UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2026 IN MG 28, MARYLEBONE BUILDING

PRESENT:	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair) Professor Dibyesh Anand David Burt (Clerk) Linsey Cole Neil Donohue Professor Catherine Dormor Dr Emma Elkington Amber Ella Jane Hoar Professor Christos Kalantaridis Dr Paul Kendall	Frantzeska Kolyda Professor Andrew Linn Adil Musani Jeanette Nicholas Professor Catherine O'Connor (Deputy Chair) Kaushika Patel Dr Andy Pitchford Henryetta Simpson Dr Pinar Uysal Onganer Dr Natasha Whiteman
IN ATTENDANCE:	Caron Bradshaw (Governor) Adam Campbell (up to Minute 25.34) Mandy Chan (Secretary) Thierry Delaitre (up to Minute 25.34) Kim Fitzpatrick (up to Minute 25.34) Elizabeth Gildersleve (up to Minute 25.34)	Maja Jovic (Shadower) Elaine McMillan (Clerk to the Court) Diane Pineda (up to Minute 25.34) Andy Ritter (up to Minute 25.34) Gunter Saunders (up to Minute 25.34) Rebecca Shonfeld (Shadower)
APOLOGIES:	Dr Margherita Sprio	Ian Wilmot

25.32 ANNOUNCEMENTS

25.32.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees, outlined the meeting agenda, and highlighted meeting etiquette to ensure inclusive and supportive discussion.

25.32.2 All members and attendees introduced themselves.

25.32.3 Members welcomed Jane Hoar, Interim Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), as a new member of Academic Council, attending in place of Jessica Adebanjo.

25.32.4 Members noted apologies as recorded above.

25.32.5 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (Minutes 25.38 to 25.44) and outlined the procedure for unstarring items for discussion.

Chair's report

25.32.6 The Chair briefed members on the continued external challenges facing the higher education sector and highlighted a positive development within the London Growth Plan, which identifies 'international education' as one of the five key growth sectors. As Vice Chair of London Higher, the Chair will work with the Major of London to advance this agenda.

25.32.7 The Chair also updated members on the University's recently announced Voluntary Leaver Scheme.

25.33 REFRESHED DIGITAL STRATEGY

25.33.1 Kim Fitzpatrick – Director of Digital and Technology Services (DTS), together with the DTS senior management team (Thierry Delaitre, Elizabeth Gildersleve, Diane Pineda and Andy Ritter), Adam Campbell - Head of Business Intelligence Performance and Insight, and Gunter Saunders – Director of Digital Capability Development and AI Leadership, joined the discussion and introduced themselves to the committee.

25.33.2 The Director (DTS) updated members on the progress of the Digital Strategy review (Document AC 260415A) and advised that the Strategy will be renamed as Digital and Data Strategy to reflect a cultural shift and support the University in a rapidly evolving environment.

25.33.3 Members discussed the twelve strategic principles relating to digital and data in small groups, with reference to the three questions set out in the paper. The main points of the discussion are set out below.

Which three principles matter most?

- *Human-Centred by Design* to ensure digital and data services meet the real needs of colleagues and students.
- *Secure and Resilient by Default* as essential to trust, safety and institutional continuity.
- *Data as Institutional Infrastructure*, supported by *Digital and AI Capability as a Core Skill*, to enable effective decision-making and service delivery.

What is missing?

- Equality, which is viewed as an underpinning expectation but is insufficiently explicit.
- Digital confidence for students and colleagues to feel safe, capable and supported through digital change.
- Greater focus on service orientation, user experience, and the effective operation and use of data.
- The need for structured gap analysis to assess current maturity, reduce overlap between principles and support realistic prioritisation.

What would most change how we operate?

- Fully embedding Human-Centred by Design across service and system design.
- Strengthening evidence-led, data-driven decision making.
- Treating security and resilience as a shared institutional responsibility, supported by clear ownership and coordination.

25.33.4 The Director (DTS) thanked members for their contributions, noted strong alignment of themes across groups, and confirmed that the feedback would inform the final Strategy.

25.33.5 The Chair thanked the team for leading the discussion and emphasised that the refreshed Strategy would address the issues raised and provide a framework for the University's future digital and data direction, supported by key performance indicators for oversight.

25.34 PROGRESS REVIEW OF THE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025-30

25.34.1 Dibyesh Anand – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement and Employability) provided a one-year progress update on the refreshed Global Engagement Strategy, reporting positive progress with global engagement embedded across education and research activities, and continued growth in international partnerships.

25.34.2 Members noted the challenging external environment affecting the UK's global competitiveness, despite the University's strong international reputation, and were assured that mitigating actions are in place to support continued delivery of the Strategy.

25.34.3 A student member shared their positive experience as an international student at the University, noting the sense of belonging that they developed through the supportive international community and student engagement activities.

25.34.4 The Chair concluded the discussion by emphasising the importance of ensuring international students feel welcomed, supported into employment and integrated into local culture, thereby reinforcing the University’s global reputation as a safe, inclusive and globally engaged place to study.

25.35 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

25.35.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 25 February 2026 (Document AC 260415B) were an accurate record of the meeting.

25.35.2 Members noted there are no outstanding actions or matter arising from previous meetings.

25.36 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

25.36.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

25.37 MEETING EVALUATION

25.37.1 Members reflected positively on the meeting, noting that the interactive workshop format was engaging, impactful and a valuable use of time.

25.37.2 A student member highlighted the value of contributing student perspectives to the discission and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve on Council, noting the experience gained and the inclusivity of the discussion.

25.38 OPEN ACCESS POLICY

25.38.1 **APPROVED** Refreshed Open Access Policy (Document AC 260415C), as recommended by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee, to take immediate effect.

25.39 ASSESSMENT RETENTION POLICY

25.39.1 **APPROVED** An Assessed Work Retention Schedule and an Assessment Retention Policy (Document AC 260415D), as recommended by the Teaching Committee, to be implemented in 2026.

25.40 COURSE SPECIFIC REGULATIONS FOR THE NURSING COURSE

25.40.1 **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for Nursing (Document AC 260415E), as recommended by the Teaching Committee, to be implemented in September 2026.

25.41 A NEW AWARD TYPE

25.41.1 **APPROVED** A new award type – Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), as recommended by the Teaching Committee, to be implemented in September 2026 (Document AC 260415F).

25.42 REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

25.42.1 Members noted the following reports and accepted the recommendations made by the Teaching Committee:

- Annual student complaints report 2025 (Document AC 260415G)
- Annual litigation report 2025 (Document AC 260415H)
- Modification report 2024-25 (Document AC 260415I)
- Continuous improvement outcomes 2024-25 (Document AC 260415J)

25.43 VALIDATION, COLLABORATIVE REVALIDATION AND CHECK-IN REVIEW

25.43.1 Members noted the validation and collaborative revalidation report 2024-25 (Document AC 260415Ki), and the curriculum and assessment check-in review (Document AC 260415Kii), as a reflection on the new validation and revalidation process.

25.44 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite.

Wednesday 24 June 2026
Wednesday 14 October 2026
Wednesday 2 December 2026
Wednesday 24 February 2027
Wednesday 14 April 2027
Wednesday 30 June 2027