# UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER⌗

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2023 IN ROOM MG38 MARYLEBONE BUILDING AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

| PRESENT: | | |
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| | Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) | Professor Luke Mason |
| | Abdelhafid Benamraoui | Professor Graham Meikle[1] |
| | Zahra Butt, UWSU (to Minute 22.33.2) | Henryetta Simpson |
| | Timo Holtappels | Jane Stonestreet[1] (to Minute 22.34) |
| | Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair)[1] | Ben Stringer |
| | Tasnim Jammal[1] | Dr Kalpana Surendranath |
| | Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) | Professor Harry Thapar[1] |
| | Professor Malcolm Kirkup | Ian Wilmot[2] |
| | Caroline Lloyd | |

| IN ATTENDANCE: | | |
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| | Mark Baldwin[1] | Dr Thomas Moore[1] (Minute 22.35) |
| | David Burt (Clerk) | Professor Gunter Saunders (to Minute 22.33) |
| | Linsey Cole[1] (Minute 22.36) | Dr Margherita Sprio[1 & 3] |
| | Elaine McMillan (Secretary) | Emma Standen |

| APOLOGIES: | | |
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| | Stephen Bunbury | Professor Andrew Linn |
| | John Cappock | Dr Andy Pitchford |
| | Professor Janet Jones | Dr Leigh Wilson |

## 22.32    ANNOUNCEMENTS

22.32.1    The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.

22.32.2    The Chair welcomed Timo Holtappels and Tasnim Jammal - postgraduate and undergraduate student representatives, and Ben Stringer - academic representative for the College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries, to their first meeting.

22.32.3    The Chair introduced Mark Baldwin, who was attending as a substitute for Professor Janet Jones.

22.32.4    Members noted apologies as detailed above.

22.32.5    All members and attendees introduced themselves to the new members and attendee.

22.32.6    The Chair reminded all members and attendees of the purpose of the committee and expected behaviours.

22.32.7    Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.

22.32.8    The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discussed starred items or to raise matters not on the agenda.

22.32.9    Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

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[1] Attended via Microsoft Teams
[2] Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
[3] Substitute covering for Dr Leigh Wilson's sabbatical

**Chair's report**

22.32.10    The Chair briefed members on sector issues and developments since the last meeting. This included:

- Financial challenges for the Higher Education sector
- Office for Students investigation process
- Action taken in partnership with the Students' Union, for example free access to clubs and societies, to address sector feedback that many students withdraw from their studies because they do not have a friend at university
- Delivery of academic endeavours in way that supports students and their well-being
- Positive action being taken to make improvements in line with Being Westminster 2022-2029, which includes stopping things that are not working

22.32.11    The Chair introduced the meeting agenda, encouraging members to bring innovation and their views and ideas to the discussions.

22.32.12    The Chair informed members about the student voice survey running from 3 to 12 April 2023 and noted that the survey outcomes would be reported to Academic Council.

**22.33    OUR DIGITAL ESTATE**

22.33.1    The Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (USCOO) and Professor Gunter Saunders, Associate Director – Digital Engagement and Library Services invited comments on the development of a refreshed Digital Strategy 2023-2029 (Document AC 230329A).

22.33.2    Members discussed the following questions in breakout groups, focusing on the digital estate as an enabler for academic activities and in support of our Education, Research and Knowledge Exchange and Employability Strategies:

- What might be missing?
- What should we do more of?
- What should we stop doing?
- What do we need to improve?

22.33.3    Members gave a summary of their group's discussions, comments covered:

- Integrated and streamlined digital infrastructure
- Support and training for academic colleagues and students
- Digital poverty experienced by students
- Building on experience post-pandemic to improve and expand hybrid working
- Co-development and co-creation of Blackboard sites with students
- Impact of artificial intelligence – harnessing the benefits and addressing the issues
- Finding new uses of technology to develop different types of practice
- Digital accessibility
- Making connections and building community in the digital environment – students and colleagues
- Online lecture summaries
- Alignment between the digital and physical estates
- Ethics underpinning teaching and learning to counter any bias built in through technologies

**22.34    ACADEMIC CALENDAR REVIEW**

22.34.1    The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)/Chair of Teaching Committee and the Academic Registrar presented potential options for improvements to the academic calendar model identified by the Academic Calendar Review Group (Document AC 230329B).

22.34.2    Members noted that the driver for the review is enhancing student outcomes through addressing issues including those related to post-study work visas and deferral and referral assessments.

22.34.3    The Chair noted that colleagues had asked academic representatives to comment on the impact on colleague workload and wellbeing. He confirmed that the discussion at Academic Council would focus on academic delivery that supports student outcomes and the potential impact on colleagues would be considered in other for a. The Chair and the Academic Registrar confirmed that colleagues would have further opportunity to comment outside of Academic Council if the Review Group proposes a new academic calendar model.

22.34.4    Members comments on the options included:

- Benefits for improving retention and impact on international students are clear
- An alternative model might be more flexible assessment processes that allow students to submit and resubmit within module structures
- Risk to successful recruitment of overseas students if seamless progress into the post-study work visa scheme is not resolved
- By reviewing student referral data, colleagues can identify assessments that could be modified to encourage student success at the first attempt
- Build in flexibility to allow course teams to adopt the model that is optimal for the course rather than mandating a single model for all
- Opportunity to think more constructively about how to align the calendar and delivery
- Apprenticeship route needs to be considered in discussions about the calendar

22.34.5    The Academic Registrar thanked members for their comments and suggested a discussion outside of the meeting with members who offered suggestions about in-module referrals.

**22.35    PERSONAL TUTORING**

22.35.1    The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Thomas Moore, Chair of the Personal Tutoring Task and Finish Group gave an oral update on work to enhance personal tutoring arrangements.

22.35.2    Members heard that the intention is for every student to have a Personal Tutor who will take part in a structured programme of support and to develop a common language and referral and triage process across the University to avoid students being transferred from one individual to another to get support.

22.35.3    The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) encouraged members to send her and the Chair of the Task and Finish Group any detailed comments after the meeting.

22.35.4    The Chair of the Task and Finish Group confirmed that there would be flexibility for Schools and Colleges to vary Personal Tutor delivery models, provided they meet the University-wide expectations for personal tutoring to support the Education Strategy.

22.35.5    A member suggested that the University should move away from deficit models and build on inspirational polices and colleagues skills with triage and extra support.

22.35.6    The Chair of the Task and Finish Group noted that professional development for personal tutors had been developed from a Quintin Hogg Trust funded project.

**22.36    OFSTED OUTCOMES REPORT**

22.36.1    The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) and the Director of Business Engagement presented the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of apprenticeship provision (Document AC 230329C).

22.36.2     The Chair and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) thanked all who contributed to the inspection outcome.

**22.37      MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

22.37.1     **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 22 February 2023 (Document AC 230329D) were an accurate record of the meeting.

22.37.2     Members noted that there were no outstanding actions or matters arising from previous meetings.

**22.38      ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE**

22.38.1     Members noted the following annual reports and accepted the recommendations agreed by the Teaching Committee:

- Annual academic integrity report 2021/22 (Document AC 230329Ei)
- Annual academic appeal report 2021/22 (Document AC 230329Eii)
- Continuous improvement report 2021/22 (Document AC 230329Eiii)
- Annual student litigation report 2022 (Document AC 230329Eiv)
- Annual student complaints report 2022 (Document AC 230329Ev)
- Annual student disciplinary report 2021/22 (Document AC 230329Evi)

**22.39      ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

22.39.1     The Chair invited feedback on the meeting from new members, who commented that it was an open space, driving for education and considering students' experience first. A new member noted that they would have liked more time to discuss the academic calendar models in breakout groups and another new member noted that they would have liked more time to think through some of the issues discussed.

22.39.2     The Chair confirmed that members could submit additional comments to the authors of the papers after the meeting and that members would have an opportunity for further comment on the academic calendar model if a proposal is submitted.

**22.40      DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite (rooms to be confirmed) with remote participation available if members are unable to attend in person.

Wednesday 21 June 2023
Wednesday 18 October 2023
Wednesday 6 December 2023
Wednesday 21 February 2024
Wednesday 27 March 2024
Wednesday 26 June 2024