

APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2024 IN
CHILTERN HALL, MARYLEBONE BUILDING**

PRESENT:	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair) Professor Dibyesh Anand David Burt (Clerk) Professor Catherine Dormor Amber Ella Dr Felicity Hardley Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Professor Christos Kalantaridis Dr Paul Kendall Louise Kernahan ¹ Frantzeska Kolyda	Professor Andrew Linn Caroline Lloyd Jeanette Nicholas Dr Pinar Uysal Onganer Kaushika Patel Dr Andy Pitchford Suhavee Sethi ² Henryetta Simpson Dr Margherita Sprio Dr Natasha Whiteman Ian Wilmot
IN ATTENDANCE:	Justin Bairamian ³ (Observer, up to Minute 24.4) Kitty Brown Mandy Chan (Secretary)	Sarah Gaines (Observer) Debs Harris (Observer) Lucy Wright (Minute 24.6)
APOLOGIES:	Divanshu Airan Emma Standen	Ben Stringer

24.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 24.1.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.
- 24.1.2 The Chair outlined the University committee structure, highlighting the role of Academic Council as the supreme academic body overseeing the University's academic portfolio, and reminded members of the expected conduct during meetings as set out in the Code of Conduct.
- 24.1.3 All members, attendees and observers introduced themselves.
- 24.1.4 The Chair explained the purpose of the Academic Council Shadowing Scheme, introduced this year's participants - Debs Harris and Sarah Gaines - who observed this meeting, and noted that Frantzeska Kolyda, as a scheme member in 2023/24, has formally joined Council as the Chair's nominee.
- 24.1.5 Members noted apologies as detailed above.
- 24.1.6 Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.
- 24.1.7 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.
- Chair's report**
- 24.1.8 The Chair briefed members on sector and institutional issues and developments since the last meeting, including:

- Government policies related to higher education.
- Financial pressure across the sector and the University's financial situation.

¹ Attended on behalf of the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards).

² Attended on behalf of the University of Westminster Students' Union President.

³ Attended on behalf of the Court of Governors for the discussion of the annual quality assurance report.

- Potential recruitment challenges for the University.

24.1.9 Members discussed the broader challenges facing the higher education sector and shared views on internal investment.

24.2 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Code of Conduct

24.2.1 **AGREED** Members reaffirmed their commitment to the Code of Conduct (Document AC 241016A).

Terms of Reference and Membership

24.2.2 The Chair informed members that Sal Jarvis, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education, is appointed as the Deputy Chair of Academic Council.

24.2.3 **AGREED** Terms of reference and membership 2024/25 (Document AC 241016B) to be recommended to the Court for approval.

Schedule of Business 2024/25

24.2.4 The Chair informed members that the schedule of business is a living document, which will be adapted as needed to address any emerging priorities in fulfilling Council's responsibilities.

24.2.5 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the activities on the schedule of business 2024/25 (Document 241016C) fulfil the responsibilities of Academic Council as outlined in the terms of reference.

Sub-committee Terms of Reference 2024/25 (Document AC 241016D)

24.2.6 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Course Validation Standing Panel to be implemented with immediate effect.

24.2.7 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Portfolio Planning Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.

24.2.8 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Teaching Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.

24.2.9 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.

24.3 ANNUAL QUALITY AND STANDARDS REPORT 2023/24

24.3.1 The Chair reminded members that a governor was in attendance to participate in the discussion of the report on behalf of the Court.

24.3.2 Louise Kernahan, Assistant Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented the report (Document AC 241016E), which is recommended by the Teaching Committee.

24.3.3 A member highlighted the statement from the external member of the Teaching Committee on page 16, noting their positive experience in observing the University's academic quality assurance process.

24.3.4 A member suggested including examples of the postgraduate research provision as evidence in the report.

24.3.5 **AGREED** Members confirm to the Court that the assurance statements have been met.

24.3.6 Members were divided into small groups to reflect on the report and identify key issues in the academic quality assurance process to help advance the University. The following ideas were shared:

- Technological improvements to support quality processes, such as classroom technology and attendance systems.
- Academic citizenship on recognising colleagues' collegiality in the quality assurance process.
- National Student Survey improvements to drive changes.
- Professional development for colleagues.
- Professor of Teaching and Learning roles to foster academic excellence.
- Resources to support employability.

24.3.7 The Chair thanked members for their insights, noting that some ideas could be further explored in future Council meetings.

24.3.8 The Chair also highlighted recent improvements in attendance rates and engagement in the personal tutor scheme, encouraging members to maintain the momentum in enhancing academic quality and striving for academic excellence.

24.4 AACSB ACCREDITATION

24.4.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Teaching Excellence and Student Experience (TESE) and Head of College – Westminster Business School (WBS) presented the proposal on pursuing accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for WBS (Document AC 241016F).

24.4.2 Members reinforced earlier comments made at the Teaching Committee regarding student support, workload and resource implications. Additionally, a member questioned potential procedural changes, such as the academic regulations, curriculum delivery and the academic calendar.

24.4.3 The PVC (TESE) and Head of College (WBS) acknowledged the challenges, assuring members that no changes to current procedures would be necessary to meet AACSB accreditation standards, and that WBS, with over 300 colleague members, could help to address the highlighted issues.

24.4.4 Addressing queries about benefits for both home and international students, the PVC (TESE) and Head of College (WBS) explained that the accreditation would provide a globally recognised qualification, enhancing students' employability.

24.4.5 Members questioned whether the application should extend beyond WBS, as some non-WBS courses could benefit, suggesting that future discussions explore expanding accreditation to other Colleges.

24.4.6 The PVC (TESE) and Head of College (WBS) clarified that:

- The current proposal is for single-unit accreditation, aligning with sector practice and meeting initial application thresholds.
- While the single-unit approach is effective, it may limit broader benefits for courses outside WBS.
- Securing single-unit accreditation typically takes around five years, whereas pursuing institution-wide application will require a more comprehensive and extended process.

24.4.7 Responding to members' questions on elective modules and the status of accredited non-WBS courses, the PVC (TESE) and Head of College (WBS) confirmed that the accreditation covers

the entire course including both core and elective modules, and that accredited courses do not need to be moved under WBS following accreditation.

24.4.8 The Chair thanked members for the thorough discussion of the proposal.

24.4.9 The Chair summarised that members, in principle, supported the accreditation proposal, recognising its potential benefits to the University, but also expressed concerns about the single-unit approach.

24.4.10 **APPROVED** PVC (TESE) and Head of College (WBS) to take forward the proposal to pursue accreditation by AACSB for the whole University.

24.4.11 The Chair highlighted that the accreditation process could further strengthen the University's quality assurance process, which could be reflected in future academic quality reports.

24.5 ANNUAL STRATEGIC KPI MONITORING REPORT

24.5.1 Members received the Annual Strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Monitoring Report (Document AC 241016G) and heard the Chair's update on KPI developments:

- The KPIs are to be achieved by 2029, and it is important to track trend data to monitor progress.
- There is a need to identify leading KPIs and regularly assess progress to inform future academic quality reports and guide the University's strategic direction.
- A dedicated KPI session at a future Council meeting may be beneficial for updating members on the developments.

24.5.2 The Director of Strategic Planning and Performance (SPP) suggested that introducing a staging point for the KPIs could enhance the effectiveness of progress tracking.

24.5.3 The DVC (Education) reported improvements in all five areas of Student Experience, although Undergraduate Teaching and Academic Support remain below benchmark. The DVC (Education) also noted a reduction in the attrition rate compared to previous years and mentioned that colleagues in SPP are addressing the data discrepancies across various dashboards.

24.5.4 The DVC (Global Engagement and Employability) informed members that Academic Council will discuss issues for employability in its February meeting, and that the University has a plan for international student recruitment.

24.5.5 The Chair updated members on a joint workshop with the Court to discuss employability provisionally scheduled for the February meeting.

24.5.6 The DVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) explained that the substantial increase in research income in 2023/24 was primarily due to the awards from the previous year and noted that some Schools are not regularly seeking research funding based on the latest application data. The DVC (RKE) also noted that there is a positive trend in graduate student enrolment as of September 2024.

24.6 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN POST-SUBMISSION DEBRIEFING

24.6.1 The DVC (Education) informed members that the Access and Participation Plan (APP) had been submitted to the Office of Students (OfS) and the next phase will focus on implementation. The DVC (Education) thanked Lucy Wright, Business Intelligence and Institutional Research Manager (BIIRM) for her contributions in the APP development.

24.6.2 The BIIRM updated members that the OfS had only one query on the submission, and the University can release the APP publicly, pending OfS approval.

- 24.6.3 The BIIRM informed members that implementation will begin next September for a three-year period, allowing one year for the University to conduct process and impact evaluations to adapt interventions and ensure effectiveness. The BIIRM pointed out that minor adjustments to the University's current strategy may be needed due to the APP's 'whole provider approach' to supporting both home and at-risk students.
- 24.6.4 The BIIRM noted that since the APP and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) share the same dataset for at-risk groups, improving APP outcomes will enhance performance against the TEF metrics. Members heard that failure to achieve positive APP outcomes could impact the University's ability to charge higher fees.
- 24.6.5 In response to a question on closing the gap, the BIIRM highlighted that the University could benchmark its impact evaluation against the standards of evidence from the OfS guidance and noted the opportunities of the University to further enhance publicly available information.
- 24.6.6 Addressing a query on the process evaluation to protect the higher fee status, the BIIRM emphasised that the APP targets a small number of students with specific needs, requiring careful consideration to support them without impacting the wider student population.
- 24.6.7 Members noted that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee commended the work of the APP, and that the awarding gap is well addressed in all School operational plans.
- 24.6.8 The Chair thanked the BIIRM for joining the discussion.

24.7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 24.7.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 26 June 2024 (Document AC 241016I) were an accurate record of the meeting.
- 24.7.2 Members noted the summary of progress against actions arising from the previous meeting (Document AC 241016J) and acknowledged that the in-progress item regarding new validation and revalidation processes will be reviewed after one year of implementation.

24.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 24.8.1 The DVC (Education) briefed members on the apprenticeship completion rate and noted that a more detailed report would be provided at the next meeting.

24.9 MEETING EVALUATION

- 24.9.1 The Shadowing Scheme members expressed appreciation for being part of Academic Council and witnessing significant academic decisions. They also noted that the breakout sessions facilitated focused discussions on key topics.

24.10 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PANEL AND MEMBERSHIP 2024/25

- 24.10.1 **APPROVED** Student Disciplinary Panel membership 2024/25 (Document AC 241016K) to be implemented from October 2024.

24.11 REFRESHED GENERATIVE AI POLICY

- 24.11.1 **AGREED** Members recommend the refreshed Policy in relation to the safe use of Generative AI (Document AC 241016L) to the University Executive Board.

24.12 RATIFICATION OF DECISION BY CIRCULATION

- 24.12.1 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair in September 2024 to grant an exemption to the Academic Regulations for a student (Document AC 241016M).

24.13 FITNESS TO PRACTICE POLICY

24.13.1 **APPROVED** Amended Fitness to Practice Policy (Document AC 241016N) to be implemented from October 2024.

24.14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite (rooms to be confirmed).

Wednesday 4 December 2024

Wednesday 19 February 2025

Wednesday 2 April 2025

Wednesday 25 June 2025