

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2024 IN ROOM MG321, MARYLEBONE BUILDING**

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PRESENT: Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair) Professor Graham Meikle  
Professor Abdelhafid Benamraoui Dr Thomas Moore  
Stephen Bunbury Dr Andy Pitchford  
David Burt (Clerk) Henryetta Simpson  
Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Emma Standen  
Professor Christos Kalantaridis Jane Stonestreet  
Professor Andrew Linn (Deputy Chair) Ben Stringer  
Caroline Lloyd Dr Kalpana Surendranath  
Professor Luke Mason Professor Alexandra Warwick

IN ATTENDANCE: Mandy Chan (Secretary) Dr Paul Kendall (Observer)  
Dr Felicity Hardley (Observer) Frantzeska Kolyda (Observer)

APOLOGIES: Professor Dibyesh Anand (Deputy Chair) Anastasia Lydaki  
Taruna Bangia Ian Wilmot  
Professor Janet Jones Professor Leigh Wilson

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**23.49 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 23.49.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.
- 23.49.2 The Chair welcomed Dr Felicity Hardley and Dr Paul Kendall, the newly elected academic members of Council who will start their terms of office on 1 August 2024, to observe the meeting.
- 23.49.3 All members, attendees and observers introduced themselves.
- 23.49.4 Members noted apologies as detailed above.
- 23.49.5 The Chair reminded all members, attendees and observers that Academic Council is the supreme academic body of the University strategically overseeing the University's academic portfolio covering education, research and employability.
- 23.49.6 Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda. However, the Chair noted that agenda item 7, concerning the academic membership of Council, might involve discussing the appointment of the two current members nominated by the Chair (Minute 23.51).
- 23.49.7 The Chair agreed to one request to discuss starred agenda item 15.4 Planned changes to the validation and revalidation processes (Minute 23.62).
- 23.49.8 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.
- 23.49.9 Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

**CHAIR'S REPORT**

- 23.49.10 The Chair briefed members on sector and institutional issues and developments since the last meeting. This included:
- The potential threats to the sector, including the graduate visas, appear to be resolved.

- London has been ranked as the world's best student city in the latest Quacquarelli Symonds report.
- Sector-wide job cuts due to financial pressure faced by universities.

## **23.50 ACADEMIC COUNCIL ANNUAL REFLECTION**

23.50.1 The Chair reported that some members shared reflections on the Council's contribution to the progression of the University's strategic priorities before the meeting (Document AC240626Aii).

23.50.2 Members shared the following reflections on the work of Council over the academic year:

- Well-managed and substantial meetings, with decisions based on collective consensus after quality and interactive discussions addressing the strategic priorities.
- Discussions are open and data-driven, incorporating well-represented views, particularly the student voices.
- Deep-dive workshop sessions were valuable for engaging members and bringing in diverse perspectives from colleagues outside Council, marking it the most positive development for Council compared to previous years.
- Members responsibly consulted their constituencies to gather opinions and feedback.
- The democratic process of Council elections was commended.
- The new shadowing scheme promotes inclusivity and helps colleagues start participating in academic governance.
- More work is needed on Council's inclusion and diversity.
- Chair's actions should be more inclusive, with potential prior engagement from members before decisions are made.
- Governance documents could more explicitly capture the context of the conversations to reflect the conclusions.

23.50.3 The Chair thanked members for their reflections and contributions over the academic year, noting that the quality discussions were in full alignment with the University's strategic priorities.

23.50.4 The Chair acknowledged the need for further efforts to enhance Council's inclusivity, particularly regarding decisions made by Chair's action.

## **23.51 ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

23.51.1 The Chair briefed members on the purpose of the discussion is to identify gaps in the academic membership of Council to inform the decisions of the appointment (or re-appointment) of the two Chair's nominated member positions for 2024-27 (Document AC 240626B).

23.51.2 Members expressed some general views on the current membership structure, highlighting the need for more student voices from different programme levels and Professional Services representatives.

23.51.3 In relation to the academic membership gap, members shared the following views:

- Including a sustainability representative could help Council to achieve the University's strategic priority on sustainable development.
- More representation from junior or early career colleagues.
- Representatives from Colleague Networks to enhance diversity and inclusivity.
- Inclusion of Course Leaders in Council.
- Some Schools currently lack representation in Council.

23.51.4 One member suggested that bringing in relevant non-member colleagues for discussing specific agenda items could help improve the diversity of Council.

23.51.5 Another member observed that the two nominated positions might bear too much responsibility, stressing the importance of appointing individuals who take the role seriously and bring new voices to Council.

23.51.6 The Chair thanked members for the opinions and informed them the appointment timeline, noting that the appointment is subject to the approval of two-thirds of the membership of Council.

### **23.52 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS**

23.52.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education gave a presentation on the 'Educational experience and the performance of students'.

23.52.2 Members noted that there are some relationships between the first-sit pass rate and the awarding gap, and that the University is working on to improve the first-sit pass rate and the DVC (Education) will keep Council informed of progress in future meetings.

23.52.3 One member suggested it would be helpful to also see the proportion of deferrals and fails at first attempt and to understand if the number of first attempt passes included those who had deferred and then passed.

23.52.4 Another member proposed studying the relationship among attendance, first-sit pass rate and awarding gap by leveraging artificial intelligence, which could inform the University of the gaps in all these areas.

23.52.5 The Chair commended the good work of personal tutoring, emphasising the need to develop positive intervening measures based on the collected data to better support students and to reduce awarding gaps.

### **23.53 IMPACT OF THE EXCEPTIONAL REGULATIONS**

23.53.1 The Academic Registrar presented the report on the impact of the exceptional regulations (Document AC 240626C).

23.53.2 The Academic Registrar assured members that the exceptional regulations met their objectives in managing student progression and awards during the sector-wide Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB), noting that it affected only a small proportion of modules and students.

23.53.3 Reflecting on lessons learnt, the Academic Registrar recommended that Heads and Assistant Heads of Schools adopt a proactive approach to overseeing marking activities to minimise the incidence of late marks and mark amendments.

23.53.4 In response to a query about the risk and inclusivity concerns of having someone unfamiliar with the students mark their work, the Academic Registrar highlighted the University's practice of anonymous marking and noted that there is currently no data from the exceptional regulations to draw any conclusions on this matter.

23.53.5 One member pointed out that marking should be constructively aligned with the learning objectives of modules, and that it is important to have mixed teams of experts for marking during a MAB to effectively manage student progression and awarding.

23.53.6 The Chair thanked the Academic Registrar for producing the report to monitor the impact of the exceptional regulations.

### **23.54 COMMISSIONING BRIEF 2024/25**

23.54.1 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented the Commissioning brief 2024/25 (Document AC 240626D).

23.54.2 **APPROVED** Commissioning brief 2024/25 to be implemented in July 2024.

## **23.55 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

23.55.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 27 March 2024 (Document AC 240626E) were an accurate record of the meeting.

23.55.2 Members noted that the summary of progress against actions arising from the previous meeting (Document AC240626F).

## **23.56 MEETING EVALUATION**

23.56.1 Members noted the following observations from the meeting:

- The discussion on inclusion, especially on involving more colleagues in the work of Council, was very helpful.
- The meeting served as a valuable reminder for members representing the wider community to reflect colleagues' views during the discussions.
- It was very useful to receive advance introduction of some discussion topics for future meetings.

23.56.2 Regarding a query on the next step for the annual reflection (Minute 23.50), the Chair explained that the reflections will be reported to the Court of Governors and then brought back to Council for further reflection.

23.56.3 An observer commended the arrangement of the starred section in the agenda with an option for members to 'unstar' items for discussion. The Chair pointed out that the starred section is a challenging aspect to manage and relies on members' trust in making decisions without discussion.

23.56.4 The Chair expressed gratitude to members attending their last Council meeting for their dedicated support and contributions over the academic year.

## **23.57 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2024/25**

23.57.1 **APPROVED** Academic Regulations 2024/25 (Document AC 240626G) to take effect from August 2024.

## **23.58 RESEARCH DEGREE ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2024/25**

23.58.1 **APPROVED** Research Degree Academic Regulations 2024/25 (Document AC 240626H) to take effect from September 2024.

## **23.59 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

23.59.1 **APPROVED** Refreshed Academic Integrity Policy for Staff and Students (Document AC 240626I) to take effect from August 2024.

## **23.60 POLICY ON PEER DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING AND PRACTICE**

23.60.1 **APPROVED** Policy on Peer Development of Teaching Practice (Document AC 240626J) to be implemented for an additional three years to enhance colleague engagement.

## **23.61 RELIGION, BELIEF AND STUDY POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

23.61.1 **APPROVED** Religion, Belief and Study Policy for Students (Document AC 240626K) to take effect from August 2024.

## **23.62 PLANNED CHANGES TO THE VALIDATION AND REVALIDATION PROCESSES**

- 23.62.1 The DVC (Education) briefed members on the proposed changes to validation and revalidation processes (Document AC 240626L), noting that these were developed based on wide consultation with the aims to create a more agile process and to reduce colleagues' workload.
- 23.62.2 The DVC (Education) shared a member's comment received prior the meeting, expressing his support for the proposal, particularly for replacing the five-year revalidation cycle to help timely promotion of decolonisation and diversification of curriculum, aligning with the University's mission for equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 23.62.3 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) proposed to include the aims of the Revalidation Task and Finish Group to add clarity to the proposal in addressing colleagues' concerns on workload reduction.
- 23.62.3.1 ACTION Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards)** to amend the proposal to include the aims of the Revalidation Task and Finish Group.
- 23.62.4 A member highlighted discussions with UCU (the University College Union) and other colleagues, requesting more details and clarity on the revised processes, including resourcing and colleagues' workload, especially for Course Leaders. Another member opined that the proposed amendment (Minute 23.62.3) did not address these concerns.
- 23.62.5 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) explained that both academic and Professional Services colleagues' workload would be reduced in future through the enhanced continuous and modification processes and the removal of the revalidation cycle. The DVC (Education) added that the University will continue to review the revised processes through consultations with colleagues to ensure they are effective.
- 23.62.6 A member suggested deferring the decision on the proposal to the next meeting until more details of the revised processes are clarified. However, other members expressed the need to have Council's approval before commencing the work.
- 23.62.7 The Chair thanked members for the thorough discussion and reminded them of the remit of Academic Council (Minute 23.49.5), noting that colleagues' workload falls outside of this remit.
- 23.62.8 Members further deliberated on the intent of the proposal and agreed with its strategic direction for a more quality and efficient process, noting that the operational details, including any workload issues, would be addressed by the Revalidation Task and Finish Group and Teaching Committee in consultation with colleagues.
- 23.62.8.1 ACTION Revalidation Task and Finish Group and Teaching Committee** to work on the detailed operation of the revised processes and monitor and review the impact on colleagues' workload after one-year of implementation.
- 23.62.9 **APPROVED** Proposed changes to validation and revalidation processes to take effect from the 2024/25 academic year, with the proposed amendments (Minute 23.62.3) to be added to the proposal.

## **23.63 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS 2024/25 AND STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

- 23.63.1 **AGREED** Members recommended the updated Student Disciplinary Regulations and Student Code of Conduct (Document AC 240626M) to the Court of Governors for approval.

## **23.64 REPORTS CONSIDERED BY TEACHING COMMITTEE**

- 23.64.1 Members noted the following reports and the recommendations agreed by the Teaching Committee:
- Continuous improvement outcomes 2022/23 (Document AC 240626Ni)

- Report on validation and reviews 2023 (Document AC 240626Nii)
- Modifications report 2023/24 (Document AC 240626Niii)

### **23.65 COURSE CLOSURES**

23.65.1 Members noted the list of course closures (Document AC 240626O), which had been approved by the Portfolio Planning Committee.

### **23.66 CONSULTANCY POLICY**

23.66.1 Members noted the newly developed University Consultancy Policy (Document AC 240626P), which had been approved by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee.

### **23.67 DECISION SUBMITTED TO THE CHAIR FOR DECISION BETWEEN MEETINGS**

23.67.1 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair to approve a course specific regulation - with effect from 18 June 2024 - that Section 4.3 of the Framework for Undergraduate Courses (Section 17) of the Academic Regulations will not apply when marks are considered at the first attempt for the following Level 4 modules on the LLB (Hons) Law: Contract Law; Tort Law; Public Law; and Criminal Law (Document AC 240620Q).

### **23.68 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

23.68.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

### **23.69 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

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

Wednesday 16 October 2024

Wednesday 4 December 2024

Wednesday 19 February 2025

Wednesday 2 April 2025

Wednesday 25 June 2025