UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER⊞

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH 2024 IN ROOM MG28, MARYLEBONE BUILDING

PRESENT:		
	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair)	Professor Luke Mason
	Professor Dibyesh Anand (Deputy Chair)	Dr Andy Pitchford
	Professor Abdelhafid Benamraoui	Henryetta Simpson
	Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair)	Emma Standen
	Professor Janet Jones	Ben Stringer
	Professor Christos Kalantaridis	Professor Alexandra Warwick
	Professor Andrew Linn (Deputy Chair)	Professor Leigh Wilson
	Anastasia Lydaki	

IN ATTENDANCE:		
	Ayushi Chamoli (for Minute 23.42)	Richard McCormack (for Minute 23.42)
	Mandy Chan (Secretary)	Olayinka Omoboye (Observer)
	Linsey Cole (for Minute 23.42)	Pinar Uysal Onganer (Observer)
	Monica Deshpande (for Minute 23.42)	Natasha Whiteman (Observer)

APOLOGIES:		
	Taruna Bangia	Dr Thomas Moore
	Stephen Bunbury	Jane Stonestreet
	David Burt (Clerk)	Dr Kalpana Surendranath
	Caroline Lloyd	Ian Wilmot
	Professor Graham Meikle	

23.40 ANNOUNCEMENTS

23.40.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.

23.40.2 The Chair welcomed Natasha Whiteman and Pinar Uysal Onganer, the newly elected academic members of Council who will start their terms of office on 1 August 2024, to observe the meeting.

23.40.3 All members, attendees and observers introduced themselves.

23.40.4 Members noted apologies as detailed above.

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

23.40.6 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (see Minutes 23.45 to 23.46).

23.40.7 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.

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

23.40.9 The Chair reminded all members, attendees and observers of the purpose of Council and the expected behaviour at the meeting.

23.40.10 The Chair summarised the major items discussed in previous meetings and briefed members on the agenda items of this meeting, including the workshop arrangement for the item on the mid-year update of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) (Minute 23.42).

Chair's report

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

- A sector-wide decline in international student applications following the implementation of the new Government policy on dependents.
- Financial challenges across the sector.
- The robust and sustainable financial position of the University.
- New senior appointment, new roles of senior colleagues and the new role of a Council member.
- Upcoming recruitment to other senior positions.

23.41   EMBEDDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTO EDUCATION

23.41.1   The Head of the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI) briefed members on the proposed action plan for embedding the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) into education (Document AC 240327A).

23.41.2   The Head of CETI highlighted that the action plan seeks to establish a cohesive framework to address Target 4.7 of the SDG on quality education. The University has to provide evidence on the extent to which education for sustainable development is integrated in the curricula and student assessments.

23.41.3   Members discussed the action plan and noted the following:

- Leveraging the extensive research in sustainability in the embedding process.
- The colour-code in the action plan table does not correspond with the level of evaluation of education for sustainable development.
- Exploring the possibility of mapping SDGs with learning outcomes during course validation.
- Including SDGs in student assessments.
- Adopting a phased approach to engage colleagues.

23.41.4   A member suggested the action plan could be more transformative if it takes on a thematic approach to capture sustainability-specific critical thinking into teaching and learning, as the subject is complex and inter-disciplinary. The Head of CETI welcomed more in-depth input on sustainability competencies in the action plan.

23.41.5   The Chair mentioned that sustainability is inherent in the daily activities of colleagues and students, emphasising the University's role in raising awareness about their contributions to the SDGs.

23.41.6   **APPROVED** The action plan for embedding sustainable development goals into education to be implemented immediately, subject to revisions incorporating the feedback provided by members.

23.41.7   **AGREED** Academic Council will receive a half-yearly progress report for ongoing monitoring and updates.

23.41.7.1 **ACTION Members** to share evidence/progress regarding the integration of SDGs into education at the last meeting of academic year 2024/25.

23.42   STRATEGIC KPI MONITORING REPORT: MID-YEAR UPDATE

23.42.1   Members divided into small groups for deep-dive discussions on the three KPIs on education, employability, and research and knowledge exchange (Document AC 240327B).

Workshop 1: Education KPI – Equality in education with a focus on the Access and Participation Plan

23.42.2   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education highlighted that the draft Access and Participation Plan (APP) sets out the University's commitment to eliminate inequality in education, with a focus on the at-risk student groups and a risk register to address the gaps throughout the student life cycle for undergraduate home students.

23.42.3   Members shared some intervention ideas to address the gaps: curriculum decolonisation, intervention support from Personal Tutors, targeted activities tailored to the at-risk student groups, bringing in industry experts to engage students, boosting student self-esteem, proactive and position actions, mentoring scheme.

23.42.3.1   **ACTION** **Secretary** to circulate the draft APP document to members for comment.

Workshop 2: Employability KPI – Highly skilled employment and further study rates relative to Westminster's benchmark

23.42.4   The DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) invited Linsey Cole, Director of Business Engagement and Monica Deshpande, Head of Employability and Graduate Success to join the discussion session.

23.42.5   Members heard about the 2.5% above sector benchmark KPI target, the key student groups with significant gaps, the priority employability programmes, and the strategic and tactical challenges in achieving the KPI target.

23.42.6   Members applauded the development of the 29 Marylebone Road project to develop the University's new employability hub, which had a Breaking the Ground ceremony earlier that day.

23.42.7   Members made the following suggestions during the discussion:

- Enhance student engagement with employability through increased visibility and accessibility of employability programmes, investment in soft skills training and a rethink of the terminology of 'employability' to make it more appealing to students.
- Improve engagement and outcomes for students/recent graduates from the groups where there are gaps in Graduate Outcomes performance by building up student confidence.
- Support the employability expectations of international students through better understanding their needs and expectations, offering globally recognised programmes with assessment incorporating a global perspective, providing placement opportunities and establishing an International Employer Engagement Board.

23.42.8   The team responded to some of the members' suggestions:

- The team is offering personalised support to both students and employers to enhance employability engagement.
- The team is collaborating with an external agency to review and improve the terminology of 'employability' to enhance engagement.
- Employability has been incorporated into School plans.
- The Employability Workstream Charter will be shared with Heads of School.

23.42.8.1   **ACTION** **Secretary** to circulate the slides presented at the meeting with members.

Workshop 3: Research and Knowledge Exchange KPI – Understanding and supporting the postgraduate research (PGR) journey

23.42.9   The DVC (Research and Knowledge Exchange) invited Professor Leigh Wilson, Head of the Graduate School, Richard McCormack, Graduate School Office Manager and Ayushi Chamoli, PhD student representative of the PhD Student Board to join the discussion session.

23.42.10   Members noted that the University has achieved the KPI target for postgraduate research satisfaction and received positive results in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

However, challenges persist for PhD students, such as issues related to their identity as colleagues or students within the University.

23.42.11   The PhD student representative shared her personal challenges upon arriving in the country to pursue her PhD study at the University.

23.42.12   Members proposed ideas to better support PGR students, including involving them in the education sustainability initiatives, better understanding of their needs and providing support by graduate tutors/supervisors.

23.42.13   The Chair reassured members that the University offers sufficient support to all students, including PGR students.

23.42.14   The Chair thanked the teams for facilitating the workshop discussions and emphasised that Council will maintain ongoing monitoring of KPI progress.

23.43   MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

23.43.1   **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 21 February 2024 (Document AC 240327C) were an accurate record of the meeting.

23.43.2   Members noted that there are no actions from the previous meeting.

23.44   MEETING EVALUATION

23.44.1   Members noted the following comments regarding the meeting:

- The discussion encompassed both broad contextual considerations and specific local actions.
- Participants shared diverse opinions from different disciplines at the meeting.

23.45   ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

23.45.1   Members noted the following reports, which had been discussed by the Teaching Committee:

- Annual Student Complaints Report 2023 (Document AC 240327Di)
- Annual Litigation Report 2023 (Document AC 240327Dii)

23.46   APPRENTICESHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

23.46.1   Members noted the Apprenticeship Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan (Document AC 240327E).

23.47   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.47.1   Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

23.48   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Wednesday 26 June 2024
Wednesday 16 October 2024
Wednesday 4 December 2024
Wednesday 19 February 2025
Wednesday 2 April 2025
Wednesday 25 June 2025