

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2024
AT ROOM C1.18 (PAVILION), 115 NEW CAVENDISH STREET**

PRESENT:	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair) Professor Dibyesh Anand (Acting Deputy Chair) Taruna Bangia Professor Abdelhafid Benamraoui Stephen Bunbury David Burt (Clerk) Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Professor Janet Jones Professor Andrew Linn (Deputy Chair) Caroline Lloyd Anastasia Lydaki	Professor Luke Mason Professor Graham Meikle Dr Thomas Moore Dr Andy Pitchford Henryetta Simpson Emma Standen Jane Stonestreet Ben Stringer Dr Kalpana Surendranath Professor Alexandra Warwick Dr Leigh Wilson
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IN ATTENDANCE:	Nandini Aggarwal (for Minute 23.31) Mandy Chan (Secretary) Gustavo Espinoza Ramos (Observer) Sara Hafeez (Observer) Elaine McMillan (Clerk to the Court)	Kirsty Mcphee (for Minute 23.31) Olayinka Omoboye (Observer) Professor Fiona Ross (Observer) Rajat Shah (for Minute 23.31)
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APOLOGIES:	Professor Christos Kalantaridis	Ian Wilmot
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23.27 ANNOUNCEMENTS

23.27.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.

23.27.2 The Chair congratulated the following members on appointment to their new roles:

- Professor Andrew Linn – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Research and Knowledge Exchange
- Dr Thomas Moore – Interim Head of College, Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Ian Wilmot – University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer

23.27.3 The Chair also welcomed the following observers to the meeting:

- Sara Hafeez – colleague governor
- Professor Fiona Ross – independent governor
- Gustavo Espinoza Ramos and Olayinka Omoboye – participants of Academic Council Shadowing Scheme

23.27.4 All members, attendees and observers introduced themselves.

23.27.5 Members noted apologies as detailed above.

23.27.6 The Chair encouraged members to join the Academic Council Open Meeting, which will be held after the meeting.

23.27.7 The Chair summarised the major items discussed in previous meetings and briefed members on the agenda items for this meeting.

- 23.27.8 The Chair confirmed that only members and the Secretary would remain in the room for the discussion of the strictly confidential item regarding the rescindment of an award (see Minute 23.29) as it involved personal data of a former student.
- 23.27.9 Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.
- 23.27.10 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (see Minutes 23.34 to 23.39).
- 23.27.11 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.
- 23.27.12 Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

Chair's report

- 23.27.13 The Chair briefed members on sector issues and developments since the last meeting. This included:
- A notable decrease in international student applications across the sector following the implementation of the new Government policy on allowing dependents.
 - Potential change in the two-year graduate work visa and its impact.
 - The University's application status for 2024/25 admissions based on the latest data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

23.28 REFRESHED EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY

- 23.28.1 The Interim DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) presented the refreshed Employability Strategy (Document AC240221A), highlighting the changes made to align with the Being Westminster Strategy 2022-29.
- 23.28.2 The Interim DVC thanked members for feeding in comments before the meeting, as well as the comments from the Teaching Committee and the Employability Task Force.
- 23.28.3 The Interim DVC informed members that the employability workstream charter will be ready by June 2024 and all six Associate Heads of College will be members of the Employability Task Force.
- 23.28.4 Members commended the refreshed Employability Strategy and were pleased to note that:
- The refreshed Strategy was endorsed by the Teaching Committee.
 - Personal Tutors are included in the refreshed Strategy and more work is to be done for the WeThrive programme.
 - Different levels of students, including Level 7 students, are covered.
- 23.28.5 Members also commented on research and employability, targeted actions for at-risk student groups in the Access and Participation Plan, and the need of further editing for the document.
- 23.28.6 Members noted that the Interim DVC will provide an action plan on enhancement of employability to Academic Council in due course.
- 23.28.7 **APPROVED** The refreshed Employability Strategy to take effect from March 2024.

23.29 A PROPOSAL TO RESCIND AN AWARD – STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

- 23.29.1 At the request of the Chair, the Clerk to the Court and all observers left the room.
- 23.29.2 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented the academic misconduct case (Document AC240215B), noting that rescindment of an award is a serious and rarely used

penalty and is recommended by the Academic Misconduct Panel in light of the repeated offences of the former student.

23.29.3 The Deputy Registrar assured members that the investigation process and all related procedures comply with the Academic Regulations.

23.29.4 Members noted a typo on the award date in the letter dated 18 September 2023 to the former student.

23.29.5 **APPROVED** Members decided to rescind the award of Bachelor of Science (Honours) Biomedical Sciences previously conferred.

23.30 COMMUNITY MUSIC REPORTABLE EVENT

23.30.1 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) briefed members on the unexpected discontinuation of a partnership with Community Music and the remedial measures to support the affected students (Document AC 240221C).

23.30.2 Members noted that the University has reported the case to the Office for Students.

23.30.3 The Deputy Registrar reflected that the case highlighted the risk associated with partnership activities and the importance of continued monitoring through due diligence.

23.30.4 Members had some discussion on the lesson learnt from the case:

- The importance of quality monitoring in upholding the University's academic excellence throughout partnerships.
- There are some professional organisations for quality monitoring, such as accreditation bodies for business courses, to support future partnerships.
- Early identification of risks in partnerships through dropping continuation and completion rates, revalidation process and financial monitoring.

23.30.5 Members noted that Community Music was the University's sole UK partnership with a very small number of students enrolled. Members confirmed that the two major international partnerships, which have larger student cohorts, have robust monitoring systems in place and are low risk.

23.31 ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE

23.31.1 The Interim DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) gave an overview on the importance of international students in the UK higher education sector.

23.31.2 The Interim DVC and the President of the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) invited Rajat Shah, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer; Kirsty Mcphee, International Student Adviser (ISA); and Nandini Aggarwal, UWSU Vice-President (Undergraduate Education) to join them as the facilitators of the discussion.

23.31.3 Members noted that the purpose of the workshop session was to gather feedback from members on how to better enhance international students' experience in the University and the Interim DVC will submit an action plan to Academic Council in due course that reflects discussions in this session.

23.31.4 Members were divided into groups for the discussion.

Study Experience

23.31.5 The UWSU President and the EDI Officer pointed out three unconscious biases on international students, namely financial bias, language bias, and grading and evaluation bias.

23.31.6 To address the biases, members suggested:

- Creating a College-based international student liaison role.
- Offering support through induction and related events.
- Incorporating English language proficiency into modules.
- Collaborating between academic colleagues and the UK Visas and Immigration team.
- Clarifying entrance criteria.
- Conducting surveys for data.
- Ensuring maximum clear communication both verbally and in written form.

A case study on deferral of study and student visa

23.31.7 The ISA presented a case study on the dilemma faced by an international student due to health reasons and the current student visa arrangements.

23.31.8 Acknowledging the importance of legal compliance, members proposed the following arrangements for academic colleagues to better support international students facing similar challenges:

- Consultation with the Student Advice team for expert visa guidance, recognising that Personal Tutors do not possess the necessary expertise.
- Adjustment of the structure and scheduling of teaching for flexibility (Teaching Committee recently approved dissertation hours in Semester 3 which will positively impact attendance).
- Good practice from a School in offering templates of relevant information to students and encouraging communication with tutors.

23.31.9 Membrs also had some discussion on the visa status of international students who fall under the UK equality law.

Belongingness

23.31.10 The UWSU Vice-President shared her experience of the challenges faced by international students, emphasising the importance of fostering a sense of belongingness at the University to help international students settling in a new country with a totally new education system.

23.31.11 The Interim DVC and the UWSU Vice-President highlighted the Westminster World Café events as part of the efforts of the University to cultivate a supportive environment for international students.

23.31.12 In addition to international students, the Interim DVC mentioned a celebration event for international colleagues to be held this summer.

23.31.13 The Interim DVC invited members to share ideas on enhancing international students' belongingness with the team on the papers provided.

23.31.14 The Chair thanked the team for their dedication in leading the workshop session.

23.31.15 Though some of the discussions may be beyond the remit of Academic Council, the Chair emphasised Council's commitment to enhancing international students' experience.

23.32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

23.32.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 6 December 2023 (Document AC 240221D) were an accurate record of the meeting.

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

23.33 MEETING EVALUATION

23.33.1 Members heard the following comments on the meeting:

- The meeting fostered inclusivity, allowing all participants to engage in open discussion.
- A good learning process as the discussions were very informative.
- In-person meeting and workshop style approach greatly facilitate effective discussion.

23.34 COURSE SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

23.34.1 **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for Bachelor of Science (Honours) Creative Computing (Document AC 240221Ei) to take effect from September 2025.

23.34.2 **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for Master of Arts Specialised Translation with Professional Experience and Master of Arts Translation and Interpreting with Professional Experience (Document AC 240221Eii) to take effect from 2024/25.

23.34.3 **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for Foundation Degree Creative Music Production and Business (Document AC 240221Eiii) to take effect from February 2024.

23.35 MRES CHANGES OF ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2024/25

23.35.1 **APPROVED** The changes to the Academic Regulations for Masters by Research (Document AC 240221F) to take effect from 2024/25.

23.36 ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

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

- Annual Academic Appeals Report 2022/23 (Document AC 240221Gi)
- Annual Student Disciplinary Report 2022/23 (Document AC 240221Gii)
- Annual Academic Integrity Report 2022/23 (Document AC 240221Giii)
- Annual External Examiners Report 2022/23 (Document AC 240221Giv)

23.37 ADMISSIONS POLICY

23.37.1 **APPROVED** The amended version of the University Admissions Policy (Document AC 240221H) to be implemented with immediate effect.

23.38 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.38.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

23.39 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Wednesday 27 March 2024

Wednesday 26 June 2024