

Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Academic Committee
Date:	Wednesday, 27 September 2023
Time:	2 PM – 4 PM
Venue:	Euston Road, Room 102

Name	Designation
John Fairhurst	Principal and Chief Executive Officer (Chair)
Joan O'Mahony	Deputy Principal
Slawomir Grzybek	Head of Quality
Sarah Bailey	Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS)
Sunmi Ayorinde	Deputy COO
Nnamdi Obiosa	Head of the School of Accounting and Finance
Marcus MA. Astley	Head of the School of Business
Tom Ironmonger*	Head of the School Foundation Year Studies
Ian Miller	Director of Bloomsbury Law Clinic and Head of School of Law
Maria Jackson	Head of Governance and Company Secretary
Dr Michelle Morgan	External Academic Advisor
Professor Gwyneth Pitt	External Academic Advisor
Carol Cook*	Non-Executive Director (Chair of the Board of Directors)
Ammar Syed**	Student Representative (Student President)
Abrahan Alejandro Burgos Ayala	Student Representative (MBA)
Marcia Barrant	Student Council Student Representation from LLB
Svetlana Zbirnea**	Student Council Student Representation from AFM Year 1 - GU
Abidur Rahman	Student Council Student Representation from AFM
Johana Petit-Frere	Quality Executive (Secretary)

In attendance

Name	Designation
Munizeh Zulfikar	Assessment Executive (For item 5.1)

No.	Item
1.0	Welcome and Apologies
*Sent apologies	
The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.	
2.0	Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:
2.1	<u>Minutes from the previous meeting: 26 July 2023</u>
The minutes of the July AC meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved by the Committee.	
2.2	<u>Matters Arising/Action Tracker</u>

	2.2.1 Minutes of July 2023
	<p>2.2.1.1 Item 4.1 refers.</p> <p>Update: See agenda item 3.1</p>
	<p>2.2.1.2 Item 5.1 refers.</p> <p>Completed: The CEO and Principal has relayed the committee's questions concerning the LLM Course Proposal to the Director of Bloomsbury Law Clinic and the Deputy Principal. Following this, the LLM Course Proposal was approved by Chair's action. See agenda item 3.2.</p>
	<p>2.2.1.3 Item 5.2/5.3.5.4 refers.</p> <p>Completed: The Head of Governance and Company Secretary has shared her comments/amendments, on the Feedback Policy and Guidelines, Management Observation of Teaching Scheme, and Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme which were considered by the Deputy Principal.</p>
3.0	Chair's Actions
	3.1 <u>FY Teach-Out Plan</u>
	<p>Further to the recommendations made in the May meeting concerning the Teach-Out Plan, the Deputy Principal consulted with M Morgan, an external Academic Advisor on our AC to agree on the finalised Teach-Out Plan.</p> <p>The finalised FY Teach-Out Plan, as approved by Chair's action, would be presented to the Academic Committee at its next meeting.</p>
	3.2 <u>LLM Course Outline Proposal</u>
	The Chair informed the Committee that he has taken Chair's action to approve the LLM Course Outline Proposal after the comments raised in the July 2023 meeting had been addressed.
	Academic Principal's Business
4.1	Principal's Report September 2023
	<p>The Chair noted that the Principal's Report September 2023 highlights key internal and external matters that would be of interest to staff, student representatives, external members of the Academic Committee and our non-executive directors. He flagged Section 4.1 of the report concerning the House of Lords Inquiry into the Office for Students and its recently published report (13 September 2023) "Must do better: the Office for Students and the looming crises facing higher education".</p> <p>He went on to inform the committee that as part of OfS Quality and Standards investigations, eight universities and colleges had been visited. Recently, the OfS released two reports detailing the findings from assessment visits to the University of Bolton and London South Bank University. Of these, Bolton had areas of concern found. Both reports can be found under agenda item 10.2.</p> <p>The OfS has announced the priority areas for its upcoming investigations, set to commence in November 2023.</p>
Part 1: Academic Regulatory, Policy and Procedural Documents for Approval, and Information	
5.0	<p>For approval by AC</p> <p><i>No further approvals required</i></p>

	5.1 Assessment Procedures – University of Northampton Validated Degrees 2023-24
<p>M Zulfikar presented the changes made to the Assessment Procedures – University of Northampton Validated Degrees 2023-24. She flagged that major changes were made to section 6.6 pertaining to Mitigating Circumstances to reflect the updated guidelines made by our awarding partner.</p> <p>Subject to minor amendments (not for discussion) the Academic Committee approved the Assessment Procedures – University of Northampton Validated Degrees 2023-24.</p>	
	5.2 Annual Monitoring Evaluation Procedures 2023-24
<p>The Head of Quality presented the revised Annual Monitoring Evaluation Procedures 2023/24 and flagged that textual and minor amendments that had been made to the document. He explained that the key change concerns our Welcome Back Survey that is expected to be replaced by the Transition Experience Survey where focus would be placed on the support we provide to students when they transition between the levels of study. He informed the committee that the Director of SEWS, Deputy COO, the Head of Quality and colleagues from Estates and Facilities would be meeting to review the survey questions.</p> <p>The Head of Quality flagged that he is still awaiting confirmation from Wrexham University (our awarding body) as to whether we would receive the external examiner reports to use in our evaluations. At the moment, the entry concerning external examiner reports is pertinent to UoN degrees only pending clarification from Wrexham.</p> <p>A query was raised concerning publication of external examiner reports, and it was noted that the reports will not be published on our website but would be made available for students via the student handbook or Canvas. The committee recommended that a clarification is provided in the document to reflect this change of practice.</p> <p>The Academic Committee approved the Annual Monitoring Evaluation Procedures 2023-24 subject to minor amendments.</p>	
	<p>For information only <i>AC approval is not required</i></p>
	6.1 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Update Reports
	6.1.1 EDI Update Report for September 2023 SMT
The EDI Update Report for September 2023 SMT was received and noted by the Academic Committee.	
	6.2 <u>National Student Survey Reports</u>
	6.2.1 NSS Results Summary Report 2023
<p>The Academic Committee noted that the NSS results indicate a strong overall positivity and satisfaction. Compared to all other London higher education providers (excluding specialist providers), Bloomsbury Institute was ranked as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1st for Law (2nd in England) – 2nd for Business (3rd in England) – 3rd for Accounting (14th in England) <p>The commercial value of the NSS results was discussed by the committee and it was recommended that they are used in our marketing campaigns as well as made prominent through Bloomsbury Institute's social media.</p>	

The Committee received and noted the NSS Results Summary Report 2023.	
	6.2.2 NSS Results 2023 from a Protected Characteristics Perspective
<p>The Academic Committee received and noted the NSS Results 2023 from a Protected Characteristics Perspective.</p> <p>It was reported that, overall, the results present no significant issues when examined from a Protected Characteristics Perspective. Notwithstanding, the student experience outcomes for our students with a disability, which represent 12.05% of the respondents, was brought to the committee's attention and a discussion ensued where it was considered that because of the smaller size of our Institute, drawing conclusions solely based on our own data could be challenging and it was suggested we should benchmark our results against the sector.</p>	
	6.3 <u>Corporate Risk Register</u>
<p>Document received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 6.3.1 <u>Corporate Risk Register – September 2023 Review</u> – 6.3.2 <u>Corporate Risk Register – September 2023 Review Commentary</u> <p>The Chair noted the importance of the Corporate Risk Register in pinpointing emerging risks and assessing both their probability and the subsequent actions taken against them.</p> <p>It was further explained that the Risk Management Working Group (RMWG) will be launching local Divisional/Departmental risk registers that are expected to capture significant local risks that do not warrant inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register. A mechanism would be in place allowing local risks to be escalated to an institutional level for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register, where appropriate. Similarly, risks from the Corporate Risk Register might be de-escalated to local registers.</p> <p>The Chair presented the revised Risk Register and noted the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Risk 4, the SMT has recommended to the Board de-escalation of Risk 4 to the local Academic register. – Two new risks have been introduced: Risk 12, concerning Financial Viability, and Risk 13, focusing on Financial Sustainability. <p>The Academic Committee received and noted the Corporate Risk Register.</p>	
	6.4 <u>External Examiner Reports</u>
	6.4.1 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (J Vaughan) BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
The Committee received and noted the External Examiner Report 2022/23 (J Vaughan) BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.	
	6.4.2 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (A Ranasinghe) BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
The Committee received and noted the Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (A Ranasinghe) BSc BM and Course Leaders's Response to External Examiner Report.	
	6.4.3 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (X Chen) BSc AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.

The Committee received and noted the Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (X Chen) BSc AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.	
	6.4.4 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (R Lang) BSc LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
The Committee received and noted the Annual External Examiner Report (R Lang) BSc LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.	
	6.4.5 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (M Alramahi) BSc LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
The Committee received and noted the Annual Examiner Report 2022/23 (M Alramahi) BSc LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.	
	6.4.6 Annual External Examiner Report 2022/23 (S Shah) BA AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
The Committee received and noted the Annual Examiner Report 2022/23 (S Shah) BA AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report.	
The Committee noted that overall, the reports were positive. Following the approval by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee as presented to the Academic Committee, our responses to external examiner reports would be forwarded to the University of Northampton (UoN) for consideration.	
Part 2: Standing Items	
7.0	KPIs 2022-23:
7.1	<u>7.1 KPIs 2022-2023 – September 2023 Update</u>
The Deputy Principal informed the committee that from 1 September 2023 we have moved to a new form of KPI reporting.	
The Deputy Principal addressed the results for the June 2022 intakes on our UG and FY programmes, explaining that we were very quick to identify performance issues, and identify and implement actions. She added that we have already begun to see the positive impact of some of our actions for subsequent intakes.	
The Chair provided further context to the change in approach, explaining that the 2022-23 KPIs had been developed and agreed in anticipation of OfS continuation rate and completion rate metrics (which had yet to be published at the time). However, following publication of the OfS approach to continuation rate and completion rate metrics, this approach was not appropriate and has therefore been refined in the new KPIs from September 2023.	
	<u>7.2 KPIs 2023-2024 – From 1 September 2023 – September Review</u>
The Deputy Principal explained that data provided for our June 2022 intake of postgraduate students shows a completion rate of 90.2% compared with a target of 80%. She took the opportunity to thank the BM team for their hard work over the year to deliver such positive results.	
	<u>7.3 KPIs 2023-2024 – From 1 September 2023 - Summarised</u>
The Committee received and noted the KPIs 2023-2024 – From 1 September 2023 Summarised.	
8.0	Admissions and Recruitment

	8.1 <u>Student Recruitment – September 2023</u>
<p><u>Domestic</u></p> <p>The Chair updated the committee on the implementation of the FY course closure and the change to undergraduate recruitment that has been now limited to October intake only. He informed the committee that in line with this change, the domestic recruitment target has been revised and set at 50.</p> <p>The Chair further elaborated on the Institute's plan to bolster relationships with FE colleges. The intention is to provide academic support and to offer to deliver a Transition to Higher Education course. A partnership has been established with the Capital City College Group (CCCG), London's largest FE college group.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the decision to close the FY does not mean abandoning our commitment to widening access to higher education and that this new partnership, and others in the pipeline, evidence this.</p> <p><u>International</u></p> <p>The Committee noted that we are nearing our intake target of 250 students. The two new MScs in Accounting and Finance, and Finance and Wealth Management, will be delivered for the first time in October 2023. Additionally, Top-up undergraduate degrees and (subject to final approval) the LLM English Legal Practice, are set to be launched in February 2024.</p>	
9.0	Internal Student Complaints
<p>It was reported that no internal student complaints were received since the last report in July 2023. During the academic year 2022-23, a total of four complaints were received, all of which have been resolved. Out of these, one was escalated to formal resolution. As of now, no complaints from the Institute have been escalated for consideration by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.</p>	
10.0	OfS Updates
	10.1 <u>APP Updates</u>
<p>There were no updates.</p>	
	10.2 <u>Quality assessment report of the business and management courses</u>
<p>Document received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 10.2.1 <u>Quality assessment report: BA Business and Management course at London South Bank University</u> – 10.2.2 <u>Quality assessment report: BSc/BA Business and Management courses at the University of Bolton.</u> <p>The Committee noted the reports published by the OfS following their investigation of business and management courses. The committee discussed the reports and it was agreed that the findings were useful for evaluating our own practices.</p>	
11.0	Wrexham University
<p>The Committee noted that the LLM English Legal Practice Course Outline Proposal has been submitted to Wrexham. We are anticipating it will be approved at the October meeting of the Academic Partnership Committee and will then progress to a validation panel.</p>	
12.0	TDAP

We are still awaiting the final decision with regards to our TDAP application.	
13.0	Confirmed minutes from other forums or committees for information, consideration, or action.
	13.1 <u>Board of Directors – July 2023</u>
There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
	13.2 <u>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 19 July 2023</u>
There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
	13.3 <u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee – 26 April 2023</u>
There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
14.0	Actions referred from other forums/committees where the minutes are unconfirmed/not yet available.
	14.1 <u>Board of Directors – 25 September 2023</u>
There were no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
	14.2 <u>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 20 September 2023</u>
There were no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
	14.3 <u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee – 31 August 2023</u>
There were no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
Part 3: Any Other Business and Date/Time of Next Meeting	
15.0	Any Other Business
<u>Unitu Survey</u> A Student Representative queried whether surveys distributed to students could be structured in a way that the final question would be an open-ended one and compulsory for completion to help gather valuable feedback on areas students identify for improvement. It was pointed out that where such open-ended questions were previously made compulsory, it led to a significant drop in response rates. The Head of Quality acknowledged the merit in the student representative's suggestion, but stated we would need to ensure it doesn't deter completion rates. The Head of Quality further explained that a new platform for student feedback named "Unitu" would be available to all students enrolled on Wrexham University programmes. This platform would provide students a possibility to give feedback on a broader range of topics, not strictly limited to the student experience or teaching and learning matters. It was noted that the intention is for staff to monitor this platform, enabling quicker responses and actions based on the feedback.	
<u>TEF Updates</u> The Committee noted that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a nationwide initiative led by the Office for Students (OfS). Its primary objective is to motivate higher education institutions to enhance and excel in key student-centric areas: teaching, learning, and ensuring positive outcomes from their academic	

journey. The ratings for providers participating in the TEF 2023 would be released on Thursday 28 September 2023.

The TEF evaluates and ranks universities and colleges based on their performance above the basic standards and quality benchmarks. Institutions receive an overall rating complemented by two foundational ratings: one concerning the student experience and the other focused on student outcomes. The TEF classifies institutions into three distinct rating categories, which are:

- Gold: The student experience and student outcomes are typically outstanding.
- Silver: The student experience and student outcomes are typically very high quality.
- Bronze: The student experience and student outcomes are typically high quality and have some very high-quality features.

The Committee members were encouraged to review the TEF 2023 rating once it is made public.

Employability

The Committee noted the proactive efforts of a Student Representative in assisting international students with CV building. With the support of the Student Guild Executive Officer Engagement and Events, they've been successful in facilitating job searches for students. The Student Representative expressed an interest in scaling up these efforts and potentially integrating them as an institutional project/activities.

The Committee expressed their appreciation for the proposal put forth by the student, and relevant members would engage with him for further considerations on the matter.

Birkbeck

The committee noted that Birkbeck College has appointed its inaugural female chancellor, marking a momentous occasion in the College's history.

16.0	Date, Time, and Venue of Next Meeting: 24 November 2023 (Joint meeting of the Board of Directors and the Academic Committee), TBC.
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