BLOOMSBURY
INSTITUTE
LONDON

Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Academic Committee
Date:	26 July 2024
Time:	2PM – 4PM
Venue:	Euston Road, Room EUS302

Name	Designation
John Fairhurst*	Principal and Chief Executive Officer (Chair)
Sunmi Ayorinde	Deputy Chief Operating Officer (Deputy Chair)
Joan O'Mahony	Deputy Principal
Slawomir Grzybek	Head of Quality (acting Secretary)
Sarah Bailey*	Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS)
Nnamdi Obiosa	Head of the School of Accounting and Finance
Marcus MA. Astley	Head of the School of Business
Maria Jackson	Head of Governance and Company Secretary
Donna Leonard	Head of Learning and Enhancement
Dr Michelle Morgan	External Academic Advisor
Professor Gwyneth Pitt	External Academic Advisor
Carol Cook**	Non-Executive Director (Chair of the Board of Directors)
Sayed Mustafa Sadat*	Student Representative (Student President)
Marcia Barrant**	Student Council Student Representation from LLB Year 3- UoN
Svetlana Zbirnea*	Student Council Student Representation from AFM Year 1 - WU
Andrea David	Student Council Student Representation from LLB Year 2 - WU
Jason White**	Student Council Student Representation from LLB Year 1 - WU
Nahid Tonya Niazi	Student Council Student Representation from LLB Year 1 - WU
Johana Petit-Frere*	Quality Executive (Secretary)

No.	Item
1.0	**Welcome**
	The Deputy Chair welcomed everyone to the Academic Committee meeting.
	Apologies
	*Denotes apologies **Did not attend, not having sent apologies The Committee received apologies from J Fairhurst, S Bailey, Student President, S Zbirnea and J Petit-Frere.
	Declarations of Interest
	There were no declarations of interest.
2.0	**Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:**
	2.1 <u>Minutes from the previous meeting:</u> 10 June 2024

The Committee requested the following amendment: To amend item 8.1 on KPIs. To amend the entry on KPI 15 which should be KPI 14 on Target undergraduate progression rate. The minutes of the June AC meeting were **approved** by the Committee subject to the above amendment.	

	2.2 <u>Matters Arising/Action Tracker:</u>
	2.2.1 Minutes of June 2024

2.2.1.1 Item 7.1 refers

Completed: The Deputy Principal prepared a summary report on UoN Teach-out programmes and included student numbers and expected completion dates. See item 6.3.

2.2.1.2 Item 8.1 refers

Completed: The External Academic Advisor shared on 28 June 2024 relevant slides from the European First Year Experience conference with the Head of Governance and Company Secretary.

3.0	**Chair's Actions**

None were taken.

4.0	**Academic Principal's Business**
	4.1 <u>Principal's Report July 2024</u>

The Committee noted and received the Principal's Report July 2024 which provided updates on internal and external factors that could have a positive or negative impact on the Institute. It was further noted that the OfS had published reports on 12 providers. The OfS decided to pause the student complaint scheme linked to freedom of speech and had published their assessment report on Dyson's degree-awarding powers.

Part 1: Academic Regulatory, Policy and Procedural Documents for Approval, and Information

5.0	**For approval by AC** *No further approvals required*
	5.1 <u>Curriculum Modification Procedures 2024-25</u>

The Head of Quality presented the revised Curriculum Modification Procedures for 2024-25 and outlined the changes, of which most were factual and the most notable change, was that we no longer modify curriculum for Northampton degrees. The procedures are only applicable to Wrexham University courses.

The Committee **approved** the Curriculum Modification Procedures 2024-25 subject to textual amendments (not for discussion).

	5.2 <u>Research Ethics Code of Practice</u>

The Deputy Principal presented the revised Research Ethics Code of Practice 2024-25, highlighting minor and textual amendments to the document, including the Flow Chart that has been replaced with 'Summary Steps'. Also, the entry on section 4.2.3 the phrase 'may be asked by the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee' has been amended to 'may be asked by the Research Ethics Committee'.

The Committee **approved** the Research Ethics Code of Practice subject to textual amendments (not for discussion).

	5.3 <u>Research Strategy 2023-26</u>

The Deputy Principal presented the revised Research Strategy 2023-26, highlighting minor and textual amendments to the document.

The Committee **approved** the Research Strategy 2023-26 subject to minor amendments (not for discussion).

	5.4 <u>Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme 2024-25</u>

The Deputy Principal presented the revised Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme for 2024-25, noting minor updates, including the incorporation of the new Dimensions of the UK Professional Standard Framework (UKPSF) as outlined in the 2023 publication.

A comment was raised regarding the scope of the scheme, highlighting that the term "Peer Observation of Teaching" may overly narrow the focus of academic responsibilities. It was suggested that institutions across the sector are critically evaluating such schemes to encompass a broader range of teaching-related activities, such as assessment, curriculum design, and material preparation. The current document does not fully address these aspects, and it was proposed that this should be reconsidered in future revisions to ensure alignment with sector-wide practices.

A discussion followed, during which it was agreed that this broader perspective would be considered in the next review of the document. However, for the time being, the document will remain unchanged.

Additionally, a query was raised about Section 3, "Pairing Up," specifically whether the same pairing system applies to Heads of School and Course Leaders. It was clarified that the system is flexible, allowing any member of staff to observe or be observed by anyone, regardless of their position.

An amendment was requested to bullet point 3 in Section 1 – Introduction. The Head of the School of Business will send the proposed amendments to the Deputy Principal for inclusion.

The Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme was **approved** by the Committee subject to minor and textual amendments.

	5.5 <u>Managed Observation of Teaching Scheme 2024-25</u>

The Deputy Principal presented the revised Managed Observation of Teaching Scheme 2024-25 and outlined the changes.

There were no queries or comments made to the changes. The Committee **approved** the Managed Observation of Teaching Scheme 2024-25 subject to minor amendments (not for discussion).

	5.6 <u>Feedback Policy and Guidelines 2024-25</u>

The Deputy Principal presented the revised Feedback Policy and Guidelines for 2024-25, highlighting changes, including the addition of the phrase "depending on Awarding Body policy" to Section 15.

A comment was raised regarding Section 15, which covers delayed feedback, specifically the requirement for academic tutors to report delays to the Course Leader. Concerns were expressed that the current wording might imply that tutors would report delays only after posting a notice on Canvas for students. It was suggested that tutors should seek approval or notify the Course Leader before this point and that the report should go to the Registry, whether related to assessment or quality.

It was clarified during the discussion that this does not need to be reflected in the policy, as Course Leaders are already involved in the process, including moderation and assessment progress, as part of their standard practice. This involvement is also embedded in the assessment process.

The Committee **approved** the Managed Observation of Teaching Scheme 2024-25 subject to minor amendments (not for discussion).

	5.7 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures 2024-25

The Deputy COO presented the revised Student Complaints Policy and Procedures for 2024-25, noting that the changes were mainly factual. It was highlighted that the document would need further review once the OfS publishes guidance on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, particularly concerning anonymous complaints. Additionally, some updates related to Freedom of Speech were also anticipated.

A comment was raised regarding Section 11 on confidentiality. It was suggested that the policy should include a commitment to check with the complainant before sharing any information with third parties, ensuring their consent. It was further emphasised that this approach aligns with GDPR requirements, which mandate obtaining permission before sharing any information. However, the Committee advised that it would not be possible to do so as if a matter is sufficiently serious, the Institute would need to act without the consent of the student.

The Committee **approved** the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures 2024-25 subject to minor amendments.

	5.8 Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures 2024-25

The Deputy COO presented the revised Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures for 2024-25, noting that most of the changes were factual updates throughout the document.

During the discussion, a comment was raised regarding Appendix 1, specifically about the ability to appeal the Panel's decision. A query was made as to whether the Deputy COO's decision should also be subject to appeal. The Committee advised that it should not be.

No further queries or comments were raised. The Committee **approved** the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure 2024-25 subject to minor amendments (not for discussion).

6.0	**For Consideration**
	6.1 Academic Performance

The Deputy Principal informed the Committee that the Academic Performance reporting would take a new formatting style as B3 data and reasons for discontinuation are now reported through the Risk Management Working Group. The Committee noted that this would be the final Academic Performance report in this format.

Updates have been made to the data in sections 2 and 3. Our June 23 intake has seen the best performance to date. The total percentage of students receiving an Award (Masters, PG Cert or Diploma) rose to 100%. The number of students receiving a Masters rose to 96.5%. The percentage of failures dropped to zero. The Committee noted this has been an impressive increase.

The key actions to be continued to improve performance were highlighted, including:

- Monitoring the number of students passing all modules or trailing one.

A query was raised about the future format of such reports. It was noted that this is still under review and will depend on the availability of data, the approval of new reporting mechanisms, and other related factors.

G Pitt said that the continuation rates were of enormous concern from an OfS perspective. She commented in particular on the Accelerated degrees which were recording higher rates of attrition than the standard degrees. Whilst acknowledging actions taken (including the decision not to offer the Accelerated degrees to international students), she asked whether consideration had been given to discontinuing accelerated

degrees for the domestic market as well. The Deputy Chair mentioned that she had compiled a report analysing student performance on the accelerated degrees, including the impact of domicile on academic outcomes, and tracking student progress and continuation on a term-by-term basis for each academic year. This report was presented to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), focusing particularly on international students but with information on the domestic students included, for a decision to be made about whether it was viable to continue with the programme. She asked the Deputy Principal what the outcome of discussions had been at SLT. The Deputy Principal said she was unable to provide an update on this at this stage.

During the discussion, a comment was made regarding the earlier conversation about financial reasons being a significant factor in student non-progression and non-continuation. Given the demographic profile of our cohort, this is considered a high-risk area. The discussion also touched on the implications for recruitment processes and whether a formal concept of suspension—where students could take a year off for financial reasons—could positively impact retention figures. It was noted that while the institution does allow for a suspension of studies, its application to international students is not possible. It was also noted that there is currently no data on whether financial difficulties are a primary reason for our students opting to suspend their studies.

	6.2 Academic Assurance Report
	The Deputy Principal informed the Committee of the updates made to the following sections: 1 on Academic Performance, 1.3 on the Office for Students' Condition B3, 3.4 on the NSS 2024 results, 4 on Pre-module Board meetings, and 6 on Annual Programme Monitoring, including 6.1.3 on the Transition Experience Survey.

The Committee praised the NSS 2024 results and congratulated everyone for their hard work. It was noted that the NSS results would contribute to the student experience data for the TEF.

Additionally, it was further noted that the second iteration of the Transition Experience Survey was deployed to continuing students returning in February 2024 and was presented at the June QAEC meeting.

	6.3 UoN Student Numbers and Mapping

The Deputy Principal presented the UoN Student Numbers and Mapping Report, highlighting that Northampton University had introduced a Covid-19 rule allowing students to mix and match modules. This policy complicates the mapping of credits to Wrexham and excludes some students from transferring.

Discussions were held last year between Heads of School and students identified by Academic Administration as eligible for transfer. Although these students initially expressed interest, they ultimately chose not to transfer. An update on new student transfers to Wrexham will be provided in a verbal report to the Board. It was noted that students at Level 6 cannot transfer.

Current discussions are ongoing with remaining students about potential transfers. The transfer process is complex due to variations in how Student Finance calculates fees for different students. The Deputy Principal has discussed with Northampton adjustments to lecture, workshop, and seminar lengths to enhance the student experience, including condensing hours where appropriate to improve learning outcomes.

7.0	For information
	7.1 Overview Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report
The Committee received and noted the Overview Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report.	
	7.2 Overview Annual Course Evaluation Report
The Committee received and noted the Overview Annual Course Evaluation Report.	

7.3 National Student Survey

Details on the National Student Survey were provided in the Academic Assurance Report (item 6.2). The NSS 2024 results were published on 10 July. Year-on-year Bloomsbury Institute's performance surpasses the sector average, and this year is no different, with the Institute scoring higher than the sector in 6 themes and 24 questions.

A further analysis report would be created to compare last year's results and 2024 results and would be presented at the next Academic Committee meeting.

Part 2: Standing Items

8.0	KPIs 2023-24
	8.1 KPIs July 2024

There were no Academic KPIs due for review.

9.0	Equality Diversity and Inclusion
	9.1 EDI Update Report: July 2024

The Committee reviewed the EDI Update Report for July 2024, presented by the Head of Governance and Company Secretary, who highlighted the following key points:

- Higher Education providers are encouraged to engage with the recently published Black Mental Health Manifesto due to the heightened mental health challenges faced by Black students. The report also includes initiatives for tailoring mentoring schemes to better support Black students.

- Information on workplace stress was provided, focusing on its causes and the employer's responsibility to conduct Stress Risk Assessments.

- Recommendations from the University of Warwick on fostering a sense of belonging were shared.

Regarding the concept of belonging, M Morgan highlighted a significant finding from BCU, noting that students' grades improved not just from feeling a sense of belonging but when they felt they mattered. She emphasised the importance of exploring data beyond the general concept of belonging and indicated that she would send further slides on this topic to the Committee.

10.0	Student Complaints

There were no student complaints.

11.0	OfS Updates
	11.1 APP Updates

The Committee noted that the APP data was published on 25 July. The data is currently under review, and any identified errors will be flagged with the OfS. It was highlighted that there have been issues with the quality of the data, primarily due to the small number of students who fall within the APP categories—these are older, UK-domiciled students. It was also emphasised that students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have equal opportunities to succeed, with those from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas being less likely to perform well. The gap in outcomes between White and Black students across the sector remains a significant issue.

The Deputy Principal said we would continue to work on interventions, particularly in financial support. The Travel Bursary remains in place, and an external evaluation has been conducted to assess its impact. Future financial strategies are under consideration. The Deputy Principal will organise a focus group with students during the week commencing 29 July and will coordinate this effort with the Guild Manager.

Work on the Peer Mentoring program is ongoing, with several reviews conducted throughout the year. SEER has collaborated with SEWS to enhance evaluation strategies. Positive results continue to be observed in the Institute's Disability and Wellbeing initiatives.

Th committee was also informed that a "Let's Grow" review was presented to SMT, mapping activities and their impact against various elements of the scheme. SEER has advised conducting evaluations at a general level. The Committee continues to explore Work and Participation themes within the Research Forum.

12.0	Wrexham University

The Committee noted that visits to Wrexham University had taken place following the creation of the two working groups discussed in the previous meeting: the Operational Working Group and the Strategic Working Group.

The Operational Working Group will meet monthly to address and resolve any issues that arise. This group serves as a platform for formally raising and addressing issues. If matters cannot be resolved at the operational level, they will be escalated to the Strategic Working Group, which will meet every three months.

The Strategic Working Group held its first meeting, focusing on building and strengthening connections between Wrexham University and Bloomsbury Institute.

13.0	TDAP

There were no updates on TDAP.

14.0	Confirmed minutes from other forums or committees for information, consideration, or action.
	14.1 Board of Directors – 18 March 2024

There have been no matters referred to Academic Committee to consider.

	14.2 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 22 May 2024

The meeting was cancelled.

	14.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 19 June 2024

There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.

	14.4 Access and Participation Committee – 27 February 2024

There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.

15.0	Actions referred from other forums/committees where the minutes are unconfirmed/not yet available.
	15.1 Board of Directors – 3 June 2024

There were no matters referred to Academic Committee to consider.

	15.2 <u>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 17 June 2024</u>
There were no matters referred to Academic Committee to consider.	
	15.3 <u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee – 29 May 2024</u>
There were no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
	15.4 <u>Access and Participation Committee – 6 June 2024</u>
There were no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.	
Part 3: Any Other Business and Date/Time of Next Meeting	
16.0	**Any Other Business**
There were matters arising that were discussed under AOB once the student left. (Minutes for restricted circulation)	
17.0	**Date, Time, and Venue of Next Meeting:** 25 September 2024, TBC.