

Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Academic Committee
Date:	25 September 2024
Time:	2PM – 4PM
Venue:	Malet Building, Torrington Square, Bloomsbury London, WC1E 7HX (ROOM - Malet G15).

Name	Designation
John Fairhurst*	Principal and Chief Executive Officer (Chair)
Sunmi Ayorinde*	Deputy Chief Operating Officer (Deputy Chair)
Joan O'Mahony	Deputy Principal (acting Chair)
Slawomir Grzybek	Head of Quality
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 Principal welcomed everyone to the Academic Committee meeting in particular the Student Representatives and the External Academic Advisors.
	Apologies
	*Denotes apologies **Did not attend, not having sent apologies The Committee received apologies from J Fairhurst, S Ayorinde, S Bailey, D Leonard, S Zbirnea and T Niazi.
	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> : 26 July 2024

The Committee requested the following amendments:

To remove the entry in section 6.3 in the final paragraph.

The minutes of the July AC meeting were **approved** by the Committee subject to the above amendments.

2.2 Matters Arising/Action Tracker:

The were no outstanding actions.

3.0 **Chair's Actions**

None were taken.

4.0 **Academic Principal's Business**

4.1 Principal's Report September 2024

The Committee received and noted the Principal's Report for September 2024. The Office for Students (OfS) published several Condition B3 Assessment Reports, including one for the University of Northampton. The OfS Assessment team concluded that the university has not consistently ensured a high-quality academic experience for students enrolled in its computing courses.

Additionally, since reporting that the OfS has initiated an investigation into Applied Business Academy to evaluate its compliance with the ongoing conditions of registration, the Academy has now closed its higher education courses and is transferring its students to other providers. The investigation had been designed to assess whether the Academy had met the OfS's requirements regarding information provision and management and governance.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has released resources on approaches to risk-based approaches to monitoring, review, and evaluation, which may be beneficial for future reference.

An Operational Working Group and separate Strategic Working Group comprising representatives from Bloomsbury Institute and Wrexham University have been established, and the meetings have been convened. The purpose of these two Working Groups is to have a forum where any issues can be raised and actions agreed to resolve such issues. Members expressed appreciation for having a space to discuss matters and track actions, noting that the meetings have been productive so far.

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

5.0 **For approval by AC**

No further approvals required

5.1 KPIs From September 2024

The Chair presented the new KPIs format for implementation from September 2024, explaining that only the Academic KPIs would require recommended approval at this meeting before being submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval on September 30, 2024.

The Chair invited attendees to review the proposed Academic KPIs. It was noted that these KPIs are aligned with the conditions of registration set by the OfS and correspond with the Corporate Risk Register, identifying associated risks and actions for mitigation. The starting point for risk assessment is our Strategic Framework, focusing on our ability to deliver on our strategic objectives.

There were no comments or queries raised by the committee.

The committee **recommended the approval** of the Academic KPIs to the Board of Directors.

6.0	For Consideration
	6.1 <u>Academic Assurance Report</u>
	<p>The Deputy Principal informed the Committee that the Academic Performance Report (APR) has been discontinued, with the last report submitted to the July 2024 Academic Committee meeting. The APR, which focused on Condition B3, will now be reported through the Risk Management Working Group. However, she welcomed any requests for future performance reporting areas that the Committee might have.</p> <p>The Committee noted updates to Section 3.2 of the Academic Assurance Report regarding the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Sections 6.1 and 6.2, related to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate External Examiner Reports, were received by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), and the responses were approved.</p> <p>The Head of Quality informed the committee that the feedback received for Wrexham and Northampton University courses was very positive, expressing his satisfaction. He emphasised the importance of these reports, and explained that they reflect our commitment to quality and standards across our provision. He congratulated the Academic team and thanked the Course Leaders for their hard work.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal provided further updates on Sections 8 and 8.1, mentioning that in August 2024, Deputy COO S Ayorinde was awarded Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. She also reported that peer observations for the year have been completed, and a summary report will be circulated at the October Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee meeting. Section 11 and updated policies were noted.</p> <p>An External Academic Advisor queried Section 2.2, which addressed the underperformance of the June 2022 and October 2022 UG intakes but had only a brief note that issues with student engagement were identified, and swift actions were taken to address the underlying factors. The Chair clarified that the only sections updated for this meeting are those noted in the Cover Sheet which does not include 2.2 as there is currently no update due until after the Award Board. The entry reflects information presented in the previous meeting which is accompanied by Academic Performance Reports which provide more detail.</p>
7.0	For information
	7.1 <u>NSS 2024 Summary Report</u>
	<p>The Committee received and noted the NSS 2024 Summary Report. It was noted that the NSS results reflect responses from our University of Northampton cohort. The overall response rate for this year's NSS was 8% lower than the sector average, however, this can be linked to the decreasing number of eligible students.</p> <p>The Institute performed well in several areas. Excluding FE colleges and specialist providers, we scored 2nd for Business course, 3rd in Teaching, 2nd in Learning Opportunities, 2nd in Assessment and Feedback, etc. However, the scores in Learning Resources and Freedom of Expression were noted to be lower.</p> <p>It was flagged that, while the results are good compared to the sector, continued monitoring was recommended to ascertain ensure our performance remains high. Following a discussion, it was noted that our internal survey results had high levels of correlation with the NSS results in the past, and if the trend continues, we have high hopes for maintaining a strong performance next year.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the exclusion of Law and Accounting specific results from the report. It was clarified that although the results were positive, due to the small sample size, NSS does not show Law and Accounting separately to preserve anonymity.</p>

	7.2 <u>External Examiner Reports</u>
	7.2.1 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (John Vaughan) UoN BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
<p>The Chair noted that the reports had been considered by the QAEC and that the response was approved before being returned to our awarding partner. She invited the Heads of Schools to provide their comments.</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the Annual External Examiner Report for 2023-24 from John Vaughan for the WU BSc BM program, along with the Course Leader's Response to the External Examiner Report. The Head of School for Business commented that both reports (items 7.2.1 and 7.2.2) were very positive. He emphasised that the reports reflect a consistent commitment to consistency in assessment and feedback provided to students, as well as the support offered. He noted that the Course Leader's A Jammeh efforts are clearly evidenced by the positive feedback from the External Examiner.</p>	
	7.2.2 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Ralitsa Arnaudova) WU BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
<p>The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Ralitsa Arnaudova) WU BSc BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee.</p> <p>See above 7.2.1 for update.</p>	
	7.2.3 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (David Bolton) WU MBA BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
<p>The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (David Bolton) WU MBA BM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee. The Head of School for Business mentioned that the External Examiner congratulated the team on the academic excellence of the programme in terms of teaching, curriculum, interactive lectures and practical workshops. The External Examiner was pleased with the outcomes.</p>	
	7.2.4 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Xihui Chen) UoN BA AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report
<p>The Committee received and noted the Annual External Examiner Report for 2023-24 from Xihui Chen for the UoN BA AFM program, along with the Course Leader's Response to the External Examiner Report. The Head of School of Accounting expressed satisfaction with the feedback from the External Examiner and highlighted the ongoing efforts of the team to improve the system. He shared a brief anecdote about a process implemented to adapt an assessment for a student's specific needs.</p> <p>It was noted that it is beneficial for members of the Academic Committee to hear about the background efforts of the academic staff, which helps reassure students. The Chair asked the student representative for their thoughts on the usefulness of this information.</p> <p>The student representative responded that the insights are indeed useful. On a personal level, she feels confident that the course delivery is of the highest quality and expressed her satisfaction with what is being taught in the classroom and her overall experience.</p> <p>A comment was raised regarding how the Institute is sharing its achievements and statistics with prospective applicants. It was mentioned that career fairs are organised, and results are showcased on postcards and the website, along with other branding content at Bedford Square. Questions arose about increasing brand visibility. It was noted that a newly appointed Marketing Manager is exploring various strategies for enhancement.</p>	

An External Examiner suggested considering the student ID card as a medium for displaying statistics, as it is something students regularly use. This concern aligns with a risk identified by the Brand and Community Engagement Working Group regarding the branding of "who is Bloomsbury," which they will address to mitigate associated risks.

7.2.5 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Syed Shah) UoN BSc AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report

The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Syed Shah) UoN BSc AFM and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee.

7.2.6 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Mohammad Alramahi) UoN LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report

The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Mohammad Alramahi) UoN LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee.

The Head of School for Law welcomed the reports and was pleased with the insight provided by our External Examiners noting that overall the reports were positive.

7.2.7 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Richard Lang) UoN LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report

The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Richard Lang) UoN LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee.

7.2.8 Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Chris Broad) WU LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report

The Annual External Examiner Report 2023-24 (Chris Broad) WU LLB and Course Leader's Response to External Examiner Report were received and noted by the Committee.

The Head of School for Law reported that the External Examiner's report was positive, expressing satisfaction with the collaborative relationship with Wrexham. She noted that this was the first External Examiner report received for the program. While the feedback was encouraging, she mentioned that the recommendations made by the External Examiner were being carefully considered for further development of our LLB course with Wrexham.

7.4 Bloomsbury Institute Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

The Chair reported that Bloomsbury Institute's Access and Participation Plan for 2025-26 to 2028-29 was shared with the Academic Committee for information. On approval by the Board of Directors, the Access and Participation Plan will be submitted to the OfS on October 1. The primary focus of the Plan is to reduce non-continuation rates and improve student attainment and to eliminate inequalities in outcomes for some student groups.

The SMT recommended the approval of the Plan to the Board of Directors, subject to minor amendments. These amendments will be incorporated before the final version is submitted to the Board for approval on Monday, September 30. Updates on the Plan's implementation will be presented to the Academic Committee.

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of the Plan's content, including the intervention strategies designed to meet key objectives and targets. She expressed her gratitude to the Student President for his involvement and support in the development of the Plan. Additionally, she mentioned that student

representatives had collaborated in delivering focus groups within the classrooms and that discussions were representative of our provision, thanking the Head of School for Law for her assistance in facilitating those sessions in collaboration with the Student Guild.

The Student President expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to contribute to the Plan, noting that it was a valuable learning experience for him.

7.5 Bloomsbury Law Clinic

The Deputy Principal provided an update on the Bloomsbury Law Clinic on behalf of the Academic Principal and CEO, who was unable to attend the meeting. She informed the committee that the re-launch of the Law Clinic is scheduled for November 2024, initially focusing on final-year Law students to build capacity with external firms and solicitors, before eventually opening it to all students.

The Law Clinic will primarily focus on housing support, as it did following its initial launch. There has been interest from a firm wishing to collaborate with the Clinic. The Head of School for Law will meet with the local court to explore volunteer opportunities for students, with the hope that lower-year students can gain valuable experience.

A question was raised regarding the use of the Law Clinic minibus. It was clarified that the minibus will serve as an advisory clinic, extending beyond just Law Clinic activities. Further investigations will be conducted to determine additional ways to utilise the minibus effectively.

Part 2: Standing Items

8.0 KPIs 2023-24

8.1 KPIs with effect from 1 September 2023 - September 2024 Update

The Head of Quality presented the September KPI updates on the behalf of the Deputy COO who could not attend the meeting.

KPI No 10a -10b – The AC noted the updated continuation rate target for both Standard UG Course and FY UG and FY Accelerated. He explained that the performance and the associated risk would be monitored through the Risk Management Working Group (RMWG) going forward.

KPI No 11 – The AC noted that the PG continuation rate is above target.

KPI No 12a - 12b – The AC noted the update on the UG and FY Courses and FY Accelerated completion rate, noting that 2021-22 and 2022-23 completion rate data will change with the update of the OfS Individualised files.

KPI No 15 – The SMT noted that the UG Progression rate is currently below target. **[Redacted.]** This KPI is monitored by the Graduate Opportunities Working Group.

KPI No 16 – The AC noted that no student complaints were submitted to the OIA since April 2024.

KPI No 17 – The AC noted that no academic appeals were submitted since April 2024.

KPI No 18 – The AC noted the NSS satisfaction ratings.

9.0 Equality Diversity and Inclusion

9.1 EDI Update Report: September 2024

The Head of Governance and Company Secretary flagged the following from her EDI Update Report:

- The OfS have now published their guidance on the new Condition E6 around harassment and sexual misconduct. With the exception of a 1 September 2024 deadline for banning Non-Disclosure Agreements, the deadline for compliance is by 1 August 2025. We already have policies in place around harassment and sexual misconduct, but there will be some new requirements that we will need to meet including annual compulsory training on harassment and sexual misconduct for students and staff. We are also likely to need an online report and support mechanism for students in the context of any incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published an advice note following the legal case of the University of Bristol vs Abrahart.
- Stress levels amongst students with no sense of belonging are reported to be higher than amongst those with an established sense of belonging.
- Universities UK (UUK) has published guidance for universities on reducing harm by tackling the supply and demand for drugs amongst students and also improving support to students.

The September EDI Update Report was received and noted by the committee.

10.0	Student Complaints
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There were no student complaints received since the last reporting date.

11.0	OfS Updates
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The OfS updates were provided in item 9.1.

12.0	Wrexham University
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The Committee noted that the two working groups (the Operational Working Group and Strategic Working Group) set up with Wrexham University are up and running.

13.0	TDAP
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There were no updates on TDAP.

14.0	Confirmed minutes from other forums or committees for information, consideration, or action.
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	14.1 <u>Board of Directors – 3 June 2024</u>
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There have been no matters referred for Academic Committee to consider.

	14.2 <u>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 17 July 2024</u>
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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 <u>Board of Directors – 29 July 2024</u>
There have been no matters referred to Academic Committee to consider.	
	15.2 <u>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee – 18 September 2024</u>
There have been no matters referred to Academic Committee to consider.	
Part 3: Any Other Business and Date/Time of Next Meeting	
16.0	Any Other Business
Following the departure of the Student Representatives, the minutes from the July meeting including the record of discussion under the reserved item, were considered by the committee and consequently approved as a true record.	
17.0	Date, Time, and Venue of Next Meeting: 25 November 2024, TBC.