

# ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY

30 October 2024 / Teams

MINUTES



## 806 Welcome and Quorum

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### REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and noted a quorum was present. A particular welcome was extended to Pamela Chesters and Ben Goose who had been invited to present an update on the work of Council and the changes to the Academic Advisors role respectively.

## 807 Declarations of Interest

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### REPORTED

No declarations of interest were reported.

## 808 Membership and Terms of Reference

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### REPORTED

The Chair reminded members of the role of the Academic Assembly within the University Governance Structure. There were currently two meetings booked for the 2024/25 Academic Year but the Chair highlighted the ability of members to call additional meetings throughout the year, particularly when there were topics of interest to the academic community.

## 809 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - AA25/25 - 01

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### DECISION

The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Assembly held on 30 April 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

# 810 Actions and Matters Arising - AA24/25 - 02

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## REPORTED

It was noted that there were two outstanding actions for the Assembly, to consider the potential of extending the membership of Academic Assembly to a sub-set of Professional Services colleagues and to host an Ask Me Anything session relating to the Climate Emergency. The Chair confirmed they would look into the feasibility of completing these actions and report back to the Assembly.

## 811 Relevant Decisions of Senate

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### REPORTED

The Assembly noted the decisions of Senate made since the last meeting of Academic Assembly including:

JUNE 2024

- The re-appointment of Dr Tim Woodman as University Marshall
- The roll-out of a course level survey to all academic departments to enable the Curriculum Transformation Project to gain student voice data to evaluate the impact of the project.
- Amendments to Regulation 18, subject to the further approval of the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech by Council. This was approved on 8 July 2024 and the amendments to Regulation 18 were published as part of the 2024/25 Student Regulations.
- The appointment of the Associate PVC Research (Doctoral) to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC).
- Recommendations relating to assuring undergraduate and postgraduate degree outcomes, including developing an action plan to enhance support and close outcome gaps for underrepresented student groups.
- Amendments to Regulation 16, including renaming the Regulation from 'Regulation 16 Higher Degrees' to 'Regulation 16 Doctoral and Research Degrees'.
- Amendments to Regulation 7 in line with best practice recommendations from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- Recommended to Council for approval new Terms of Reference for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and the formation of the Community and Inclusion Standing Group (CIOSG).
- Approved the extension of Professor Perera's term of office on Academic Staff Committee for one additional year, ending on 31 July 2025.
- Updates to the University Export Control Policy.
- Approval of a number of new courses including a MSc Artificial Intelligence, MSc Advanced

Machine Learning and MSc International Development with Education.

- A Collaborative partnership with Amrita University, India.

OCTOBER 2024

- Approval of the Disabled Students' Policy, which sets out the University's commitment and approach to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 relating to disabled students.

- Collaborative partnerships with South West Jiaotong University, China.

- Approval of a suite of MA Education campus-based courses.

- Amendments to the Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure.

## 812 Chair of Council update

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### REPORTED

The Chair of Council attended the meeting to provide an update on the work of Council over the 2023/24 Academic Year. They extended their thanks on behalf of Council to academic colleagues for their work over the past year. There had been significant milestones for the University over the Academic Year, with Professor Ian White ending his tenure as Vice-Chancellor and Professor Phil Taylor starting in the role. IAAPS had launched as well as five beacons which had impacted positively on the institution's research income. The University had received a triple gold award in the TEF which was noted as a great milestone. The student experience and employment rates for students was positive but there was still work needed in relation to widening participation and focus on the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience. Thanks were extended to the previous Vice-Chancellor for their work improving the University's relationships within the city, including the signing of a civic agreement between BANES, the RUH and Bath Spa University.

Council had attended an away day at the beginning of October where they had been able to reflect on the new Vice-Chancellor's first months in the role. It had been useful to hear the early thoughts on priorities for the Executive over the coming academic year. There was the potential that these priorities would change over the year but the current focus was improving the University's international standing and laying a strong foundation for the University in terms of sustainability, the physical estate and technology. It was noted that while these were the current priorities there was always a number of things the University would like to progress, including continuing work on the University's relationship with BANES, looking at widening participation and enhancing the student experience for Postgraduate Taught Students.

The Council had been moving to reduce its size since 2022, with two new lay members appointed to fill vacancies for the 2024/25 Academic Year, including one who had HE experience. With the reduction in Council size it was noted that it was important to have more specialism from the HE sector within the membership. The Chair of Academic Assembly had an ex officio role on Council and informal sessions were hosted between Council and Senate before each Council meeting, the Council found it useful to hear the voices of staff to feed into their discussions. The incumbent Chair of Council would be coming to the end of their term as Chair and recruitment for their replacement would commence within the next 12 months.

The University had made a surplus the previous year of 2.5%. There was the need to invest in the physical estate and digital infrastructure which would require more capital and there would likely be some impact on the budget but the University was in a relatively secure financial position at this stage in comparison to other institutions in the sector.

## **DISCUSSED**

It was queried what the University would be doing practically in relation to widening participation, particularly considering the high entry requirements to study which may be a barrier for students. The initial discussions of these plans did not take place at Council but it was known that this year more effort was being placed in allowing contextual offers. It was noted that widening participation was not only about the numbers of students admitted but continuing to support them during their time at the University.

The current projected surplus for the University was 2.5% with 5% needed. This projection had been made assuming that there would be no changes to the HE funding model. There was the potential that this could change and the University could see more income but a 5% surplus would still be required to carry out the necessary planned capital projects.

## **813 Academic Advisors**

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### **REPORTED**

The Policy and Programmes Manager (Education and Student Experience) attended to provide an update on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) on the change from personal tutoring to academic advising which had been implemented over the summer. The changes had been made to make explicit the boundaries of the role to aid with the understanding of the role for both staff and students. These changes also aimed to support the wellbeing of academic colleagues and improve the consistency across the University. There was very little change being made to the practicalities of the role however it was noted that it would take time to make all the necessary updates and for the changes to filter through the University so it was requested colleagues signposted areas which hadn't been updated.

### **DISCUSSED**

It was queried if there were more responsibilities placed on either the student or the academic advisor with the changes to the role. It was confirmed that there would not be a substantial change but more onus would be placed on the academic advisor to reach out to students to set up meetings. This was already laid out within QA33 so there was not a change in this process, it was simply being clarified.

It was noted that the move from personal tutor to academic advisor was in line with the sector norms around the role. There was ongoing work within the sector looking at a form of accreditation for personal tutoring and academic advising which could potentially be used in the future to assess where the University was placed in this space.

There had been a lot of discussion about the name of the role, personal tutor suggested more of a pastoral role while advisor could feel more consumer focused. There was not a perfect title which would fit every department within the institution so there was the need for some flexibility in this space.

The Director of Studies role had been looked at when reviewing the academic advisor role to ensure the two fed into each other correctly. There was a number of cases where students

would bypass their academic advisor, going directly to the Director of Studies and it could be unclear when issues should be escalated to the Director of Studies. The aim was that the refresh of the academic advisor role and the communication to students would help assist with these issues.

## **815 Elections - AA24/25 - 03**

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### **REPORTED**

The Assembly noted the list of members of Academic Assembly appointed to Senate and its sub-committees for 2024/25. It was noted that there were two open vacancies on Senate for a Professorial and non-Professorial member and eligible Assembly members were invited to apply.

## **816 Programme of Meetings for 2024/25**

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### **REPORTED**

The programme of meetings for 2024/25 was noted. It was noted that the Chair was looking to host the April meeting of the Assembly in person with the option to join virtually and moving forward the aim would be to have a combination of online, in-person and hybrid meetings.

### **DISCUSSION**

It was noted that while it would be good to have in person meetings it is also important to have a good option to join remotely to support the accessibility of the meetings.

The Chair noted that they would welcome feedback from Assembly members in relation to the format and frequency of meetings.

## **817 Any Other Business**

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### **REPORTED**

It was noted that while all members of the Education and Research job family were invited to meetings of the Assembly but attendance was limited. The Chair invited feedback from attendees as to why colleagues did not attend and how they could improve future attendance.

# Attendees

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## **Members Attended**

Dr Sabina Gheduzzi, Chair of Academic Assembly

42 others

## **In Attendance**

Pamela Chesters, Chair of Council, for item 812

Ben Goose, Policy and Programmes Manager (Education and Student Experience), for item 813

Hannah South

Matt Durant

Jason Harper

Helen Rhodes

Katie Anderton, Governance Partner