

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday, 02 July 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Seminar A, Falmouth Campus

1.1 Present

Professor Emma Hunt (EH)	Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive [Chair]
Professor David Prior (DP)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Knowledge Exchange [Deputy Chair]
Professor Russell Crawford (RC)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Services
Dr Douglas Brown (DB)	Dean of Faculty of Screen, Technology & Performance, and Associate Professor
David Dickinson (DD)	Director of Student & Library Services, FX Plus
Andrew Harbert (AH)	Technical Staff Member [Elected Member]; Technical & Facilities Manager, Falmouth Campus
Robert Ingram (RI)	Senior Head of Academy of Continuing Education
Aisha Lord (AL)	SU Vice-President: Falmouth 2025-26
Jadelle Luckman (JL)	SU President: Falmouth 2024-26
Dr Adrian Markle (AM)	Academic Staff Member [Elected Member]; Senior Lecturer, BA Creative Writing
David McCarron (DMc)	Head of Recruitment, Outreach & Admissions [Professional Services Staff Member - Elected Member]
Alex Mesterton-Gibbons (AMG)	Head of Employability [Co-opted Member]
Professor Lee Miller (LM)	Head of Postgraduate Research
John Sumpter (JS)	Head of Online & Digital Learning
Robyn Wyatt (RW)	Head of Governance Services, and Secretary to the Board of Governors [Co-opted Member]
Dr Jennifer Young (JY)	Dean of Faculty of Business & Design

1.2 Servicing Officers

Dr Brian Hoskin (BH)	Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement [Secretary]
Mary Flewitt (MF)	Governance & Executive Support Officer [Clerk]

1.3 In attendance

Dr Tadhg Leane (TL)	Independent Member of the Board of Governors
Julian Coia (JC)	Corporate Lawyer
Dr Tom Baugh (TB)	Associate Dean, Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication

1.4 Apologies

Professor Ruth Heholt (RH)	Professoriate Staff Member [Elected Member]; Professor, School of Communication
Professor David Prior (DP)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Knowledge Exchange [Deputy Chair]
Mandy Jandrell (MJ)	Dean of the Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication

2 **Chair's welcome** (EH) [Verbal]

3.1 **Noted:** the Chair provided a warm welcome to the newly elected 2025/26 Vice-President for Falmouth University, Aisha Lord; Dr Tom Baugh as Interim Associate Dean for the Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication, attending on behalf of MJ; and Julian Coia, Corporate Lawyer, who was in attendance to support item 11 on the agenda.

2 a) **Declaration of interests related to the agenda**

2.2 **Noted:** the Chair requested Members to declare any potential conflicts of interest relevant to items on the agenda. No conflicts were declared.

INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

3 **Strategic transformation update** (MR) [Presentation]

3.1 **Received:** to note, an update on the strategic transformation of the University's three core business units: On Campus, Online and On Demand (the Academy of Continuing Education (ACE)), with focus on the blueprints and priorities that had been identified for the year ahead. The strategic transformation programme is a comprehensive framework to establish and ensure the necessary capabilities to deliver the Mission, Vision and Values, with sustainable income generation and innovation.

3.2 **Noted:** the initial two year planning horizon was introduced, with milestones overseen by a steering group for each business unit. Immediate priorities were outlined in the areas of 'people', 'process', 'information' and 'technology/estate', which included a new portfolio development and review framework; an externally conducted review of the portfolio; and Workload Allocation Model rollout. Adaptation to the changing HE sector landscape, financial sustainability and student experience were at the centre of the programme. Members thanked MR for his presentation and successful spearheading of the programme to date, with significant progress made since January 2025.

3.3 **Action:** a more comprehensive overview of the Strategic Transformation programme to be scheduled to the Board on the October 2025 meeting. (MR)

MAIN AGENDA

4 **Minutes** (EH) [AB/25/051]

4.1 **Approved:** the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 were approved as presented for publication on the website, in alignment with the publication schedule.

5 **Matters arising** (BH) [AB/25/052]

5.1 **Received:** to note, a report on matters arising from the previous meetings, supplemented by verbal updates from members.

5.2 **Noted:** Academic Board confirmed completion of eight actions, and was satisfied with the progress updates provided for the remaining nine open actions.

5.3 **Action:** Chair request that members ensure all outstanding actions were completed by 31 July 2025. MF to issue requests to individual action owners to support this.

5 a) **Effectiveness review implementation update** (RW) [Verbal]

5.3 **Received:** to note, an update on key points of progress against the Board-approved implementation plan from the 2024 Halpin Review of Governance Effectiveness. Members were informed that the Academic Board section of the implementation plan was currently at 75% complete and that RW was working with the Academic Board Secretariat and broader membership as appropriate to progress the remaining actions,

with the aim of being substantially complete by the next meeting, in readiness for Halpin's independent impact review in autumn 2025.

INTRODUCTORY REPORTS

6 Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive's report (EH) [AB/25/053]

6.1 Received: to note, the standing item report from the Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive which covered updates on recent sector and local policy developments; ongoing focus on financial sustainability across the sector; strategic transformation update; University news and successes; and external advocacy activities and developments.

6.2 Noted: it was confirmed that the application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) remained on track for submission at the earliest opportunity, following confirmation from the Office for Students (OfS) that they were to re-open degree awarding power applications on 28 August 2025. The OfS were yet to formally confirm the timeline for the submission of the full application including critical self-assessment, which would be submitted at the earliest opportunity in the autumn.

6.3 Noted: local and national policy developments were introduced and considered. The launch of the Creative Industries In the South West report in Westminster on 7 July was highlighted.

6.4 Noted: focus was drawn to the successful three-day Nexus (staff development) event held in June, with positive levels of engagement highlighted. The importance of Nexus as a platform for sharing knowledge, discussing key topics, and building networks among the University community was acknowledged.

6.5 Noted: the Chair acknowledged the significant achievements of Academic Board, its sub-committees and the University community, emphasising the tough conditions under which these achievements had been made. She emphasised the importance of the constructive challenge brought by the Board and expressed gratitude for the engagement and contributions of members.

7 Students' Union President's report (JL) [AB/25/054] □

7.1 Received: to note, the standing item report from the elected Students' Union (SU) President which included: Students' Union (SU) updates; information on incoming Sabbatical Officers; update on the Fox Café trial; Forum proposals; and new opportunities for Student Reps. The President provided a full introduction to her report.

7.2 Noted: the President highlighted the initial trial during May 2025 of the Fox Café late opening times on Falmouth Campus. The initiative was to encourage students to utilise the café space with the aim of enhancing student interaction, community and belonging on Falmouth Campus. Engagement in May had been modest, not helped by the timing in the academic calendar. Members welcomed the second trial in September and highlighted the importance of clear communication/signage about the extended opening hours to support success.

7.3 Action: liaise with the SU and University communications teams, and FX Plus to promote (through appropriate signage and communications) the extended Fox Café opening hours in September. (JL)

7.4 Noted: attention was drawn to a recent SU Forum event, which explored the implications of a recent UK Supreme Court ruling and its impact on the University's

transgender student community, with student experiences and concerns shared with and acknowledged by the Board. The Forum had been attended by students and Sabbatical Officers and provided an open and respectful space for dialogue on this topic, with context regarding the challenges faced across universities in responding publicly to the ruling explained. The Chair highlighted that the University continued to await detailed guidance and had not withdrawn any support, policies or services as a result of the ruling. The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining a supportive and respectful environment for all students; and that the University was proactively working through the potential implications to fully understand any action that may be required.

7.5 Noted: Members were informed of proposed initiatives to increase opportunities for Student Representatives (Reps) to empower them throughout the year and beyond into employment; this included the introduction of LinkedIn badges to formally recognise their leadership, communication and advocacy skills – along with an awareness of these as transferable skills into the workplace; and more student-facing opportunities for Reps, such as hosting stalls or running activities during Welcome Week.

7.6 Noted: the President expressed excitement to be serving for a second year as well as for the opportunity to work alongside Aisha Lord as she commenced her role as Vice-President of Falmouth, and who was warmly welcomed by the Board.

8 Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Academic Services (RC) [AB/25/055]

8.1 Received: to note, the standing item report from the PVC Academic Services, which had been mapped to the Terms of Reference for Academic Board. The report included: Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Annual Statement; an overview of the Nexus Learning and Teaching day; a student recruitment update; adjustments to Annual Plan Metric targets – B3 Completion and National Student Survey (NSS); and a statement of assurance in relation to academic partnerships oversight and monitoring.

8.2 Noted: the PVC highlighted the academic partnerships assurance statement, emphasising the importance of continuing to ensure good partnership management, governance and compliance practices in light of rising negative press, regulatory scrutiny and reported cases of Student Loans Company (SLC) fraud in the sector linked to academic partnerships. He advised that a recent internal audit had provided assurance in relation to the University's arrangements. Key aspects of the assurance statement were introduced.

8.3 Noted: B3 Completion and NSS Annual Plan Metric targets had been reprofiled with the latest data and were presented for the Board's endorsement ahead of presentation to the Board of Governors. Members highlighted the downward trend in B3 Completion metric results since the baseline year. It was confirmed that the metric remained comfortably above the Office for Students' threshold (75%), and was being closely monitored, with recovery targeted over the period. Data was lagged, and internal data had indicated that this recovery was realistic. The Board supported a deep dive should a metric result fall below 85%.

8.4 Endorsed: re-profiled B3 and NSS Annual Plan Metric targets were endorsed, with the caveat that the NSS targets may need to be re-visited post NSS results.

8 a) 2025 results: process update (BH) [Verbal]

8.5 Received: to note, an update on 2025 results to date, with focus on the Assessment Boards held in Study Block 2 (SB2). Assessment Board outputs to date included 5,919 students having successfully gone through Assessment Board.

8.6 **Noted:** overall, results were trending positively with BH highlighting the significant effort from course teams, and professional services teams in ensuring the smooth operation of the Assessment Boards, thanks that were echoed by the Chair.

9 **Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Research & KE's report** (EH) [AB/25/56]

9.1 **Received:** to note, the standing item report from the PVC Research & Knowledge Exchange, which had been mapped to the Terms of Reference for Academic Board and included updates on: strategic RKE developments; Nexus Research and Knowledge Exchange day; externally funded RKE projects; On Demand; Research Centres; developments to the research environment; postgraduate research; and Research Excellence Framework (REF)2029 preparations.

9.2 **Noted:** the report was taken as read in the absence of the PVC, with LM providing a brief update on the status of postgraduate research (PGR) applications, which was on a positive trajectory with steady growth since 2022, indicating growing reputation. Developments to the support infrastructure and supervisory teams to accommodate increased numbers were outlined.

DECISIONS

10 **Admissions entry requirements** (DMc) [AB/25/57]

10.1 **Received:** a paper that outlined the proposed approach to undergraduate admissions entry requirements for the 2026-27 cycle. Building on the existing framework, the approach had been adapted to address evolving applicant behaviours and market conditions, with aims to: protect and grow application and enrolment volumes; improve applicant and enrolment conversion rates; support widening access and applicant inclusivity; and retain academic standards and subject fit.

10.2 **Noted:** DMc provided a detailed introduction to the proposed changes to admissions processes and entry tariffs. [Redacted]

10.3 **Noted:** rebranding of the term 'interview' for something more accessible and less intimidating to support applicants to engage was supported.

10.4 **Noted:** the Board discussed the proposed adjustments to entry tariffs, which included lowering the minimum UCAS points required for certain courses, while maintaining academic integrity through the processes that sit behind the tariff level. Benchmarking with comparator institutions, and consultation with academic and professional services staff had been undertaken to inform the recommendations.

10.5 **Noted:** concerns were raised in respect of ensuring the appropriate student support infrastructure was in place for students with lower entry qualifications. The importance of widening access was also discussed.

10.6 **Noted:** Members highlighted the importance of ensuring clear communications with Course Teams in respect to detail of, and rationale for the changes, to ensure there was no confusion or misperception about lowering academic standards.

10.7 **Approved:** (1) the flexible selection model, as piloted in 2025, (2) the change to the entry tariff approach, and (3) related adjustments to the Admissions Policy, as proposed.

10.8 **Action:** comprehensive communications to be issued to academic, admissions and recruitment teams to ensure changes are understood. (DMc)

11 Annual Academic Regulations update (BH) [AB/25/58]

11.1 Received: for approval, a paper that presented policies within the remit of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) team that required significant amendments ahead of the 2025-26 academic year, along with some minor housekeeping changes to the Academic Regulations and other student-facing policies to reflect structural, staffing and job title adjustments.

11.2 Noted: the proposed amendments to student-facing policies were introduced, with the following two explored in greater depth:

- Re-write of the Student Bullying and Harassment Policy in light of the upcoming Office for Students Condition E6 on harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Adjustments to the Student Registration Policy, particularly around calculating the last date of attendance for students who withdraw or interrupt their studies

11.3 Noted: Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that policy changes were effectively communicated to staff and students, along with the need for policies to be published in a consistent format.

11.4 Approved: Academic Board approved the amendments to the Student Bullying and Harassment Policy and Student Registration Policy.

11.5 Approved: minor amendments to Academic Regulations and policies as detailed within the paper.

11.6 Action: updated versions of all approved policies to be published in the appropriate location in the approved policy format. (BH/MF)

11 a) Academic Board schedule of policies (RW) [AB/25/58a]

11.6 Received: for approval, a paper that summarised the results of the spring 2025 audit of Falmouth University policies published on the website and intranet. The summary included policies approved by Academic Board and its sub-committees, in order to provide visibility of the Board's whole policy framework.

11.7 Noted: Members were invited to comment on the accuracy and completeness of the schedule, and formal approval was sought on the delegation of the approval of named policies to sub-committees, as shown in the paper.

11.8 Approved: Academic Board approved the policy approval authorities documented within the schedule.

11.9 Action: Members to highlight any policies not captured within the audit to RW. MF to facilitate.

11.10 Noted: an updated version of the schedule would be presented to Academic Board at the October 2025 meeting, with regular monitoring and review by Academic Board going forward.

12 Freedom of Speech and Lawful Assembly Policy (RC) [AB/25/059]

12.1 Received: for approval, a paper that provided an overview of work undertaken to review and update Falmouth University's Freedom of Speech Policy (FoS Policy), and the creation of a linked Code of Practice. This work had been facilitated by the Freedom of Speech Working Group in readiness for the [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act](#)

[2023](#), which was due to come into force on 1 August 2025, late availability of regulatory guidance had required an expedited development timeframe. The paper presented the latest drafts of these documents for Academic Board's endorsement for finalisation.

12.2 Noted: JC assured members that the documents were legally sound, having undergone an extensive consultation process and internal legal review. Consultation was confirmed by members as having been thorough and well-managed, which had allowed for robust and meaningful discussion that had visibly impacted the final version of the documents presented. It was highlighted that guidance and case law linked to the University's legal duties to uphold and promote free speech within the law was emergent and subject to change, and as such, the policy and CoP would need to be regularly reviewed.

12.3 Noted: the importance of supporting staff and students in expressing their values and opinions was discussed. The policy gave encouragement to respectful sharing of viewpoints and aimed to ensure that all voices were heard within the bounds of the law.

12.4 Endorsed: the Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice were endorsed by Academic Board, the first to progress to approval by the Board of Governors and the latter to be approved via Chair's action following final drafting edits to ensure harmonisation between the two documents.

12 a) Related changes to Prevent Duty policies and guidance (DD) [AB/25/059A]

12.5 Received: for approval, a paper that outlined changes to the Prevent Statutory Duty and Events Involving External Speakers policy, along with the Prevent Duty Policy and Prevent Duty Guidance, that were linked to the development of the FoS Policy and Code of Practice.

12.6 Noted: proposed changes involved tightening the language to align with the specific requirements of the Freedom of Speech Legislation (FoS Legislation). These adjustments ensured that the policies were consistent with the new policy framework.

12.7 Approved: Academic Board approved the changes to the Prevent Statutory Duty and Events Involving External Speakers Policy, Prevent Duty Policy, and Prevent Duty Guidance subject to final minor drafting amendments, with the understanding that any further adjustments to FoS legislation may necessitate a review of the documentation ahead of the next cyclical review. Once finalised the documents would be submitted to the Office for Students as collectively they constitute a 'Prevent-related change of circumstance' per regulatory advice.

13 Academic Calendar (RC) [AB/25/060]

13.1 Received: following discussion at the May 2025 meeting, the proposed Academic Calendar had been adjusted to reflect the request to move SB2's non-teaching week to week 5, rather than week 4, to align with recruitment activities and Cornwall school holidays. The proposed new calendar called for the coordination of academic staff annual leave to mitigate against recruitment risks, which had already been agreed with Faculty Deans.

13.2 Approved: the 2027/28 Academic Calendar and subsequent annual leave stipulations.

REPORTS

14 Gender safety pilot (DB) [Presentation]

14.1 Received: a presentation that provided an overview of the pilot programme created in response to feedback on gender safety issues within the Games Academy. The pilot had pre-dated and was aligned with the University's ongoing preparations for the incoming E6 conditions of registration.

14.2 Noted: the pilot included seven consent workshops for all year one and year zero students, covering topics like consent, harassment, sexual misconduct, intervention, and allyship. Facilitated by a specialist trainer, the workshops had tracked attendance rates that aligned with average module attendance.

14.3 Noted: overall the pilot was deemed successful, and provided valuable insights for future implementation. As the workshops were conducted in person with one trainer, this presented a challenge in scaling up the programme to accommodate more students; and was something to be mitigated against with next steps for the programme. Recommendations included integrating the workshops into welcome week in order to deploy the student-facing training as early in the semester as possible in further support of readiness for E6.

15 Student & Academic Support report (DD) [AB/25/061]

15.1 Received: to note, a paper that provided an update on the FX Plus student welfare, wellbeing, timetabling and learning and research support services provided in 2024-25. This included examining KPI performance, risk profiles and key developments within the reporting period.

15.2 Noted: there was an overall increase in contacts to the student support services, especially regarding disability and personal services; drop-in service demand had also risen by over 10%, meaning that just over half had been provided same day as being requested. The impact of growing demand was also felt within PI performance, with Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) take up and Helpdesk opening hours affected in some months. All other performance indicators had been met.

15.3 Noted: updates were also provided on safeguarding, Prevent training, freedom of speech, E6 policy, and Equality Act compliance. Positive developments included the expected ratification of the Mental Health Charter award, continuation of the Talking Therapies pilot, and the replacement of the Compass Helpdesk with the Student Support and Wellbeing System.

16 Academic Board risk review (RW) [AB/25/062]

16.1 Received: to note, a report on the latest assessment of strategic, corporate compliance and operational risks relevant to the work of Academic Board, following the summer term triannual risk review exercise. The exercise had been completed by risk owners following a series of deep dive risk review tasks in the spring. Following this deep dive, supplemented by feedback from Academic Board, University Executive Board, and Audit & Risk Committee, two additions to the risk register had been actioned, and were detailed within the paper.

16.2 Noted: the Board were invited to highlight any new or emerging risks for Academic Board's awareness. No new risks were highlighted.

16.3 Noted: members discussed linking the Academic Board risk register with the Student & Academic Services risk register in order to provide a comprehensive view of risks associated with student wellbeing.

16.4 Action: mechanism to link Student & Academic Services (FX Plus) risks with Academic Board's risk register to be determined. (RW/DD)

DISCUSSION

17 Team Charter (RW) [AB/25/063]

22.1 Received: for discussion, taken from initial conversation at the March 2025 meeting of the Board along with externally gathered commentary from Members, a first draft of the Team Charter for Academic Board. The purpose of the Charter was to support effective boardroom dynamics, the achievement of Board objectives, and transparency about the work of the Board. Members were asked to review the draft and provide feedback.

22.2 Noted: the value of building an ongoing positive culture that can form a benchmark for current and future Members was commented on, with the Board agreeing on the Charter's importance in fostering open and safe conversation. Time-constraints of the meeting did not allow for a full discussion and it was proposed that drop-in sessions be arranged for further feedback. An updated draft was to be provided for the October 2025 meeting that would be informed by these sessions, with the objective of using the Charter as an opening agenda item for the 2025/26 academic year.

22.3 Action: drop in sessions to discuss feedback on the Academic Board Team Charter to be facilitated over the Summer ahead of the October meeting. (RW/MF)

22.4 Action: updated draft of the Team Charter to be provided at the October 2025 Academic Board. (RW)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TO BE NOTIFIED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE

18 Academic Staff Member Election Plan (RW) [AB/25/064]

18.1 Received: for approval, a newly proposed academic staff member election plan as an action arising from the 2024 Halpin Review of Governance Effectiveness. The purpose of the formal plan was to increase the transparency of the election process and attract more applicants by providing clear information and resources, whilst also raising the profile of the work of the Board. This was proposed to be in place for the next election of Professional Services Staff Member for Academic Board, which was to be open for application from 14 July 2025.

18.2 Approved: Academic Board approved the implementation of the Staff Member Election Plan for the July 2025 election process onwards.

19 Professorial Appointments (EH) [AB/25/065]

19.1 Received: to note, a report that provided details of the Professorial Appointments Panel conferments in the academic year 2024-25, as considered by the Professorial Appointments Panel.

19.2 Noted: the conferments were: Dr Robyn Cook, Associate Professor of Design Ecologies; Professor of Digital Games, Tanya Krywinska as Emeritus Professor; and the continuation of Professor Mark Jenkins as Distinguished Professor of Film Practice. Members congratulated those recognised.

20 Honorary Awards (EH) [Verbal]

20.1 Received: to note, a verbal update from the Chair on the Honorary Awards being conferred at the July 2025 Graduation following the open nominations process and Honorary Awards Panel. These were artistic director, cultural leader and changemaker who founded the Serendipity Institute for Black Arts and Heritage, Pawlet Brookes MBE; and renowned comedian and TV personality, Sue Perkins.

21 Course suspension/cessation (RC) [Verbal]

21.1 Received: for approval, in alignment with the delegation framework, the Board was presented with the rationale for three courses set for suspension: BA Marketing Communications; BA Sustainable Festival Management; and BA Sustainable Management.

21.2 Approved: the suspension of these three courses.

21.3 Noted: RC proposed an action for the approving authority for course suspensions to instead sit with the University Executive Board (UEB) due to its more frequent meetings, and for a summary of decisions to be reported to Academic Board as standard practice going forward, including assurance in respect of due diligence and supporting documentation.

21.4 Approved: revision to approving authority for course cessations and suspensions to University Executive Board, and related update to the delegation framework.

22 Reflections from the link Board of Governors Member (TL) [Verbal]

22.1 Received: to note, verbal reflections from the link Board of Governors' Member after his first full meeting cycle attending Academic Board. TL praised the quality of work at the University, evident through Board content, attributing this to the effort and dedication of staff. Attention was given to the positive and productive relationship between the University and the SU and the overall healthy culture demonstrated within Board discussions. He also acknowledged the difficult external conditions and context in which the University operated, noting that these challenges have a disproportionate impact on smaller and specialist institutions, and encouraged the continuation of the good work.

22.2 Noted: the Chair closed the meeting re-iterating thanks to all in attendance and their teams for their hard work and commitment through the 2024/25 academic year, and encouraged members to take time to recharge and reflect ahead of 2025/26. The importance of the forthcoming Graduation ceremonies was highlighted, with all looking forward to celebrating the achievements of students.

TO NOTE – SILENT PAPERS

23 Student and staff successes and industry awards [AB/25/066]

24 Cycle of Business [AB/25/067]

25 Date, time and location of the next meeting:
22 October 2025, 11:30-15:00, Location: The Sandpit