

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday, 07 May 2025, 12:30 – 14:30, All online

1 Present

Professor David Prior (DP)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Knowledge Exchange [Deputy Chair]
Professor Russell Crawford (RC)	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic Services
Jadelle Luckman (JL)	SU President: Falmouth 2024-25
Dr Adrian Markle (AM)	Academic Staff Member [Elected Member]; Senior Lecturer, BA Creative Writing
David Dickinson (DD)	Director of Student & Library Services, FX Plus
Andrew Harbert (AH)	Technical Staff Member [Elected Member]; Technical & Facilities Manager, Falmouth Campus
Professor Ruth Heholt (RH)	Professoriate Staff Member [Elected Member]; Professor, School of Communication
Dr Douglas Brown	Dean of Faculty of Screen, Technology & Performance, and Associate Professor
Alex Mesterton-Gibbons (AMG)	Head of Employability [Co-opted Member]
Robyn Wyatt (RW)	Head of Governance Services, and Secretary to the Board of Governors [Co-opted Member]
John Sumpter (JS)	Head of Online & Digital Learning
Dr Jennifer Young (JY)	Dean of Faculty of Business & Design, and Head of People Success
Robert Ingram (RI)	Senior Head of Academy of Continuing Education
David McCarron (DMc)	Head of Recruitment, Outreach & Admissions [Professional Services Staff Member - Elected Member]

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

1.4 Apologies

Professor Emma Hunt (EH)	Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive [Chair]
Mandy Jandrell (MJ)	Dean of Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication

2 Deputy Chair's welcome

2.1 Noted: Members were provided with an overview of key agenda items, objectives and appropriate conduct during an Online meeting. In the Chair's absence, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Knowledge Exchange chaired the meeting.

2 a) Declaration of Interests related to the agenda

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

MAIN AGENDA

3 **Minutes** (DP) [AB/25/031]

3.1 **Approved:** the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were approved for publication on the website in alignment with the publication schedule.

4 **Matters arising** (BH) [AB/25/032]

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

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

4 a) **Effectiveness Review Implementation update** (RW) [Verbal]

4.3 **Received:** to note, an update on key points of progress against the Board-approved implementation plan from the 2024 Halpin Review of Governance Effectiveness. This incorporated the upcoming publication of the academic governance page on the University website, which was to feature the published Board minutes and Member profiles. Additionally, RW advised that discussion on the Board Team Charter was to be resumed at the next in-person meeting.

INTRODUCTORY REPORTS

5 **Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive's report** (DP) [AB/25/033]

5.1 **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; University news and successes; strategic transformation planning updates; and a summary of the Vice-Chancellor's external advocacy activities. In The Chair's absence, the Deputy Chair DP, introduced the report.

5.2 **Noted:** several updates from the Office for Students (OfS) were noted. This included a shared mid-year funding announcement of £60 million to support level four and five provision, of which Falmouth University would be receiving an amount. Focus was given to OfS' new regulatory powers regarding freedom of speech in universities that was due to come into effect from 1 August 2025. Also of note was the news that the OfS were to be lifting their pause on registration of Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) in August 2025, and following a recent OfS meeting the University had been given a timeline for submission of its application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP).

5.3 **Noted:** attention was drawn to the recent implications of the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of a woman being based on biological sex. Under the Equality Act 2010, as a public body, the University has a statutory duty to uphold the decision. The Deputy Chair reminded the Board that Falmouth would continue to recognise and celebrate diversity within its community and that it was working through the implications whilst awaiting more comprehensive guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

5.4 **Noted:** an update was provided on three parallel strategic transformation programmes for the University's three core business units: on campus, online and on demand. A previous presentation on this topic had come to the March 2025 Academic Board, and transformation planning had been progressing at pace in the period since.

5.5 **Noted:** the Deputy Chair highlighted the ongoing difficult times faced by the sector, including financial challenges, and the need for a more sustainable funding model. Emphasis was given to the resilience and dedication of staff and students in weathering

these challenges, with encouragement given to visit the forthcoming end-of-year Degree Shows to celebrate the brilliant work of students.

6 **Students' Union President's report** (JL) [AB/25/034] □

6.1 **Received:** to note, the standing item report from the elected Students' Union (SU) President which included: Students' Union (SU) updates; Student:Staff Liaison Group (SSLG) discussion; SU Awards shortlist; Falmouth Student Experience Group updates; ongoing progress with CoLab; and focus on CV support for Falmouth University students. The President provided a full introduction to her report.

6.2 **Noted:** the President highlighted ongoing discussions between herself, the Chief Executive Officer of the SU, the Head of Advocacy of the SU, RC and RW, regarding SSLG processes. She noted that whilst there had been no negative feedback from students about the operation of SSLGs, opportunity to strengthen SSLG processes had been identified and the SU was working collaboratively with the University to optimise in readiness for 2025/26.

6.3 **Action:** update on SSLG process enhancements, once agreed, to be provided to Academic Board (RC/RW/JL).

6.4 **Noted:** initiatives to support students on Falmouth Campus were discussed, with the success of the pantry and hygiene station highlighted. A pilot was underway to keep the Fox Café open later to provide a social space for students and encourage extended use of the facilities. The pilot was running in May, with a further pilot planned for September 2025 to coincide with the start of the academic year. The remit of the recently established Falmouth Student Experience Group was outlined – an SU-led forum aimed at addressing and responding to the needs of Falmouth University students including dedicated focus on the Falmouth Campus experience.

6.6 **Noted:** attention was drawn to the upcoming SU Awards, with the President highlighting the nomination of JY for the Education Excellence Award and the nominees for the Rep of the Year – which included a mix of on campus and online nominees.

6.7 **Noted:** the President emphasised the importance of the CoLab platform (SU-led extra-curricula student collaboration platform). She noted improved engagement since it had been promoted in the SU newsletter and stressed the value to the student experience, and urged Academic Board members to promote CoLab amongst their staff and students.

7 **Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Academic Services** (RC) [AB/25/035] □

7.1 **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 was focused on two key relevant sector external engagements that were relevant to Academic Board's remit awareness.

7.2 **Noted:** the PVC reported on his recent attendance at the UUK-led Webinar on Student Wellbeing on 25 April 2025. The meeting's focus explored peer support as a student wellbeing tool, with Members sharing examples of its effectiveness throughout their universities. The PVC outlined several pre-existing Falmouth peer support systems in place at the University, inclusive of Student Mentors, Uni Buddies, Student Ambassadors and prompted reflection on whether future focus was needed on the deployment of these through a dedicated student wellbeing methodology, based on the UUK event discussion.

7.3 **Noted:** interest was expressed in further exploring the idea, with members noting the benefits of providing course teams with options for holistically incorporating elements of the peer support models discussed. The PVC emphasised that despite the positive intentions of such a scheme, it was not without risk to the students providing support, which should be factored into any planning in the future. It was suggested that an exploration of the three sector models with optional recommendations made was a better fit for the University, rather than a uniform approach to be mandated at scale.

8 **Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Research & Knowledge Exchange (DP)** [AB/25/021]

8.1 **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 developments; On Demand developments; the research environment; policy developments; and visitors and engagements relevant to Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE).

8.2 **Noted:** the PVC spoke on the upcoming Devolution White Paper expected on 11 June 2025, with implications anticipated for local growth plans and funding eligibility. The paper was expected to align with regional and national priorities, with a potential for concentration on sectoral themes. An increase in Defence spending was also expected to impact UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) budgets, which in turn would affect Research funding and resource distribution.

8.3 **Noted:** updates were given on the Research portfolio, with £30.4 million in external funding live bids and 7 bids submitted since the March 2025 Academic Board. DP also mentioned that the awarding of the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) reported a margin of 0.2% variance against the project funding, which was recognised as a notable success.

8.5 **Noted:** an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 was provided, including the development of the code of practice for identifying those with significant responsibility for research (SRR). Developments to impact case studies and support available on the Knowledge Exchange Intranet page were covered, supplemented by the relaunch of the Research Review following revisions to the software platform, as well as the development of a responsive online training model for research guidance. These updates aimed to enhance the research environment and provide better support for researchers.

8.6 **Noted:** also mentioned was the Creative Industries Deep Dive held on 24 April 2025, which showcased talent from across the county and featured work from Falmouth staff and students. This event highlighted the vibrant creative community and its contributions to the region.

8.7 **Noted:** other highlights included a rise in post graduate research (PGR) applications, with 90 applicants in round one indicating a growing interest in PGR; and the Cornwall Angel Network workshops, with emphasis on research into increasing female participation demonstrating the aim to foster a more inclusive investment environment.

DISCUSSION

9 **Freedom of Speech regulatory action briefing** (JC) [Presentation]

9.1 **Received:** to note, a presentation which outlined recent regulatory action on freedom of speech, academic freedom and governance, brought against the University of Sussex by the Office for Students. The background of the ruling was provided, inclusive of Sussex's application for judicial review claiming that the OfS had acted outside of its powers and misinterpreted the law.

9.2 **Noted:** JC reinforced the need for all universities to be vigilant in their governance and policy management to comply with regulatory expectations.

9a) **Reflections and impacts** (All) [Verbal]

9.3 **Noted:** an overview of assurances in relation to recent policy audit and review work was provided and considered, an updated schedule of the policies of Academic Board and its sub-committees would be shared for Academic Board's approval in due course. Discussion highlighted the importance of balance between policies and guidance, with emphasis given to the need for clear accountability for internally and externally published policy information.

9.4 **Noted:** concerns were raised regarding support systems for colleagues navigating the complexities of upholding lawful freedom of speech, which would be taken to the Freedom of Speech Policy Working Group.

9.4 **Action:** establish with the Freedom of Speech Policy Working Group, as part of the policy development work, the support systems in place for navigating staff through supporting students in the sphere of Freedom of Speech and other complex regulations. (RC/RW)

DECISION

10 **Academic Board regulations and policy updates**

a) **Safeguarding Policy & Guidance** (DD) [AB/25/038]

10.1 **Received:** for approval, the updated Safeguarding policy and associated guidance following routine review. Revisions to the policy included changes based on the Department for Education (DfE) document '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)'; updates to job titles; clarification of staff responsibilities; the relationship between safeguarding and confidentiality; plus additional changes following input from Academic Board's external review of the policy.

10.2 **Approved:** Academic Board approved the updated Safeguarding policy and guidance.

b) **Student Sexual Misconduct Policy** (BH) [AB/25/039]

10.3 **Received:** for approval, the updated Student Sexual Misconduct Policy in readiness for the incoming E6 condition of registration. This followed action 15.3 from the March 2025 meeting to seek external legal advice to ensure the policy had external legal scrutiny before the 1 August 2025 E6 implementation date for assurance.

10.4 **Noted:** it was highlighted that external legal advice had been incorporated into the policy without changing the original content - adding clarifications and adjustments to wording. Members discussed the need to ensure that grammar and clarity of definitions throughout the document were aligned, noting the importance of precise language to avoid any room for misinterpretation. The need for inclusion of postgraduate research students within the policy was also raised.

10.5 **Action:** to review the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy and ensure language is precise and cohesive. (RC/BH)

10.6 **Approved:** Academic Board approved the updated Student Sexual Misconduct Policy, subject to recommended amendments.

c) **Admissions Policy** (DMc) [AB/25/040]

10.7 Received: for approval, the Admissions policy following its annual review. This policy sets out the strategic framework for managing admissions across all levels of study, aiming to reflect the University's goals and sector best practices in order to attract a diverse and talented student body.

10.8 Noted: Members were informed that adjustments that had been made for the 2025 version of the policy included clearer visa compliance guidance, refined wording on contextual offers, and updates to terminology. This had been scrutinised for accuracy and was recognised as being reflective of Falmouth's current admissions practices.

10.9 Noted: discussion was had regarding the need to adapt the postgraduate research admissions process to better support the significant increase in applications, which was supplemented by a similar query regarding Short Course provision. RW suggested differentiating the policy from guidance at the next review point to ensure compliance around keeping policies crisp and cohesive.

10.10 Action: LM and DMc to discuss adapting of the Admissions Policy to best support the postgraduate research and short course admissions.

10.11 Action: revisit the Admissions Policy ahead of its next annual review and separate the policy and its guidance to ensure compliance with keeping policies crisp and cohesive, and allowing more flexibility to develop supporting guidance without Board approval. (DMc)

10.12 Approved: Academic Board approved the updated Admissions policy.

11 Employability Framework (AMG) [AB/25/041]

11.1 Received: for approval, an overview of the new Employability Framework, which aimed to embed key future skills development at every level and support students in securing competitive graduate jobs. The context and rationale for the proposed approach, along with information about implementation, impact, measuring success and timeline was explored. The presentation of this framework for approval satisfied action 12.3 in the tracker.

11.2 Noted: discussion centred on refining the framework to ensure effective implementation was possible. This included emphasis on the importance of upskilling academic staff to use the content in a curriculum-contextual way; the embedding of employability content within assessment criteria; the incorporation of technical skills; the personalisation of the framework to reflect individual student learning journeys; and adaption to incorporate the postgraduate research student experience.

11.3 Action: AH to be involved in discussion of the Employability Framework and the incorporation of technical skills throughout. (AMG/AH)

11.4 Action: Employability Framework to be adapted to incorporate the postgraduate research student experience. (AMG/LM)

11.5 Approved: Academic Board approved the implementation and requisite modifications to the Employability Framework following its initial presentation to the Board.

12 Credit-bearing on demand provision with external organisations – approval process (RC) [AB/25/042]

12.1 Received: for approval, a paper that outlined the proposed process for course approval of employer-led business cases. The usual course approval event process for assurance and audit purposes had been retained to ensure rigor and regulatory compliance. This new model was to provide flexibility around pre-approval and post-approval stages to enhance efficiency and leverage opportunities that required flexibility, such as with A&P (next agenda item). The paper included relevant tracked changes to the delegation framework and Members noted that this was not a change to either of the established non credit-bearing short course or partnership course approval processes.

12.2 Approved: Members approved the approval process for on demand provision with external organisations, and linked changes to the delegation framework to document this process.

a) Pilot: Diploma in Ship Repair Management (JY) [AB/25/043]

12.3 Received: to note, a report on the successful approval of a new level 5 Diploma that had recently been validated by Cornwall Business School (CBS), in partnership with A&P ship repair specialists. The course provided an example of industry-led credit-bearing on demand provision, [Redacted]. The course was to be piloted on campus from September 2025, with scope for online delivery for subsequent cohorts and employees [Redacted].

13 Academic Business case: dBs (RC) [AB/25/044]

13.1 Received: for approval, a business case outlining dBs Institute's proposal for ten new courses as part of the academic partner's portfolio consolidation to support growth and maintain quality standards. The courses were proposed in a single business case to demonstrate their overall strategic cohesion, with the case having been supported by Partnership Quality Committee and the University Executive Board, as per the delegation framework.

13.2 Approved: Academic Board approved dBs' business case proposal.

14 Academic Calendar (RC) [AB/25/045]

14.1 Received: for approval, the proposed Academic Calendar for 2027 – 2028, which allowed for the University to operate in a future-focused manner to facilitate best practice of forecasting and forward planning.

14.2 Noted: discussion was had regarding concerns around misalignment of the non-teaching week and Easter break in study block 2 with some of the local school holidays, as well as the potential impact on recruitment activities taking place at that time.

14.3 Action: further consideration to be applied to the timing of SB2 non-teaching week (SB2, week 4 or week 5 specifically), based on further discussions on the relative pros and cons of adjusting the University academic calendar for alignment with some of the local school holidays.

14.4 Not-approved: Academic Board did not approve the proposed Academic Calendar for 2027 – 2028 at this time, agreeing that it was to be returned to at the July 2025 meeting.

TO NOTE – SILENT (RECEIVED WITHOUT DISCUSSION)

15 Register of Interests [AB/25/046]

16	Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee report	[AB/25/047]
17	Research Integrity & Ethics Committee report	[AB/25/048]
18	Faculty Committee revised Terms of Reference	[AB/25/049]

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TO BE NOTIFIED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE

19 **Degree Show programme and dates** (DP) [Verbal]

19.1 **Noted:** the Degree Show programme was provided to members, which gave an outline of the annual end of year presentation of student work. The Deputy Chair encouraged the Board to attend the shows to experience and appreciate the work of Falmouth's students. It was highlighted that two of the courses had been omitted from the programme.

19.2 **Action:** MF to liaise with design team around the Degree Show programme to highlight the omissions.

20 **Course cessation decision by circulation** (DP/RC)[Verbal]

20.1 **Noted:** Members were informed of two courses recommended to be cessated in line with the Course Suspension and Cessation Procedure. There was a discussion about the potential for redeploying content from these courses in the on-demand space, ensuring that any created content was audited and available to be utilised elsewhere if not used in its original form. The item also highlighted ongoing work around establishing consistent review points in-year for decisions (both UG and PG) around course feasibility based on student numbers and student experience to mitigate the risks of complaints from late withdrawal of courses on that basis.

20.2 **Noted:** approval for cessation was to be facilitated via circulation outside of the meeting, subject to University Executive Board approval in early May.

21 **Date, time and location of the next meeting**
Wednesday, 02 July 2025, 12:30 – 14:30, Seminar A, Falmouth Campus