

**ACADEMIC BOARD**

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Thursday, 07 November 2024, 13:00 – 15:00, Falmouth Campus

**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
Jadelle Luckman	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
Robert Ingram (RI)	Senior Head of Academy of Continuing Education
Mandy Jandrell (MJ)	Dean of Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication
Dr Jennifer Young (JY)	Dean of Faculty of Business & Design, and Head of People Success
Alex Mesterton-Gibbons (AMG)	Head of Employability [Co-opted Member]
David McCarron (DMc)	Head of Recruitment, Outreach & Admissions [Professional Services Staff Member [Elected Member]
Professor Lee Miller (LM)	Head of Postgraduate Research [Co-opted Member]
Robyn Wyatt (RW)	Head of Governance Services, and Secretary to the Board of Governors [Co-opted Member]

**1.2 Servicing Officers**

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

**1.3 In attendance**

Dr Tadhg Leane (TL)	Independent Member of the Board of Governors [Observing]
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**1.4 Apologies**

Dr Douglas Brown	Dean of the Faculty of Screen, Technology & Performance and Associate Professor
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**2 Chair's Welcome**

(EH)

- 2.1 Noted:** the Chair provided a warm welcome to Independent Member of the Board of Governors, Dr Tadhg Leane, who was in attendance as the new link attendee from the Board of Governors; and Dr Adrian Markle who was attending his first meeting as Elected Academic Staff Member. Members were provided with an overview of Academic Board's role and responsibilities, and the Board's Terms of Reference were highlighted.

## INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

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- 3 Student Circus & Freelancers Club Employability Initiatives** (AMG) [Presentation] ☐
- 3.1 Received:** to note, an introductory overview of two new platforms for employability initiatives: the Student Circus and Freelancers Club, which had been introduced in response to feedback from students. The aim of Student Circus was to promote employment opportunities for international students; and the aim of the Freelancers Club was to promote freelance opportunities, for both students and staff. The Student Circus was a one year membership through Cornwall Business School and was promoted by a dedicated student ambassador. Similarly, the Freelancers Club offered tangible opportunities for users to utilise on their freelance journey, and was recognised as something equally useful for online students as well as on-campus students.
- 3.2 Noted:** discussion was had around the benefits of the initiatives to students, particularly the international student body. These initiatives supported the need for increased visibility of employability services for students which was a priority of the current Student President. Members thanked AMG for her presentation and discussed the benefits of promoting employability initiatives more broadly to students.
- 3.3 Noted:** the Chair encouraged members to put forward ideas for future introductory presentations, to encourage diverse snapshots into projects and developments across the University, relevant to the work of the Board.

## MAIN AGENDA

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- 4 Minutes** (EH) [AB/24/096] ☒
- 4.1 Approved:** the minutes of the 11 September 2024 meeting as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 5 Matters arising** (BH) [AB/24/097] ☐
- 5.1 Received:** to note, a report on matters arising from the previous meetings, supplemented by verbal updates from members. Academic Board confirmed completion of 13 actions, and was satisfied with the progress updates provided for the remaining 5 open actions, noting that 4 were scheduled for a later meeting.
- 6 Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive's report** (EH) [AB/24/098] ☐
- 6.1 Received:** to note, the standing item report from the Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive which covered sector and University updates. The report encompassed the following topics: local policy updates; academic updates; finance updates, inclusive of the Voluntary Severance Scheme; investment into the University's estates; University successes, inclusive of student and staff awards and recognition; and external advocacy activities.
- 6.2 Noted:** following political updates and the announcement of the Autumn Budget since the release of the Chair's paper, the discussion was focused on the University's navigation of fast-moving HE, local and regional political dynamics. Changes within Cornwall Council were highlighted, whilst on a wider scale, further developments were expected following the announcement of an increase to undergraduate student tuition fee cap, although details were as yet unconfirmed.

- 6.3 Noted:** the Chair reported her involvement at Great South West (GSW) meetings and more broadly to boost the recognition of the importance and reach of the creative industries, and highlighted that it had been recognised as one of the 8 growth-driving sectors within the latest iteration of the Government's Industrial Strategy (which was currently out for consultation).
- 7 Students' Union President's report** (JL) [AB/24/099] ☐
- 7.1 Received:** to note, the standing item report from the elected Students' Union (SU) President including Students' Union updates; the reintroduction of CoLab (extra-curricula collaboration platform); an increase in the President's presence at open days; advocacy and academic representation updates; and future plans for targeted SU communications to students.
- 7.2 Noted:** Members were introduced to an update to Sabbatical Officer roles, which was to be in place for the 2025/26 student President elections. Going forward, Falmouth University was to have have their own President and Vice-President deployed one on each campus, to provide equal visibility of Falmouth and Penryn Campus-based student voices.
- 7.3 Noted:** The President spoke on the various engagements and successes during her first few months in the role, drawing attention to topics explored as a result of her first Student Forum. Members were informed of a drive to increase opportunity for online students within SU societies, which had been facilitated by the SU and was targeted towards all clubs and societies to serve students more inclusively. The President also highlighted plans to adapt the already existing toilet facilities to increase the number of gender neutral toilets and baby-changing stations; and advised that as part of her role she was to be present at all open days, expanding her visibility to the prospective student body.
- 7.4 Action:** JL to meet with JS and discuss ways to further involve online students with SU activities and connect with peers.
- 7.5 Noted:** updates were given on the President's involvement within the University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) application, which had consisted of running two focus groups; completing further training; and working with students to narrow down 6 key themes to focus on within the student-led element of the submission. This 2000 word report from the President was on track, and the Board thanked the President for her engagement with this key strategic project.
- 7.6 Noted:** information was given on the reintroduction of the cross-university student-led collaboration platform, CoLab. The initiative aimed to support students in creating meaningful collaborative opportunities through skill sharing, with the platform also expected to enhance housing connections, shared creative better, better community building, and employability. Student focus groups with course representatives to further discuss the topic had been planned, and feedback from academics had been mostly positive. The SU's future aim was to build the platform into the academic structure, to promote its visibility and ease of access if successfully re-launched.
- 7.6 Action:** JL to discuss with LM plans to extend the CoLab invite to Postgraduate Research students, mindful of the platform's potential to enrich the student experience for this group.
- 8 Pro Vice-Chancellor: Academic Services report** (RC) [AB/24/100] ☐

- 8.1 Received:** to note, the standing item report from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Academic Services, which was mapped to the Terms of Reference for Academic Board and included: updates on student results following recent Assessment Boards; proposed academic enhancement activities; and an update on readiness toward publishing a formal Degree Outcomes Statement.
- 8.2 Noted:** all students eligible to be reviewed at this assessment point had progressed or achieved an award with only c.3% engaged in retakes and less than 0.5% withdrawing from study. The PVC also talked through several metrics in the report which demonstrated a level of assessment and course challenge for external assessors, and then introduced an ongoing suite of enhancement activities.
- 8.3 Noted:** questions were raised on the Degree Outcomes Statement readiness table within the report, and timeline to turn areas marked as "amber" to "green". The response indicated that whilst some areas required minimal input to meet the criteria, completion would be a longer process. It was highlighted that a Degree Outcomes Statement was not a mandatory requirement.
- 8a Learning Teaching & Quality – Terms of Reference** (RC) [AB/24/100a] ☒
- 8.3 Received:** for approval, adjustments to the Learning Teaching & Quality Committee (LTQC) Terms of Reference (ToR), specifically clarification of role titles and additions to the membership, ensuring: correct role titles for RC, DD, and RI; correct departmental name for the Head of Library & Archives; and the addition of JS. It was confirmed ToR wording was suitable for assurance of meeting Falmouth's Prevent Duty.
- 8.4 Approved:** the Board approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference for LTQC, as presented.
- 9 Pro Vice-Chancellor: Research & Knowledge Exchange report** (DP) [AB/24/101] ☐
- 9.1 Received:** to note, the standing item report from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Research & Knowledge Exchange, which was mapped to the Terms of Reference for Academic Board and included: updates on readiness for Research Degree Awarding Power (RDAP); changes to the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee; Academic Career Pathway updates; and a refresh of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF).
- 9.2 Noted:** Members were informed of progress with the Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAPs) application, and were thanked for their contributions to this process. Preparation for the application were well underway and the application was on track for submission in spring 2025. The importance of full engagement with the strategic goal to achieve RDAPs was emphasised, with expected benefits including increased research funding opportunities for both PGR students and staff and reputationally as a signifier (alongside Research Excellence Framework results) of the maturity of the University's research culture and environment. External scrutiny linked to the application would include the effectiveness of the University's deployment of its Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and it was noted that the application would be reviewed by the Board of Governors ahead of submission.
- 9.3 Noted:** updates were received on the recently overhauled Falmouth University Research Repository (FURR) ahead of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029, with 19 active externally funded Research Knowledge Exchange (RKE) projects and seven bids, since September 2024.
- 9.4 Noted:** DP also spoke on the minor changes to the Lecturer to Senior Lecturer Academic Career Pathway and the rationale for the amalgamation of the RKE and Knowledge

Exchange (KE) committees. Changes to the RKE internal staff support fund were also discussed.

- 9a Research & Knowledge Exchange – Terms of Reference** (DP) [AB/24/101a] ☒
- 9.5 Received:** for approval, adjustments to the Research & Knowledge Exchange ToR. This was focused on the amalgamation of Knowledge Exchange Committee (KEC) into Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). This required the removal of KEC from the academic governance structure, and update to ToR items 5 and 6 of RKEC.
- 9.6 Approved:** the Board approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference for RKEC and removal of KEC from the academic governance structure.

## DECISIONS

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- 10 External governance review outcomes** (RW) [AB/24/102] ☒
- 10.1 Received:** for approval, an draft implementation plan to enhance academic governance, following the independent review of governance effectiveness conducted by Halpin, which encompassed the effectiveness of the governing body and academic governance. The independent report set out a suite of commendations and developmental recommendations to further strengthen Falmouth University's governance, which had been addressed in this draft implementation plan (which was focussed on actions relevant to Academic Board).
- 10.2 Noted:** an overview of the Halpin review findings was provided, and Members were thanked for their high engagement with the review - an aspect that Halpin had reported on positively. The Board were informed of the Academic Assurance Maturity Framework used to measure effectiveness, and discussion focused on whether there was a necessity to strive for 'leading-edge' given all elements had been assessed as 'good', with no failings identified.
- 10.3 Noted:** the Board discussed the implementation plan with a concentration on high-priority actions. These actions included reducing the number of meetings (in alignment with the Board of Governors); creating Team Charters for the Board of Governors (BoG) and Academic Board; new joint sessions between the two Boards, and increasing the transparency and visibility of the work of the Board for the wider University staff.
- 10.4 Action:** action related to the visibility of Academic Board to be increased in priority.
- 10.5 Approved:** the implementation plan of recommended enhancements to Academic Board, subject to the completion of action 10.4 – to progress to the Board of Governors.
- 11 Academic Business Cases - introduction** (RC) [AB/24/103] ☐
- 11.1 Received:** a cover paper which explained course approval processes, clarifying the role of different approval forums. This followed a recommendation from Halpin as an area that had required further clarification.
- 11a Faculty of Creative Arts & Communication** (MJ) [AB/24/103a] ☒
- 11.2 Received:** for approval, four new courses for the Faculty; BA Media & Communication; BA Media & Journalism; BA Media & Public Relations; and MA Environmental Communications. The proposals had been endorsed by University Management Committee (UMC) and University Executive Board (UEB). A full introduction to the proposed courses was provided, which formed part of a broader plan to grow the offer in the School of Communication via a matrix model of delivery with shared learning

outcomes and core shared modules across a range of Communications courses across Advertising and Writing and Journalism.

- 11.3 Action:** MJ and RI to meet to discuss how prospective new courses could be adapted for Short Course provision.
- 11.4 Approved:** Academic Board approved the business cases to move onwards to the Course Approval event.
- 11b Faculty of Business & Design** (JY) [AB/24/103b] ☒
- 11.5 Received:** for approval, a new business case for the Faculty; BSc (Hons) Business and Design, which sought to progress to Course Approval event for launch in September 2026. The course was seen as an opportunity for a collaboration between business and design, thereby creating a unique opportunity for students by combining the two disciplines, and was to draw on existing modules. A full introduction to the proposed new course was provided.
- 11.7 Approved:** Academic Board approved the business case to move onwards to the Course Approval event.
- 11c Academic Partnerships** (RC) [AB/24/103c] ☒
- 11.8 Received:** for approval, two new business cases for dBS Institute, MA Music Production; and WaterBear, MA Music Education. Both cases had been endorsed by Partnership Quality Committee and University Management Committee, with timelines in line with portfolio development processes.
- 11.9 Approved:** Academic Board approved the business cases to move onwards to the Course Approval event.
- 12 Student Protection Plan review** (RC/JL) [AB/24/104] ☒
- 12.1 Received:** for approval, the updated Student Protection Plan (SPP) for submission to the Office for Students (OfS) and publication. The SPP sets out what assurances are in place for students should a course, campus, or institution close; with the purpose of ensuring that students are able to continue and complete their studies or seek compensation if this is not possible. This update followed consultation with the SU.
- 12.2 Approved:** Academic Board approved the updates to the Student Protection Plan, as proposed.
- 13 Prevent annual monitoring return** (DD) [AB/24/105] ☒
- 13.1 Received:** for approval, a paper which formed part of the annual monitoring returns covering August 2023 to 31 July 2024, demonstrating Falmouth University's due regard to the Prevent Statutory Duty as required by the Office for Students (OfS). It was confirmed that the risk profile remained low for Falmouth, with minimal reporting of incidents within the last year, with no reportable incidents. Activity within the period was discussed.
- 13.2 Approved:** the report was approved by Academic Board to progress to the Board of Governors for approval.
- 13.3 Action:** introductory presentation on Prevent Duty to feature at the January Academic Board, to provide further information to Members on this topic.
- 14 National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 Q26 Analysis** (DD) [AB/24/105a] ☐

- 14.1 Received:** a paper that provided an in-depth analysis of Q26 from the 2024 NSS, 'How well communicated is information about your university mental wellbeing support services?'. This followed a below national average score for Falmouth in this area in 2024, with the paper exploring the reasons behind this score, and explaining work undertaken in response along with further mitigating actions.
- 14.2 Noted:** various considerations to improve this for students were discussed, including the importance of academics in the promotion to students of wellbeing services, and work to strengthen links between academics and student support, whilst being mindful of academic workloads.
- 14.3 Noted:** the lasting impact of COVID-19 on students and their capacity for proactive engagement with support services was recognised, which further highlighted the necessity for more visible and available support services, particularly at Falmouth Campus. The report highlighted the need for transparency with students to help manage their expectations, with a drive to increase the number of student drop-in sessions, and the promotion of where these were located across both campuses.

## DISCUSSION

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- 15 Planning for National Student Survey (NSS) 2025** (Deans) [Presentation] ☐
- 15.1 Received:** to note, slides pertaining to Faculty strategies to improve the student experience ahead of the 2025 NSS, accompanied by an introductory cover paper. The purpose of the item was to offer assurance to Academic Board that NSS 2025 was being tackled holistically including in collaboration with the SU and FX Plus, with an effective data-driven continuous improvement methodology. Regulatory developments linked to NSS 2025 were also highlighted within this.
- 15.2 Noted:** the Deans provided assurance to Academic Board of their plans for NSS 2025, which consisted of a targeted course approach, working closely with course teams to achieve this; exploring approaches to contact with student support; further work around Q26; and further promotion specific to online students to increase the reach of NSS. The benefit of directly encouraging students to engage with the survey was highlighted as a useful method of empowering student participation in NSS.
- 15.3 Action:** DD to liaise with faculty Deans to promote what student support assistance is available to them ahead of the opening of NSS 2025.
- 16 Learning & Teaching and Research & Knowledge Exchange** (MJ/DP) [AB/24/107] ☐
- Philosophy: side-by-side comparison**
- 16.1 Received:** to note, a paper following an action from the September 2024 Academic Board meeting which had requested a side-by-side comparison of the two philosophies (action 10.6). The paper focused on implementation planning and communication approaches for the philosophies, whilst the annex provided a direct comparison of the philosophies.
- 16.2 Noted:** the philosophies worked cohesively to underpin Falmouth's Mission, Vision and Values.
- 16.3 Noted:** Members queried the promotion of the philosophies to staff and discussion focused around a need for better awareness of them as guidance tools. Planned engagement activities were outlined.



- 16.4 Action:** DP and MJ to meet to discuss increased promotion of the L&T and RKE philosophies across the University to support awareness and adoption.

## REPORTS

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- 17 External Examiner summary report** (BH) [AB/24/108] ☐
- 17.1 Received:** to note, a short summary annual report to provide assurance to Academic Board that the University was consistently meeting the standards expected of courses of higher education.
- 17.2 Noted:** the report provided assurance that courses were overwhelmingly satisfying or exceeding the expectations of our external examiners, and was received positively by the Board.
- 18 Academic Board risk register** (RW) [AB/24/109] ☐
- 18.1 Received:** to note, the latest iteration of the Academic Board risk register, adhering to regulatory requirement and OfS conditions of registration to operate comprehensive corporate risk management and control arrangements.
- 18.2 Noted:** it was highlighted that the cycle of business was in the process of being enhanced to ensure due coverage of all risk topics within the register, at least annually. No changes to risk scoring were recommended, and no new risks were escalated to the Board's attention.

## TO NOTE - SILENT (RECEIVED WITHOUT DISCUSSION)

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- 19 Research Integrity & Ethics Committee report** [AB/24/110] ☐
- 20 Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee report** [AB/24/111] ☐
- 21 Cycle of Business** [AB/24/112] ☐

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TO BE NOTIFIED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE

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- 22 Any other business** – no items of AOB were discussed
- 23 Date, time and location of the next meeting**  
Wednesday, 15 January 2025, 12:30 – 14:30, Online