

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday, 15 January 2025, 12:00 – 14:30, Online

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 Douglas Brown	Dean of the Faculty of Screen, Technology & Performance, and Associate Professor
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]
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

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
Diane Grannell (DG)	Independent Member of the Board of Governors
Helen Norman (HN)	Head of Student Access & Success [Introductory Presentation only]

1.4 Apologies

Professor Lee Miller (LM)	Head of Postgraduate Research [Co-opted Member]
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2 Chair's Welcome

(EH) [Verbal]

- 2.1 Noted:** the Chair provided a warm welcome to Independent Member of the Board of Governors, DG, who was observing the meeting alongside the link Independent Member of the Board of Governors for Academic Board, TL. Members were provided with an overview of Academic Board's role and responsibilities, and key agenda items and Terms

of Reference were highlighted.

a) Register and declarations of interests

2.2 Noted: the Board had accepted Halpin's recommendation within the external governance review to introduce a new register and routine declarations of interests for Academic Board. Members were informed that they would be invited at the start of each meeting to declare any conflicts or potential conflicts of interest relevant to items on the agenda; and that a silent paper detailing members' registered interests would be provided every other meeting, from March 2025.

2.3 Noted: no interests relevant to the agenda were declared, and members were thanked for their engagement with the formal declaration process, which had been completed by all.

INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

3 Access and Participation Plan activities (HN) [[Presentation](#)] ☐

3.1 Received: to note, a presentation which gave an overview of the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) and related activities. The [latest iteration](#) of University' APP had been approved by the Office for Students (OfS) in 2023, and outlined how the University intended to improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. The presentation provided key highlights from the annual report, inclusive of key interventions that had been delivered within the reporting year, which covered the whole student life-cycle.

3.2 Noted: the APP was a key pillar of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Commitment, and it was confirmed that the wider EDI Annual Report and full APP Annual Report were provided later on the agenda for the Board's review [AB/25/010].

3.3 Noted: the University was currently meeting 10 out of the 11 quantitative targets for 2024-25. Early adoption of the APP was highlighted as having put the University in a positive position at the start of the academic year. Members thanked HN for her visible commitment to achieving the ambitions within the APP, and insightful presentation.

MAIN AGENDA

4 Minutes (EH) [AB/25/001] ☒

4.1 Noted: the Chair reminded the Board that all Academic Board minutes, from September 2024, would be published on the University's governance webpages. The Board was asked going forward to review and approve minutes conscious of their release for public consumption. A delay was built into the publication schedule to minimise the need to redact information.

4.2 Approved: the minutes of the 7 November 2024 meeting as an accurate record of the meeting.

5 Matters arising (BH) [AB/25/002] ☐

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 nine actions, and was satisfied with the progress updates provided for the remaining seven open actions.

- 6 Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive's report** (EH) [AB/25/003] ☐
- 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; changes within the University's senior management; the Government's announcement to increase the cap on undergraduate student tuition fees; University news and successes; and a summary of the Vice-Chancellor's external advocacy activities.
- 6.2 Noted:** the Chair introduced recent adjustments to the senior management team, the internal appointments of: Mark Ricketts as Senior Head of Strategic Transformation; Wayne Evans as Director of Planning & Business Intelligence Services; Christine Turton as Chief People Officer; and Anna Brown as Director of Marketing & Engagement.
- 6.3 Noted:** following the announcement by the [Secretary of State for Education](#) of the increase to the cap on undergraduate student tuition fees, members were informed that an extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors had been scheduled for 17 January 2025 to approve the University's fee levels for 2025-26 for new and continuing students in light of this announcement, the outcomes of which would be communicated as soon as appropriate.
- 6.4 Noted:** a briefing was provided on the [English Devolution White Paper](#), published by the Government on 16 December 2025, and complex related local and regional politics, as well as implications of Mayoral Strategic Authority status on access to external funding, all of which were being closely monitored by the University.
- 7 Students' Union President's report** (JL) [AB/25/004] ☐
- 7.1 Received:** to note, the standing item report from the elected Students' Union (SU) President which included Students' Union (SU) updates; the SU's publication of Solace; key trends from the recent Student:Staff Liaison Groups (SSLGs); an overview of outputs from the recent SU Big Rep Meeting; case studies of SU Student Project Fund projects; and SU student engagement data from Study Block 1. The President provided a full introduction to her report.
- 7.2 Noted:** the President highlighted key positive and negative student feedback trends from the recent round of SSLG meetings. This included opportunity to improve in some academic departments: the fee model for late equipment returns, timeliness of assessment feedback, consistency of Individual Learning Plan acknowledgement by academic staff, and timetable changes. Examples of positive feedback and an overall positive response to SSLGs from students were also highlighted.
- 7.3 Noted:** TL commended the SSLG process, highlighting the balanced and constructive approach to addressing difficult issues, which would aid the prevention of escalation to complaints and appeals. He also praised the SU's proactive effort to enhance student representation and support for online students.
- 7.4 Noted:** low student engagement with new SU events and activities on Falmouth Campus was reported and Members commented on broader challenges with engagement with extracurricular activities on Falmouth Campus, due to different social spaces and opening times. Ongoing work to enhance the breadth of extracurricular activities and culture on the campus were highlighted by members, inclusive of the library re-development and extension of library opening times, academic-led activities, and proactive development of the presence of the SU – continued focus by the SU on Falmouth Campus student engagement was encouraged by the Board.

- 7.5 Action:** JL, DD, MJ & AH to meet to discuss campus opening hours and opportunities to enhance student engagement with extracurricular activities on the Falmouth Campus.
- 7.6 Noted:** Members congratulated the SU on the publication of [Solace](#), a collaborative zine created between the SU and the African Caribbean Society, exploring personal stories of life as a person of colour living in Cornwall.
- 7.7 Noted:** the Chair requested that the issues raised by the SU from the SSLGs be addressed by Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee (LTQC), utilising the expertise within its sub-committee structure as appropriate, and that a report on these matters be brought back to Academic Board for assurance in due course. The Chair praised the breadth of activity covered within the report as well as the President's clear commitment to the enhancement of the student experience.
- 7.8 Action:** a summary of the University's response to the SSLG feedback trends shared by the SU to be routed from Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee to Academic Board via the PVC Academic Services report. On an ongoing basis, it was highlighted that the SU's SSLG feedback trends should be routed via LTQC ahead of Academic Board. (RC)
- 8 Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Academic Services** (RC) [AB/25/005] ☐
- 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 provided an update and assurance on student cases and complaints – inclusive of disciplinary procedures, as well as associated trends and analysis.
- 8.2 Noted:** the PVC provided an overview of the latest student cases and complaints data, along with an overview of work being undertaken in preparation for the incoming Office for Students (OfS) E6 Condition of Registration. A year-on-year reduction in the volume of student cases and complaints was reported alongside an increase in the complexity of individual cases, the resolution of which had often required input from multiple teams across the University. Insight around case trends was shared and considered.
- 8.3 Noted:** assurance was provided to the Board that recommendations from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator had been incorporated into the University's academic policies and procedures, as detailed within the paper.
- 8.4 Noted:** Members highlighted the impact of involvement with complex student cases and complaints on staff wellbeing, with discussion emphasising that members should ensure their teams were aware of the support available to staff, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- 8.5 Noted:** it was advised that the visibility, sector wide, of the incoming E6 Condition of Registration may result in increased reporting. An overview of activity to support preparedness for the August 2025 E6 implementation deadline was provided, which was being overseen by a dedicated working group. The Chair thanked the group for their work in this important area.
- 8.6 Noted:** Members highlighted a notable improvement to the Games Academy's data regarding volume of student cases and complaints, which evidenced the success of the pilot initiated in 2023-24 following review of the previous years' data. The Dean (DB) and wider staff involved with the pilot were congratulated by the Chair on this result, the learnings from which would support the University's readiness for E6.

- 8.7 Action:** RC to meet with the Chief People Officer and Head of People Success to discuss the adequacy of training and support for staff managing challenging and complex student cases and complaints. A summary of the resources available to staff to be shared with the Board for awareness, along with communications to support wider awareness. (RC)
- 9 Pro Vice-Chancellor: Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE) (DP) [AB/25/006] ☐**
- 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 RKE strategic developments and policies, inclusive of the University's progress toward an application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAPs) and readiness for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029; an update on the RKE Staff Support scheme; information on the live portfolio of external funding activity; and updates on the University's research environment and Postgraduate Research activity.
- 9.2 Noted:** it was confirmed that following the OfS' decision to temporarily pause their acceptance of applications for degree awarding powers of all categories, work toward the submission of the University's application for RDAPs had continued to the same timeline. This was due to extensive investment into this key strategic project, which was at an advanced stage of completion. Members involved with the production of the draft critical self analysis were thanked for their contributions, and the next phases of the project were outlined.
- 9.3 Noted:** following the devolvement to Faculties of the remaining Research England funding for the Staff Support Scheme, the Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Funding Committee had processed twelve applications. Changes to application processes were outlined which had enabled a sharpened focus on alignment with Faculty RKE plans, and were reported and confirmed by members as working well.
- 9.4 Noted:** an update was given on the Higher Education-Business & Community Interaction (HEB-CI) survey submitted in December 2024. The University's ranking had been negatively impacted by changes to the definition of a spin-out, as well as a new requirement to submit supporting Companies House data for start-ups, previously taken from the Graduate Outcomes Survey data. The Head of Knowledge Exchange & Impact and others had been working with sector bodies to address these changes with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which would negatively impact Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) funding across a number of universities, inclusive of Falmouth.
- 9.5 Noted:** the University's latest preparations for REF2029 were introduced, which included ensuring staff were correctly coded as Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), with the importance of staff Performance Development Review (PDR) processes highlighted. A survey in September 2024 had identified 102 staff members with SRR, which equated to 81.5 FTE. The University had also been developing a portfolio of exemplar practice research outputs and enhancing staff awareness of Open Access compliance.
- 9.6 Noted:** the PVC provided updates on external funding applications, which included the UK Shared Prosperity Fund's (SPF) approval of £47 million for Launchpad Futures Year 4, subject to detailed business case. Members highlighted that this was a significant achievement given high competition for access to this fund, and thanked those involved with the application process.

DECISIONS

10 University Mental Health Charter (DD/JY/RC) [AB/25/007] ☒

10.1 Received: to endorse for submission, the proposed self-assessment for the University's application for University Mental Health Charter Award (UMHC) accreditation. Following a University Executive Board (UEB) decision to progress toward accreditation in September 2022, a significant programme of work had been undertaken to assess current practice against the Charter's Principles of Good Practice; identify and address gaps and development needs; and draw up the self-assessment document that was presented for critical review by Academic Board.

10.2 Noted: the different domains of the Charter, which had been divided into four workstreams, were discussed. Workstream leads spoke to the work undertaken to support the achievement of accreditation in the following areas:

- **LEARN** – focused on various aspects of the educational experience inclusive of transition into study; learning and teaching; progression between levels of study; and employability; with emphasis on embedding healthy curricular themes across courses.
- **WORK** – focused on people success, inclusive of staff well-being, development, leadership strategy and policy, training opportunities and accessible support; with emphasis on embedding mental health awareness in teams across the University.
- **SUPPORT** – focused on the University's central welfare, wellbeing, and mental health services, inclusive of the delivery of central services; engagement with local external services to join up support; clinical governance and risk; student communications; and peer support programmes.
- **LIVE** – focused on the broader lived experience of students and non-academic side of university life, inclusive of student communication and collaboration; peer support programmes; student representation; support for specific student communities; and the enrichment of the student experience through the campus grounds.

10.3 Noted: the UMHC scrutiny visit had been agreed for March 2025, and an overview of what could be expected as part of the scrutiny processes was provided and discussed. It was confirmed that to date the Charter had been awarded to only a small proportion of the sector, and that the scrutiny was anticipated to be wide-ranging and thorough.

10.4 Noted: feedback on the draft UMHC self-assessment was invited and discussed, which included the need to provide a strong evidence base to qualify gaps or barriers; opportunity to strengthen contextual information on the University's specialisms; and better signposting for the role of academics in supporting student mental health – all of which would be picked up in the next stages of drafting.

10.5 Noted: involvement of the SU in the University's submission was queried and it was confirmed, with thanks, that the SU President had proactively and independently led the student aspect of the submission.

10.6 Noted: Members' highlighted the importance of the University's investment to support the mental health of its campus communities and the need for continued vigilance,

innovation and improvement post submission, and if successful, post accreditation. Benefits of the self-assessment process and scrutiny were emphasised (regardless of outcome).

10.7 Action: Members were invited to provide any further written feedback by circulation as soon as possible to workstream leads (RC, JY, DD) (no later than 20 January 2025), who would address alongside the comments noted in 10.4.

10.8 Endorsed: the proposed submission for University Mental Health Charter Award accreditation, subject to final drafting adjustments, which would be scrutinised by the UMHC Steering Group on 22 January 2025.

11 Governance Effectiveness Review implementation update (RW) [AB/25/008] ☒

11.1 Received: to note, a paper that provided an overview of progress against the implementation plan that had been formally approved by the Board of Governors on 22 November 2024 following the 2024 external review of governance effectiveness.

11.2 Noted: Academic Board confirmed satisfactory completion of eight actions and closure of four actions, which would be archived from the tracker. New developments to strengthen governance were outlined, and members commented positively on progress since the previous meeting.

11.3 Noted: the Board were asked to approve changes to the academic governance structure which responded to feedback from the external review. The rationale for the proposed changes was introduced and considered, which included the removal of the Continuous Improvement Committee (continuous improvement processes would continue without change) and Employability Committee (which would continue as a steering group and continue to report to the Boards as per the ordinary cycle of business); and movement of the Faculty Committees into the academic governance structure, reporting to Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee (LTQC) with a clear connection to Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee, instead of University Management Committee (UMC).

11.4 Noted: the Board discussed related changes to its sub-committee Terms of Reference, in particular, the Faculty Committee Terms of Reference, which had been adjusted following consultation with the Deans, their Servicing Officers, RC, and BH.

11.5 Action: LTQC to consider: the appropriateness of Faculty Committee accountability for student recruitment, as expressed within the Terms of Reference; allowing provision for a nominated alternate to Head of Subject within the membership, where appropriate; as well as inclusion of clear reference to progression alongside retention within the document. (Deans/BH)

11.6 Approved: the changes to the academic governance structure and related Terms of Reference as proposed, subject to completion of action 11.5.

12 Academic Business Case: Central Film School (RC) [AB/25/009] ☒

12.1 Received: for approval, the introduction of two undergraduate courses and one postgraduate course by validation partner, Central Film School: BA(Hons) Post-Production & VFX; BA(Hons) Post-Production & VFX with Integrated Foundation Year; and MA Virtual Production. The courses had been supported to progress to Academic Board following rigorous scrutiny by UMC and Partnership Quality Committee (PQC), which had included examination of business case specifics, academic rigor, and KPIs inclusive of student retention statistics.

- 12.2 Noted:** RC outlined the assurance process for the approval of academic partnership courses, and informed the Board of developments to academic partnership quality review processes.
- 12.3 Approved:** two new undergraduate courses and one postgraduate course to be delivered by validation partner, Central Film School - to progress to Course Approval Event.

DISCUSSION

- 13 Continuous Improvement overview** (RC) [[Presentation](#)] ☐
- 13.1 Received:** to note, linked to the removal of the CIC approved within section 11, an overview of the University's Continuous Improvement (CI) processes was presented for the Board's awareness and assurance. CI processes had been revised in 2023 to sharpen focus on forward action planning rather than retrospective performance reviews, and to better align with regulatory drivers and the University's Annual Plan. The processes had a strong focus on data-informed decision-making and targeted interventions to maximise the impact of the processes on the student experience and key metrics.
- 13.2 Noted:** the presentation included the deployment of business intelligence dashboards to course teams, in order to automate performance reporting and support a proactive course improvement culture, along with roles and responsibilities for CI. A key aspect of the revised process was the dissemination and sharing of best practice across faculties and departments to foster a culture of continuous improvement and learning.
- 13.3 Noted:** the Deans welcomed the move to integrate oversight of continuous improvement processes into LTQC and Faculty Committees, with the importance of sharing good practice across the faculties emphasised.
- 13.4 Action:** Short Course Quality Committee, to develop a proportionate Continuous Improvement process or principles for short course provision. (RC and RI)
- 14 Faculty Continuous Improvement (CI) report** (Deans) [[Presentation](#)] ☐
- 14.1 Received:** a presentation which provided an overview from each of the Deans on CI activity within their respective faculties. Various CI initiatives and actions taken to improve the student experience, inclusive of preparations for the National Student Survey 2025 (NSS), were highlighted. These initiatives were being developed and delivered both locally and institutionally through a multitude of strategies.
- 14.2 Noted:** key initiatives were well summarised within the slides.
- 14.3 Noted:** Members were impressed by the multi-layered and innovative approaches shared by the Deans, that were data-informed and proactively addressed various sources of student feedback. The necessity of different approaches and innovations, tailored to the needs and characters of students from different subject areas, was emphasised by the Chair, along with the importance of sharing successes and innovation.
- 15 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report (2023-24)** (RC/JY) [AB/25/010] ☒
- 15.1 Received:** to endorse for presentation to the Board of Governors for approval and publication, a report that provided assurance regarding the University's Public Sector Equality Duty along with an update on key EDI initiatives that had advanced during the

2023-24 academic year. This report was structured in alignment with the core objectives within the University's published [Statement of Commitment](#).

- 15.2 Noted:** focus had remained on the three identified priority areas which had substantially progressed: (1) delivering on Falmouth's Access and Participation Plan (APP), (2) achieving University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) accreditation and (3) workforce enablement. These efforts reflected a whole-University approach and ongoing response to both community and societal needs.
- 15.3 Noted:** diversification across student demographic profiles was projected to increase alongside the development of the University's short course provision, through the Academy of Continuing Education (ACE). The potential for this diversification to have an interesting impact on data within future EDI reports was highlighted.
- 15.4 Noted:** members shared key points of progress within the reporting period. Positive internal mobility data was highlighted – 66% of staff appointments within the reporting period had been internal.
- 15.5 Endorsed:** the report was well received, with its focus on continuous improvement and the integration of EDI principles across various University functions and initiatives welcomed. The Board endorsed the report for presentation to the Board of Governors and publication.
- 16 Environmental Sustainability Annual Report (2023-24)** (RC) [AB/25/011] ☒
- 16.1 Received:** to endorse for presentation to the Board of Governors for approval and publication, the Learning & Teaching section of the draft Environmental Sustainability Annual Report.
- 16.2 Noted:** progress made across the Learning & Teaching theme was highlighted, in particular activity linked to the integration of sustainability into the curriculum. The report included case studies that demonstrated progress within the reporting year, and it was highlighted that focus had been evolving within the current academic year following the approval of updated [Environmental Sustainability Commitment](#) at the end of the reporting year. It was highlighted that next year's report would include progress linked to the new Research & Knowledge Exchange theme.
- 16.3 Noted:** Members highlighted opportunity to enhance the report, which did not capture fully the breadth of relevant activity within the year, for example, the omission of reference to the University's portfolio of sustainability-focussed short courses. Changes recommended by University Executive Board on 14 January 2025 were outlined by the Chair, and it was confirmed that the report was being re-worked in response to feedback.
- 16.4 Action:** Members to provide any detailed feedback on the Environmental Sustainability Report to RC/RW no later than 20 January 2025.

TO NOTE - SILENT (RECEIVED WITHOUT DISCUSSION)

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| 17 | How your fees are spent – a guide for students | [AB/25/012] | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 | Research Integrity & Ethics Committee report | [AB/25/013] | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 | Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee report | [AB/25/014] | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TO BE NOTIFIED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE

20 Board Away Day – Research Degree Awarding Powers (EH) [Verbal]

20.1 Noted: the Chair introduced the joint strategic session between Academic Board, the Board of Governors, and University Executive Board, scheduled on 30 January 2025. It was highlight that the focus of the deep-dive was the University's application for Research Degree Awarding Powers, with social time to connect the three Boards arranged as part of the event.

21 Date, time and location of the next meeting

Wednesday, 12 March 2025, 12:30 – 14:30, Online