FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday, 12 March 2025, 12:30 – 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 (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

1.3   In attendance

Dr Tadhg Leane (TL)	Independent Member of the Board of Governors
John Boddy (JB)	Head of Fashion & Textiles [Introductory Presentation only]

1.4   Apologies

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
Robert Ingram (RI)	Senior Head of Academy of Continuing Education
David McCarron (DMc)	Head of Recruitment, Outreach & Admissions [Professional Services Staff Member [Elected Member]
Dr Brian Hoskin (BH)	Head of Quality Assurance & Enhancement [Secretary]
Mary Flewitt (MF)	Governance & Executive Support Officer [Clerk, minutes were taken from a recording of the meeting]

1.5   Noted: the Chair provided an outline of apologies, which had been agreed with the Chair in advance of the meeting. The meeting was quorate.

2   Chair's welcome

2.1   Noted: Members were provided with an overview of key agenda items and meeting objectives.

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   The Devonshire Collection of Period Costume   (JB)   [Presentation]

3.1   Received: to note, an overview of the newly acquired Devonshire Collection of Period Costume, that had been relocated from Totnes Museum to Falmouth University's Fashion & Textile Institute (FTI), following the museum's closure. The collection was to benefit FTI through enhancement of the University's costume design and fashion provision, both externally and internally, making Falmouth the only UK university with an in-house collection of this scale and significance.

3.2   Noted: the objectives of the collection also included providing public access, learning experiences, exhibitions, conferences, workshops, and promoting research and publishing related studies. JB talked on the future focus for the collection, which consisted of development of postgraduate and short courses; digitisation; creating a virtual museum; and partnering with local museums and the National Trust. The Chair thanked JB for an insightful presentation, and congratulated all involved for their efforts in making the project happen.

MAIN AGENDA

4   Minutes   (EH)   [AB/25/015]   ☒

4.1   Approved: the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025 were approved for publication on the website..

5   Matters arising   (RW)   [AB/25/016]   ☐

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

5.2   Noted: it was highlighted that the number of outstanding actions had been reduced to six due to proactive responses from members, and appreciation for the progress made was expressed.

5.3   Noted: Academic Board confirmed completion of six actions, and was satisfied with the progress updates provided for the remaining six open actions.

5 a)   Effectiveness Review Implementation update   (RW)   [AB/25/16a]   ☐

5.4   Received: to note, an update on the progress with the Board-approved implementation plan following the 2024 Halpin Review of Governance.

5.5   Noted: RW highlighted that the implementation of actions related to Academic Board was ahead of plan (14 of 22 actions, 65%) and summarised key areas of focus for the upcoming period until the May 2025 meeting. These consisted of the development of the Team Charter for Academic Board; development of the external web page for academic governance including profiles for members; and the establishment of an election plans.

INTRODUCTORY REPORTS

6   Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive's report   (EH)   [AB/25/017]   ☐

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; University news and successes; and a summary of the Vice-Chancellor's external advocacy activities.

6.2   **Noted:** that the university sector was in financial crisis and as a result there was enhanced regulatory focus on financial sustainability. The Chair emphasised that in order to achieve the University's Mission and Vision against an increasingly complex and volatile backdrop, the whole University community would have to come together to embrace change. It was confirmed that work on the University's strategic transformation had been accelerating, with a focus on the development of the three business units which make up the University's core business: On Campus, Online, and On Demand (Academy for Continuing Education).

6.3   **Noted:** the impact of local and national politics on the University was highlighted, including the upcoming local Cornwall Council and parish/town council elections, local government reorganisation and the Devolution agenda.

6.4   **Noted:** the Chair shared details of external engagements, inclusive of separate visits by the President of UUK, as well as the Chair, Chief Executive, and Director Policy & Strategy of GuildHE. Both had shared positive feedback about Falmouth's innovative approaches and vibrancy. The Chair emphasised the importance of ongoing external advocacy to promote and position the University within its shifting external context.

6.5   **Noted:** the Chair also highlighted that the Chair of the Office for Students had been appointed, Professor Edward Peck, with further changes anticipated from the regulator following this key appointment.

6.6   **Noted:** Members highlighted the value of the Vice-Chancellor's report and encouraged wider sharing of key activities and external engagements with staff to boost staff awareness of the activities taking place on behalf of the whole University. It was highlighted that development of a communication plan for of all of Academic Board outputs, inclusive of the Vice-Chancellor's report, was a key action within the governance review implementation plan, and that the publication of the minutes was to also serve as a method of boosting awareness of the Board's outputs externally.

7   **Students' Union President's report**   (JL)   [AB/25/018]   ☐
7.1   **Received:** to note, the standing item report from the elected Students' Union (SU) President which included: Students' Union (SU) updates; election news; online student experience focus; paid opportunity for students to create this year's SU awards; development of Falmouth Campus presence; SU awards nominations; and information on the costs of hiring space on campus for clubs and societies. The President provided a full introduction to her report.

7.2   **Noted**: the President reported on a successful election campaign, with the largest turnout since 2019 which highlighted an increase in student engagement. The current President had been re-elected for 2025-26, with BA(Hons) Popular Music student, Aisha Lord, being elected as the first Falmouth Vice-President. Congratulations were passed to both Jadelle and Aisha for their re-election and election.

7.3   **Noted:** discussions had been had with online course advisors around what the SU could offer for online students. Covered topics included societies; the Student project fund; the Make Change program; and advice services, all of which could cater to online students. Additionally, there had been discussion about encouraging online students to

start societies before they began their journey with the University, in order to boost engagement and inclusion within that demographic. It was highlighted that the advisors had found this information very helpful as they had previously not been aware of the breadth of services offered.

7.4 **Noted:** as a drive towards boosting student engagement on Falmouth Campus, the President had been working towards increased events there, she highlighted recent activities at the Fox Cafe, which had successfully attracted many students with the hopes of further expansion. Following ongoing discussions with FX Plus about extending Fox Cafe's opening hours, a trial period of one month for a 19:00 closing time had been agreed on. Additionally, there were plans to install a table football and create a board game section to enhance this key social space.

7.5 **Noted:** a proposal from a music society student regarding space booking costs at AMATA (Performance Centre) for clubs and societies was addressed, which had highlighted the need for exploration of fair costs for student-led activities. The Dean of Faculty, DB, confirmed that dialogue had been constructive with the SU on this issue, and confirmed discounted pricing information and commitment to keep prices stable, reasonable and fair. DB highlighted positively the effectiveness of the SU Forum system that had brought this issue to light.

7.6 **Noted:** Members were informed that nominations for the SU Awards had opened, which would celebrate brilliant projects and people (students and staff) that had improved the student experience. Members were encouraged to promote the opportunity and to submit nominations.

8 **Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Academic Services** (RC) [AB/25/019] ☐
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 on relevant regulatory developments; University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) application update; and an update on completion rates for the 2025 National Student Survey (NSS).

8.2 **Noted:** the PVC reported two key consultations from the Office for Students (OfS) and Department for Education (DfE): the first consultation (DfE) focused on academic partnership franchise provision, requiring providers with over 300 students to register with the OfS by 2028-29. The second consultation (OfS) introduced new conditions of registration for new providers, involving additional paperwork and governance documentation. Links to these consultations are 'Consultation on two new initial conditions of registration' and 'Franchising in higher education'.

8.3 **Noted:** members were reminded that the assessment team from Student Minds for the University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) application were visiting on 18 and 19 March 2025. An overview of the scope of the visit was provided.

8.4 **Noted:** it was highlighted that the National Student Survey completion rate was tracking better than the previous year, and members were thanked for their promotion of the survey.

8a **Mid-year student retention report** (RC) [AB/25/020] ☐
8.4 **Received:** to note, the annual mid-year student retention report which reviewed Falmouth's relative student retention performances with respect to the same point in previous years, and offered a separate deep dive into retention of the University's online provision, as well as some provocations to inform forward action planning.

8.5 **Noted:** RC reported that retention at the University-wide level had continued to improve year-on-year, inclusive of data presented under the on-campus business units and included performance across all faculties. Postgraduate retention was variable but within expected levels based on previous years data trends. It was highlighted that online retention performance were better than sector expectations, with Falmouth trends well below the sector benchmark of c.20% (attrition). Factors such as personal and financial circumstances were noted as directly impacting retention behaviours, noting online students often intermitted and returned, while on-campus students tended to withdraw completely. Partnership retention was reported as being within expected quality standards and subject to review within Partnership Quality Committee.

8.6 **Noted**: discussion was had on the retention performance data and their implications for the University. TL noted the front-loaded nature of retention issues, particularly in early years. Members inquired about the application of the new conditions to existing providers, which were clarified as not applicable to Falmouth as they only impact new providers. The registration process consultation for franchise partners was discussed, with explanations about progress and potential delays due to OfS capacity issues.

8.7 **Noted:** emphasis was placed on understanding the reasons behind positive retention performance and ways to sustain it, with upcoming National Student Survey (NSS) data from our undergraduate online courses expected to provide further insights. The importance of considering retention metrics as part of key sector benchmarking such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and other initiatives was also highlighted, along with an awareness of the benefits of face-to-face events on positive online retention and student satisfaction.

9 **Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC): Research & Knowledge Exchange** (DP)   [AB/25/021]   ☒
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: a Creative Industries Sector Body update; developments to Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Annual Plan Metrics; Postgraduate Research (PGR) application progress; Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 guidance; external funding successes; Nexus plans; and On Demand developments.

9.2 **Noted:** the PVC spoke on updates from the Creative Industries Sector Body, including work undertaken to align local industrial strategy with national goals, utilising the Great South West Partnership Board's commissioned 'At the Edge' report. Members were also informed of recent additions to the Centre of Blended Realities staff *[Redacted].*

9.3 **Noted:** changes were reported within the methodology for REF2029, which would see a requirement for collaboration with the Knowledge Exchange team in order to accurately identify staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR).

9.4 **Noted:** an overview of proposed revisions to the University's top-level Annual Plan Metrics was provided, which addressed (1) the amended timescale for the next Research Excellence Framework exercise (from 2028 to 2029) and (2) an alternative to the previously utilised biannual AdvanceHE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) with a bespoke annual internal survey, 'Research Pulse', which had been designed, with Research Degrees Committee oversight, to provide better quality data at lower cost, while retaining a comparable overall satisfaction measure.

9.5 **Endorsed:** members endorsed the recommended changes to the Annual Plan Metrics to be progressed to the Board of Governors for approval.

9.6 **Noted:** minor adjustments to the Intellectual Property (IP) Policy were explained for the Board's awareness, these were sufficiently minor that they did not require formal Board approval. It was confirmed that a more thorough review of the IP Policy was scheduled for the autumn 2025 meeting.

9.7 **Noted:** updates were given on external funding applications, totalling £3.7 million since the last Academic Board. An update was also provided of recent successful bids, including the University's first collaborative doctoral award with Historic England and English Heritage that will produce a fully funded studentship role, to be implemented alongside other Expanding Excellence in England (E3) funded roles. Launchpad Futures had also been granted an extension, along with the pilot Cornwall Angel Network investor workshop.

9.8 **Noted:** a positive trajectory was also reported for Post Graduate Research (PGR) applications, with 90 applications having been received, 35 shortlisted, and 23 business cases granted approval.

9a **Research Degree Awarding Powers – draft CSA** (DP) [AB/25/022] ☐

9.9 **Received:** to note, a paper that provided an update on progress towards the University's strategic objective of achieving Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP). The paper provided draft three of the Critical Self-Assessment (CSA) and included details of the approach to preparing the application and included a timeline to submission. A key purpose of the paper was to seek Academic Board volunteers to support the next stages of the CSA review and editing.

9.10 **Noted:** despite the OfS decision to pause applications for Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) until August, the University had continued along its original timeline and had successfully met all eligibility criteria, thanks to staff completion of the RDAP survey. RH and TL volunteered to assist with supporting next stages, which was warmly endorsed by the Chair and PVC.

9.11 **Action:** Academic Board members interested in supporting the RDAP CSA editing and review process to contact DP.

DISCUSSION

10 **Three business units – on campus, online, on demand** (MR) [Presentation] ☐

10.1 **Received:** to note, a presentation which outlined the methodology for the transformation of the University's three core business units On Campus, Online and On Demand (the Academy of Continuing Education (ACE)) along with key points of progress, which had started with the project to transition the remaining Falmouth Flexible courses delivered through an academic partnership to be entirely in-house (Falmouth Online). The transformation approach would prioritise initiatives across these three business units, with a focus on delivering the Mission and Vision, the Annual Plan, and managing the key organisational risks, while remaining on the lookout for new opportunities.

10.2 **Noted:** it was confirmed that each business unit was at different stages of its transformation journey, and that transformation was planned over two to three-year horizons, which would balance long-term planning with short-term imperatives. It was confirmed that the three business units approach was not about creating silos and would identify synergies between the business units, and enable an integrated

approach. It was confirmed that the approach would include regular updates and awareness-raising among internal audiences, inclusive of Academic Board, who would be kept informed and consulted on the developments.

10.3 **Noted**: the Chair highlighted the importance of the enhanced transparency around financial performance that would be achieved through the business unit approach, and highlighted three other key strategic focal points: on the lookout (for new opportunities), en pointe (ensuring quality and compliance), and on the rocks (de-prioritising to enable due focus on priorities).

10.4 **Noted:** Members welcomed the progress, and discussed scope to expand the University's micro-credential offer (examples of current offer and potential opportunities were outlined) within the On Demand transformation agenda.

11 **Online Transformation Roadmap** (JS) [Presentation] ☐

11.1 **Received:** to note, the Online transformation roadmap, which outlined the key challenges, new course delivery models and key progress to date. The roadmap had been designed to expand the goals and processes of Falmouth Online, to improve experiences for students and staff by providing a clear and structured inclusive plan. Aligned with the University's Mission, Vision, and Values, its aim was to bring online colleagues together, fostering collaboration and a sense of direction.

11.2 **Noted:** Members discussed the Roadmap, with emphasis on its agile nature and the intentional absence of specific timelines to recognise need for flexibility within the delivery of the initiatives. There was mention of the need for technical support in online delivery, particularly for skills-based learning, and the possibility of incorporating this into the staffing and support review. Additionally, the decision to update and maintain a process for course updates and module modifications, despite its increased efficiency, was explained as necessary to uphold high accessibility standards and ensure rigorous checks by learning designers.

12 **Academic Board Risk Register review** (RW) [AB/25/023] ☐

12.1 **Received:** for discussion, a paper which provided an overview of the latest assessment of the risks monitored by Academic Board. This paper followed the University's triannual risk review exercise, and encompassed visual analysis of the red strategic and corporate compliance risks relevant to Academic Board, along with prompts to support a risk horizon scanning discussion. All risks had been reviewed by risk owners and operational leads. Members discussed the accuracy and completeness of the risk register and highlighted several key points liked to the academic risk landscape.

12.2 **Noted**: the risk management approach for the 'graduate outcomes' risk was outlined, inclusive of measures implemented to improve employability services and support for students, various steps taken to respond to outputs and learnings from the latest Graduate Outcome Survey, and the development of an employability framework.

12.3 **Action:** Employability framework to be presented to the May Academic Board meeting. (AMG)

12.4 **Noted:** an overview of the 'B Conditions of Registration' risk management approach was also provided, inclusive of mapping undertaken by Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) team assure the strength of compliance against the different conditions for different categories of provision. Key linked risk factors to this risk included student retention and progression, curriculum currency and staff qualifications.

12.5   **Noted:** a potential gap in relation to coverage of research ambition delivery within the risk register was identified, which was aligned with the Board's Terms of Reference.

12.6   **Action:** a new research ambition-related risk(s) to be added to Academic Board's risk register, encompassing delivery of research ambitions, success in securing funding, and the visibility and impact of research. (DP/RW)

12.7   **Noted**: Members considered another potential gap in relation to People & Culture risks, broader than Trade Union relations and industrial action.

12.8   **Action:** RW to discuss with the Chief People Officer the inclusion of staff recruitment/retention/wellbeing risks within Academic Board's risk register. (RW)

12.9   **Noted:** the Board supported the scores proposed for the existing risks within the risk register, with no changes proposed.

13   **Academic Board Team Charter development**   (RW)   [AB/25/024]   ☐
13.1   **Received:** for discussion, a proposal to develop a Team Charter for Academic Board as a tool to support governance effectiveness and positive boardroom dynamics, underpinned and aligned with the University's Mission, Vision and Values and the Terms of Reference for Academic Board. This was an action within the implementation plan from the external review of governance effectiveness that would support transparency activities. All members were invited to share their thoughts about what encapsulated the ethos and behaviours of Academic Board.

13.2   **Noted:** all Members reflected on Academic Board's merits and uniqueness, highlighting key words and phrases that captured the culture and ways of working of the Board. This discussion would inform an early draft Charter, which would be produced for discussion in the next meeting.

13.3   **Action:** initial Team Charter draft to be produced for discussion in the next meeting of Academic Board (RW)

DECISIONS

14   **New course business case: Integrated Masters**   (RC)   [AB/25/025]   ☒
14.1   **Received:** for approval, a business case for a new Combined Arts Integrated Masters (Online) with up to three separate pathways: creativity, design, and technology. A full introduction to the proposed course was provided, which would be the first of its kind for Falmouth.

14.2   **Noted:** it was confirmed that, under current OfS published guidance, an Integrated Masters was the only postgraduate course category that was eligible for the Lifelong Learning Entitlement which was a factor in its selection for this business case. The nature of the combined arts basis and course design presented in this business case lends itself to both Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE) and the Academy of Continuing Education (ACE) overlaps in a joined up way for the University. The proposal had been recommended by University Executive Board and University Management Committee.

14.3   **Approved:** Academic Board approved the business case to progress onward to the Course Approval event.

15   Academic Policy Developments

a)   Student Sexual Misconduct Policy   (RC)   [AB/25/026] ☒

15.1   Received: for approval, a new Student Sexual Misconduct Policy with the objective of ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all students. The policy had been produced by the Condition E6 working group in readiness for the E6 Condition of Registration which was due to come into effect from 1 August 2025. The scope of the policy included students from all types of learning provision, including academic partners, and was to be complemented by other E6 compliance activities.

15.2   Noted: the Board discussed the draft policy. It was confirmed that the policy had been reviewed by the internal Legal and Compliance Team, and Members advised that external legal advice should be considered to provide further assurance, given scope for legal challenges in this area. Additionally, Members queried the visibility and reporting of trends arising from the Speak Out reporting tool, highlighting this as an important data source. It was confirmed that the tool was in the process of being reviewed.

15.3   Action: consider seeking external legal advice to ensure the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy meets all necessary standards. (RC)

15.4   Action: review the Falmouth and Exeter Speak Out reporting tool to ensure it meets the requirements of the E6 condition and confirm approach to reporting data/trends arising from this tool at Academic Board. (RC/DD)

15.5   Not approved: Academic Board welcomed the progress with the development of the policy and requested that it was brought back to the next meeting of Academic Board, with the two action points above addressed before it can be considered for approval.

16   Delegation framework

a)   Academic partnerships   (RW)   [AB/25/027] ☒

16.1   Received: for approval, an update to the delegation framework for academic partnerships, approved in May 2024. Adjustments were proposed to enhance decision-making efficiency, while ensuring due rigour, and adjustments included replacement of the University Management Committee with the PVC Academic Services for specific decisions. Academic Board was asked to note this update and approve the proposed adjustments.

16.2   Approved: the proposed adjustments to the delegation framework.

17   Academic governance meeting sequence 2025/26   (MF)   [AB/25/028] ☒

17.1   Received: for approval, the annual proposal of the academic governance meeting sequence for the academic year ahead. This was based on the 2024/25 sequence and had been adjusted to allow for optimisation of business flow and reduction of clashes.

17.2   Approved: the Board approved the proposed meeting sequence for 2025-26 for circulation to relevant servicing officers.

17.3   Action: MF to circulate meeting sequence to relevant servicing officers, with a request to ensure that dates were provided to the Timetabling Team as promptly as possible.

TO NOTE – SILENT (RECEIVED WITHOUT DISCUSSION)

| 18 | **Learning, Teaching & Quality Committee report** | [AB/25/029] ☐ |
| 19 | **Cycle of Business** | [AB/25/030] ☐ |

ANY OTHER BUSINESS – TO BE NOTIFIED 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE

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20   **Safeguarding Policy**   (RW)   [Verbal] ☐

20.1   **Noted:** it was confirmed that an updated version of the Safeguarding Policy following routine review would be circulated for review and comment, with the approval of the policy planned for the 7 May 2025 meeting.

20.2   **Action:** MF to circulate the revised Safeguarding Policy to Members for comment.

21   **Date, time and location of the next meeting**   (EH)   [Verbal]
      Wednesday, 07 May 2025, 12:30 – 14:30, Online