

Academic Board

ACTIONS

Action from current meeting

Action completed since last meeting

Ref	Action	Lead	Due Date
23/011	Invite the Students' Union sabbatical officers elected for the 2023-24 academic year to observe the June Academic Board meeting	CM	June AB
23/018	Add a discussion item on artificial intelligence tools and academic integrity to the next agenda of Academic Board	CM	June AB
23/039 and 23/053	Elected member to send detailed queries on the proposed amendments to the College Statutes to Academicboard@rhul.ac.uk Principal to review comments	SM and JS	June AB
23/040	Update Academic Board on analysis of the responses to the Committee Effectiveness Review	CM	June AB
22/193	Add Foundation Year Degree to a future agenda of Academic Board	CM	End of autumn 2023
23/061	Clarify the timeline for the publication of the Emergency Regulations outside the meeting and update the Board in October.	MH/CM	October 2023
23/68	Circulate the proposed Terms of Reference and membership of the Schools review group	TB	October 2023
23/097	further update on progress with Assessment Futures should be provided to the 29 November meeting of Academic Board	MH	November 2023
23/101	Set up working group to scope future developments in AI	MH	Summer 2023
23/109	Update Academic Board on the implementation of recommendations arising out of the effectiveness review	CM/AB	Autumn 2023
23/118	Discuss with the University Secretary whether the Committees Handbook, last published in 2015, should be re-introduced	CM/AB	October 2023
23/122	Inform the Secretariat and Events Manager that AB approve the recommendations in the Honorary Degrees paper	CM	June 2023
23/124	Advise the Secretariat and the Events Manager that AB recommend references to marital and parental status are removed from appendix 2 of the Honorary Degrees paper as a matter of urgency.	CM	June 2023

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday 7 June 2023

2pm

Moore Auditorium (in person) or MS Teams (online) [hybrid]

Min. 23/051-23/135



Minutes

Present:	Prof J Sanders (Chair), Dr S Alty, , Dr D Beer, Dr T Berry, Prof T Bhamra, Dr A Bown, Dr P Bremner (on MS Teams), Prof V Boisvert, Dr D Brown, Dr E Cox (on MS Teams), Dr V Desai, , Prof K Dodds, Prof R Fitzgerald (on MS Teams) Prof S Gibson, Prof A Gupta, Dr N Hall, Prof R Hemus, Ms H Hockin, Prof S Hosany (on MS Teams), Prof M Humphreys, Ms M Jarvis, Dr C Kremmydas,	Prof R Livesey, Prof C Matos, Prof J McEvoy, Prof C Mitchell (on MS Teams), Prof I Moffatt, Prof S Murphy, Prof R Mock, Dr J Nuri, Dr L Oliveira (for Prof R Barn), Prof A Palombi (on MS Teams), Prof G Pieri, Prof S Rose,, Prof D Schreve, Prof S Shah (on MS Teams, until item 12), Mr S Shrey, Prof L Sjoberg, Prof C Tsinopoulos, (from item 11), Dr E Xhetani (on MS Teams), Prof H Zagefka, Dr Anica Zeyan (on MS Teams, for Prof S Wagner)
Secretary:	Miss C Munton	
In attendance:	Mr S Kendrick, Prof G Knight, Mrs A Wallis	Mr J W Hill (minutes)
Apologies:	Prof D Anderberg, Prof R Barn, Dr K Clemitshaw, Dr C Dendrinis, Prof B Langford, Prof M Lycett,	Prof N Panteli, Prof G Shaddick, Prof G Symon, Prof S Wagner
Trade Union Observers:	Mr A Alway (on MS Teams) Dr D Elphick	
Students' Union Observers:	Ms S Sivarajah (VP Education Elect), Ms N Bundhun, (VP Wellbeing and Diversity (Elect), Mr A Copland (VP Societies and Sport Elect).	

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, with the Board receiving the updated membership list (AB/23/23). 23/051

Apologies were noted; these are recorded in the list above. 23/052

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 22 March 2023 were approved, except for Minute 23/039, which was left pending because an elected member challenged the accuracy of this minute. They were invited to submit a suggestion for rewording this minute to the Secretary. 23/053

3. **Matters arising**

The Board NOTED the following actions have been completed since the last meeting: 23/054

23/011	Invite the Students' Union sabbatical officers elected for the 2023-24 academic year to observe the June Academic Board meeting	CM	June 2023
23/018	Add a discussion item on artificial intelligence tools and academic integrity to the next agenda of Academic Board	CM	June 2023
23/040	Update Academic Board on analysis of the responses to the Committee Effectiveness Review	CM and JS	June 2023

To receive an update on other actions due: 23/055

22/193	Add item on Integrated Foundation Year to a future agenda of Academic Board	CM	End of 22-23 academic year
	ACTION: This will be included as an item on the October 2023 agenda	CM	October 23
23/039	Elected member to send detailed queries on the proposed amendments to the College Statutes to Academicboard@rhul.ac.uk These comments were not received formally, however, the typographical errors in the documentation, as reported during the March meeting were corrected and the lines of accountability clarified. The member was again invited to contact the Secretary with suggested rewording for consideration.	SM and JS	June 2023

4. **Actions taken by the Chair**

The Board were informed that Chair's Action had been required to approve the Emergency Regulations 2022/23 in response to the marking and assessment boycott (AB/23/23a). 23/056

The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) gave an overview of the Emergency Regulations that had been approved by Chairs Action in response to the Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB). These had been developed in consultation with Executive Deans and Vice-Deans Education and Student Experience as well as Chairs of School Progression and Award Boards (SPABs). 23/057

The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) explained that the Emergency Regulations had been introduced to prioritise and protect students in terms of progression and award which might be adversely affected because of the MAB, and that provisions including the use of scaling and Allowed module outcomes were already permitted under the standard regulations in specific circumstances. The approach was in line with several other HEIs and were supported by the University's Principal External Examiner. The provisions under the Emergency Regulations were intended to be used as a tool where there were insufficient marks present to confirm support a progression/award decision and the University did not mandate that they were used in all cases. 23/058

- The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) confirmed, in response to a member, that the Emergency Regulations may need to be in place for two years to ensure all affected students had an equitable experience. Professor Humphreys confirmed, in response to a member, that the operational guidance on scaling had been reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee for Assessment (ECA), which explained why this was not present in the Academic Board papers. He also confirmed that it was the responsibility of Schools with PSRB provision to contact the relevant accrediting body to ensure implementing the provisions of the Emergency Regulations was compliant with their accreditation requirements. 23/059
- Several members expressed concern at the procedural way the Emergency Regulations had been agreed and implemented and suggested that this might damage the integrity of the University's awards, especially as students' degree classifications could be raised and not lowered if work was marked after the Departmental Assessment Boards (DABs) had met. There was concern expressed that the response to the industrial action was viewed by the University as equivalent to the response required to the (Covid-19) pandemic. 23/060
- A member queried whether the Emergency Regulations had been agreed in line with the Standing Orders of Academic Board paragraph 26, which stated the Chair was required to attempt to convene a meeting of Academic Board Executive Committee to consider urgent matters requiring a decision between Academic Board meetings. Furthermore, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal was asked to confirm the date upon which the Emergency Regulations came into effect as there appeared to be a week between the date of the Chair's Action and the date of their publication. It was agreed to clarify the timeline for the publication of the Emergency Regulations outside the meeting and to provide this with the Board papers for the October meeting. 23/061
- The Board acknowledged the impact of the MAB in increasing staff workload, particularly in School Admin teams and various sections of Professional Services. The Chair confirmed that the University was committed to protecting the experience of the student cohort(s) affected by the MAB, noting these had already experienced a disrupted educational experience because they started their studies during the (Covid-19) pandemic. 23/062
5. **Unstarring of items**
- The Board noted there had been no requests for the unstarring of items. 23/063

Formal Reports

6. **Senior Leadership Team appointments**
- The Board received a summary of recent appointments to Senior Leadership roles and an update on recruitment to SLT vacancies (AB/23/24). The Chair noted that there would be several announcements on appointments to currently vacant roles in the weeks to come. 23/064
7. **Vice-Chancellor and Principal's Report**
- The Board received and noted a written report from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal (AB/23/25). 23/065
- A member challenged the accuracy of the report in terms of references to the pay deductions of UCU members taking part in the MAB industrial action, contending that 100% pay deductions were in fact being made. The Chair responded that Academic Board was an inappropriate forum to raise these issues, which should be discussed in the Joint Negotiating Committee. 23/066
8. **Reports from the Senior Leadership Team**
- 8.1 The Board RECEIVED a presentation from the Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) on reflections on the formation of School (AB/23/26). 23/067

- The Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) noted that the School structures had not been formally reviewed since their introduction in 2019 and there were clearly areas in need of attention in terms of lengthy decision-making processes and disparate practice. The formal review across 2023/24 would be coordinated by a review group, the membership of which would include some members of Academic Board and have clear Terms of Reference. The membership and proposed Terms of Reference would be remitted to the October 2023 meeting of Academic Board for full approval. 23/068
- The Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) agreed, in response to a member, that students could be consulted in this exercise and the views of PGR students might be of value in terms of comparing the previous Faculty structure with the existing School structure. The aim was for the review group to report its recommendations by the June 2024 meeting of Academic Board. 23/069
- Professor Bhamra confirmed, in response to a question from a Board member, that the Terms of Reference would reflect concerns around increased workload for staff and the loss of expert advice. The activity and improvement survey of Student and Academic Services (SAS), instigated by the previous Director of SAS and conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers had not looked specifically at School structures but was instead intended to analyse the core activities of the directorate and develop a baseline understanding of resource allocation. The results of this survey were therefore not within the scope of the review of Schools. 23/070
- 8.2 The Board received an update from the Executive Dean (Life Sciences and the Environment) on outcomes from the Ofsted monitoring visit for the MSc Clinical and Associate Psychologist (Children and Young People) apprenticeship and the future of the course (AB/23/27). 23/071
- The Executive Dean (Life Sciences and the Environment) confirmed that, despite the course being closed to new applicants because it was too demanding administratively to run, the 17 apprentices would be supported to finish their studies. Partner institutions had also been informed that the degree course would cease recruitment. The Executive Dean (Life Sciences and the Environment) wished to record his thanks to the School Admin team, the Academic Quality and Policy Office and Prof. Helen Pote for the work they had done to support the trainees. 23/072
- The Chair confirmed in response to a member that Council would be considering the viability of validating other degree apprenticeship provision as part of its strategy discussions. 23/073
- 8.3 The Board RECEIVED an update from the Executive Dean (Performing and Digital Arts) on the work of the Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) Working Group (AB/23/28). 23/074
- The Executive Dean (Performing and Digital Arts) reported that consultations would be held with students and staff with the aim of improving the student experience and addressing workload implications of the existing system. Recommendations for improvements arising from the consultations would be co-designed with students, and these would ultimately be put to Academic Board for approval. 23/075
- Professor Mock confirmed, in response to a member, that the previous EC Working Group chaired by Prof. James Knowles had improved the guidance notes and made some revisions to the EC form, but there were fundamental issues with the existing system that still needed to be addressed. 23/076
- It was confirmed that the incoming Executive Director of Student Journey would work closely with the Interim Director of IT to ensure that the IT requirements for the refreshed EC system were in place. 23/077

9. **Report from the Students' Union President**
- The Board RECEIVED the biographies of the incoming sabbatical officers for 2023-24 (AB/23/29). 23/078
- The Board RECEIVED a report from the Students' Union President (AB/23/30). 23/079
- The President of the Students' Union reported that new sabbatical officers had been elected and would be in post by 10 July, once induction training had been completed. 23/080
- Ms Jarvis also reported that the SU Executive had had productive conversations with disabled students and School Representatives on the challenges of the current Extenuating Circumstances process. The final report of the PGT Student Experience Policy Inquiry would be published at the start of the 2023/24 academic year and the SU were looking forward to working through its findings. 23/081
10. **Report from the Council**
- The Board RECEIVED the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 February 2023 (AB/23/31). 23/082
11. **Students, Education and Research Committee**
- The Board NOTED there had been no SERC meetings since the March meeting of Academic Board. 23/083
12. **Reports from Schools**
- The Board received a presentation from the Executive Dean of Life Sciences and the Environment on education, research, and EDI priorities within the School (AB/23/32). 23/084
- The Executive Dean of Life Sciences and the Environment expressed his thanks to the contributors to the presentation, which were echoed by the Chair, who noted that this was a very ambitious programme for the School. 23/085

Strategy Discussion

13. **Strategic Plan Update – Pillar 1**
- 13.1 The Board RECEIVED updates and progress with Pillar 1 overall (AB/23/33). 23/086
- The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) explained that the focus of Pillar 1 would be narrowed to Assessment Futures, Curriculum Development Management System (CDMS) and revisions to the Access and Participation Plan (APP). It was felt that aspects of Pillar 1 needed to be better articulated. 23/087
- Professor Humphreys confirmed, in response to a question from a Board member, that 'authentic delivery methods and assessments' described anything that might be construed as useful to students' future careers. 23/088
- 13.2 The Board RECEIVED an update on the Structure of Teaching (AB/23/34) 23/089
- The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) reported that work on 'Shape of the Year' and a potential move to semesterisation was being paused, although the more easily implemented parts of this including standardised reading weeks and assessment periods might still go ahead. 23/090

- Some Board members expressed their disappointment that the work on 'Shape of the Year' was being paused. The Head of the Department of Biological Sciences noted that there was presently insufficient time to mark assessments following the January assessment period in his department. Another member noted that this was a missed opportunity to improve the student experience of students on joint honours degree courses. 23/091
14. **Strategic Projects Update**
- The Board RECEIVED an overview of progress for the projects in each of the strategic pillars (AB/23/35). 23/092

Major Items of Business

15. **Assessment Futures**
- The Board RECEIVED an update on progress with the University Assessment Strategy (AB/23/36). 23/093
- The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) set out the reasons for undertaking the Assessment Futures project, noting that there had been widespread positive conversations with all stakeholders. The Interim PVC (Education) summarised the progress to date and the next steps. 23/094
- The Head of the Department of English recommended that more research should be provided to colleagues to bring them onboard regarding the aims of the project, especially regarding narrowing attainment gaps. There was also a danger that the growing sophistication of AI would render any attempt to make assessments more robust to academic misconduct redundant. 23/095
- Professor Humphreys confirmed, in response to a question from the President of the Students' Union, that Assessment Futures was largely skills led. 23/096
- The Board agreed that a further update on progress with Assessment Futures should be provided to the 29 November meeting of Academic Board. 23/097
16. **Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education**
- The Board discussed opportunities and concerns about the use of Artificial Intelligence in the context of Higher Education (AB/23/37). 23/098
- The Interim Director of IT noted that AI was being harnessed, not just in terms of teaching and research but also as part of phase 2 of the launch of the Enquiry Management System (EMS), with a Chatbot directing enquirers to sources of information in response to simple queries. The Interim Director of IT added that students would be given paid opportunities to participate in the further development of the EMS. 23/099
- The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) agreed with members that potentially the Annual Review process could be improved in terms of reviewing the appropriateness of assessments vis-à-vis AI. External Examiner Reports could also be adapted to elicit advice in this area. 23/100
- Professor Humphreys confirmed, in response to a question from a member, that a working group would be set up to scope future developments in AI and welcomed Board members to volunteer to participate in this if they wished to do so. 23/101
- The Chair, in concluding the discussions, agreed with the Students' Union VP Education that the university had to meet students' expectations regarding AI and work constructively to harness the training and skills opportunities it presented. It was noted that Council would also be debating this issue further. 23/102

17. **Academic Representation**
- The Board RECEIVED an update on the Department Action Meetings pilot in 2022-23 (AB/23/38). 23/103
- The Student Opportunities Manager summarised the contents of the paper, noting that three Schools had been piloting new Course/Department Action Meetings C/DAM system, with the remainder using the current Student Staff Committee system. The paper summarised the feedback that had been received in respect of the pilot and proposed a new system which hoped to combine the best elements of the SSC and C/DAM system for use in 2023/24. 23/104
- The Student Opportunities Manager noted that the experience of PGR students was not within the scope of the proposed model but would be looked at separately. The Student Opportunities Manager confirmed, in response to a member, that the SU had conducted sector research as to the possibility of remunerating students for their participation in SSCs, but it was difficult to find an appropriate model for remunerating students for what were voluntary roles. 23/105
- The Board considered the impact the proposals would have on staff workload, particularly when meetings were poorly organised or lacked student engagement. The Head of the Music Department noted that School Administration Teams could be asked to organise and service meetings, rather than academic staff. A Board member added that it was important that disadvantaged students were provided with training to equip them with the skills to confidently Chair meetings. 23/106
18. **Effectiveness review**
- The Board RECEIVED the results from the Academic Board Effectiveness Review Survey (AB/23/39a and b). 23/107
- The Secretary caveated that the proposals contained within paper AB/23/39a would need operational input from the University Secretary who would not be in post until September. A more detailed review of the Terms of Reference was also overdue, and this too would benefit from the input of the University Secretary. 23/108
- The Secretary asked Board members for their feedback on the proposals contained within AB/23/39a, noting that a paper would be brought back to Academic Board in the autumn which clearly set out the delegation of powers to Academic Board sub committees. 23/109
- A Board member thanked the Secretary for the work that had been undertaken to ensure Academic Board membership had more input into the construction of the agenda but noted that there should be consideration given to expanding membership of Academic Board to senior staff in the Professional Services, as well as academic staff on Professional Services contracts such as Teaching Fellows. The Secretary agreed this could be considered further with the incoming University Secretary, subject to wider sector research. 23/110
- A Board member asked whether the Chair had a view on increasing the percentage of elected members to Academic Board from the current level of 20% to 40-50% which they considered was the equivalent on similar bodies at other HEIs, noting, however, that this would require revisions to Statute 5 of the College Statutes. The Chair replied that she would await the outcome of further sector research, which would be completed with guidance from the University Secretary, rather than express a view at this stage. 23/111
- The Board agreed it would be useful to provide newly elected Board members with a briefing pack to provide more information on the operation and remit of the Board. It was also noted that the Chair had agreed that meetings could continue in hybrid form for 2023/24. 23/112

	The Board expressed no objections to Board papers being uploaded to an MS Teams site, rather than distributed to Board members via email.	23/113
	The Board expressed no objections to the proposed frequency of meetings or extending each meeting to 2.5 hours duration. The Secretary noted it had been difficult to get through the dense agendas in the 2 hours currently allotted.	23/114
	The Board expressed no objections to Academic Board Executive Committee being disbanded, noting the intention to give members a broader role in compiling agendas.	23/115
	The Board APPROVED the recommendations presented in AB/23/39a.	23/116
	Following on from paper AB/23/39a, the Board RECEIVED and APPROVED paper AB/23/24b, which set out the academic governance structure of the committees reporting to Academic Board in 23-24, the terms of reference for the proposed new University Education and Assessment and Quality Assurance committees and the revised Terms of Reference and Standing Orders of Academic Board 2023-24, which had been edited to reflect the reallocation of responsibilities previously devolved to Academic Board Executive. The Board AGREED a further amendment to 7.12 of the Academic Board Terms of Reference and Standing Orders, which should read "To promote research <i>and knowledge exchange</i> in the University, and to require regular reports on research <i>and knowledge exchange</i> ;"	23/117
	On the theme of Terms of Reference, a Board member noted that it would be useful if the university could reproduce the Committees Handbook, last published in 2015. The Secretary agreed to feedback to the University Secretary on this point.	23/118
19.	Annual Report on Appeals and Complaints	
	The Board received the annual report on appeals and complaints (AB/23/40). The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) noted the paper provided a high-level summary of appeals and complaints in 2021-22. The Board noted the increase in appeals, and there was some speculation this could be attributed to the complexity of the Extenuating Circumstances process as referenced under Item 8.3.	23/119
	The President (Students' Union) reported the SU advice centre was seeing an increase in students seeking advice regarding the appeals and complaints process and queried the extent to which the Academic Investigations Team was adequately resourced, given that they were struggling in some instances to respond to complainants within the 3-month timescale prescribed by the Office for Independent Adjudicator (OIA).The interim PVC (Education and Student Experience) responded that the situation was being monitored and would be considered further as part of the planning round currently underway.	23/120
20.	Quality and Standards Report	
	The Board received the University's Annual Quality and Standards Report (AB/23/41) which outlined the quality and standards work carried out over the preceding year.	23/121
21.	Honorary Degrees	
	The Board RECOMMENDED the nominations listed for the award of Honorary Degrees of the University of London (AB/23/41a). It was noted that the details in the paper were confidential and should not be discussed outside of the Board.	23/122
	The Chair noted that a process was underway to develop a matrix for evaluating nominations for honorary degrees.	23/123
	A Board member noted that references to marital and parental status needed to be removed from appendix 2 as a matter of urgency. The Chair agreed this would be feedback to the team.	23/124

Items for formal approval

21. *** Student Protection Plan**
The Board approved the Student Protection Plan (AB/23/42). 23/125

Items for report

22. ***Academic Board Executive**
The Board received the minutes from the Academic Board Executive meeting held on 2 May 2023 (AB/23/643) 23/126

23. ***Executive Committee for Assessment**
The Board received the unconfirmed minutes from the Executive Committee for Assessment meeting held on 15 February 2023 (AB/23/44). 23/127

24. *** Curriculum Development Committee**
The Board received the minutes from the Curriculum Development Committee meeting held on 26 April 2023 (AB/23/45). 23/128

25. ***Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee**
The Board received the minutes from the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee held on 20 March 2023 (AB/23/46). 23/129

26. ***Quality Assurance and Standards Committee**
The Board received the minutes from the Quality Assurance and Standards Committee meeting held on 22 February 2023 (AB/23/47). 23/130

Other Matters

27. **Any other business**
A member asked fellow members to clarify whether their School Boards had registered any objections to the MAB mitigations. The Head of English and the Executive Dean of Performing and Digital Arts advised that the School Boards in Humanities and PDA had each voted to support a motion to call on the Principal and UCU to make a public statement on the Marking and Assessment Boycott, calling for the re-opening of talks. It was noted that the LSS School Board was yet to take place. 23/131

The Chair thanked Board members and added as reassurance that Vice-Chancellors were meeting with UCEA on an almost weekly basis in an effort to attempt to resolve the dispute. 23/132

The Chair congratulated the Head of the English Department, Professor Ruth Livesey, for her appointment as Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation. 23/133

28. **Date of next meeting**
Wednesday 18 October 2023 at 2pm. 23/134

The Board noted the dates of the remaining meetings in 2023-24 as: 23/135

- Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 2pm
- Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 2pm
- Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 2pm