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 an 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~~
~~23/137~~	~~To hold an information/ drop-in session for academic staff interested in applying for one of the elected member positions~~	~~AB/ CM~~	
~~23/156~~	~~Present Regulatory Addendum for 2023/24 and timeline for review of academic regulations~~	~~MH~~	~~November 2023~~
~~23/159~~	~~Update the timeline of the Emergency Regulations to include the date of the announcement of the Marking and Assessment Boycott and the instruction from the Office for Students issued on 12 June~~	~~MH~~	~~November 2023~~
~~23/177~~	~~To present the terms of reference for an external review of Academic Board~~	~~AB~~	~~November 2023~~

~~23/211~~	~~Provide an update on discussions at AQuASC about degree outcomes in Economics, Electronic Engineering and Geography~~	~~MH~~	~~June 2024~~
~~23/224~~	~~Provide update on implementation of a mark management system and assessment changes as part of Assessment Futures project~~	~~MH~~	~~March 2024~~
~~23/238~~	~~Give further consideration regarding input into the AB governance review a wider pool of staff than those sitting on the Board.~~ ~~Present report and recommendations from external AB governance review~~	~~AB~~ ~~AB~~	~~January 2024~~ ~~March 2024~~
~~23/240~~	~~Present recommendation on additional Honorary Degree to Council for approval~~	~~AB/CM~~	~~November 2024~~
24/24	To note that any discussion of Artificial Intelligence and the sector includes reference to PGR	AB/CM	Will be included as an agenda item in June 2025
24/31	~~To include item on June agenda on prioritises emergening from academic governance review and approval of terms of reference for implementation working group~~	~~AB/CM~~	~~June 2024~~
~~24/58~~	~~To receive an update on the processing times referenced in the Admissions Policy~~	~~MF~~	~~June 2024~~
~~23/209, 24/76~~	~~Receive final update on the last year of the current strategic plan (June 2024) - on agenda~~	~~MF/AW~~	~~October 2024~~
~~24/84-85~~	~~Update Costing and Pricing policy to either replace 'man' or insert 'sic' against the Frascati definition of research quoted in the policy - completed~~	~~RL~~	~~Summer 2024~~
~~24/154~~	~~Update on non-submission of External Examiner report 2022-23 for Clinical Psychology – Uni Sec provided verbal update~~	~~MH~~	~~Autumn 2024~~
~~24/160~~	~~Add agenda item on strategic vision for London campus and enhancing the student experience for students based there~~	~~AB/CM~~	~~During 24-25~~
~~24/203~~	~~Correct Daniel Elphick's title to Dr in the 4 July Minutes~~	~~CM~~	~~December 2024~~
~~24/218~~	~~Add cataylsts lessons learned paper to December meeting agenda~~	~~CM~~	~~December~~
~~22/227~~	~~Add Agenda Item in March 2025 for NSS Action Plan update~~	~~CM~~	~~March 2025~~
24/275	~~Correct Minutes from 16 October to reflect that Dr Sophie Nield was not present at the meeting~~	~~CM~~	~~ASAP~~
24/297	Reflect on feedback re 2024/25 exams and results schedule	WM EM	Autumn 2025
~~24/317~~	~~Confirm PGT application deadline~~	~~MF~~	~~March 2025~~

ACADEMIC BOARD

Wednesday 4 December 2024

2pm

Wettons B (in person) or MS Teams (online) [hybrid]

Min. 24/273-24/335

Minutes

Present:	Prof J Sanders (Chair), Prof T Bhamra, Prof M Fellowes, Prof W Morgan, Prof A Gupta, Prof R Mock, Prof G Pieri, Prof C Tsinopoulos, Prof K Dodds, Prof C Frost, Dr R Priest, Prof S Wright, Prof C Kremmydas, Prof A Roberts, Prof J Parker-Starbuck, Dr N Hall, Prof S Rose, Prof R Barn, Dr K Smets, Prof S Hosany, Prof S Sian, Dr C Tsai, Prof T Wainwright, Dr P Wu, Dr C Manning, Prof S Blockley, Prof A Palombi, Prof H Zagefka, Prof C Matos, Prof E Coles-Kemp, Prof S Gibson, Prof I Moffatt, Dr M Bentley, Prof R D'Alton-Harrison, Dr S Dissanayeke, Dr J Murdoch, Dr S Nield, Dr M Ribary, Dr C Paltrinieri, Prof P Meeson, Prof S Shah, Ms S Sivarajah, Ms M Gray, Ms B Asqalan, Dr D Brown, Prof M Tsakiris, Dr V Greenaway, Prof M Humphreys, Prof R Livesey, Prof D Watling.
Secretary:	Mr A M Boggs
In attendance:	Dr N Barratt, Mr S Kendrick, Mr S McAuliffe, Dr N Rata. Miss C Munton (Clerk)
Apologies:	Dr S Alty, Prof D Anderberg, Ms O Davies, Prof J McEvoy, Ms A Wallis
Trade Union Observers:	Mr A Alway , Dr Daniel Elphick

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Members were welcomed to the meeting, noting this was the inaugural meeting for Professor Manos Tsakiris, elected member of Council, and Dr Kaat Smets, interim Head of Department for Politics, International Relations and Philosophy. 24/273

Apologies are noted in the section above. 24/274

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024 were APPROVED. It was noted that Dr Sophie Nield had sent apologies for the meeting and attendee list should be updated accordingly. 24/275

3. **Matters arising**

The Board NOTED the following actions had been completed since the last meeting: 24/276

24/160	Add update on London Campus to December meeting agenda. **Discussed under item 10.**	AB

24/203	Correct Daniel Elphick's title to Dr in the 4 July Minutes.	CM
24/218	Add catalysts lessons learned paper to December meeting agenda. **Discussed under item 15.2.**	CM

The Board RECEIVED an update on the following actions: 24/277

24/154	Update on non-submission of External Examiner report 2022-23 for Clinical Psychology **The report from the Course External Examiner has not been submitted. The PGT Chief External Examiner Life Sciences and the Environment has given written confirmation of standards on the MSc Clinical Psychology in 2022/23 and 2023/24.**	MH

4. **Actions taken by the Chair**

No actions were taken by the Chair. 24/278

5. **Unstarring of items**

The following paper was unstarred-

- Item 21, Paper AB/24/84 Academic Quality Assurance and Standards Committee Minutes, 30 October 2024. 24/279

Formal Reports

6. **Vice-Chancellor and Principal's Report**

Paper AB/24/70 Vice-Chancellor and Principal's Report was RECEIVED and NOTED. The Vice-Chancellor recorded her thanks to those involved in the development of the Access and Participation Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29, noting that the university had now received formal approval from the Office for Students. 24/280

It was REPORTED that there is an error on page 4. The research grant for the project entitled 'Revealing the secrets of neutron-star interiors with AI and the SKA' is a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship award to Dr Vanessa Graber; the Medical Research Council is not the funder. 24/281

Highlights from the report included the growing activity around purpose coalition, the impact on university and student finances of various government announcements and recent publications, the ongoing work around improving reputations and ranking, approval of the Access and Participation Plan, a new interdisciplinary language masters with the University of London, grant successes, doctoral scholarships, senior leadership updates and the Future Studio launch ahead of the November Open Day. 24/282

7. **Report from the Students' Union President**

Paper AB/24/71 Report from the Student's Union President was RECEIVED and NOTED. Members were invited to contact the President if they wished to know more about the new Students' Union strategy and how the SU can offer support to their areas of work. 24/283

The Board noted that the traditional election manifestos used in previous sabbatical officer elections were being removed and requested further information regarding the rationale for this change. The President confirmed that candidates will choose the key priorities that are significant to them, from a list determined by the student electorate. The change aims to ensure that election pledges are both realistic and achievable. 24/284

8. **Report from the Council**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/72 the minutes from the Council meeting held on 3 October 2024. 24/285

The University Secretary REPORTED that the Office for Students had confirmed it was satisfied with the University's response to the reportable event referenced in the Council minutes. 24/286

9. **Strategy: Reporting against RH2030s**

Strategic Action Plans

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/73 Strategic Action Plans for RH2030s. Each of the three action plan leads PROVIDED an overview of the plans in Education and Student Experience, Research and Innovation and Global Engagement. 24/287

It was REPORTED that Strategic Planning is planning a workshop in the spring term to provide an opportunity for more detailed discussion and feedback. 24/288

The Board DISCUSSED the need to create capacity for colleagues to be able to deliver on the action plans. A Change Board had been set up to support with prioritising tasks, decide what activities can be stopped and ensure that stakeholders are consulted across the university. The Education and Student Experience and Research and Innovation Leads were committed to working across both strands to develop a clear framework of research-infused teaching and learning opportunities across the curriculum. Plans were already in place for Strategic Leads and School leadership teams to map the strategic action plans onto School activities and planning processes to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of effort. 24/289

Major items of business

10. **London Campus**

The Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) REPORTED that the University is currently liaising with the University of London regarding space in Stewart House. The proposal is designed to improve student experience and provide a better working environment for colleagues based in London. A parallel exercise is underway to review the existing portfolio of courses delivered in London as part of the broader portfolio review. The Board will receive updates on progress. 24/290

11. **Degree Classifications**

11.1 The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/74, a summary of Degree Classifications and Progression in 2023/24. 24/291

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Standards) REPORTED that a detailed review of progression and award data had taken place at the November Assessment, Quality Assurance and Standards Committee meeting, the 2023/24 patterns are consistent with those seen pre-Covid and following the removal of various temporary and emergency regulations, and that the data is reflected upon in more detail by protected characteristic by departments and Schools. 24/292

The Summer Vacation Assessment Period continues to be a significant activity with implications for both student and staff workload and it was noted a key outcome from the academic transition interventions listed in the Education and Student Experience Strategic Action Plan is a reduction in the number of students needing to complete summer resits from 2025/26. 24/293

11.2 The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/75, Undergraduate Principal External Examiner Statement 2023/24. 24/294

The Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Quality and Standards) REPORTED that the Principal External Examiner presented the report at the November Assessment, Quality Assurance and Standards Committee meeting, including a review of the conclusions and recommendations. 24/295

The Board welcomed the report but agreed that references to 'good degrees' should be revised in future reports. 24/296

Members noted that the report highlighted the tight turnaround for staff and External Examiners to complete the various activities required ahead of the examination boards and that this had been raised as a concern at previous meetings of Academic Board. Professor Humphreys advised that timings are determined by graduation week, that there was an institutional commitment to reducing the volume of assessment and that the 2024/25 schedule had been discussed in detail at AQUASC before being agreed. The Chair committed to revisiting the topic at a future meeting. 24/297

12. **Annual Review**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/76 composite School reports from the annual review of undergraduate provision in 2023/24. 24/298

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Standards) PROVIDED assurance that an undergraduate annual review has been completed for all courses which ran in 2023/24 and highlighted examples of best practice in each of the composite reports. It was agreed that more time needs to be invested in sharing good practice across the institution. In response to a suggestion from a Board member to invite independent members of Council to view the excellent teaching practices highlighted in the reports, the Chair advised that this will be considered in ongoing discussions about engaging Council members with university activities. 24/299

13. **Extraordinary Regulations**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) PROVIDED an update on the drafting of Extraordinary Regulations to manage variances in the Academic Taught Regulations, the Regulations on the Conduct of Assessment and any relevant policy or policies to limit the impact of unforeseeable circumstances affecting the University's ability to execute the Regulations or policies as written. The University Education Committee and the Assessment and Quality and Assurance and Standards Committee have reviewed a draft and the next steps are to consult with a wider group of stakeholders before bringing a set of regulations to Academic Board for approval. 24/300

14. **Student Protection Plan**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/24/77 Student Protection Plan. 24/301

The Executive Director (Student Journey) REPORTED that the Students' Union had been consulted in drafting the updated plan and it had also been scrutinised by various university committees including Executive Board. The risk ratings had been benchmarked to ensure the University is broadly consistent with the sector, taking into consideration some important variations reflecting sector contexts. Academic Board were assured that Executive Board members had robustly scrutinised the assessment of risk, mitigations and impact on students for each event and especially if the university were to permanently close, noting the recent OfS report on financial sustainability in the sector. 24/302

The Board AGREED to RECOMMEND the updated Student Protection Plan to Council for approval and submission for consideration to OfS. 24/303

15. **Research Excellence Framework (REF)**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/78, Preparing for REF 2029. 24/304

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) REPORTED that final UKRI guidance on outputs, impacts and eligibility will be available in spring and the new measures for people culture and environment were expected in autumn 2025. Professor Livesey PROVIDED an overview of the key milestones achieved in 2023/24 and a timeline for actions in 2024/25 including drafting a Code of Practice and draft institutional environment narrative. Thanks were given to colleagues in Academic Schools currently involved in an initial internal review of Research Outputs. Attention was drawn to the Annual Cycle of REF preparations and the importance of checking and, where necessary, correcting the HESA staff contract data provided in the annual Research Planning Cycle, noting that REF29 relies on the accuracy and reliability of this data. The Board were reminded of the ambition in the RH2030s strategy for the university to match the REF2021 performance in REF2029. Various modelling of units of assessment would take place in summer. In response to questions from the Board, Professor Livesey confirmed that UKRI have not yet confirmed which years HESA staff record data will be drawn from and she would ask the relevant members of staff to investigate concerns about outdated information showing on PURE if details were forwarded to her. 24/305

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/79 End of Catalyst Reporting. 24/306

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) REPORTED that although there had been some notable successes, the catalysts had not delivered the expected improvements in research income and there had been a decline in research contract income across the three years of the previous strategic plan. Professor Livesey summarised the lessons learned, noting that these had been 24/307 reflected on in the creation of the Research and Innovation Strategic Action Plan for RH2030s. Board members discussed the success of the catalysts in bringing together staff from different academic departments with similar research interests, highlighting in particular the Living Sustainably Catalyst, that it takes time for cross-departmental projects to emerge and asked that consideration is given to maintaining a mechanism that facilitates collaboration across Schools. The Chair noted that the University is reviewing established European models for facilitating cross-disciplinary research.

In response to concerns about resourcing, the Chair advised further discussion is needed to ensure there is adequate professional services support in the right areas for strategy delivery in education and research. 24/308

16. **Knowledge Exchange**

16.1 The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/80 Knowledge Exchange Framework 4 outcome and plans for improving performance. 24/309

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) PROVIDED an overview of the outcome, advising that more needs to be done to increase visibility of KEF within the institution. KEF is the university's best indication of performance against its peer group cluster of universities (Cluster X). It uses the same data sources that are used to allocate Higher Education and Innovation Funding and it promotes the research and social purpose work of the institution. The University did not perform well in KEF 4. Most notably scores decreased in the Intellectual Property and commercialisation, continuous professional development and graduate start-ups quintiles. 24/310

Targeted actions ahead of the next KEF were listed in the paper. Board members considered that there can be structural barriers within the institution to consultancy and CPD and further conversations were needed to understand the issues ahead of a policy and process review. 24/311

16.2 The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/81 Higher Education Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) return for knowledge exchange activity in 2023/24. 24/312

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) REPORTED that the university's performance in some areas had worsened, which was expected to result in a lesser performance in next year's Knowledge Exchange Framework exercise and a reduction in Higher Education and Innovation Funding. She drew the Board's attention to Table 2, which showed a breakdown of performance in a number of areas. One area of concern for the Board was that the university holds several patents, however, 95% of the income is generated from a single patent which is due to expire in four years. The Board noted the university could explore further whether activities such as MOOCs could be included in future returns. It was confirmed that the public engagement data does not include information from the School of Performing and Digital Arts. Professor Livesey hoped that staff would be able to report public engagement activities into Pure on an ongoing basis during the year to facilitate data collection ahead of next year's submission. 24/313

The Board APPROVED the submission of the HE-BCI return 2023/24. 24/314

17. **Student Number Count 2024/25**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/82, 1 December Student Number Count. 24/315

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Strategy, Planning and Resources) PROVIDED a verbal update on application data for 2025/26, reporting that undergraduate application numbers are up slightly compared to last year primarily because of an increase in applications in the School of Business and Management . 24/316

Postgraduate Taught applications were lower than at the same point in the previous cycle, consistent with the sector but noting that there is a later application deadline for PGT than UG. The Board was assured that turnaround times for both UG and PGT applications are meeting targets. Board members considered there had been ambiguity around the PGT application deadline last year and late applications were not accepted. Professor Fellowes agreed to investigate and report back to the March meeting. 24/317

18. **Academic Governance**

The Board RECEIVED paper AB/24/83, Committee Terms of Reference were RECEIVED. 24/318

The University Secretary REPORTED that the autumn term meetings of the Academic Governance Task and Finish Group had reflected on the underpinning decision-making structures of Academic Board, taking into consideration feedback from the internal and external effectiveness reviews and implementation of the new university strategy. The group recommended moving some of the current AQUASC responsibilities into University Education Committee and repurposing AQUASC as an Assessment and Academic Regulations Committee reporting into the University Education Committee. 24/319

Board members noted that the membership of these committees did not include any elected members of Academic Board. The University Secretary confirmed this was a conscious decision taken to avoid a conflict of interest between the individuals sitting on Academic Board and therefore with final decision-making responsibility. 24/320

The Students' Union Vice-President (Education) noted that she had been incorrectly recorded as 'in attendance' at the University Education Committee, and should be recorded as a member of the Committee. The Clerk noted that this will be corrected in the Committee new terms of reference. 24/321

The Board APPROVED

1. the updated Terms of Reference for University Education Committee, subject to correctly recording the Students' Union Vice-President (Education) as a member of the Committee. 24/322
2. the repurposing of AQUASC into an Assessments and Academic Regulations subcommittee of UEC.
3. the undertaking of a committee effectiveness review for both committees in July 2025.

19. **Term Dates**

The confirmed dates for 2025/26 are: 24/324

- **Autumn Term** – Monday 22 September 2025 to Friday 12 December 2025
- **Spring Term** – Monday 12 January 2026 to Thursday 2 April 2026 (Good Friday is 3 April. Easter Discretionary Days are Tuesday 7 and Wednesday 8 April).
- **Summer Term** – Tuesday 5 May 2026 to Friday 12 June 2026 (Monday 4 May is Early May Bank Holiday).

The Executive Director (Student Journey) REPORTED that a small working group would be convened to consider term dates for 2026/27, noting the impact of an early Easter weekend on setting the spring term dates. Elected members were asked to contact the Clerk with expressions of interest in joining the working group. A proposal for term dates in 2026/27 would be discussed at the spring term University Education Committee meeting ahead of seeking approval from Academic Board. 24/325

Items for formal approval

20. ***University Education Committee**

It was noted that the Minutes from the 13 November meeting of the University Education Committee would be circulated with the March Academic Board papers. 24/326

21. ***Assessment, Quality Assurance and Standards Committee**

Item unstarred. 24/327

Paper AB/24/84 Minutes from the Assessment, Quality Assurance and Standards Committee minutes 30 October 2024 were RECEIVED. 24/328

In response to the queries raised in the unstarring request, it was confirmed that 24/329

- The committee received an overview of academic misconduct allegations split by demographic characteristic, which had generated an interesting discussion and a request for further analysis by Strategic Planning and Change. The information would then be shared with Schools.

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) and Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Standards) share concerns about the overall volume of suspension of regulations requests and within that the large number arising from students being provided with incorrect academic advice. There were likely to be multiple reasons for this, including regulatory and procedural complexity in some areas and engagement with students when giving advice post results.

The unstarring request also raised concerns about the compressed timeframe for processing results, which had been prior discussed under item 11.2. 24/330

22. ***Doctoral School Committee**

Paper AB/24/85, Minutes from the Doctoral School Committee meeting held on 5 November 2024 were RECEIVED. 24/331

23. ***Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee**

It was noted that the Minutes from the 5 October meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee will be circulated with the March Academic Board papers. 24/332

Other Matters

24. **Any other business**

The Chair REPORTED that this was Professor Matthew Humphreys's final meeting as Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Standards), noting he would remain on the Board as Executive Dean for Law and Social Sciences. The Board thanked Professor Humphreys for his contributions as Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Professor Anna Gupta was thanked for sitting on the Board as the Executive Dean's nominee. 24/333

An updated membership list would be circulated with the March meeting papers to reflect the above change along with any amendments arising out of changes to senior leadership posts. 24/334

25. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 19 March at 2pm, Wettons B. 24/335

The final meeting of the 2024/25 academic year will be held on Wednesday 4 June 2025 at 2pm, venue tbc.