

ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

20 NOVEMBER 2025

REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION

A meeting of the Academic Assurance Committee was held via Zoom video conference from 09.30-11.30am on Thursday 20 November 2025.

Present:	Prof. Nick Braisby Prof. Alison Cotgrave [AC] Helen Edwards [HE] Jyotveer Gill [JG] Jon Hubert [JH] Hazel Lobo [HL] Dr. Liz Marr [LM] (Chair) Prof. Malcolm Todd [MT] Ashley Wheaton [AW]
In attendance:	Kate Deakin [KD] (for item 2.1 only) Sophie Elliott [SE] (for items 3.3 only) Lyndsay Hughes [LH] (Clerk to the Board of Trustees) Charlotte Thackeray [CT] (for item 3.1 only)
Apologies for absence:	Susan Dawson [SD] Jane Fawkes [JEF] Dr. Wendy Finlay [WF] Ben McManus [BM] Paula Shaw [PS]

1) GENERAL MEETING GOVERNANCE

2282 1.1/ DECARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2283 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

2284 1.2/ APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

2285 There were apologies for absence from Susan Dawson, Jane Fawkes, Dr. Wendy Finlay, Ben McManus and Paula Shaw.

2286 The Chair welcomed Prof. Malcolm Todd to his first meeting. LM introduced herself to the Committee as its new Chair.

2287 1.3/ MINUTES AND REDACTIONS OF THE MEETING HELD 21 NOVEMBER 2024

2288 The minutes and proposed redactions (highlighted grey) of the Academic Review Committee held 21 November 2024 were **APPROVED** as a true record as, despite the changes in Trustee membership since that time, it was noted that the previous Chair had reviewed them shortly after the meeting. The redacted minutes will be published on the University website in order to maintain compliance with Office for Students Conditions of Registration. The Chair of the Committee asked Prof. Nick Braisby to sign the minutes on behalf of the Committee as he had been in attendance at the time.

2289 1.4/ MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS SUMMARY

2290 An actions summary from the previous meeting was circulated as Paper 1.4 and the Committee noted that the only action had been completed.

2291 1.5/ ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

2292 The Academic Assurance Committee Terms of Reference V19.01 were shared with the Committee at paper 1.5a. They served as a reminder of the revised role and remit of the Committee, as discussed and agreed at the last meeting. Some further memberships changes were proposed, noting that Hazel Lobo, Ben McManus and Susan Dawson would conclude their terms of office on the Committee, and Prof. Malcolm Todd would join the Committee as a result of his new role as Pro Vice Chancellor Academic.

2293 The Committee noted that under the new terms of reference this year, Academic Trustees on the Committee had yet to observe a meeting of the Academic Board. This will be addressed in 2026 when the Committee schedule is reviewed with the return to work of the University Secretary.

ACTION: Ensure Academic Trustees observe an Academic Board meeting annually as per the Academic Assurance Committee Terms of Reference. [JEF]

2294 The Committee **NOTED** its role and remit and **APPROVED** the Academic Assurance Committee Terms of Reference for republication as the new V20.0.

ACTION: Finalise the Academic Assurance Committee Terms of Reference for republication. [LH]

2295 1.6/ ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

2296 The Committee reviewed its draft Annual Report for 2024-25 as presented in paper 1.6. The report provides an overview of the work and role of the

Committee in 2024–25 and forms part of the University's evidence of good governance practice. It recognised that in the reporting year just one meeting of the committee took place.

- 2297 It was agreed that the report clearly demonstrated the output of the Committee over the year. The Committee further agreed that the report will play an important role in giving the necessary assurance to the Board of Trustees on the University's academic quality and processes.
- 2298 The Committee **APPROVED** the Academic Assurance Committee Annual Report 2024–25 for presentation to the Board of Trustees for their review and final approval in December 2025.

2) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING

2299 2.1/ APPRENTICESHIP KPIS, SCORECARD AND SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2024–25

- 2300 Kate Deakin joined the meeting for item 2.1.
- 2301 KD provided a brief overview of the updated KPI scorecard which outlined the University's current performance against KPIs and the ESFA Accountability Framework and the final Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for Ofsted 2024–25, as provided in paper 2.1. This is the final such SAR as the inspection framework has now been revised and UBE is working towards preparing for assessment in the new model. UBE continues to consider itself as 'Good' against the existing Framework.
- 2302 The Committee focussed in on the demonstrable best practice and any areas of risk in their discussion of the reports. KD reported that the areas that require greater development and maturity are related to student feedback from NSS/SES and acting on feedback, particularly with regards to workload in the final year, building a student community and increased academic support.
- 2303 KD also raised the long-standing challenges with the Qualification Achievement Rate (QAR) for the Chartered Surveyor apprenticeship standard. UBE's rate currently stands at 47.5% which is an increase of 3% since 2024 and is some 35% higher than the national average for the standard and better than any other provider but remains significantly off the level the ESFA expects. An integrated end point assessment had been hoped for but there is no progress on this, and apprenticeships generally are subject to significant policy change at the current time. Equally, there has been a general governmental policy shift towards getting people into work rather than education/upskilling. The EPA is also hampered by the employer attitude and support towards completion of the apprenticeship.

- 2304 Against all other metrics in the Accountability Framework, the institution is performing well, in particular on retention which had previously been at risk and is now almost in the 'good' category.
- 2305 Initial observations on the new Inspection Framework show there is a huge checklist to cover and UBE clearly has areas of great strength, but the focus will be on meeting the expected standards for all seven areas of inspection, and then working towards greater strength. This is taking the form of a whole-institution approach to add value to the apprenticeship student experience.
- 2306 The Committee queried the increased number of withdrawals reported in the KPI spreadsheet. KD confirmed this was relative only to increased numbers of apprentices on programme and not related to an increasing trend, and also relative to some legacy issues with some of the earliest apprentice students who KD has actively managed out of the programme as they clearly had no intention of sitting the EPA but were technically classed as 'active' students still.
- 2307 The Committee also queried the comments about needing to improve assessment feedback practices and mechanisms. KD confirmed this is being addressed across the institution with pedagogic improvements underway and is sometimes more about contact with academics and better understanding of the feedback provided. There will be closer working between academic staff and Apprenticeship Outcomes Officers in the future.
- 2308 KD reported that she recently attended a meeting with other providers against the Chartered Surveyor Standard and that all other eight providers will be ceasing their provision because of the poor performance in the EPA. REDACTED
- 2309 The Committee **NOTED** the University's current performance on apprenticeships delivery and **AGREED** it would provide assurance to the Board of Trustees on the positive institutional performance in this area and seek further Board support on securing a solution to the QAR performance / EPA engagement rates / loss of income challenges still being faced by the institution.
- 2310 The Chair thanked KD for her contribution to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.
- 2311 2.2/ STUDENT SUCCESS**
- 2312 MT provided a brief overview of the evidence provided in paper 2.2 on the University's progress on its student outcomes measures and the improvement work that has driven that progress.

2313 MT reported that module success rates have materially improved and stand at 93.7% – the highest ever rate. Engagement with first assessment rates are also materially rising, as is the second semester engagement rate and engagement rates from apprentices. Overall Degree Outcomes remain stable with no signs of grade inflation and in alignment with sector norms. There are no unexplained attainment gaps and the University is tracking below just one B3 Condition metric and this is impacted by the very small associated cohort. The transparency and visibility to performance data at the institution is now impressive and allows for real time monitoring and interventions, underpinned by sustained and long term initiatives such as Transform, HELP and IRIP to bring focus to improving the student experience. The module level gains now need to be translated into improved programme outcomes.

2314 The Committee queried the impact gapped students have on the data and were informed there are processes in place to seek their re-engagement but if they gap twice they are then removed to avoid high numbers of 'ghost' students impacting performance metrics. The Chair requested that greater clarity be added to explaining these metrics and how they are reported.

2315 Overall, the Committee praised the outcomes and results being seen after a dogged pursuit of improvement over the years. They requested that the data pack also include module attainment data in the future.

ACTION: Include module attainment data for the Committee in the future when reporting on student success rates. [WF/MT]

2316 The Committee queried some of the data in the Degree Outcomes Statement and the increases seen in firsts compare to 2:1s. HE confirmed the algorithms are reviewed every 5 years but that all increases will be analysed properly for appropriate explanation. Work is commencing on analysing the data for the next Degree Outcomes Statement as the existing one in the data pack was approved by the Board earlier in 2025 and published accordingly.

2317 The Committee **NOTED** the University's progress in terms of student success and **AGREED** it would provide assurance to the Board of Trustees on the positive institutional performance in this area. They requested that MT pass on their thanks to all staff involved in delivering such exceptional results.

2318 2.3/ ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

2319 Helen Edwards presented an update to the Committee on the University's work in maintaining academic quality and standards during 2024-25 as outlined in paper 2.3 in order for the Committee to be able to assure the

Board of performance in this area. Slides were shared with the Committee that gave more context to some of the information provided in the report.

- 2320 The presentation focussed on the education KPIs alongside positive recent feedback from the external examiners, governance changes and the focus for 2025–26. The slide deck was circulated to the Committee for reference.
- 2321 In terms of the education KPIs, the picture is positive overall and the only indicator UBE is falling behind on in terms of continuation data is part time undergraduate, which is linked to the low success rate on the Certificate of Higher Education Surveying Practice programme and is a legacy issue relating to only 30 students. For split indicator data that is lagging behind, there are signs of sustained improvement year on year now. Student outcomes completion data is also a positive picture excepting the full time provision, though this also still shows some improvement year on year and will remain an institutional focus. Student progression outcomes are very positive given that most UBE students are in employment.
- 2322 HE also reported that the Graduate Outcomes Survey response rate stood at 49.7% with 93.5% in employment with only 4.5% having left the built environment sector post study. As raised earlier, the Degree Outcomes being seen also present a positive picture with some increase on last year, likely as a result of sustained internal initiatives. This is supported by effective algorithm design that correlates directly to the approved list allowed/used.
- 2323 HE reported that there have been sustained low levels of complaints and appeals and where these are made, they relate primarily to mitigating circumstances. More matters are dealt with through the informal process and only one case was referred to the OIA and determined as not justified.
- 2324 18 out of 23 External Examiner reports have now been received and so far provide positive endorsement to UBE, though they did note some inconsistencies in feedback, which challenges all Universities. This is an area for review and action in the coming year.
- 2325 HE reported that a number of academic governance changes were introduced last year following a governance review and as a result two committees were disbanded and four were introduced, some with a greater focus on research given the University's direction of travel.
- 2326 Finally, HE reported that the priorities for the coming year are focused on Ofsted Readiness, institutional readiness for TEF, compliance with OfS baseline standards in all core and split metrics, continued focus on student satisfaction and NSS, and launching new programmes, including Research Degrees.

2327 The Committee queried the disbanding of the Quality Audit Group and its relationship with the new Internal Audit Function, largely managed through the Board's Audit Committee. The degree of knowledge about this decision within the Audit Committee was queried as its role is much wider than just commissioning audits in academic areas and therefore there may be a gap.

ACTION: Confirm with the Audit Committee the rationale for the disbanding of the Quality Audit Group in line with introduction of the Internal Audit service. [JEF]

2328 The Committee also queried readiness for Research Degrees and delivering on the 22 recommendations the Open University has made to UBE. Some of this was challenging as UBE cannot demonstrate its research environment and credentials as yet as it is not yet delivering. Others were simply alignment with their policies and practices. Without assurance it will be able to deliver Research Degrees with the OU as validating partner, UBE is unable to put further resource and expertise into setting this up.

2329 The Committee queried the numbers of students securing third class degrees who join the University with exemptions. They require significant additional support and therefore this should be an area of investigation for the Degree Outcomes Working Group. MT confirmed that actions in this area have been agreed and are being taken forward.

2330 The Committee thanked HE for the presentation and felt reassured around the work of the institution on quality assurance. The Committee **PRE-APPROVED** the Annual Report on University of the Built Environment's Academic Quality and Standards and **AGREED** to provide assurance to the Board that the University's work and performance in this area is of a high standard and therefore that the report should secure Board final approval.

3) ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING

2331 3.1/ ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN VARIATION FOLLOWING THE LSA MERGER

2332 Charlotte Thackeray joined the meeting for item 3.1.

2333 CT presented to the Committee paper 3.1 which outlined the proposed amendments to be made to the institution's Access and Participation Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28 following the merger with the LSA, which will require Board final approval ahead of submission to the OfS. CT explained that some changes proposed are the direct result of the merger, others are relative to the opportunity to makes changes and consolidate. Targets have been adapted and consolidated where necessary. All changes have been reviewed and approved through Executive and Academic Board and with

the Committee's recommendation will secure final Board approval to submit in December.

2334 CT reported that the LSA's main APP activity is progressing well, is award-winning and therefore remains included in the Plan. The primary risk in securing approval of the Plan may be considered the removal of Intervention Strategy 2, which from UBE's perspective is acceptable but OfS could interpret as a reduction in ambition. More than five intervention strategies for a University of this size is not advisable though so the rationalisation comes with a strong narrative which the Executive was also happy to support.

2335 The Committee **PRE-APPROVED** the University's proposed amendments to the Access and Participation Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28 and **AGREED** to provide assurance to the Board of Trustees that the revised plan meets all requirements and should be duly submitted to the OfS to maintain compliance with Conditions of Registration

2336 The Chair thanked CT for her contribution to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.

2337 3.2/ ACADEMIC CAREER FRAMEWORK

2338 MT presented to the Committee the institution's new Academic Career Framework, which was approved by Academic Board earlier this year and is now in operation (paper 3.2).

2339 The Committee very much welcomed the introduction of the Framework. They queried why Fellowship of the HEA was not a stronger feature in the criteria and MT confirmed it was simply not a UBE prerequisite at this time but further refinement of recruitment practices for academics will be undertaken in the near future and this can be considered then.

2340 The Committee queried the feedback from staff on the introduction of the Framework. MT reported it had been largely positive albeit there are lessons to be learnt on how colleagues apply and demonstrate their credentials which will be carried forward into improvements next time. Staff have been delighted to see clearly articulated progression routes now in place and the appropriate recognition of skills and development within the academic team. This is now contributing to recruitment of some high calibre staff. The Committee also queried why there was no Professorial route for Associate Professorships. MT responded that benchmarking with similar institutions had taken place and there were no leadership routes at Associate Professorship levels but this too will be further reviewed in time as the institution grows.

2341 The Committee **NOTED** the Academic Career Framework for the University that has been approved by Academic Board and adopted in 2025 and in particular it's alignment to the University's strategy. The Committee **AGREED** to provide assurance to the Board of the University's quality and standards in the recently approved Framework and the structures/processes that have been put in place, noting that review and potential enhancements will take place after the first year. The Committee requested an update in one year's time.

ACTION: Report on uptake and appointments within the Academic Career Framework after one full year. [MT]

2342 3.3/ STUDENT SATISFACTION ACTION PLAN

2343 Sophie Elliott joined the meeting for item 3.3.

2344 Sophie Elliott presented an update on the institution's action plan created on the back of the 2025 NSS and SES results. It was noted that to date, the Board had seen the detailed results and analysis but not the associated action plan to bring about improvements in some scoring (paper 3.3).

2345 SE reported that the focus for the next NSS is now on identifying the characteristics of the participating cohort (in particular the apprentices) and their engagement and data points are currently being analysed for positive interventions. The aim is to ensure students understand the support available to them in the terminology that will become familiar to them through the NSS. SE also reported that *The Loop* student newsletter has been developed to try to close the feedback loop with a 'you said, we did' communications approach.

2346 The Committee commented that an overall 'positive atmosphere generator' action is missing from the plan and would help the student body outside of the fairly technical/data driven approach to improving NSS highlighted so far by the institution. SE assured the Committee that this is occurring but is not explicit in the plan and is more ongoing, however SE and NB agreed to have a further conversation about this outside of the meeting. The committee was also understanding of the remote context of the UBE student body which does make this work more challenging.

2347 The Committee **NOTED** the action plan for improving student satisfaction following the NSS and SES results 2025 and **AGREED** to provide assurance to the Board of Trustees of the appropriateness of the response and work now underway as part of a core institutional priority for the year.

2348 The Chair thanked SE for her contributions to the Committee and invited her to leave the meeting.

2349 **3.4/ PSRB ACCREDITATIONS**

2350 HE provided a brief overview of the status of all the University's professional accreditations and where there are any risks to accreditations and if so, how these are being managed, as provided in paper 3.4. The paper was written by Kate Greenway and acknowledged as excellent by the Committee.

2351 HE reported that CABE reaccreditation had been secured this year with extremely positive feedback, as had the first re-approval with the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals. The team is currently preparing for the CIOB reaccreditation process from January and significant work is underway to map provision to the new ARB Education Framework to ensure accreditation of the LSA programme can continue (this is a new standard for all providers and was anticipated at the time of the merger with the LSA). Overall, all accreditations are being managed but represent a lot of work manage on an ongoing basis.

2352 The Committee **NOTED** the status of all current and future PSRB accreditations and **AGREED** to provide assurance to the Board of Trustees of the University's positive management of these accreditations and any associated risks. They were impressed with the volume being successfully managed.

4) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**2353** **4.1/ THANKS TO DEPARTING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

2354 The Chair thanked Hazel Lobo for her six years on the Committee and for her insightful contributions during that period. HL's term of office will end in February 2026, and this was therefore her last meeting on the Committee.

2355 The Chair thanked Susan Dawson and Ben McManus (in absentia) for their years of service on the Committee and for their insightful contributions during that period. SD's term of office has now concluded, and BM will conclude his time as Student Trustee in March 2026. Recruitment will take place during 2026.

2356 **4.2/ ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

2357 The Chair thanked all attendees for their continued commitment to the Committee and the valuable perspectives they bring to the academic matters it reviews.

2358 There were no additional items of business reported.

5) CLOSE

2359 **5/ MEETING CLOSE**

2360 The Chair called the meeting to a close at 11.32am.

2361 The date of the next meeting is Thursday 18 June 2026.

Signed



Name

Dr Liz Marr

Position

Chair, Academic Assurance Committee

Date

30 April 2026