

LINCOLN BISHOP UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2025
14:00PM VIA MS TEAMS

Present:

Stephan Bolton, Students' Union President (SB)
Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty (NG)
Professor Andrew Gower, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive (AG)
Professor Hilary Grainger OBE
Professor Marianne Howarth (MH) **(Chair)**
Professor Andrew Jackson, Executive Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange (AJ)
Dr Claire Thomson, Executive Dean for Teaching, Learning & Student Success (CT)

In attendance:

Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office and Interim University Secretary (*minutes*)

Action

- 1. Welcome**
 - 1.1 The Chair, Professor Marianne Howarth, welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year for the Academic Assurance Committee (AAC).
- 2. Apologies**
 - 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from:
 - Elise Temple
- 3. Declarations of Interest**
 - 3.1 There were no new declarations of interest to raise for this meeting.
- 4. To Receive the Minutes of the AAC Meeting held on 4 June 2025**
 - 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 June 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record and the Chair was authorised to sign them.
- 5. Matters Arising**
 - 5.1 There were no matters arising from the last meeting held on 4 June 2025. However, the Chair RAISED one follow up question from the last meeting:
 - 5.1.1 Minute 6.4 – The Language Gallery (TLG) Student Recruitment
The Chair ENQUIRED about the anticipated growth in TLG student recruitment and whether this has been currently achieved.
 - The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Andrew Gower (AG) EXPLAINED that actual recruitment was significantly lower than the 1,800 previously projected by TLG, with the final number expected to be between 200 and 300.

6. Terms of Reference for 2025/26

- 6.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Terms of Reference (ToR) for 2025/2026.
- 6.2 The Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office and Interim University Secretary, Leanne Chancellor (LC), NOTED that the only amendments made to the ToRs from last academic year was to nomenclature and the University name change to Lincoln Bishop University.
- 6.3 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the ToR for the AAC – members felt that the responsibilities were still comprehensive and gave the Committee the opportunity to fulfil the core mission of providing assurance to University Council.

7. Update on the Development of the Academic Portfolio

- 7.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the update report from NG on the development of the academic portfolio.
- 7.2 The Provost and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Nick Gee (NG), PROVIDED members with a comprehensive update on the rationalisation of progress this academic year aligning with the University's Strategy 2030, which included:
- Drafting the academic portfolio innovation sub-strategy.
 - Planning, consulting and preparing for the new academic structure -
Noting in particular:
 - The University transitioning from one Faculty with three portfolio areas to two Faculties — 'Education' and 'People & Society', designed to align academic provision with the University's three Strategic Goals and facilitating cross-collaboration.
 - Initiating new portfolio developments -
Noting in particular:
 - Ongoing plans to expand into allied health and nursing, though delayed due to an unsuccessful capital funding bid to the Office for Students (OfS). The University will proceed with internal investment and stakeholder engagement to determine the best approach and phasing.
 - Ongoing portfolio innovation, including new Business MBA and ITE course developments, Foundation Year and Fast-Track Routes, and partnerships with external organisations such as the Ministry of Defence and Franklin College in Grimsby.
 - Developing new collaborative provision.
 - Planning for Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) implementation.
 - Reviewing current provision for delivery optimisation opportunities.
Noting in particular:
 - The establishment of Centres of Excellence in health and business, with encouragement to define tangible outcomes for education and applied humanities, ensuring all areas are central to the University's strategic direction.
 - The successful internal appointment of leaders for health and applied humanities, while the Deputy Dean role for the Business School remains open, with plans to appoint early in the new year.

- 7.3 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:
- *What would be the impact of new courses on campus space?*
 - NG NOTED that the new Business School will increase teaching space, and many new courses will be delivered online or off-campus, minimising immediate space pressures.
 - *Support was expressed for the new academic structure.*
 - NG NOTED that staff feedback had been generally positive, with concern about perceived costs addressed with ongoing efforts to ensure cross-faculty collaboration and operational clarity.
- 7.4 Members THANKED NG for a comprehensive update on the development of the portfolio.
8. **Strategy 2030 – Sub-strategies**
- ***Academic Portfolio Innovation***
 - ***Learning, Teaching and Student Success***
 - ***Research and Knowledge Exchange***
- 8.1 Members RECEIVED and REVIEWED three of the seven sub-strategies to the Strategy 2030, which have been through quite an extended journey with various iterations and had been recently reviewed at Senate at its meeting on 3 December 2025.
- 8.2 AG NOTED the Strategy 2030 which was published on the University's website and aligns to the priorities within the recent Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper: www.lincolnbishop.ac.uk/strategy2030
- 8.3 AG HIGHLIGHTED that the three sub-strategies were in alignment with the University's mission and goals.
- 8.3.1 *Academic Portfolio Innovation*
NG presented the Sub-Strategy and NOTED that it focuses on building a coherent narrative around the academic portfolio, with emphasis on professional alignment and the Local Skills Needs, particularly in health, business, education, and applied humanities.
- 8.3.2 *Learning, Teaching and Student Success*
The Executive Dean of Learning, Teaching and Student Success, Dr Claire Thomson (CT), presented this Sub-Strategy and HIGHLIGHTED that this was an ambitious document, mapping to the University's 2030 Goals. CT NOTED that the Sub-Strategy is about providing inspirational opportunities, transformative experiences and sustainability as key for the institution, and also emphasising digital infrastructure and graduate employability.
- 8.3.3 *Research and Knowledge Exchange*
The Executive Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Professor Andrew Jackson (AJ) presented this sub strategy and NOTED that he had benchmarked against six peer institutions to create this sub strategy and the importance of strategic development in research, with attention to sector trends and the evolving Research Excellence Framework (REF) landscape.
- 8.4 AAC was CONTENT to give their ENDORSEMENT for the three sub-strategies to go to University Council at its meeting on 19 December 2025 for approval.

9. Access and Participation Plan (APP) Update

9.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the November 2025 Access and Participation Plan (APP) summary update from CT.

9.2 CT REMINDED members that the current APP was approved by the OfS in September 2025 as one of the conditions for OfS registration for a Higher Education provider charging the higher fee.

9.3 CT PROVIDED members with an update on the APP, HIGHLIGHTING the following:

- Progress on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and demographics, NOTING that the University exceeded its target for IMDQ1 and IMDQ2 student intake, largely due to Clearing, but noted a decrease in male student enrolment and the importance of improving foundation year continuation.
- Analysis of Clearing data showed a higher proportion of applicants from IMDQ1 and IMDQ2 engaging later in the admissions cycle, prompting further investigation into their motivations and needs. Ongoing monitoring will be completed by the Access and Participation Sub Committee.
- Continuation rates and attainment are closely monitored, with particular attention to transitions from Foundation to Undergraduate levels and the need to recruit more male students.

9.4 CT CONFIRMED that the current degree classification algorithm had been reviewed and was compliant with recent guidance, with the current and continuing algorithm reported in the Degree Outcome Statement, which will be presented in item 12 of this meeting.

9.5 Members RAISED the following comment:

- For CT to ensure future APP reports include more detailed analysis of interventions and their impact on continuation rates – especially after Year 2 of the APP.

10. National Student Survey (NSS), Lincoln Bishop University Student Satisfaction Survey (LBUSSS) and Graduate Outcomes Reports

10.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the NSS, LBUSSS and Graduate Outcomes Report presented by CT.

10.2 CT HIGHLIGHTED the following from the summary report:

- Strong performance in the NSS and LBUSSS with the University achieving high rankings in the survey completion rates and top national rankings for student support, satisfaction, and teaching quality, with data used to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Graduate Outcome employment rates were strong, particularly in education, though the definition of 'highly skilled employment' varies by sector and was under review.

10.3 CT NOTED that survey and outcome data are reviewed quarterly with Programme Leaders and inform action plans, which are monitored by the Student Journey and Experience Sub Committee. It was NOTED that any recommendations would be included within subject level / department Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) and the final Annual Health of the Institution Report.

11. B3 Outcomes Report

- 11.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the B3 Student Outcomes Dashboard Summary Report, which was updated in August 2025.
- 11.2 CT NOTED that the OfS Condition B3 focuses on ensuring that Higher Education providers in England deliver positive student outcomes at or above the required thresholds. It was NOTED that Condition B3 requires Higher Education providers to demonstrate that students:
- Continue with their studies,
 - Complete their courses successfully, and
 - Progress into professional employment or further study.
- 11.3 CT NOTED that to meet this condition of registration, providers must show that their performance meets or exceeds numerical thresholds set by the OfS for these outcomes.
- 11.4 CT PRESENTED the B3 Report and DISCUSSED with members the overview of the data dashboard and areas of concern for the three areas; 'continuation', 'completion' and 'progression'.
- 11.5 CT HIGHLIGHTED the five strategic recommendations from the B3 Report:
1. Review of historic withdrawals from part-time PGCE cohorts to establish if trends continuing and, if so, can they be mitigated.
 2. Review of non-UK students' continuation rates and withdrawal reasons to establish possible mitigations.
 3. Start to track Asian, Black, Mixed & Other (ABMO) continuation rates ahead of the APP proposed date (currently year 3 of plan) to establish if there are trends in terms of withdrawal reasons, level, mode or subject.
 4. As part of the quarterly Head of Programme/ data meetings, introduce a standing agenda item to look at continuation on first-degree with foundation year.
 5. Investigate the extent to which partnership activity has impacted both the business and management and first-degree with integrated foundation year continuation rates.
- 11.6 CT NOTED that the strategic recommendations for B3 outcomes would be monitored by the Student Journey and Experience Subcommittee and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- 11.7 The Chair NOTED that she would welcome any progress reports to be presented to the committee when ready.

CT

12. Degree Outcome Statement

- 12.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the draft Degree Outcome Statement, which was presented by CT.
- 12.2 CT NOTED that the Degree Outcome Statement had been reviewed and approved by Senate at its meeting on 3 December 2025 and was being presented at AAC to provide assurance.

- 12.3 CT NOTED that the Degree Outcome Statement details the updated classification algorithm, which now excludes Level 4 from the degree classification and reduces the uplift threshold from 3% to 2%, following sector guidance and internal modelling. CT also confirmed the alignment with the OfS guidance on degree classification algorithms.

13. Research Integrity Statement

- 13.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the draft annual Research Integrity Statement 2025, which was presented by AJ and was the University's commitment as a signatory to the Concordat.
- 13.2 AJ NOTED that the Research Integrity Statement had been reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. It was NOTED that it had received its final review at Senate at its meeting on 3 December 2025 and was approved.
- 13.3 AJ confirmed strong and robust research governance through the research ethics process, with no reported cases of misconduct and ongoing policy refinements and updates, including guidance on AI use in research – it was NOTED that recent research policy updates address the use of AI in research, prohibiting student use but allowing staff to use AI for methodological support and grant writing, in line with external strategic drivers.

14. Faculty Annual Quality Monitoring Summary

- 14.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Faculty Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) Overview Reports from the three portfolio areas of 'Education, Health and Lifelong Learning', 'Initial Teacher Education', and Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, to provide them assurance on the monitoring process.
- 14.2 NG SUMMERISED and DISCUSSED the Faculty AMR Overview Summary Report, highlighting strong NSS results, achievements, the monitoring process, areas for improvement, mechanisms for sharing good practice and the need for systematic tracking of action plans, especially regarding continuation rates and Ofsted recommendations.
- 14.3 NG HIGHLIGHTED the following key areas:
- *Annual monitoring process:* the summary distils extensive programme-level reports, noting strong faculty performance despite leadership transitions, and identified areas such as continuation rates in foundation years and specific courses needing action plans that fell below baseline, such as Early Childhood Studies and Psychology.
 - *Data and action plan tracking:* there was a call for more robust, systematic tracking of action plans and outcomes, with suggestions to improve dashboard reporting and ensure subject-level actions are centrally acknowledged and monitored.
 - *Ofsted and mentoring actions:* action plans were in place to address the Ofsted recommendations on mentoring and EAL provision that arose, with regular reviews and evidence of progress being systematically documented.
 - *ITE Placement Capacity Challenges:* the ongoing challenges in securing sufficient placement capacity for ITE students, particularly in Physics, and outlined steps to regulate intake and collaborate with partners to address these issues.

- *Sharing Good Practice:* mechanisms such as Faculty Forums and themed conferences facilitate the sharing of good practice between high- and low-performing areas, supporting continuous improvement across the institution

14.4 Members RAISED the following question:

- *What support was there for Partners completing the AMR form and the interventions for underperformance?*
 - Variability in AMR completion among Partners was discussed, with bespoke support provided based on Partner needs, including staff embedded at partner sites to facilitate quality assurance.
 - NG acknowledged the need for a more systematic approach to tracking underperformance and described plans to use the new Faculty structure to enhance monitoring and intervention.

15. Student Contention Report

15.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Student Contention Executive Summary Report prepared by the Safeguarding, Contention and Projects Officer, Connor Short, which refers to the academic year 2024-25 (01/09/24 – 01/09/25) and captures data collected in relation to reported student contention issues, such as complaints, disciplinarys, and academic misconduct.

15.2 CT HIGHLIGHTED effective resolution of complaints without escalation to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and described the University's strengthened reporting process which ensures most complaints are resolved internally, with the Students' Union playing a key advocacy role – CT NOTED that the majority of student complaints (93%) are resolved at Stage 1.

15.3 CT NOTED the recent visit to the University by the OIA Outreach Team on 13 November 2025, to share with the OIA the University's effective practice. The OIA visit provided positive feedback as well as suggestions for further improvement and resource support.

15.4 CT NOTED that a project group, which included Students' Union representatives, was currently reviewing disciplinary and complaints procedures to enhance clarity and student-friendliness, incorporating direct student feedback and OIA recommendations.

15.5 The Chair THANKED CT for presenting the Student Contention Report and confirmed that the Committee had been provided with assurance on the University's complaints, disciplinarys and academic misconduct processes.

16. Any Other Business

16.1 There was no further business to discuss.

16.2 To Note: Agenda Items for next meeting:

- Research Excellence Framework (REF) Update – (June).
- A Summary Overview of the new Ofsted ITE Framework.
- Apprenticeships Update – including recruitment and progression.

17. Key Items for University Council

17.1 The key items to HIGHLIGHT to University Council at its next meeting on 19 December 2025 were:

- Update on the development of the academic portfolio.
- Approval of the three Sub-strategies:

- Academic Portfolio Innovation
- Learning, Teaching and Student Success
- Research and Knowledge Exchange
- APP Progress Update.
- Update on the NSS, LBUSSS and Graduate Outcomes Reports.
- B3 Outcomes Report.
- Sight of the Degree Outcomes Statement and Research Integrity Statement, which had been approved by Senate.
- Student Contention Report.

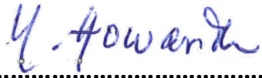
18. Date of Next Meeting

- 18.1 The date of the next AAC meeting was scheduled for:
- Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 2pm via MS Teams

Secretary's Note:

In January 2026, the date of the next AAC meeting has been rescheduled to take place on Thursday 19 March 2026 at 3pm via MS Teams.

- 18.2 The Chair THANKED members for their attendance and staff members for their work in preparing detailed and comprehensive reports. It was felt that AAC was very well informed and supported the committee's assurance role.

Signed 

Date 19 March 2026