Meeting Minutes

Academic Board (AB)

Date: Monday, 28 July 2025

Time: 11:00 AM (Meeting commenced at 11:04 AM)

Location: Online (via Microsoft Teams)

Attendees:

- Dr. Mohamad Islam (MI) – CEO and Director (Observer)

- Mathew Shafaghi (MS) – Academic Partnerships Manager and Chair

- Isabella Micu – Secretary

- Valentina Bouzo – Internal Member

- Shaida Akter – Internal Member

- Dr. Rajib Mustofa (RM) – External Member (15 years in industry, Academic Lead, OFS Assessor, partnership experience since 2018)

- Dr. Ramesh Marasini (RA) – External Member (20 years in UK Higher Education, Academic Dean, Senior HE Lead)

1. Preliminary Items

1.1 Welcome and Apologies
Mathew Shafaghi welcomed all attendees. Shafiq introduced Shaida. No apologies were noted.

1.2 Declaration of Interest
Mathew asked if there were any conflicts of interest; none were declared.

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (28 April)
The minutes were reviewed and confirmed. Previous policy updates and version control were approved.

1.4 Matters Arising
No matters arising.

2. Strategic Discussion

2.1 DMS Strategy 2030

Mathew highlighted DMS's plan for online and blended delivery using Moodle, with strong student support and a goal to improve competitiveness.
Rajib emphasized tailoring delivery to student demographics and exploring various blended models.
Ramesh advised evaluating current online models, feedback, and market needs.
Mathew stressed technology and AI integration to enhance interactivity. Plans to establish a Teaching and Learning Committee were discussed, especially with the upcoming campus opening in Milton Keynes.

Actions:
- Establish a Teaching and Learning Committee
- Establish a Student Committee to assess outcomes and advise the Academic Board

3. Regular Business Items

3.1 CEO Report
Shafiq gave an update on programme and campus development, university partnerships (including KTP with City University), focus on quality teaching, employability, and upcoming external reviews (OfS, Matrix).

3.2 Resources
No updates recorded in this section.

3.3 Programme Data
Concerns raised about high withdrawal rates. Discussions focused on improving the admissions process, early student engagement, support mechanisms, and teaching quality. Suggestions included stricter pre-assessment, better induction, and mid-module checks (e.g., 3-week assessments). Rajib suggested collecting feedback via withdrawal forms and reviewing teaching observations. Valentina proposed pre-enrolment interviews and clearer expectations.

Actions:
- Mathew to liaise with IQA for improved reporting and early attention indicators
- Shaida to coordinate on early-stage assessments and update Mathew if support is needed

3.4 Student Representative Report
Not available; next cohort starts in September.

3.5 Academic Calendar
Mathew confirmed that academic calendars are available online and will be updated for future FE delivery.

3.6 Policy Review and Approval
All listed policies were reviewed and generally approved. Ramesh requested clarity on terminology (CEO/Director), definition of personal tutor, committee membership, and addition of contact details in relevant policies. Mathew agreed to incorporate changes.

Policies Reviewed:
- Academic Appeal Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- EDI Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Internal Quality Assurance Policy
- Malpractice, Maladministration & Plagiarism Policy
- Online Learning Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment & Special Consideration Policy
- RPL Policy
- Staff Development Policy
- Freedom of Speech Policy

4. Developments

4.1 Matrix Self-Assessment
Preparation underway for review on 14–15 August. A mock session was recommended and scheduled for Monday 4 August at 2:30 PM. Rajib will lead the session with Ramesh supporting.

4.2 Partnerships
Ongoing discussions with universities. MK campus to open mid-September; official event to include university representatives. OFS update expected in September; monitoring Condition E8 and student cap concerns.

5. Enterprise, Research and Community

5.1 Cricket Team
Shafiq confirmed DMS sponsorship of a cricket team to support community engagement and visibility.

5.2 Research Projects (Funding)
Mathew and Shafiq involved in collaborative research with university partners. A KTP project proposal has been submitted. Outcome expected in October. Plan to hire a researcher to support the project.

6. External Comments

Ramesh praised the progress, increased evidence-based discussions, and structural improvements. Emphasized formalizing documentation and validating website information.

7. Any Other Business

Mathew reminded the team to review the website ahead of the Matrix assessment.

8. Date of Next Meeting

10 November 2025