

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ACADEMIC ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 25 May 2018

Present: Prof P Wiles (Chair), Prof J Bale, Dr S Timothy, Mr M Conway (University Secretary + Clerk to the Board)

Apologies for absence from Dr J Morrissy

In attendance: Prof C Hughes, PVC for Student Experience
Mr L Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
Mr P Sweeney, Governance Services (Minute Secretary)

Paper reference	Minute reference	
	AAC/18/01	Declarations of Interest
	1.1	Professor Jeff Bale reported he had been one of the external 'critical friends' referred to the Annual Quality Review Action Plan. He had undertaken this role before joining the Board of Governors.
	AAC/18/02	Minutes of the Meeting on 20 October 2017
	2.1	The minutes were <u>approved</u> as a correct record. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
	AAC/18/03	Terms of Reference and Constitution
	3.1	The revised Terms of Reference and Constitution addressed comments raised at the previous meeting about defining the term 'academic' to mean taught and research degrees provision and the type of external input required by the Committee. The revisions would be presented to the Board at the meeting on 13 June 2018 where the Board would be asked to delegate authority to the Committee to co-opt any external members. Action: Clerk to the Board
	3.2	The University would continue to research potential co-options with a view to the Committee agreeing names before its next meeting in October 2018. ACTION: Clerk to the Board
	3.3	The Committee discussed the need for effective input from students about the quality of the University's academic provision at its meetings. The Student Voice Report was useful but some of the content was not relevant to the Committee's remit and needed to be considered in its entirety somewhere else. The Chair said he would speak with the President of the Students Union to discuss how the committee could best receive the Report. Action: Chair

AAC/1/18/6 AAC/18/04 **Annual Quality Review**

4.1 At its meeting in October 2017, the Committee recommended the Annual Quality Review (AQR) 2017 and Action Plan to the Board as a basis for it authorising the Accountable Officer to give the necessary assurances to HEFCE on the University's approach to continuous improvement of the student experience and the reliability of degree standards. The Action Plan was a living document which was continually updated to reflect the progress of the various work-streams against the stated delivery and impact targets.

4.2 The Provost reported on the wider context within which the on-going work operated and on some of the challenges to implementing changes. These challenges included:

- i) The University could only implement changes to regulations and policies on an annual basis at the start of each academic year. This could delay certain actions taking place.
- ii) The scale and complexity of some of the planned developments would take a while to work through. This applied particularly to the movement from a module based to a course based structure.
- iii) The cultural challenges around adopting the Professional Services Operating Model (PSOM) narrative of one University and consistency of approach.

A significant amount of work was taking place within the Shaping Futures pillar on the levers for academic change. This work included, the portfolio review, having more flexibility around modes of study, a more flexible workforce with clarity about responsibility, mapping the activities needed for the Subject Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Employability Plan.

4.3 The Chair asked the Provost and the Clerk to the Board to consider how this context could be best provided to the Board in terms of a health-check of progress towards academic transformation.

ACTION: Provost/Clerk to the Board

4.4 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that the majority of the work-streams established within the Action Plan were either on track to deliver activities and benefits within the agreed timescales or that delays and risks were being managed and likely to be recovered within the next academic year. A key driving force behind the on-going work and the actions set out in the draft plan for 2018 was the shift in the unit of learning from the module to the course. This sat behind much of what was happening.

4.5 The draft Action Plan 2018 included:

- i) Implementation and embedding of the new standard Collaborative Course Leader role descriptor across all academic departments. Additional specialist staff development was being provided for Collaborative Course Leaders to support them in the management of collaborative provision and attendant risk management.

- ii) On-going work to support and develop academic course leadership which would now be taken forward within the Academic Operating Project plan.
- iii) The continuing shift from module-based to course-based external examination.
- iv) A review of the principles behind assessment and attendant assessment regulations to ensure assessment was proportionate to the level of the award.
- v) Further improvements in timetabling including a policy to manage late curriculum and timetabling changes that accorded with the legal requirements of CMA and prioritised the best student experience.
- vi) A review of the timing of summer reassessment processes to ensure that the reassessment and marking process was complete before the end of July each year.

4.6 In response to questions and comments from the Committee, the following points were made:

- i) The shift in the unit of learning from the module to course was designed to break out of the 'module jail' and be liberating for academic staff. It was important to secure academic confidence in order to achieve this.
- ii) At present some external examiners would discuss the overall quality of the course but others were reluctant to see the course level view. The phasing out of module external examiners would continue in 2018/19.
- iii) 'Over-assessment' occurred where learning outcomes overlapped between modules. This resulted in students effectively being tested twice on the same things and an increased workload for staff. The Department of Media, Arts and Communications was currently piloting course level assessment.

AAC/18/05 Education Partnership Planning and Approval Process

5.1 The new Education Partnership Planning and Approval Process would be implemented from September 2018 on a phased basis. The process featured a set of decision points based around the initial risk assessment, the finalisation of the faculty business case, consideration by the Partnership Approval Panel and final institutional approval. These steps had been explicitly designed to ensure that the University engaged in only robust partnerships of a sufficient quality.

5.2 The Committee noted the report and asked for an update on progress at the next meeting.

ACTION: Head of Academic Quality and Standards

AAC/18/06 Office for Students Registration Documents

6.1 The registration documentation required by the newly formed Office for Students (OfS) in order for the University to register as a provider of higher education for the 2019/20 academic year had been submitted by the deadline of 23 May 2018. Four documents were required:

- I. The Access and Participation Plan (in a revised form from the present version),
- II. Self-assessment on guidance on consumer protection law,
- III. Student Protection Plan
- IV. Self-assessment on management and governance.

These documents would be shared with the Board at its meeting on 13 June 2018.

AAC/18/07 **Student Complaints**

- 7.1 The draft Annual Quality Review Action Plan 2018 contained an action to review the governance of student complaints to ensure the University had effective oversight of the developing trend towards group complaints. The Student Complaints Policy and Procedure would be revised for 2018/19 to ensure that group complaints moved directly to the Faculty Resolution stage for a full investigation of the issues raised. A report on student complaints in 2017/18 would be presented at the next meeting.

ACTION: Provost

AAC/18/08 **Next Meeting**

The date scheduled for the next meeting is 26 October 2018