

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT (viaWebex):

Professor Paul Wiles (Chair)	Angela Foulkes
Professor Jeff Bale	Professor Julietta Patnick
Elaine Buckley	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michaela Boryslawskij, Clerk to the Board of Governors
 Hannah Boyce, Governance and Sector Regulation Senior Administrator
 Professor Roger Eccleston, DVC Academic
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
 Dan Lally, Head of Business, Engagement and Growth (for agenda item 7)
 Dr Neil Mckay, Dean of Students
 Professor Alison Metcalfe, PVC Teaching and Learning
 Pete Sweeney, Governance and Sector Regulation Adviser (Minute Secretary)

Agenda item	Opening Comments	Minute Ref AAC/20/37
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37.1 The Chair welcomed Angela Foulkes to her first meeting as a member of the Committee.

Agenda item 2	Declaration of Interests	Minute Ref AAC/20/38
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38.1 Angela Foulkes declared an interest in agenda item 7 in her role as Chief Executive and Principal of The Sheffield College.

Agenda item 3	Meeting on 3 July 2020	Minute Ref AAC/20/39
	Paper Ref AAC/3/20/M	

39.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Agenda item 4	Matters Arising	Minute Ref AAC/20/40
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40.1 Minute AAC/20/28 (Autumn 2020): The following updates were provided:

- I. The University was now operating within Tier 2 of its Covid contingency framework. This was consistent with the High and Very High levels of restrictions recently announced by the Government as well as the Government's priority to keep university campuses open. The shift to a greater degree of online delivery took effect on 5 October 2020 and replaced the previous commitment to four hours per week of campus experience for all students, which had been suspended until further notice.
- II. A lecture capture system had now been implemented and would become an important element of the teaching fabric moving forward. In response to a query relating to confidence in the ability to deliver blended learning technically and professionally, it was acknowledged that there had been a series of rapid transitions and that to support staff through these, a significant amount of training and development sessions were being delivered to staff and around 600 members had accounts at present.

Agenda item 5	Evaluation of No-Detriment Assessment Measures	Minute Ref AAC/20/41
	Paper Ref AAC/4/20/5	

41.1 The report set out the findings from the evaluation of the no-detriment assessment measures introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Key findings from the evaluation included:

- I. There had been large but proportionate increases in the use of extensions to submission deadlines. This increased use had supported students to complete their learning in a meaningful way.
- II. Module and individual scaling were used, but in low numbers compared to the number of modules and student record.
- III. The evidence indicated that there was high application of no detriment measures in Departments which may have suffered the greatest disadvantage from Covid-19 restrictions
- IV. Less than 1000 No Detriment Retakes were recorded (as of early August) which was low when considering the number of assessment tasks during 2020/21.
- V. Very early indicators suggested that average module marks across all levels of study were broadly in line with previous years. This measure would eventually be supported by the analysis of HESA data on good honours outcomes which was due in late September 2020.
- VI. The number of formal complaints submitted at Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure was relatively low (around 100) in comparison to the overall student population. Many of these had been submitted before Departmental Assessment Boards had met to review their performance under the no detriment principles.

41.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- I. Members asked about the use of scaling of individual marks and sought assurance that this was not impacting on standards. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that scaling of individual marks was an exceptional measure for 2019/20 and not part of routine assessment board processes. It had been necessary to apply the measure on just six occasions,
- II. The increase in academic conduct cases during semester 2 was noted and members welcomed the review into the reasons for this.
- III. Members encouraged the University to look carefully across the sector to see if the expected small increase in good honours (grade inflation) was in line with outcomes elsewhere. The findings from this might impact on actions taken around assessment in future years.

41.3 The Committee agreed that it could assure the Board that the no detriment measures had been supportive to students whilst maintaining the standards of awards. It would look at any implications around grade inflation at a future meeting when the full data was available.

Agenda item 6	Changes to Assessment 2020/21 and Review of	Minute Ref AAC/20/42
Paper Ref AAC/4/20/6	Assessment Policies and Practices	

42.1 The report set out:

- I. Changes to assessment in 2020/21 approved by the Academic Board at its meeting on 23 September 2020.
- II. The Academic Board's decision to agree a series of reviews into assessment policies and processes. These would be conducted during 2020/21 and would comprise a fundamental review of assessment, grading and classification alongside specific reviews of how Foundation Year and Level 4 was assessed.

42.2 In discussion, the Committee welcomed the scope and scale of the review of assessment and commended the University for taking a lead on these issues. It urged caution however to ensure that outcomes from the reviews did not take the University significantly out of line with practice elsewhere, which could lead to students being disadvantaged. The importance of rigorous consideration of equality impact from the outset and throughout the reviews was acknowledged, and the need to take account of ongoing developments around post-16 education and training.

Agenda item 7.	Ofsted Readiness Report	Minute Ref AAC/20/43
Paper Ref AAC/4/20/7		

- 43.1 The report provided an update on progress regarding the Apprenticeship Improvement Plan and Position Statement relating to a visit from Ofsted. The key points were that:
- I. Ofsted had announced a revised inspection approach which involved an interim visit in Autumn 2020 which would be ungraded. They were expected to return to a normal inspection regime from January 2021.
 - II. The Position Statement had been updated to account for the changes in provision and the impact of actions with specific considerations around the headline impacts of Covid-19.
 - III. The Apprenticeship Improvement Plan had been updated to account for the actions completed, new actions identified and the updated data position.

- 43.2 Jeff Bale, in his role as Link Governor, reported that he had met with University representatives on 15 October and been assured by the preparations that were taking place.

- 43.3 The Committee noted that Ofsted had now been asked to take over responsibility for inspection of all apprenticeship provision. This meant significant increases to the number of students, staff, and Departments within the scope of Ofsted inspection. The University had anticipated this development and as previously reported to the Committee, had ensured that improvements made in response to the Ofsted inspection have been applied to all apprenticeship provision. The Chair stated that this represented a significant cultural change for the University and the governing body. The University was now subject to two very different types of regulator and it was important that the whole Board understood this.

Agenda item 8. **National Student Survey Outcomes** Minute Ref AAC/20/44

- 44.1 The Dean of Students provided an overview of the results which included a fall of 4% in overall satisfaction against a decrease of 1% in overall satisfaction across the sector. This translated into a drop in quartile position for most survey questions though some did remain in the top quartile. The questions with the most pronounced decrease were Organisation and Management and Assessment and Feedback. The net result was a fall from the top quartile to an average position. The University now sat in the middle of the competitor pack. It was on benchmark for most questions but below for Organisation and Management.

- 44.2 The Committee noted the report, commenting on the disappointing outcome after several years of solid progress.

Agenda item 9. **Annual Quality Review Update** Minute Ref AAC/20/45

- 45.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that the Annual Quality Review Report would now be presented to the meeting in January 2021. This was because the full set of data from the no detriment analysis had not been available in time to incorporate into report and due to the desire to not distract Colleges and Departments from autumn readiness preparations.

Agenda item 10. **Academic Assurance Committee: Annual Report of Effectiveness** Minute Ref AAC/20/46
Paper Ref AAC/4/20/10

- 46.1 The draft annual report set out how the Committee had discharged its remit in 2019/20, the views of members about its effectiveness, and issues to be considered around the development of its terms of reference. The Committee agreed the content of the report which would be presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting on 25 November 2020.

Agenda item 11 - 14 **Items to Receive** Minute Ref AAC/20/47
Paper Ref

47.1 The Committee noted the following reports:

- I. Update to the Process of Validation of New Courses (AAC/4/20/11)
- II. Academic Board Annual Report and Review of Effectiveness (AB/4/20/12)
- III. Minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board on 16 September 2020 (AB/4/20M)
- IV. Annual Business Cycle (AAC/4/20/14)

Agenda
item 15.

Other Urgent Business

Minute
Ref AAC/20/48

48.1 Elaine Buckley reported that this would be her final meeting as a member of the Committee before her retirement from the University in December 2020. She encouraged members to continue to challenge the University where necessary on equality, diversity, and inclusion matters. The Chair thanked Elaine for her contribution to the Committee and wished her well for the future.

48.2 Paul Wiles reported that this would be his final meeting as Chair of the Committee before handing over to Jeff Bale under the succession arrangements agreed by the Nominations Committee. He would remain a member of the Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 academic year, at which point he would step down from the Board at the end of his period of office.

Agenda
item 16.

Date of Next Meeting

Minute
Ref AAC/20/51

51.1 5 February 2021