

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2021

PRESENT (via Zoom):

Prof Sir Chris Husbands (Chair)	Dr Elizabeth Freeman	Prof Eileen McAuliffe
Andrew Adegbola	Dr John Freeman	Dr Neil McKay
George Alvey	Dr Sam Giove	Prof Lisa Mooney
Dr Helen Best	Dr Geff Green	Dr Christine O'Leary
Dr Julie Brunton	Catriona Hynes	Dr Lucian Tipi
Dr Claire Cornock	Praise Ishola	Susan Wakefield
Prof Roger Eccleston	Laith Jaafar	Prof Chris Wigginton
Prof John Francis	Prof Kevin Kerrigan	Dr Rob Wilson

APOLOGIES:

Dr Rebecca Hodgson, Dr Toni Schwarz

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michaela Boryslawskij, University Secretary (Secretary)
 Prof Wayne Cranton, Dean of Research (for agenda Item 7.2)
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
 Jan Juillerat, Advance HE (Observer)
 Dan Lally, Head of Business, Growth and Engagement (for agenda item 5)
 John Pymm, Director of Academic Development and Diversity
 Pete Sweeney, Governance and Sector Regulations Adviser (Minute Secretary)
 Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance
 Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services

Opening Comments

Minute Ref AB/1/21/1

1. The Chair welcomed to the meeting:
 - I. Jan Juillerat from Advance HE who was observing the meeting as part of the external Board Effectiveness Review.
 - II. John Pymm, who had recently joined the University as Director of Academic Development and Diversity.

Agenda item 2

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minute Ref AB/1/21/2

Paper Ref AB/4/20M

2. The Board approved the minutes of the meeting on 23 September 2020 as a correct record.

Agenda item 3

Matters Arising

Minute Ref AB/1/21/3

Paper Ref verbal

3. There were no matters arising.

Agenda item 4

Annual Quality Review Report

Minute Ref AB/1/21/4

Paper Ref AB/1/21/4

- 4.1 The Annual Quality Review Report set out how the University continued to exercise its responsibilities for the regulation, quality assurance, and enhancement of educational provision through its academic

governance structure. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards highlighted the following points for the Academic Board's attention:

- I. Overall, University procedures were operating effectively to maintain academic standards and to ensure and enhance the quality of academic provision.
- II. There were however areas where particular attention would need to be paid. These included managing the balance between agility and risk associated with collaborative and apprenticeship provision, the forthcoming monitoring visit and full inspection by OFSTED, end point assessment requirements and the resource required to support their delivery, the risk of fragmentation within the sector around how universities were regulated, the political situation in Hong Kong, the transition to online delivery in response to Covid-19, and the impact of some of regulatory changes in response to Covid-19 which remained to be seen.
- III. There were also significant achievements to celebrate including the Sheffield Business School obtaining AACSB approval in March 2020 which placed it in the top 6% of business schools in the world, and new academic partnerships developed with South Yorkshire Police and Sensory Integration Education.

4.2 The Chair reminded members that oversight of the Annual Quality Review Report was one of the most important functions of an Academic Board and core to its remit. In the subsequent discussion, University leaders and managers responded as follows to comments and questions from members:

- I. Regarding the risks posed by collaborative provision and the steps being taken to ensure effective oversight of this area of work, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that the ongoing restructure of internal governance arrangements would include a Teaching and Learning Committee. This would have a remit for detailed oversight of collaborative and TNE provision.
- II. Regarding the implications of the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus scheme on the University's ability to work in Europe, the PVC Global and Academic Partnerships reported that the University was doing all it could to retain its ability to operate in Europe and was currently reviewing the scope of the new Turing Scheme, particularly around the ability to continue to offer language provision. He referred members to the articulation agreement with institutions in France and Spain for a new 'European Route' of the BSc International Business as an indication of the continuing commitment to providing opportunities for students to study in Europe.
- III. Regarding potential regulatory implications around the need to revise courses, including delivery and assessment methods, at short notice, the University Secretary reported that the OfS had written to all institutions asking them to conduct a self-assessment of compliance with Customer and Markets Authority (CMA) legislation which relates to OfS Condition of Registration C1. The University was required to report its findings to the Board of Governors in the Spring term. The Academic Board would revive an update on this area of regulatory compliance in due course.
- IV. Regarding the absence of reference in the report to the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) alongside the NSS outcomes, the Dean of Students explained that the timing of the survey had coincided with lockdown and the move to remote working in March 2020. It was decided not to publish the survey because there was not enough data to include in the report.
- V. Regarding data in the Annual Review of Research Degrees Activity around an increase in research degree suspensions and changes to supervisors, the DVC Academic reported he would follow this up with the Head of the Doctoral School.

Action: DVC Academic to follow up issue on research degrees with Head of the Doctoral School

4.3 The Academic Board provided the following feedback on areas that could be clarified or strengthened before the report was presented to the Academic Assurance Committee.

- I. The report understated the value of the Students' Union restructure and the considerable positive impact the new College Officer posts were having in Colleges.
 - II. The report would benefit from more information about the overall size and shape of the institution in terms of giving context and scale to the reported activity.
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- III. The report provided details about the Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) with which the University had engaged in 2019/20. The report would benefit from additional information about the number and scale of provision that had been successfully reaccredited.

Action: Head of Academic Quality and Standards to redraft taking on the points above

- 4.4 Based on the material contained within the Annual Quality Review Report and the responses provided in the meeting from members of the University Executive, the Academic Board agreed to endorse the report for submission to the Academic Assurance Committee as a demonstration of the robust academic governance structure operating in the University.

Agenda item 5	Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report 2019/20	Minute Ref AB/1/21/5
Paper Ref AB/1/21/5		

- 5.1 The annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) covered the University's entire Apprenticeship provision (levels 4-7) and set out key strengths and areas for improvement. The SAR would be submitted to Ofsted in early February and would be used by inspection teams to inform the Monitoring Visit and re-inspection. The Head of Business Engagement and Growth drew the following points to the attention of Academic Board:
- I. The University had self-assessed as Good (Grade 2) across all areas of judgement aligned to the Ofsted inspection framework.
 - II. All areas for improvement and associated actions required for swift improvement identified in the SAR will form an internal Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), to be monitored by the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Steering Group, Chaired by PVC Business and Engagement.
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- 5.2 Ofsted had confirmed that they intend to re-commence Monitoring Visits from the 18 January 2021. Based on the current timelines, the University could expect the Monitoring Visit by the end of March 2021. This would result on a progress judgement being made against the Areas for Improvement outlined in the University's Full Inspection Report (March 2019). Ofsted had further confirmed their intention to re-commence Full Inspections from 1 April 2021. This aligned to the date that Ofsted's scope as the regulator for apprenticeships broadened to include all apprenticeship provision, so any Inspections after 1 April 2021 would make a judgement against the University's entire apprenticeship provision.
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- 5.3 Discussion focussed on the areas that had been identified for improvement and the actions for addressing these. The Head of Business Engagement and Growth reported the following in response to comments and questions from members:
- I. Regarding the challenges posed by the extension of Ofsted's remit and the actions being taken by the University, he reported that the extension of the remit to include all Apprenticeship provision would encompass delivery in 13 Departments. The thematic Business and Engagement portfolio and the role of the Associate Deans for Business and Engagement would be critical to responding to this. The main challenge lay in those Departments not previously in-scope of the inspection. Work was ongoing to ensure that they understood the additional requirements.
 - II. Regarding progress towards mainstreaming delivery, he advised that whilst mainstreaming was the best way forward, it had to be accepted that there would always be additional requirements around Apprenticeships. Currently, each individual element of lifecycle and delivery was being examined to see what could be mainstreamed.
 - III. Regarding engagement with the Students' Union, he reported that work was ongoing to better understand what Apprenticeship students needed from the Union. The President of the Students' Union assured the Academic Board of the Union's commitment to working with the University to support and represent Apprenticeship students.
 - IV. Regarding indicators of progress since the Monitoring Visit in March 2019, he explained that this was reported in a separate document, the Summary of Progress against Areas for Improvement, which he was happy to share with Academic Board.
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- V. Regarding the relationship of Apprenticeships to the overall University strategy, he explained that a strategy document would be produced to identify alignment with Transforming Lives and inform portfolio and number planning.
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5.4 The Chair thanked members for what he felt was a helpful discussion. He stressed that the decision to widen the remit of Ofsted made it even more critical to address the issues identified from the SAR. It was important that the Academic Board understood the differences between the approach taken by Ofsted and other regulatory approaches and recognise there would be no concessions to this. The University had taken a strategic decision to deliver Apprenticeships and must ensure it could address the challenges involved in doing so.

5.5 Academic Board endorsed the SAR for submission to Ofsted.

Agenda item 6.1

Supporting Fair Assessment Outcomes

Minute Ref AB/1/21/6

Paper Ref AB/1/21/6.1

6.1 The report detailed the range of assessment support measures in place for academic year 2020-21 and enhancements to this support for semester 2 to ensure fair outcomes for students amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. A review of the uptake of semester 1 measures indicated similar usage to that before the pandemic. However, the changing environment in which teaching, learning and assessment were delivered continued to be challenging and further support was felt necessary to ensure fair outcomes for students through the remainder of the academic year. The measures approved by the Teaching and Learning Leadership (TaLL) Group enhanced the support currently offered through the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure and comprised:

- I. Increasing the extension period from 5 working days to 10 working days.
- II. Broadening the scope of the Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) policy to allow all students with approved RRAAs to retake assessments they have passed. This would also apply to previously approved RRAAs.
- III. Recognising the impact of Covid pandemic as an extenuating circumstance that does not require further evidence.

The Dean of Students assured Academic Board that in implementing these additional support measures, the University was aiming for a robust and personalised approach which was in accordance with the latest guidance issued by the OfS whilst ensuring that student outcomes remained fair, valid, and secure and that the value of the Sheffield Hallam degree was protected.

6.2 The Students' Union representatives on the Board reported that they had asked the University for additional support to help get students through the current situation and that they welcomed the response received and the measures that had been implemented.

6.3 The Academic Board discussed the potential implications of the additional measures. The following was reported in response to comments and questions from members:

- I. Regarding consultation with those members of staff who would be affected the most by the likely increase in the use of extensions and RRAAs, the Dean of Students reported that consultation had been conducted via the TaLL Group whose membership included the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching from each College. It had been done this way by necessity to enable decisions to be taken at pace. The Group had recognised the knock-on impact of extending submission deadlines close to assessment board deadlines and had issued a clear message to staff that, unlike in 2019/20, deadlines should not be moved. Any student reporting difficulties should be directed to the extension process. The Group was aware of the impact of any delay in results being confirmed by assessment boards, particular for those students on professional courses waiting to move into practice.
 - II. Regarding the use of learning from measures applied over the past year to inform future decisions, the Dean of Students stated that as reported at the previous Academic Board, some measures from 2019/20 had been retained including the use of 24-hour exams which appeared
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to be having a positive impact on BAME achievement. Further work was taking place around a wider review of assessment policies and practices.

- III. Regarding communication to students and staff, the Dean of Students acknowledged that some students had been aware of the new measures before the staff teaching on their courses. He stressed that this had not been the intention and formal communication had been carefully sequenced to ensure that all parties were informed around the same time. Unfortunately, a social media posting by a Students' Union representative had alerted some students to the news before the formal communication had been issued.
- IV. Regarding extended submission deadlines for students on Dissertations or similar large tasks, the Head of Student Policy and Compliance reported that the 10-working day extension would apply to those students and would not be extended further. However, if students felt this was insufficient to overcome the impact of their extenuating circumstances, they should be directed to the RRAA process which would defer their deadline to a later assessment period.

6.4 The Academic Board noted the report and measures in place to support fair assessment outcomes for all students during the ongoing pandemic.

Agenda item 6.2 **University Standing Panel for Departmental Assessment Boards** Minute Ref AB/1/21/7
Paper Ref AB/1/21/6.2

7.1 The Academic Board noted the Terms of Reference for the central standing panel to which Departmental Assessment Boards could refer cases for individual and cohorts of students for potential remedial action which goes beyond the measures articulated in the Department Assessment Boards Policy. The decision to retain this Panel into 2020/21 was reported at the previous meeting.

Agenda item 7.1 **Research Reporting and Compliance** Minute Ref AB/1/21/8
Paper Ref AB/1/21/7.1

8.1 The report which set out the governance pathway for reporting on key measures of the quality and standards of research and how this would impact on the cycle of business covered by Academic Board. The intention of the work was to secure a robust reporting and compliance structure including increased visibility at Academic Board.

8.2 In discussion the Academic Board welcomed the intention to increase the visibility of research within its cycle of business. In response to a point raised about the type of actions Academic Board would be asked to take, the PVC Research and Innovation stressed that this was the first iteration of the governance pathway and further work would now take place to determine the specific actions required at Academic Board and other governance forums.

Agenda item 7.2 **Update on Progress to REF 2021 Submission** Minute Ref AB/1/21/9
Paper Ref AB/1/21/7.2

9.1 The Dean of Research presented an overview on the status and progress of the University's REF2021 submission, highlighting the position on outputs, narratives on impact and environment, and the timetable and preparations in the lead up to final submission on 31st March 2021.

9.2 In discussion, the Academic Board noted the considerable organisational effort that had gone into getting the REF submission to this point and commended the work of those involved. In discussion, members raised the importance of sharing the impact case studies across Departments so they could be used to feed into teaching at every level. The Dean of Research assured the Academic Board that this would be happening and would not be restricted to just those case studies submitted for the REF.

9.3 The Board received the report.

Agenda item 8 **Student Voice Report** Minute Ref AB/1/21/10
Paper Ref AB/1/21/8

- 10.1 The report presented the Student Voice Report 2019/20 and the interim update on the University's response to the issues raised in that report. The President of the Students' Union drew attention to the University's response, stating that he welcomed the work that had taken place and the University's commitment to listening to the student voice. He highlighted the following areas where the Students' Union required greater commitment from the University:
- I. Around placements, volunteering, and internships.
 - II. For student wellbeing and mental health.
 - III. Providing the Union with physical space within Colleges to support its engagement strategy.
- 10.2 In discussion it was noted that placement and related activity had been a significant casualty of the pandemic. The PVC Business and Engagement offered to work with the Students' Union to move towards a holistic placement offer.

Agenda item 9 **Regulating the Quality and Standards of Higher Education** Minute Ref AB/1/21/11
Paper Ref AB/1/21/9

- 11.1 The report provided the background into the OfS' current consultation on its approach to regulating the quality and standards of higher education. The Head of Governance and Sector Regulation reported the University's headline view as being that whilst it was useful to have a sector-wide understanding of what constituted a minimum benchmark for quality and standards matters, there was concern over the type of metrics being proposed. It was agreed to circulate the University's response to the consultation once submitted.

Action: Secretary

Agenda item 10 **Notification of an OfS Reportable Event** Minute Ref AB/1/21/12
Paper Ref AB/4/21/10

- 12.1 The Academic Board noted the report.

Agenda item 11 **Academic Assurance Committee 16 October 2020** Minute Ref AB/1/21/13
Paper Ref AAC/4/20M

- 13.1 The Academic Board received the minutes of the 16 October Academic Assurance Committee.

Agenda item 12 **Annual Business Cycle** Minute Ref AB/1/21/14
Paper Ref AB/1/21/12

- 14.1 The Academic Board noted the forward programme.

Agenda item 13 **Review of Meeting** Minute Ref AB/1/21/15

- 15.1 The Chair invited members to submit comments about the meeting into the Zoom chat function. These would be collated and reflected in the minutes of the meeting.
- 15.2 The comments reported very positively on the quality of the cover papers and reports, the inclusivity of the discussion, the constructive and challenging nature of comments and questions, and the overall balance of the agenda across teaching and learning and research and innovation provision. The Meeting Book was felt to have been too long however and consideration should be given to organising the annual cycle of business to ensure the Academic Board is given as much time as possible for in-depth scrutiny of the Annual Quality Review Report.

Agenda item 15 **Date of the Next Meeting** Minute Ref AB/1/21/16

- 16.1 21 April 2021