

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 06 OCTOBER 2021**

PRESENT (via Zoom):

Professor Jeffrey Bale (Chair)	Dr Claire Ketnor
Dr Ishan Cader	Professor Julietta Patnick
Angela Foulkes (from item 4.3)	Professor Keith Ridgway
Praise Ishola (items 3 to 7)	

IN ATTENDANCE:	AGENDA ITEM
Michaela Boryslawskij, University Secretary and Clerk to the Board	All
Dr Lisa Mooney, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation	Items 6.1 & 6.2
Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality & Standards	All
Dan Lally, Head of Business Engagement and Growth	Item 7
Ben Machin, Governance Senior Adviser (Committee Secretary)	All
Dr Neil McKay, Dean of Students	All
Professor David Shepherd, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning	All
Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance	Item 5.3
Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation	All
Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services	Item 5.3

APOLOGIES: Professor Roger Eccleston

<b>Opening Remarks</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/1
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1.1 In opening the meeting, the Chair:

- Noted the apologies received.
- Confirmed meetings of the Committee will continue to be held remotely with the possibility of one in-person meeting per annum.
- Welcomed new members and attendees of the Committee including Professor Keith Ridgway, Dr Ishan Kader, Praise Ishola (2021/22 Students Union President) and Professor David Shepherd (interim Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning).
- Commended the departing Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for his stewardship through the pandemic to provide quality education under challenging circumstances.

Agenda item 2 Paper Ref	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/2
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2.1 There were no declarations of interests.

Agenda item 3 Paper Ref AAC/3/21/M	<b>Minutes of Meeting held on 09 July 2021</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/3
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3.1 The Committee **approved** the minutes from the meeting held on 09 July 2021 as an accurate record.

Agenda item 4 Paper Ref AAC/4/21/4	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/4
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4.1 The Chair confirmed that an update on the Committee's discussions from the meeting on 09 July 2021 had been received by the Academic Board on 22 September 2021 (AB/4/21/3).

4.2 Members identified a requirement for further technical support with the onboarding of the newly procured board management software.

**Action: University Secretary**

4.3 The Committee confirmed that action AAC/21/8.3 (05 February 2021) had been completed.

Agenda item 5  
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/5

**Academic Regulation & Student Experience:  
Student Experience Update**

Minute Ref AAC/4/21/5

5.1 The Committee noted the student experience update which aims to provide insight and assurance about how the University is ensuring the continued delivery of a high-quality academic experience to students throughout the pandemic and for the 2021/22 academic year. The Dean of Students gave members an overview of the update which focused on:

- Extensive planning and preparations that had taken place for the 2021/22 academic year, including regular meetings with Heads of Departments' to review contextual plans for delivery.
- Activities to support on Level 5 and 6 students in recognition of the significant levels of disruptions faced.
- The introduction of a common Language for Learning to support a clear and consistent narrative.
- Timetabling changes that have resulted in significantly less change requests and greater stability than in previous years.
- COVID adjustments to assessment.
- The expansion of the Departmental Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead roles with increased University resource to support EDI priorities.

5.2 In discussion, members requested assurances on the differential outcomes in attainment. The Dean of Students informed the Committee early indications are that there have been consistent supportive measures in place and the degree awarding gap is narrowing, with variance across departments and student groups. A more detailed analysis of attainment and progression has commenced.

Members also raised the issue of pressure on students carrying incomplete credit from the previous academic year and sought assurances of the support arrangements in place. The Dean of students confirmed that most assessments will be completed ahead of progression and that the regulations allow only a small amount of credit to be carried over.

Agenda item 5.2  
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/5

**Academic Regulation & Student Experience:  
Outcomes from the National Student Survey**

Minute Ref AAC/4/21/6

6.1 The Dean of Students briefed the Committee on the analysis of the University's 2021 National Student Survey (NSS) results, outlining the priority areas identified and actions to be taken to reverse the trend.

Members were informed that National Student Survey feedback has been correlated with feedback from module evaluations to enable a focus on the areas to be addressed. Although there is no correlation between course size and overall satisfaction, members commented that dissatisfaction in departments with a large provision can have a disproportionate bearing on institutional results. An analysis of issues across all departments, even in those that have performed well, would be critical in improving student experience and satisfactions and would have a subsequent impact on the NSS outcome for 2021/22. A University action plan is being progressed through the University Leadership Team and it will be an area of focus at the upcoming Board of Governors strategy event.

6.2 In considering the report on the National Student Survey results, the Committee concurred with the University's disappointment in the drop in the overall satisfaction score. Staff were thanked for continuing to deliver high quality teaching and support in very difficult circumstances. In discussion, members highlighted the importance of identifying and

addressing issues quickly and working with the communications team to monitor social media channels for early warning of particular issues.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of this as a key metric in league tables but emphasised that the University should not be driven by them, identifying the National Student Survey as providing an annual lever of change which contributes to upward movement. It was commented that a focus on improving student satisfaction will positively impact the University's league table position.

The Committee was content with Academic Board's scrutiny of the report and was assured by the identified common priorities and actions.

Agenda item	5.3	<b>Academic Regulation &amp; Student Experience: Student Casework: Annual Statistical Review</b>	Minute Ref	AAC/4/21/7
Paper Ref	AAC/4/21/5			

- 7.1 The Director of Academic Services and Head of Policy and Compliance briefed the Committee on the annual statistical review which specifically reported on data in relation to extenuation, appeals and complaints, and academic misconduct. A second report containing details of further analysis including Student Disciplinary and Fitness to Practise cases will be presented at the next meeting, via the Academic Board.

In the briefing, the Committee was informed there is a demonstrated understanding and awareness of extenuation support amongst the student population, but students are not always choosing to use the measures. In terms of appeals and complaints, there had been an expected increase in volume, but outcomes remained broadly proportionate in percentage with pre-pandemic years. It was reported the robustness of these outcomes had improved as a central panel consisting of senior academic and professional services staff has reviewed all stage one investigations to determine outcomes.

It was identified to members that a further analysis into complaints and appeals from students with a protected characteristic will be taking place in conjunction with specialist teams and fast-track process to review appeals relating to extenuating circumstances that challenge a Department Assessment Board decision is planned.

- 7.2 Members commented on the approach of comparing occurrences against a non-disrupted baseline year as sensible. The Committee was satisfied with the Academic Board's scrutiny, noting the actions proposed and raised an interest in reviewing the data in the longer term.

Agenda item	6.1	<b>Research and Innovation: Concordat for Research Integrity</b>	Minute Ref	AAC/4/21/8
Paper Ref	AAC/4/21/6 Confidential			

- 8.1 The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation introduced the Committee to the Concordat and its interrelationship with the subsequent item. Context was provided to members on the development, purpose, and compliance requirements of the Concordat as a publicly accessible document that outlines institutional responsibilities and forms an integral condition of funding.

- 8.2 The Committee expressed confidence in the publication of the University's Commitment to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, endorsing for recommend acceptance to the Board of Governors.

Agenda item	6.2	<b>Research and Innovation: Annual Report on Research Ethics</b>	Minute Ref	AAC/4/21/9
Paper Ref	AAC/4/21/6 Confidential			

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- 9.1 The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation introduced the Committee to the report which provides a summary of the University's Research Ethics Committee business for the 2020/21 academic year. Members were informed that the annual report was an intricate part of commitment to concordat which ties into regulatory compliance by outlining our systematic considerations of ethical implications. It helps to animate the day-to-day business and mitigates against risks by aligning with best practice. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation reported confidence in the document as it well maintained with exemplary day-to-day due diligence.

The retiring Head of University Ethics and Chair of University Research Ethics Committee was recognised for the report and for an outstanding contribution to research ethics within the institution.

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- 9.2 Members were assured the annual report has sufficient coverage of due diligence and mitigation against business risk, emphasising that any relatable risks are not ring-fenced to research and could impact on all aspects of the University's provision.

The Committee expressed confidence with the content and coverage for the report to be published, positively endorsing the report to the Board of Governors.

Agenda item 7  
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/7

### Apprenticeships and Ofsted Update

Minute Ref AAC/4/21/10

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- 10.1 For the benefit of new members, on opening of the item the Chair provided some background on the expansion of apprenticeships and Ofsted in the context of the University's provision and aspirations. The Head of Business, Engagement and Growth updated the Committee on developments since the previous meeting that included progress as to the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan, as well as the end of year position (2020/21) for apprenticeship provision Key Performance Indicators. Other key points presented to members included:

- External consultants have been engaged to conduct a series of "deep-dives" over the Autumn into apprenticeship provision to judge areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- An apprenticeship course leader induction had been launched.
- Improvements continue to be made with attendance monitoring and a senior group is meeting regularly to interrogate the data.
- There is an emerging possibility of two Ofsted inspections in semester two due to reinspection of Apprenticeships and, separately, Teacher Education provision.
- The Self-Assessment Report and the Quality Improvement Plan are due to be presented to the Academic Board in January 2022.

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- 10.2 The Committee noted the update including work being progressed through the Quality Improvement Plan and raised the following in discussion:

- Members raised challenge to ensure there was strong data and narrative on functional skills development for all students.
  - It was recognised that further work was required around both data and practice to bring attendance monitoring within the parameters Ofsted would expect.
  - Members challenged the University's ability to respond to an Ofsted inspection at short notice during the annual quality cycle process. A review on the development of
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the Self-Assessment Report and the associated timeline was advised to demonstrate preparedness.

- Assurances were sought that the 2021/22 targets would be reviewed and clarified once the achievement outcomes for 2020/21 were known, in acknowledgement that 2021/22 targets should be upwards of the previous year's achievements.
- It was reiterated that those Governors who would be participating in the Ofsted inspection would benefit from a detailed summary of compliance with the overall framework. This includes receiving assurances on how sexual harassment, abuse and violence is being addressed in line with the Ofsted inspection framework.

The Chair advised that whilst broadly content with the level of scrutiny reported from the Academic Board, areas of challenge in relation to Ofsted requirements on sexual harassment, key performance indicators and the self-assessment report should be received by the Academic Board as part of the Committee's feedback.

**Action: Head of Business, Engagement and Growth, Head of Quality and Standards & Committee Secretary**

Agenda item 8.1 Paper Ref AAC/4/21/8	<b>Annual Report and Review of Effectiveness: Academic Assurance Committee</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/11
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11.1 The draft annual report and review of effectiveness reflected how the Committee had discharged its remit in 2020/21, the views of members about its effectiveness, and issues to be considered around the development of its terms of reference. In introducing the report, the University Secretary confirmed the report represented a positive endorsement of the Committee's development over the last 12 months in clarifying its role with enhancements to membership and in working relations with the Academic Board. Developments in the evolution of papers have been welcomed to enable focus on recommendations in line with the Committee's remit. In responding to feedback on the accessibility of materials, members were optimistic that the newly procured board management software would enhance the user experience.

11.2 The Chair of the Committee informed members that assigning a Deputy Chair would help to provide business continuity in situations of absence or a declaration of interest. As no expressions of interest were received prior to the meeting, it was requested that eligible members give this further consideration in advance of the next meeting.

In discussion, the Committee considered the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference which included delegating authority to the Committee to approve of the annual quality review and action plan as a non-delegable item, in line with the new Instrument and Articles.

The Committee agreed the content of the annual report and endorsed the revised Terms of Reference to be presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting in December 2021.

**Action: Members and Chair of the Committee**

Agenda item 8.2 Paper Ref AAC/4/21/5	<b>Annual Report and Review of Effectiveness: Academic Board</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/12
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12.1 The University Secretary introduced members to the Academic Board Annual Report and Review of Effectiveness, highlighting the interactions between this report and the preceding

item. The Committee confirmed its contentment that the Academic Board had effectively discharged its remit in 2020/21, endorsing the report and the outlined recommendations.

Agenda item 9	<b>Quality and Standards report</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/13
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/9		

13.1 The Committee **noted** the report on significant issues relating to quality and standards.

Agenda item 10.1	<b>Items received from Academic Board: Unconfirmed minutes of the Academic Board held on the 22 September 2021</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/14
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/10		

14.1 The Committee **received** the minutes of the September Academic Board meeting.

Agenda item 10.2	<b>Items received from Academic Board: Academic Board Selection Panel: Outcome</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/15
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/10		

15.1 The Committee **noted** the appointment by the Academic Board Selection Panel.

Agenda Item 10.3	<b>Items received from Academic Board: Regulation and External Policy Update</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/16
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/10		

16.1 The Committee **noted** the updates on regulatory developments and external policy.

Agenda Item 10.4	<b>Items received from Academic Board: Office for Students: Reportable event</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/17
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/10 Confidential		

17.1 The Committee **noted** the Office for Students reportable event.

Agenda Item 10.5	<b>Items received from Academic Board: Student Attendance and Engagement Policy</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/18
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/10		

18.1 The Committee **noted** the policy update.

Agenda Item 11	<b>Annual Business Cycle</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/19
Paper Ref AAC/4/21/11		

19.1 The forward schedule of business for the next meeting was **noted**.

Agenda Item 12	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/20
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20.1 The Committee will next meet on 02 February 2022.

Agenda Item 13	<b>Other Urgent Business</b>	Minute Ref AAC/4/21/21
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21.1 There was no other business.