

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2021

PRESENT (via Zoom):

Professor Jeff Bale (Chair)	Professor Julietta Patnick
Dr Claire Cornock	Professor Paul Wiles
Angela Foulkes	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Professor Roger Eccleston, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	All
Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards	All
Dan Lally, Head of Business, Engagement and Growth	Item 5
Dr Neil Mckay, Dean of Students	Up to item 5
Dr Lisa Mooney, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation	Item 6
Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation (Secretary)	All
Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services	Item 8
Tracey Taylor, Senior Governance Adviser (Minute Secretary)	All

APOLOGIES:

Michaela Boryslawskij, University Secretary and Clerk to the Board of Governors

Opening comments and Declarations of Interest

Minute Ref AAC/2/21/1

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Dr Claire Cornock, the new Academic Board nominated member of the Board of Governors, to her first meeting of the Committee.
There were no declarations of interest.

Agenda item 2
AAC/1/21/M

Minutes of the meeting held 5 February 2021

Minute Ref AAC/2/21/2

- 2.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Agenda item 3
Paper Ref AAC/2/21

Matters arising and Action Tracker

Minute Ref AAC/2/21/3

- 3.1 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda. The Committee noted good progress had been made against the actions recorded from the previous meeting.

Agenda item 4.1
Paper ref AAC/2/21/4.1

Student Experience Update

Minute Ref AAC/2/21/4

- 4.1 Members reviewed the report to the Academic Board from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on the University's arrangements to deliver a quality student experience during the pandemic and the remainder of the 2021/22 academic session, including oversight by the Content Delivery and Student Engagement in Learning (CDSE) Silver Group. The Committee noted that the proportion of face-to-face teaching had varied from the Course Delivery Principles during semesters 1 and 2 due to changes in the local tiers and revised national guidance, and the announcement of a further national lockdown in January 2021 meant that most courses remained online until Easter. Departmental Plans had recognised the challenges around student engagement and the University had provided for the loan of equipment to facilitate home study alongside the introduction of innovative digital measures. Student feedback, obtained through a range of mediums, together with the 2021/22 Student Voice arrangements, had been invaluable in supporting student engagement and Students Union representatives in departments and

colleges continue to play a critical role. Members noted that a risk log had been implemented to monitor learning outcomes and compliance with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements during semester 2 and continued to be a useful tool in ensuring the delivery of learning outcomes. Initiatives such as adjustments to the assessment period had assisted with the recovery of delayed learning and resulted in good progress being made in this area. It was recognised that, whilst some challenges remained, activities to enable optional engagement over the summer and further development of plans for the next academic year were in progress.

- 4.2 Having considered the scrutiny by the Academic Board, the Committee concurred with the conclusion that significant progress has been made on remote delivery and access to learning resources. The following points were raised in respect of the wider student experience:
- the retention of elements of online teaching delivery which had positively impacted a broad range of students and specific student groups; the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) reported that online learning provided increased flexibility to students outside of building opening times and that innovative practice, such as the increased use of cloud computing access to facilities, would be incorporated in teaching delivery going forward.
 - consideration of the impact on student mental health referrals, retention and on outcomes; it was reported that whilst there was evidence of a negative impact on student mental health, the University was still gathering data and this had not yet been fully quantified. There had been no substantive change in withdrawals and work to identify students who may be in need of additional support during progression activity had been undertaken. With regard to outcomes, only a small number of modules had required assessment design changes due to the pandemic and student communications regarding extra time to complete assessments and extenuating circumstances processes had proved effective;
 - concern for students who were not on practical courses and the level of physical contact with the University; it was noted that considerable work had been undertaken by course leaders and departments during the year to build a sense of community and the University would be introducing events to encourage engagement over the summer. Looking ahead to the next academic session, engagement for new and returning students, and support for progression, were key focus areas; and
 - strategic discussions on new ways of working, the management of student expectations post pandemic, the impact on the local economy and how the digital transformation aligned with the University's vision. The opportunity to explore this as the next Away Day in the context of the Future Strategy Programme (FSP) was considered.

The Committee congratulated the University on its approach to teaching delivery in light of changing national guidance and confirmed its assurance to the Board of Governors that mechanisms were in place to ensure a quality student experience was being maintained.

Agenda item	4.2	Standard Assessment Regulations for Foundation Years and Level 4	Minute Ref	AAC/2/21/5
Paper ref	AAC/2/21/4.2			

- 5.1 Members considered the Academic Board's decision to make an in-year change to the above Regulations to enhance progression for Foundation and Level 4 students in line with UUK principles. The Academic Board had concluded the change would benefit all students, particularly minoritised groups. The Committee noted that this was part of the University's approach to developing its assessment regulations and accounted for the wide range of Level 4 student profiles with the aim of providing extra support to gain maximum benefit from these levelling years.
- 5.2 Whilst recognising the remit of Committee in scrutinising the decision process, members requested further assurance that the proposals would maintain appropriate levels of academic standards. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards explained that the revision had been subject to detailed review and that the primary driver was to recognise the formative nature of

Foundation Years and Level 4 and to support, and retain, students who had the potential to succeed at Levels 5 and 6 in line with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. Furthermore, the student support triangle would ensure regular contact throughout the year and allow for continuous monitoring of progression and outcomes for these students.

In response to a member's query on consultation with academic staff, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) confirmed that the working group was comprised of academic staff representatives from across the University and the composition of Academic Board, which had scrutinised and approved these proposals, was noted.

The Committee acknowledged the Academic Board's assurances on the maintenance of standards and agreed that progression should be closely monitored. Members suggested that further information on the Future Strategy Programme workstream relating to grade assessment and other such academic matters would be beneficial to enhance the Committee's understanding of the rationale behind Academic Board decisions.

Action: DVC (Academic)

Agenda item 5	Apprenticeship - Ofsted Update	Minute Ref AAC/2/21/6
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/5		

6.1 The Head of Business, Engagement and Growth updated the Committee on the outcome of the Ofsted Progress Monitoring Visit (PMV) in February 2021 to assess the progress made since the last inspection in March 2019. Members were pleased to note that the University had received a significant progress judgement (the best possible outcome), however, the challenges of the next inspection, which would encompass all apprenticeship provision, were acknowledged. It was reported that inspection activity would recommence in September 2021 and that the University would be eligible for inspection one month from re-commencement. The Committee noted that the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Steering Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Enterprise, continued to meet monthly to maintain oversight of provision and the Quality Improvement Plan. Areas for improvement over the summer had also been identified and a high-level overview would be presented at the next Committee meeting.

6.2 The Chair congratulated the University on the excellent outcome of the PMV and the improvement in governance oversight of provision. In view of the increased number of programmes eligible for inspection, a query was raised on the management of key risk areas; it was noted that a paper summarising the key risks would be presented to the next meeting of Academic Board; considerable progress had been made in the University's ability to monitor attendance and attainment and a focus on academic groups had helped to identify outliers and assess additional support required.

Members suggested that information on the impact of the work being undertaken, together with further details of strengths and risk areas would be beneficial for future reporting.

Action: Head of Business, Engagement and Growth

Agenda item 6	Research and Innovation: REF Submission Report	Minute Ref AAC/2/21/7
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/6		
Confidential		

7.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation briefed the Committee on the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF Submission) including Units of Assessment, the number of FTE staff submitted with significant responsibility for research, the University's Code of Practice, its environment statement and impact case studies. Members were reminded of the confidential nature of the report while the assessment was in progress.

In response to a member's query on the number of University staff with experience of participating in REF panels, the Committee received assurance that all outputs submitted were subject to a high level of scrutiny.

Agenda item 7 **Quality and Standards Report** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/8
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/7

- 8.1 Members received a comprehensive update on the key matters relating to Quality and Standards since the previous meeting, including the ongoing assessment project, a key piece of work within the FSP suite of teaching and learning proposals, course improvement plans, the proposed reintroduction of departmental periodic reviews, work on decolonising the curriculum and other strategic priorities. The reference to consideration of grade-based assessment as part of quality assurance development work was highlighted, together with members' responses about the potential impact on student outcomes. It was noted that additional information following Academic Board discussions would be presented to future meetings of the Committee.

Agenda item 8 **Review of Compliance with OfS Registration Condition C1** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/9
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/8

- 9.1 The Director of Academic Services presented the key findings of the stage 1 review of compliance with consumer protection legislation as had been presented to the Academic Board and Board of Governors. This initial review concluded overall confidence in compliance with CMA regulations, with some enhancements recommended. It was noted that the stage 2 review of local communications had recently concluded and would be reporting to ULT shortly.

Agenda item 9 **Report on the Outcomes of the Student Union (SU) Elections** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/10
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/9

- 10.1 The Committee noted the outcome of the SU Elections and was satisfied with the assurances that the elections were fairly and properly conducted

Agenda item 10 **Unconfirmed minutes of the Academic Board held on 21 April 2021** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/11
Paper Ref AB2/21/M

- 11.1 The Committee received the minutes of the 21 April Academic Board meeting.

Agenda item 11 **Annual Business Cycle** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/12
Paper Ref AAC/2/21/11

- 12.1 The Committee received the forward schedule of business for the Committee.

Agenda item 12 **Other Urgent Business** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/13

- 13.1 There was no other business.

Agenda item 13 **Date of Next Meeting** Minute Ref AAC/2/21/14

- 14.1 9 July 2021.