

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 09 JULY 2021

PRESENT (via Zoom):

Professor Jeff Bale (Chair)	Professor Julietta Patnick
Dr Claire Cornock	Professor Paul Wiles (until item 9)
Angela Foulkes (from 10.30 until item 9)	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michaela Boryslawskyj, University Secretary and Clerk to the Board	All
Professor Roger Eccleston, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	All
Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards	All
Dr Rebecca Hodgson, Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning (College of Social Sciences & Arts)	Item 6.4
Dan Lally, Head of Business, Engagement and Growth	Item 5.1 - 5.2
Dr Neil McKay, Dean of Students	All
Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance	Item 6.3
Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation	All
Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services	Item 8
Tracey Taylor, Senior Governance Adviser (Minute Secretary)	All

APOLOGIES: there were no apologies.

OPENING THE MEETING:

The Chair noted that this was Professor Paul Wiles' last meeting and thanked him for his excellent contribution to the stewardship of the Committee. The Chair also thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for his leadership, particularly during the pandemic, and wished them both all the best for the future.

Members acknowledged the revised approach to the Committee papers with the introduction of a helpful summary of the Academic Board discussions and scrutiny, in addition to the usual access to Academic Board papers themselves.

Agenda Item 2	Declarations of Interest	Minute Ref AAC/3/21/1
1.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
Agenda item 3	Minutes of the meeting held 21 May 2021	Minute Ref AAC/3/21/2
AAC/2/21/M		
2.1	The minutes were approved as a correct record.	
Agenda item 4	Matters arising and Action Tracker	Minute Ref AAC/3/21/3
Paper Ref AAC/3/21/4.1	Action Tracker	
AAC/3/21/4.2		
3.1	Members reviewed the matters arising as detailed in the updated Action Tracker, noting that the Committee's recommendations in relation to membership would be incorporated into the Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan and Nominations recommendations paper which were being presented to the Board of Governors at its July meeting. It was noted that all other outstanding matters were included as part of this meeting agenda.	

Agenda item 5.1

Ofsted Update and Quality Improvement Plan

Minute Ref AAC/3/21/4

Paper ref AAC/3/21/5

- 4.1 The Head of Business, Engagement and Growth updated the Committee on developments since the previous meeting. Members were reminded of the extended scope of the inspection (which could take place at any point in the 2021/22 academic year) including an increase in the number of eligible departments, the inspection criteria and possible outcomes. It was noted that the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) had been endorsed by the Academic Board, following scrutiny by the Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Steering Group and the University Leadership Team (ULT) which included constructive challenge around the KPIs, review timescales and development areas. The Head of Academic Standards and Quality highlighted that further work had been undertaken on the governance arrangements (as detailed below) to strengthen College and departmental ownership and that deep dive activities into each curriculum area would be concluded by the end of October 2021. Members acknowledged the significant progress made, noting that the Committee, via the Academic Board, would continue to be updated on key risk areas.

The Chair acknowledged the potentially varying expectations and reporting requirements from the different regulators and noted that the Head of Quality and Standards was exploring this further with the relevant Heads of Department.

In response to a member's query, it was reported that a version of the QIP, which not only demonstrated the considerable progress made and recorded areas for improvement, would be made available to Ofsted, on request.

Whilst content with the level of scrutiny by the Academic Board in this area and noting that the University was monitoring its external partners closely in terms of quality, members flagged a potential strategic opportunity for the University to enhance its due diligence work in this area to assure the Board of Governors that the required quality standards were being achieved.

The Chair welcomed Angela Foulkes to the meeting.

- 4.2 Members discussed the wider considerations of apprenticeship provision over and above the remit of the QIP, in light of Ofsted's recently published requirements around safeguarding and sexual misconduct. The Committee agreed that it was important for the Academic Board to receive assurance that the University was sufficiently addressing the Ofsted framework in its entirety. It was reported that a significant amount of work was being progressed across the University in response to the Office for Students Statement of Expectations on harassment, sexual misconduct and hate crime, and that a detailed report would be presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting on 20 July 2021. Members also noted that, whilst a robust report and support mechanism was available to all students, work was underway to further develop a culture where individuals felt safe to report concerns and seek support. The Committee recommended that those Governors who would be participating in the Ofsted inspection would benefit from a detailed summary of compliance with the overall framework. The Head of Business, Engagement and Growth and the Head of Academic Standards and Quality agreed to review this as a priority.

The Dean of Students updated members on the potential risks around the attendance monitoring tool, noting that significant progress in the approach to recording and reporting had been made. However, it was critical that use of the tool was promoted amongst staff to enable gaps in reporting to be addressed.

Action: Head of Business, Engagement and Growth

Agenda item 5.2

Governance and Oversight of Apprenticeship Provision

Minute Ref AAC/3/21/5

Paper Ref AAC/3/21/5

- 5.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards briefed the Committee on the enhanced internal governance arrangements for apprenticeship provision, including the inclusion of the new Teaching and Learning Committee in the framework, to ensure appropriate oversight of both Office for Students and Ofsted regulatory requirements. The revised arrangements aimed to ensure clarity of decision making and authority, particularly at College/departmental level with clearly defined relationships between Departmental Quality Boards, Apprenticeship Progression Boards and the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Standing Panels. Members highlighted that Governors involved in the inspection would benefit from a detailed briefing from the Head of Academic Quality and Standards.

The Committee agreed that significant progress had been made as a result of efforts across the University and confirmed it was content with Academic Board's consideration of the revised governance arrangements and oversight.

Action: Head of Academic Quality and Standards

Agenda item 6.1 **Student Experience Update and Planning for 2021/2** Minute Ref AAC/3/21/6
Paper Ref AAC/3/21/6

- 6.1 Members noted the student experience update which aimed to provide the Academic Board with insight and assurance about how the University was ensuring the continued delivery of a high-quality academic experience to students throughout the pandemic. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) briefed the Committee on the University's efforts to promote the support available to students through the Request to Extend a Submission Deadline and Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) processes, via improved communications and collaborative work with the Students Union. It was noted that, despite initial concerns about increased pressure on colleagues resulting from these processes, the impact on workload had been lower than anticipated. There had, however, been an increase in allegations of collusion associated with online examinations and the Dean of Students was leading on potential solutions for mitigating this in future. The Committee was pleased to note that positive feedback on the key role of Academic Advisors and assessment support from the academic teams had been received.

Agenda item 6.2 **University Grade Descriptor** Minute Ref AAC/3/21/7
Paper Ref

- 6.2 The Committee considered the Academic Board's approval of the proposal to revise the University Grade Descriptors as an interim step towards the University's ambition to implement Grade Based Assessment. Support from the Students' Union for the proposals, which had been informed by learning experiences and sector best practice from other institutions, was also noted.

Agenda item 6.3 **Student Regulations and Policies 2021/22** Minute Ref AAC/3/21/8
Paper Ref

- 6.3 Members reviewed the Academic Board's scrutiny and approval of the Standard Assessment Regulations for the 2021/22 Academic Year which included the discontinuation of the temporary measures introduced as a result of the pandemic. The Committee concurred with the Academic Board's comments on the need to communicate the change carefully to students and noted that students would continue to be supported through the RRAA and other processes. Members also emphasised the importance of communicating changes to students with reference to the Competition and Markets Authority Regulations; the Head of Student Policy and Compliance noted that the temporary arrangements for 2020/21 (the only substantive change to the Regulations for that year) had been presented as an addendum which would be removed for the 2021/22 academic year. However, the Key Changes document, which was available to all students, would contain details of the amendment to ensure clarity and further promotion by

way of a screencast was also being considered. It was also reported that links to the Regulations were available on all course module sites and via 'My Hallam', as well as the newly created central webpage relating to assessment. Members noted that an awareness raising campaign would be also undertaken in the run up to assessments.

Agenda item 6.4

Department Assessment Board (DAB) Outcomes

Minute Ref AAC/3/21/9

Paper Ref

- 6.5 The Committee received a verbal update on the headline data from the recent DABs (which had not been available time of the Academic Board meeting); RRAA's were significantly lower than anticipated and first sit referrals were at the same level as 2019. The Committee confirmed that it was encouraged by the latest data and that the temporary arrangements had been well delivered.

Agenda item 7

Update on the Assessment Programme

Minute Ref AAC/3/21/10

Paper Ref Presentation

- 7.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) delivered a comprehensive presentation on the above, key elements of which included:
- the values of the programme: fair, transparent, consistent, easy to understand, non-arbitrary and non-inflationary;
 - the elements of the programme: foundation provision, Level 4 assessment and Grade Based Assessment (GBA);
 - the definition of GBA: assessed work receives one of 17 grades comparing the work with written descriptors;
 - the benefits which included objectivity through the combination of grades and descriptors, an easy to understand assessment process with clarity on expectations and regulations and an emphasis on outcomes rather than tasks;
 - an explanation of the Hybrid model and the implementation of categorical marking
 - the impact of the way the 0-100 scale disproportionately weights exceptionally good or poor performance in a single module and the proposals around revised categorisation to remove extremes at the lower and high end of the scale;
 - the temporary nature of the arrangements until GBA was fully implemented and new algorithms were in place; and
 - the proposed timeline for moving to GBA.

- 7.2 Members noted that, by moving away from current degree algorithm, the University would be in a position to address the sector issue of grade inflation which would be welcomed by the Academic Assurance Committee. In response to a query on employers' requirements, it was reported that this work would also provide the opportunity to enhance clarity around assessment which would benefit employers. The Associate Dean confirmed that a Quality Assurance Agency Working Group had been established to consider grade inflation and, whilst the University enjoyed good relations with its industry partners, it was important for key players in the sector to develop a sector-wide approach. Members queried the approach taken by others, noting that previous sector discussions in this area had been motivated by encouraging institutions to make use of the full marking range. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) confirmed that a number of institutions have adopted GBA. The importance of communications to both students and staff and the continuation of advice and guidance and Frequently Asked Questions for staff and students on assessment was highlighted.

Agenda item 8

Condition of Registration C1 Review – Stage 2

Minute Ref AAC/3/21/11

Paper Ref AAC/3/21/8

Confidential

- 8.1 The Director of Academic Services reminded members of background to this two-stage report in response to the request from the Office for Students that institutions review their compliance

with the Competition and Markets Authority regulations and the associated condition of registration (C1). The second phase of the review, which comprised a risk-based evaluation of a number of courses provided positive assurance on the University's Competition and Markets Authority compliance, and some opportunities for improvements to student feedback ("you said we did") were identified. The University's proactive and proportionate oversight arrangements, particularly in relation to departmental reporting on course delivery were also noted. Whilst those students likely to be most vulnerable to disruption correlated with students identified as being more disproportionately disadvantaged in the University's Access and Participation Plan, it was acknowledged that the pandemic may have been an overriding factor and that mechanisms to identify these students to facilitate the timely provision of support/mitigation were in place. The report had been endorsed by the University Leadership Team on 25 May 2021 and the Academic Board at its June meeting.

The Committee confirmed it was content with the Academic Board's support of the conclusions and recommendations of the review, noting that a full report would be considered by the Board of Governors at its July meeting.

Agenda item	9.1	Academic Board Constitution and Membership	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/12
Paper Ref	AAC/3/21/9			

9.1 The University Secretary highlighted the proposed revisions to the Academic Board's Terms of Reference including changes to internal governance structures and increased expectations on the Board of Governors to engage with academic governance matters. It was noted that Academic Board had exceptionally approved extending the term of office of the current academic staff appointments by a further 12 months, and that subject to approval by the Board of Governors, the selection process for the academic staff representative vacancy on the Academic Board would be progressed.

9.2 The Committee **endorsed** the revised Terms of Reference and membership, as approved by the Academic Board.

Agenda item	9.2	University Governance: Teaching & Learning and Research and Innovation Committees	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/13
Paper Ref	AAC/3/21/9			

10.1 The Head of Governance and Sector Regulation confirmed the introduction of the above Committees, noting the approval of their terms of reference by the Academic Board. Initial meetings would be taking place in the autumn term and meeting schedules and cycles of business were in development. The Committee welcomed the oversight by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of both these core areas.

Agenda item	9.3	Unconfirmed minutes of the Academic Board held on 09 June 2021	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/14
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11.1 The Committee received the minutes of the June Academic Board meeting.

Agenda item	10	Annual Business Cycle	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/15
Paper ref	AAC/3/21/10			

12.1 Members noted the forward schedule of Committee business for the following academic year. It was also noted that, following the circulation of meeting dates for next year, some meeting times may need to be revised and any changes would be communicated to members shortly. The intention to continue meetings remotely in line with the approach taken to other sub-committees of the Board was highlighted.

Agenda item	11	Review of Meeting	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/16
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13.1 The Head of Business, Engagement and Growth confirmed that the point made under item 5 around Ofsted's expectations on safeguarding had already been acted upon and that the Head of

Work Based Learning, as the designated lead for Safeguarding in this area would be participating in future discussions.

Agenda item	12	Other Urgent Business	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/17
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14.1 There was no other business.

Agenda item	13	Date of Next Meeting	Minute Ref	AAC/3/21/18
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15.1 Wednesday, 6 October 2021
