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| **CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2023** | | | | |
| PRESENT: | | | | |
| Prof Sir Chris Husbands  Roger Bateman  Helen Best (from item 7.1)  Prof Neil Bricklebank (until item 6.3)  Prof Claire Craig  Dr Marjory Da Costa Abreu  Dr James Fenwick  Jeremiah Abiola Fasipe | | Dr Alison Purvis  Dr Iain Garner  Dr Claire Ketnor  Dr Neil McKay  Martha Mitchell  Prof Conor Moss  Dr Christine O’Leary  Dr Rebecca Peake | David Rogerson  Dr Alan Ruddock (from item 6.2)  Prof Helen Scott  Seun Seidu  Prof David Smith (except item 6.1)  Prof Chris Wigginton | |
| IN ATTENDANCE: | | | | AGENDA ITEM |
| Michaela Boryslawskyj, University Secretary  Prof Wayne Cranton, Dean of Research  Nikki Davies, Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance  Dr Luke Desforges, Academic Director - London Campus  Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards  Ben Machin, Governance Senior Advisor (Committee Secretary)  Ann Norton, Associate Dean for Business and Enterprise - BTE  Prof Mayur Ranchordas, Head of University Ethics  Joe Rennie, Group Director of Student and Academic Services  Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation  Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services | | | | All  Item 5  All  All  All  All  Item 7.1  Item 5  All  All  All |
| APOLOGIES: | | | | |
| Prof David Shepherd, Dr Sadiq Bhanbhro, Prof Rory Duncan, Dr Samantha Giove, Dr Tina Harness, Prof Toni Schwarz. | | | | |
| Minute Ref | Item of Business | | | Paper Ref |
| AB/2023-10-11/1 | OPENING OF MEETING | | |  |
| 1.1 | In opening the meeting, the Chair:   * Noted the apologies received. * Thanked outgoing members and attendees for their valued contributions to Academic Board. * Welcomed new Students’ Union representatives. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/2 | MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING | | | AB/2023-06-14/M  **Confidential** |
| 2.1 | Academic Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 14 June 2023 as a correct record. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/3**Confidential** | MATTERS ARISING/ACTION TRACKER | | | AB/2023-10-11/3 |
| 3.1 | There were no identified matters arising and noted no updates on actions were due. | | | |
| 3.2 | AB/2023-06-14/5 - Academic Board received a verbal update from the Director of Academic Services on the use of Regulation 13 of the Standard Assessment Regulations, approved at the previous meeting. Academic Board received assurance the number of students requiring application of this regulation remained low. Members were informed an extension to the activation period was not required at this time, and a report would be presented at the next meeting. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/4 | CHAIR’S BUSINESS | | | Verbal |
| 4.1 | The Chair reported that due to time-sensitivities associated with clearing and confirmation, an approach to the admission of students with incomplete marks from other institutions because of the Marking and Assessment Boycott was progressed through Chair’s action. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/5 | RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2028: INITIAL DECISIONS | | | AB/2023-10-11/5.1 |
| 5.1 | The paper gave an overview of the university’s preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2028, including the university’s position on initial decisions taken by UK higher education funding bodies. The Dean of Research introduced the paper and informed members:   * The REF is a national assessment of the quality of research in UK higher education institutions and the outcome has a significant impact on Quality-Related funding. * The previous REF took place in 2021, with the result published in May 2022 (min ref: AB/3/22/6). * The UK higher education funding bodies have published their initial decisions on the high-level design of REF 2028. Key changes were outlined including new elements and weightings, as well as changes in the determination of research volume and the removal of limitations on research outputs. * The university has an ambitious research and innovation plan for growth which is consistent with the emerging REF and particularly the emphasis on “People, Culture and Environment”. * Further consultations are expected on the design principles and updates on the university’s response will be progressed through the governance framework. * Members of the REF Management Group will attend planned sector events to provide representation, keep abreast of developments, and to learn/share best practice with other institutes. | | | |
| 5.2 | In discussion, the following points were noted:   * The Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI) and sustainability factors will be reviewed as part of code of practice revisions once the design principles have been agreed. It was emphasised these factors already form a significant part of the university’s approach. * Identified risks associated with weighting changes will be closely monitored. * The university will have input into the submission of output types, including pedagogical outputs, and this will be internally managed. * More academic staff were engaged in the review process, and it was recognised that some proposals could increase academic review workload which would require careful oversight, training, and mitigation. * Financial sustainability is central to the research and innovation strategy and the REF outcome will have a direct impact on income generation. * As detailed in the Research and Innovation Strategy (min ref: AB/2022-10-05/5), creating a stronger teaching and research nexus will provide opportunities for colleagues to engage with research and to further embed research and innovation across the academic portfolio. | | | |
| 5.3 | Academic Board **noted** the paper. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/6 | COMMITMENT TO THE CONCORDAT FOR RESEARCH INTEGRITY | | | AB/2023-10-11/5.2  **Confidential** |
| 6.1 | The paper presented the university’s commitments to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity for the 2022/23 academic year. In presenting the report, the Head of University Ethics informed members:   * The Concordat is a condition for receiving funding from the Research Council (UKRIO) and the higher education funding bodies. * It includes five commitments that provides assurances that research in the UK continues to be underpinned by the highest standards of rigour and integrity. * The commitments, approved by the Research and Innovation Committee, demonstrates the university’s commitment to the concordat and eight actions have been updated to reflect internal developments. | | | |
| 6.2 | In discussion, the following points were noted:   * Clear communication with students and staff is critical to embedding the outlined actions and the wider ethics framework. There is already substantial information, advice, and guidance available to students and a new research system will further support students in navigating research policies, guidance, and resources. * Members suggested the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) worked with Student Engagement and Student Policy, Casework and Compliance when developing artificial intelligence guidance to achieve consistency. * Additional consideration is given to support research active staff in managing journal inputs to enhance the integration of generated/enhanced submissions. * At the request of members, the Head of University Ethicsoutlined the Concordat review process which is coordinated by the UREC. | | | |
| 6.3 | Academic Board **recommended** the commitments for approval by the Academic Assurance Committee. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/7 | TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK: INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOME | | | AB/2023-10-11/6.1  **Confidential** |
| 7.1 | The paper outlined the university’s Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and provided an overview on the panel’s submission feedback. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Success (PVC LTSS) introduced the outcome, emphasising the collective effort involved in the submission and thanked colleagues from across the university and the Students’ Union for their involvement. Key points were as follows:   * An overall gold rating was achieved, along with a gold rating for student outcomes and a silver rating for student experience. * The provider submission was accompanied by an independent Students’ Union submission. * Panel feedback will be considered by the Teaching and Learning Leadership team (TaLL) to identify areas for further development. * Submissions and feedback for all providers will be reviewed once published by the Office for Students (OfS). | | | |
| 7.2 | Academic Board congratulated everyone at the university on achieving the outcome and thanked the PVC LTSS for directing an excellent submission. In discussion, members:   * Noted the importance of academic and professional teams in achieving high quality student experience and outcomes. * Welcomed proposals for a campaign to enhance the visibility and celebrate achievements in excellent and innovative teaching. * Commented that it is crucial to consider the outcome in context with the National Student Survey (NSS) results. | | | |
| 7.3 | Academic Board **noted** the award and the panel’s feedback on the submission. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/8 | NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY: INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN | | | AB/2023-10-11/6.2 |
| 8.1 | The paper outlined the institutional improvement plan in response to the university’s 2023 NSS results. It provided an overview of student positivity levels, institutional and course performance against sector and OfS benchmark, identified areas for improvement, and outlined a timeline of monitoring and reporting for NSS improvement planning at course level.  The PVC TLSS introduced the report emphasising the collective approach required to improve the student experience. The following points were highlighted:   * The core questions and methodology have changed, therefore a direct comparison against previous results is not robust, but some benchmarks remain valid. * Due to changes in the survey’s construction some questions are not directly comparable, however, the results indicate the university has not seen the desired improvements. * Underlying the results are variation in course performance across colleges and departments, with low positivity measures in large departments having a proportionate negative impact on the university’s overall positivity score. * Following publication of the results by the OfS in August, the university has developed an institutional improvement plan which has been shared with the Students’ Union. * A combination of tactical short-term focussed actions and longer-term strategic approaches is required, particularly for subjects with the most ground to recover. * Course Development Plans will be a key tool in identifying specific actions where positivity levels remain lower than benchmark.   In concluding the opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the university’s previous sector position and emphasised that ensuring a robust and consistent positive student experience is an institutional responsibility. | | | |
| 8.2 | Key points from the discussion were as follows:   * The approach to improvement planning was welcomed, with members commenting the additional support identified was appreciated. * Identified good practice will be shared within and across departments from courses with positive results. * A deep dive into ‘organisation and management’ was required as it remained the most challenging area of feedback from students. * Enhancing communications and closing the feedback loop is essential to ensuring students can see how the university has acted on their feedback. * There are thematic correlations with outcomes from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (paper re: AB/2023-10-11/10.2). Addressing the common priority areas will benefit the experience of all students. * A project is ongoing to address specific challenges in connection with healthcare placements, which are multifaceted and complex due to the Covid-19 pandemic. * The Student Offer and Experience group's oversight of Professional Services NSS improvement actions was welcomed. * The importance of clearly communicating upcoming Curriculum Structure changes to students was emphasised. | | | |
| 8.3 | Academic Board **recommended** the planned approach and next steps. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/9 | STUDENT VOICE REPORT 2022/23: UNIVERSITY INITIAL RESPONSE | | | AB/2023-10-11/6.3 |
| 9.1 | The paper presented the 2022/23 Student Voice Report and the university’s initial response to the recommendations. The Dean of Students informed members:   * The report is independently commissioned and produced by the Students’ Union. * The report and the university’s response represent a well-established continuous cycle of improvement. * 13 recommendations have been identified across two areas: Our Learning Experience and Our Wellbeing and Community. * The identified themes triangulate with student feedback sought and collated throughout the year. * Work aligned with several recommendations is underway with positive changes already being implemented. | | | |
| 9.2 | Academic Board thanked the Students’ Union and Dean of Students for the report and for coordinating the university’s response. In discussion,   * Students’ Union representatives thanked the university for the progress already made against the recommendations. * Members emphasised the importance of establishing clear metrics with the identifiable leads to effectively measure success. | | | |
| 9.3 | Academic Board **noted** the University’s response. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/10 | CURRICULUM STRUCTURES: SCHEME ‘E’ | | | AB/2023-10-11/7.1 |
| 10.1 | The Associate Dean Business & Enterprise (College of Business, Technology and Engineering) presented the paper which detailed a proposal for the curriculum structures of the university’s online portfolio (scheme ‘e’). Key points were as follows:   * A new scheme is required for the online portfolio due to the proposed module structure. * Scheme ‘e’ has been designed to support online pedagogy and is intended to be delivered through a carousel model with multiple start dates. * There are four variant models that would not require exceptions and exemptions. * Any necessary student regulation changes will be progressed in advance of launch. * Detailed scrutiny had taken place at the Teaching and Learning Committee (paper ref: AB/2023-10-11/9.1) with the proposal recommended for approval. | | | |
| 10.2 | Members responded positively to the proposal. In discussion, the following was noted:   * There will be no micro credential status for the modules scheduled for delivery during the initial phase. * Online delivery will be predominantly asynchronous learning. * It was reiterated the programme is specific to the scope of the online delivery project. Members queried, as part of future developments, whether the scheme would be compatible with online delivery outside of the initial phase. * All modules will be standalone i.e., no prerequisites, with the exception of fixed first module and the capstone module. * The University Executive Board continue to have oversight of costs associated with the online project provision. * An impact assessment on curriculum structure changes will be presented to Academic Board and is reflected on the forward schedule (paper ref: AB/2023-10-11/13). | | | |
| 10.3 | Academic Board **approved** the curriculum structure proposal for implementation. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/11 | DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT | | | AB/2023-10-11/7.2  **Confidential** |
| 11.1 | The paper presented an updated Degree Outcomes Statement which sets out the university’s current position in relation to the institutional classification profile. The Dean of Students’ informed members:   * A Degree Outcomes Statement is an expectation of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) and supports compliance with the Office for Students ongoing conditions of registration. * This statement reflects on trends from the period 2018 to 2022. * The proportion of good honours degrees awarded at the university in 2022 has returned to pre-Covid levels and is below the sector average. * The Access and Participation Plan is in place to address awarding gaps. * Subject to approval from the Academic Assurance Committee the statement will be uploaded to Universities UK. | | | |
| 11.2 | Academic Board **recommended** the commitments for approval by the Academic Assurance Committee. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/12 | STUDENT CASEWORK: ANNUAL STATISTICAL REVIEW | | | AB/2023-10-11/7.3  **Confidential** |
| 12.1 | The statistical review provided Academic Board with headline figures from individual reports on the operation of student regulations and policies in 2022/23. Data was provided with a comparative analysis against the previous (2021/22) academic year and a pre-covid baseline (2018/19) academic year in relation to academic conduct, extenuating circumstances, complaints, appeals, disciplinary and fitness to practise.  The Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance outlined the headline trend data and the Director of Academic Services commented on the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on expectations and behaviours. | | | |
| 12.2 | Academic Board **noted** the report. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/13 | ACADEMIC BOARD: ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW | | | AB/2023-10-11/8  **Confidential** |
| 13.1 | The draft annual report reflected on the effectiveness of Academic Board’s operation during 2022/23 academic year. The Head of Governance and Sector Regulation introduced the report, outlining the scope of the review and delivery of outputs from the Academic Governance Review (min ref: AB/2022-10-05/7) and the emerging themes. | | | |
| 13.2 | In **considering** the review, members:   * Noted that the diversity information provided is subject to the availability of centralised staff datasets (paper ref: AB/1/22/9.1). * Acknowledged the good quality and consistency of the meeting book and organisation. * Suggested the format of future meetings is considered, noting some preferences for meetings to be held in-person. * Noted the actions to enhance development and address improvements to circulation and meeting paper volume.   **Action: Committee Secretary** | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/14 | RESEARCH AND INNOVATION & TEACHING AND LEARNING: CHAIR’S UPDATE | | | AB/2023-10-11/9.1 |
| 14.1 | Academic Board **noted** the paper which provided an overview of recent meetings of the Research and Innovation (RIC) and Teaching and Learning (TLC) sub-committees, the approvals actioned under delegated authorities, and links to the minutes. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/15 | TERMS OF REFERENCE: STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE | | | AB/2023-10-11/9.2.1 |
| 15.1 | The PVC LTSS presented proposals for the establishment of a Student Experience Committee. This will work in conjunction with the TLC to ensure a continued and sustained focus on the improvement of student experience and outcomes. | | | |
| 15.2 | In **approving** the establishment of the committee, members commented on the importance of ensuring the membership and business cycle represented a broad range of student groups.  **Action: PVC LTSS** | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/16 | TERMS OF REFERENCE: TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE | | | AB/2023-10-11/9.2.2 |
| 16.1 | The paper presented a reviewed terms of reference for the TLC, noting the clarification of the role of the committee in the oversight of the Advance HE Talent scheme. | | | |
| 16.2 | Academic Board **approved** the update and **noted** the forward schedule. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/17 | TERMS OF REFERENCE: SENIOR ACADEMIC PROGRESSION COMMITTEE | | | AB/2023-10-11/9.2.3 |
| 17.1 | The paper updated Academic Board on the update of membership of the Senior Academic Progression Committee (SAPC). | | | |
| 17.2 | In **noting** the update, Academic Board received assurances of the expertise and input to the committee of the Academic Career Framework Teaching and Learning priorities. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/18 | POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY | | | AB/2023-10-11/10.1 |
| 18.1 | Academic Board **noted** the survey outcomes and next steps. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/19 | POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY | | | AB/2023-10-11/10.2 |
| 19.1 | Academic Board **noted** the survey outcomes and next steps. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/20 | OFFICE FOR STUDENTS REGULATION UPDATE | | | AB/2023-10-11/11 |
| 20.1 | Academic Board **noted** the update report. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/21 | HONORARY AWARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT | | | AB/2023-10-11/12 |
| 21.1 | Academic Board **noted** the report. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/22 | ANNUAL BUSINESS CYCLE | | | AB/2023-10-11/13 |
| 22.1 | The forward schedule of business was **noted**. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/23 | ANY URGENT BUSINESS | | | Verbal |
| 23.1 | The PVC LTSS thanked, on behalf of Academic Board, the departing Vice-Chancellor for his chairmanship of the committee and leadership of the institution. | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/24 | DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING | | |  |
| 24.1 | Wednesday 31 January 2024 | | | |
| AB/2023-10-11/25 | REVIEW OF MEETING | | | |
| 25.1 | The Chair thanked all staff and students present for their contributions. Members were invited to submit a comment about the effectiveness of the meeting to the secretariat team. | | | |