

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**PRESENT (via Zoom):**

Prof Sir Chris Husbands (Chair)	Praise Ishola	Dr Vishal Parikh
Zainab Ata	Prof Kevin Kerrigan (up to item 5.2)	Dr Alison Purvis
Dr Helen Best	Dr Claire Ketnor	Prof David Shepherd
Elena Bowley	Dr Rebecca Mallet	Dr David Smith (from item 2)
Prof John Francis	Dr Neil McKay	Dr Lucian Tipi
Dr Geff Green	Dr Lisa Mooney	Susan Wakefield
Dr Rebecca Hodgson	Dr Christine O'Leary	Dr Rob Wilson
Catriona Hynes	Adeyemi Otebolaku	

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Julie Brunton, Prof Roger Eccleston, Dr Elizabeth Freeman, Dr John Freeman, Dr Sam Giove, Prof Eileen McAuliffe, Dr Toni Schwarz, Prof Chris Wigginton

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Michaela Boryslawskyj, University Secretary (Secretary)  
 Prof Wayne Cranton, Dean of Research (items 6.1 and 6.2)  
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality & Standards  
 Dan Lally, Head of Business Engagement and Growth (item 7)  
 Ben Machin, Governance Senior Adviser (Minute Secretary)  
 Prof John Pymm, Director of Academic Development and Diversity  
 Joe Rennie, Group Director of Student and Academic Services  
 Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance  
 Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation  
 Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services

Agenda item 1	<b>Opening of the meeting</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/1
Paper Ref AB/4/21/1		

**1.1 In opening the meeting, the Chair:**

- Thanked the departing Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for his long-standing contribution to the University and particularly for his leadership in teaching and learning through the pandemic.
- Thanked on behalf of the Academic Board the departing Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning (College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences) for her contributions.
- Welcomed new members and attendees of the Academic Board including the 2021/22 Students Union College Officers, interim Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, interim Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning (College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences) and the Group Director for Student and Academic Services.
- Noted the apologies received.

**1.2 The University Secretary reported to the Academic Board the outcome of the selection process to fill the Academic Staff representative vacancy. The report presented the procedure applied and steps**

taken following the remit outlined at the previous meeting (min ref: AB/3/21/12). The Selection Panel met in September 2021 to consider the expressions received against the application criteria and of their remit to provide a diverse and inclusive membership. Following a competitive selection process, Dr David Smith was appointed to the Academic Board with a term of office until 31 July 2024.

The Academic Board **received** and **noted** the outcome and next steps.

Agenda item 2	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/2
Paper Ref AB/3/21/M		
	AB/4/21/MC	

2.1 The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 09 June 2021 as a correct record.

Agenda item 3	<b>Academic Assurance Committee feedback</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/3
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3.1 The Chair summarised feedback from the Academic Assurance Committee meeting held on 09 July 2021 (AAC/3/21/M). Overall, the Committee was content with Academic Board's scrutiny and welcomed developments in the creation of the new sub-committees (AB/3/21/13) and the steps taken to address grade inflation (AB/3/21/7). The Committee also identified where due diligence and regulatory considerations could be enhanced.

Agenda item 4	<b>Matters Arising and Action Tracker</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/4
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4.1 As an addendum to the progress update of Honorary Doctorate Nominations for 2021 (min ref: AB/3/21/14), the Chair informed the Academic Board of additional acceptances included in the finalised list of recipients which were publicly announced in August 2021.

4.2 The Dean of Students presented a verbal update to the Academic Board on solutions in response to the number of allegations of collusion associated with the 24-hour online examinations (min ref: AB/3/21/6). The update confirmed that several actions in relation to academic integrity are underway which address assessment design, conduct and the operation of examinations as well as processes to respond to allegations of academic misconduct:

- Assessments have been reviewed ahead of the new academic year in line with the University's Verification and Moderation Policy and Procedures. There has been a decrease in the number of exams for the coming academic year with most still occurring in the semester 2 assessment period.
- Examination arrangements have been reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Leadership group and College Delivery Group.
  - By default, exams will remain online but the availability of exam papers will be reduced from 24 hours to more closely reflect the university's assessment tariff and the time constrained nature of exam assessment.
  - Exams will include 15 minutes reading time and additional 15 minutes per hour of the exam duration to allow for accessibility and reasonable adjustments for learning contracts.

The Academic Board welcomed the update and in the subsequent discussion, the Dean of Students confirmed that:

- The Disabled Student Support Team will be consulted to review the retention of inclusive practice.
- Software to support the detection of essay mills has been purchased.

- There is no capability for facial recognition and consideration would need to be given to several factors including software requirements, invigilation for professional body courses, reliability, and Data Protection compliance.
- A combination of education, monitoring and the Academic Conduct Regulation will form the University's approach to addressing collusion.

The Academic Board **received** the update.

Agenda item 7

### Apprenticeships and Ofsted Update

Minute Ref AB/4/21/5

Paper Ref AB/3/21/7

5.1 The report updated the Academic Board on progress as to the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), as well as the end of year position (2020/21) for apprenticeship provision Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Business and Enterprise informed members the report includes feedback from the University Leadership Team. The Head of Business Engagement and Growth introduced the following:

- The information presented in the report is an update.
- 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.
- Data analytics from the recording of attendance was highlighted as an ongoing challenge due to the usage and specifications of the delivery platform. When attendance has not been logged, inaccurate absences are being recorded. A group is being convened weekly to interrogate the attendance data and escalate to Colleges, as appropriate.
- In terms of next steps, the annual review cycle (reflecting on apprenticeship delivery within the 2020/21 academic year) has now commenced with the development of the Apprenticeship Course Improvement Plans (ACIP) by delivery teams. The content of these will feed into a College level review of apprenticeship provision then these will form the basis for the University's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 20/21 and Quality Improvement Plan for 2021.
- The SAR and the QIP are due to be presented to the Academic Board in January 2022.

The Head of Academic Quality and Standards provided some additional context to the Academic Board of the differences in Ofsted's approach to quality assurance in their focus on individual learners.

5.2 The Academic Board thanked for the Head of Business Engagement and Growth for a thorough and informative update. Challenge in the subsequent discussion related principally to systems, scrutiny and staff development, key points were as follows:

- Challenge was provided as to the number of actions which are showing as overdue or had not been met.
- An apprenticeship course leader induction is being created with the transformation team and due to be launched in the coming weeks. It was identified there would be an opportunity to introduce this at the course leader fest.
- There is an emerging possibility of two Ofsted inspections in semester two due to reinspection of Apprenticeships and, separately, Teacher Education provision. Leaders and managers confirmed there were no concerns in supporting two concurrent visits.
- Consultants are adding value by driving improvements across the portfolio by using active Ofsted inspectors to undertake quality assurance activity in line with the Ofsted framework.

The Chair concluded the item by outlining to members the importance of this piece of work and the challenge due to the differing frame through which Ofsted looks at organisations.

5.3 The Academic Board **reviewed** and **challenged** the item presented.

Agenda item	5.1	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience:</b>	Minute	AB/4/21/6
Paper Ref	AB/4/21/5.1	<b>Student Experience Update</b>	Ref	

6.1 The report gave the Academic Board insight into how the University is ensuring the continued delivery of a high-quality academic experience to students through the Covid 19 pandemic and for the 2021/22 academic year. The report was introduced by the Dean of Students who thanked his co-contributors and highlighted the following points for the Academic Board's attention:

- The National Student Survey (NSS) results (item 5.2) and annual statistics relating student policies (item 5.3) would be presented in subsequent substantive items.
- A common Language for Learning has been developed and implemented to support a clear and consistent narrative and common language for teaching and learning. Language for Learning will be used externally and internally to provide a consistent way of articulating the student offer.
- The 2021/22 academic year has been timetabled as two semesters and semester one has been completed and released to students. The approach has resulted in significantly less fewer change requests.
- Despite challenges throughout the year the Department Award Boards (DABs) progressed smoothly with only a small number of modules requiring any scaling.
- The role of the Departmental Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Lead has expanded, increasing departmental resource to support the EDI agenda. Colleges are in the process of appointing to these roles, and it is anticipated the new team will appointed in October 2021.

6.2 In the subsequent discussion, University leaders and managers responded to comments and questions from members:

- There have been a few challenges faced at DABs with some needing to be being reconvened.
- There are no planned changes to timetables in semester one but where there is strong reasoning for changes, these could be implemented for semester two.
- Contextualised plans include significantly more in-person delivery than in 2020/21.
- The digital learning team would continue to support staff in using pedagogical tools to the best effect.

The Chair outlined to members the origins of developing the common Language for Learning and was appreciative to all colleagues who had contributed to developing and adapting plans for 2021/22 delivery at speed, which has helped place the University in a good position.

6.3 The Academic Board **noted** the update on the student experience.

Agenda item	5.2	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience:</b>	Minute	AB/4/21/7
Paper Ref	AB/4/21/5.2	<b>Outcomes from the National Student Survey</b>	Ref	

7.1 The report summarised the analysis of the University's 2021 National Student Survey (NSS) results, priority areas identified and actions to be taken. The Dean of Students introduced the report to the Academic Board by providing background and context to the NSS. He outlined the NSS as being the key indicator of undergraduate student experience, with headline data reported publicly and used to compile league tables and contribute to measures of performance including Office for Students (OfS)

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benchmarks. The survey has been consistent in its questioning of final year students although notably, the 2021 survey had six COVID-related questions embedded.

The Dean of Students, highlighted the following points for the Academic Board's attention:

- There was a good response rate to the NSS.
- The overall satisfaction for the institution had fallen.
- The pandemic has brought into focus the areas of the academic experience that need to be addressed to reverse the decline in student satisfaction.
- For universities in England, student satisfaction fell by 8 percentage points to 75%, the lowest result since the survey first reported in 2006.
- The result means that the University has lost some sector position against comparative Higher Education Institutes.
- In the application of the OfS benchmark, the University is on benchmark for six questions scales and below benchmark for two question scales.
- The University results show that twelve subjects are in the top quartile for their provision in comparison with other providers and of the courses that meet reporting thresholds, thirty-nine achieved overall satisfaction between 80-100%. These achievements should be recognised and celebrated. It was noted that there was no correlation between the size of courses and satisfaction, it was a mixed picture based on the quantitative data.
- Thematic analysis of the NSS student comments has been helpful in identifying common priority areas for action, these include:
  - Learning Communities and Engagement between staff and students
  - Course organisation and management
  - Student Voice
  - Assessment
  - Focused actions for Level 6 Put focused support in place for L6 students.
- A set of agreed actions were outlined (section 2.5 of the report) and a University-wide approach with the consistent delivery of actions are required to address the identified common priority areas.

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7.2 Members of the Academic Board shared a collective disappointment in the institutional outcome from 2021 NSS. In the subsequent discussion, University leaders and managers responded to comments and questions from members with primary focused being on the action required to address the results:

- A University level action plan is being finalised with actions to be delivered at pace.
- Improving collaboration between academic and professional services was important to make the student experience the University's collective motivation.
- An early review of College's and courses will support the sharing of good practice.
- There are correlations between the key points of actions in this report and the Student Casework: Annual Statistical Review report (item 5.3).
- The development of a framework for interactions with students is close to completion.
- The Students Union confirmed that the Student Voice report has been published and work will commence with course and department representatives with an aim of improving student satisfaction. The Student Voice report features on the Academic Board's forward programme with a report due at the next meeting in January 2022.

The Academic Board thanked the Dean of Students for producing a comprehensive report on the NSS results with realistic and appropriate recommendations. Along with members, the Chair shared his

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disappointment of the results, reflecting on the University's previous position and concurred with members on the importance of addressing the identified common priorities and actions. The Chair recognised and thanked all staff for their continued hard work and efforts during these challenging times.

7.3 Academic Board **endorsed** the identified actions.

Agenda item	5.3	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience: Student Casework: Annual Statistical Review</b>	Minute Ref	AB/4/21/8
Paper Ref	AB/4/21/5.3			

8.1 The report provided the Academic Board with an annual statistical review from the operation of the student regulations and policies in 2020/21 to highlight risks, trends, and anomalies and to inform thinking on areas where current regulations, policies, and processes may need review. The report specifically provided data in relation to extenuation, appeals and complaints, and academic misconduct.

The Head of Student Policy and Compliance introduced each area of reporting, reflecting on another casework heavy year with figures higher for the past two years. Points drawn from the report included:

- Department quality boards will be reviewing the data sets with detailed statistics to be presented to the appropriate bodies, providing the right level of granularity.
- The analysis from 2020/21 is compared against a base-year of 2018/19, which can be considered a typical year in terms of usage of the regulations and policies pre-Covid.
- The application and use of the failsafe measures.
- Appeals and complaints being accepted or declined compared with pre-pandemic years.
- A further analysis of complaints and appeals from students with a protected characteristic needs to be undertaken in conjunction with specialist teams.
- There has been an increase in cases being referred to Academic Conduct Panels.
- A fast-track process to review appeals relating to extenuating circumstances that challenge a DAB decision is planned for 2021/22.
- The 2021/22 academic year will be the first year that additional supportive measures introduced in 2019/20 can be utilised due to being superseded by temporary measures in 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- An effectiveness review is planned for the end of the 2021/22 academic year.

8.2 The Academic Board commended the Head of Student Policy and Compliance on the presentation of a thorough report. In the subsequent discussion, the following points were raised:

- Continued increase of awareness across the institution of contact cheating is required, focusing on prevention within the student population and support to staff in gathering evidence.
- Increasing awareness of student support measures could be enhanced through further collaboration with the Students Union.
- Data for the number of complaints was requested to be available as a percentage of students within the department.

**Action: Head of Student Policy and Compliance**

Academic Board **received** the report.

Agenda item	5.4	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience: Student Attendance and Engagement Policy</b>	Minute Ref	AB/4/21/9
Paper Ref	AB/4/21/5.4			

9.1 The Head of Student Policy and Compliance informed the Academic Board of amendments to the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy that had been approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee in September 2021.

9.2 Academic Board **noted** the policy changes.

<p>Agenda item 6.1 Paper Ref AB/4/21/6.1 <b>Confidential</b></p>	<p><b>Research and Innovation: Concordat for Research Integrity</b></p>	<p>Minute Ref AB/4/21/10</p>
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10.1 The report presented the statement on compliance with the concordat to support research integrity to the Academic Board. The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Dean of Research explained to the Academic Board the interrelationship between the concordat and the annual report on Research Ethics and Integrity (item 6.2) in supporting and maintaining an effective research environment by adopting best governance practice. The following points were highlighted for the Academic Board's attention:

- The Concordat is a condition for receiving funding from the Research Councils' (UKRIO) and the higher education funding bodies since 2013.
- An updated version of the Concordat was published in 2019 which considered recommendations set out in the Science and Technology Committee's report on research integrity. These recommendations have now become requirements.
- The Concordat includes five commitment statements.
- The University has retained the Research HR Excellence in Research Award retained in 2021 which demonstrates the commitment to improving the working conditions and career development for research staff.
- Internal communication will remind staff of the responsibilities set out in the Concordat.

10.2 Academic Board **endorsed** the commitment statement.

<p>Agenda item 6.2 Paper Ref AB/4/21/6.2 <b>Confidential</b></p>	<p><b>Research and Innovation: Annual Report on Research Ethics and Integrity</b></p>	<p>Minute Ref AB/4/21/11</p>
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11.1 The annual report provides background and a summary of the University's Research Ethics Committee business for the 2020/21 academic year. In introducing the report, the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Dean of Research informed the Academic Board that the annual report was an intricate part of commitment to concordat as Research Councils only fund research where there are systematic considerations to ethical implications.

Aspects of the report that were brought to the attention of the Academic Board included the operational response to the pandemic, the revised operating structures from January 2020, the coverage of research activities and key outcomes. Following consideration and endorsement from the Board of Governors, the report is to be made publicly accessible to meet Universities UK compliance requirements.

11.2 The Chair and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation recognised and thanked the Head of University Ethics and Chair of University Research Ethics Committee for the report and for an outstanding contribution to research ethics within the institution.

11.3 Academic Board **endorsed** the report.

<p>Agenda item 8 Paper Ref AB/4/21/8 <b>Confidential</b></p>	<p><b>Academic Board Annual Effectiveness Report</b></p>	<p>Minute Ref AB/4/21/12</p>
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- 12.1 The draft Annual Report reflected on the effectiveness of the Academic Board’s operation during 2020/21. In introducing the report, the University Secretary outlined the following key points for the Academic Board’s attention:
- A positive endorsement was received from members who were invited for the first time to reflect of the Academic Board’s effectiveness in advance of the meeting.
  - Remote meetings in 2020/21 were well attended and all meetings were quorate.
  - The Academic Board has discharged its remit in accordance with its Terms of Reference.
  - The annual business cycle and items presented have reflected the Terms of Reference, however, it was noted that no items relating to the admission of students has been considered.
  - The work of the Academic Board meets compliance expectations of the Committee of University Chairs Code of governance.
  - The relationship with the governing body has continued to develop and improve throughout 2020/21 with feedback from the Academic Assurance Committee becoming a standing item on Academic Board agendas and enhanced clarity of Academic Board’s scrutiny in the sequencing of comments to the Academic Assurance Committee.
  - Highlights from 2020/21 included steps taken to:
    - achieve an appropriate balance between teaching and research oversight,
    - continue oversight of student and academic related policies throughout the pandemic,
    - protect academic standards, and
    - monitor regulatory oversight and compliance of the University’s provisions.
  - Comments from members reaffirmed that meetings are efficient, inclusive, and well Chaired. Other emerging themes included ensuring the Academic Board retained its strategic focus, it has enhanced visibility across the institution and to develop understanding of the wider external policy context within the membership.

Moving forward into 2021/22 some key actions include undertaking a specific review of academic governance, ensuring the compliance of constitutional documents and the development of a communication and engagement plan.

- 12.2 The Academic Board supported the information presented in the report and in discussion, commented on the ambassadorial role members have to informally enhance exposure of the Academic Board’s work in their College or Directorate.

- 12.3 Academic Board **approved** the report.

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

- 13.1 The report is a standing item and provides the Academic Board with an update on significant issues relating to quality and standards since the previous meeting in June 2021. Key points for the Academic Board’s attention were as follows:
- 21 courses have been validation/reaccredited.
  - Strands of activities are being progressed to support Ofsted requirements and the Future Strategy Programme.
  - Course Improvement Plans (CIPs), Collaborative Course Improvement Plans (CCIPs) and Apprenticeship Course Improvement Plans (ACCIPs) have been agreed with multiple stakeholders.
  - Progress is being made on the alignment of quality and planning cycles.

- 13.2 The Academic Board **noted** the update.

Agenda item 10	<b>Regulation and External Policy Update</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/14
Paper Ref AB/4/21/10		
14.1	The report updated the Academic Board on the following Office for Students' consultations and other regulatory proposals that may impact on the University's academic provision: - Office for Students' consultation on the regulation of quality and standards - UK Government proposals on a Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill - Review of Initial Teacher Training report and proposals	
14.2	The Academic Board <b>noted</b> the update.	
Agenda item 11	<b>Office for Students: Reportable event</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/15
Paper Ref AB/4/21/11	<b>Confidential</b>	
15.1	The Academic Board <b>noted</b> the report which outlined a reportable event relating to academic matters which had been notified to the Office for Students in August 2021.	
Agenda item 12	<b>Annual Business Cycle</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/16
Paper Ref AB/3/21/12		
16.1	The Academic Board <b>noted</b> the forward programme.	
Agenda item 13	<b>Review of Meeting</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/17
17.1	The Chair thanked all staff and students present in the meeting for their contributions that included 40 interventions (22 male, 18 female) which included 35 from members of staff and 5 from students. On reflection, staff and students commented positively on the inclusivity of the meeting and requested further enhancements to the digital meeting book to support efficiencies.	
Agenda item 14	<b>Other Urgent Business</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/18
18.1	No urgent business was raised.	
Agenda item 15	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	Minute Ref AB/4/21/19
19.1	19 January 2022	