

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 09 JUNE 2021**

**PRESENT (via Zoom):**

Prof Sir Chris Husbands (Chair)	Dr Elizabeth Freeman	Dr Rebecca Mallet
Andrew Adegbola	Dr John Freeman	Dr Neil McKay
George Alvey	Dr Sam Giove	Dr Lisa Mooney
Dr Helen Best	Dr Geff Green	Dr Christine O'Leary
Dr Julie Brunton	Dr Rebecca Hodgson	Dr Vishal Parikh
Dr Claire Cornock	Catriona Hynes	Dr Lucian Tipi
Prof Roger Eccleston	Praise Ishola	Susan Wakefield
Prof John Francis	Prof Kevin Kerrigan (items 1 to 6.2)	Dr Rob Wilson

**APOLOGIES:**

Laith Jaafar, Prof Eileen McAuliffe, Dr Toni Schwarz, Prof Chris Wigginton

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Michaela Boryslawskyj, University Secretary (Secretary)  
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality & Standards  
 Dan Lally, Head of Business Engagement and Growth (items 4 & 5 only)  
 Ben Machin, Governance Senior Adviser (Minute Secretary)  
 Adeyemi Otebolaku, Business, Engineering and Technology College Officer elect (Observer)  
 Prof John Pymm, Director of Academic Development and Diversity  
 Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance  
 Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation  
 Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services

**Opening comments**

Minute Ref AB/3/21/1

- In welcoming members to the meeting, the Chair:
  - conveyed the Academic Board's thanks to the outgoing Students Union President and College Officers for their outstanding contributions to the Academic Board through a challenging period. It was noted their input has been thoughtful, helpful, and constructive.
  - welcomed the Business, Engineering and Technology College Officer elect to the meeting as an observer.

Agenda item 2

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minute Ref AB/3/21/2

Paper Ref AB/2/21/M

- The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 21 April 2021 as a correct record.

Agenda item 3

**Matters Arising**

Minute Ref AB/3/21/3

Paper Ref

- The Chair and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) provided feedback to members from the Academic Assurance Committee meeting held on 21 May 2021 and consideration was given to two items raised for reflection:
  - Regarding the approved changes of the Progression Regulation for foundation year and level four students, the Academic Board confirmed assurance that processes are in place to ensure

quality and standards are maintained and that the arrangements represent an appropriate way of progressing these students in recognition of the formative nature of these Foundation and L4 years of study. Further assurance will be provided to the Academic Assurance Committee by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

- The Academic Board noted the Apprenticeship Quality Improvement Plan was due for presentation under item AB/3/21/4.

**Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)**

Agenda item 4	<b>Apprenticeships: Ofsted Update and Quality Improvement Plan</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/4
Paper Ref AB/3/21/4		

- 4.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Business and Enterprise reported that the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) seeks to address areas for improvement identified in the University’s Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for the University’s entire apprenticeship portfolio. It is aligned to the factors and “Good” grade descriptors articulated in Ofsted’s Education Inspection Framework, Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook.

The QIP was agreed by the Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Steering Group in March 2021 and was endorsed by the University Leadership Team on 18 May 2021. There is a cross reference to updated governance arrangements (AB/3/21/5) which outlines proposals for ongoing scrutiny and challenge.

The Head of Business Engagement and Growth introduced the paper supported by the Head of Quality and Standards and highlighted the following points for the Academic Board’s attention:

- The first two pages of the plan identify the key items and metrics. The development of key metrics and the availability of their visualisation to staff will enable the demonstration of impact over time.
- The QIP is intended to provide a snapshot in time to enable demonstration of challenge and progress against identified actions and improvements.
- The QIP is not required to be submitted to Ofsted but is likely to be viewed by them at Full Inspection to demonstrate how the University has identified strengths, weakness, and improvements.
- The University Leadership Team had challenged the review timescale non-compliance and actions are in place to address this.

- 4.2 The Academic Board congratulated the team on the development of the Quality Improvement Plan, recognising the substantial amount of work and progress over the last three years. The Academic Board commented that the report provided assurance there was sufficient challenge in the plan for endorsement. In discussion, University leaders and managers responded to comments and questions from members:

- The QIP is designed to address actions relating to students once they are on course. Applicant experience is being considered through other mechanisms.
- The Academic Board acknowledged that there are ongoing regulatory requirement alignments to be considered.
- Technical issues have been experienced in embedding the usage of JISC learner analytics app for the standardisation of recording attendance. Progress is being made with Strategic Planning and Insight to validate and provide a visualisation tool for live data. Current progress is considered to be ahead of many in the sector and further improvements will be reported as this work progresses.

- The Academic Board challenged the performance on compliance with the review timescale and noted that some issues relate to historic delivery models. This is being resolved and subsequent improvement will be seen in this metric.
- There is further exploration required to ensure there is an appropriate Student Voice for apprenticeship students in recognition of the demographics of these cohorts. This would be useful to escalate and demonstrate impact ahead of a Full Inspection (QIP 2.9).
- It is envisaged that impact will be delivered at a course and student level and quantified by measuring against the Key Performance Indicators.

The Chair outlined to members that the expansion of the scope of Ofsted would require a more developed understanding of regulatory expectations across the institution.

4.3 The Academic Board **endorsed** the Quality Improvement Plan.

Agenda item 5	<b>Governance and Oversight of Apprenticeship Provision</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/5
Paper Ref AB/3/21/5		

5.1 The paper proposed an updated Governance arrangement to ensure oversight of the regulatory requirements for Office for Students and Ofsted for the apprenticeship provision. The Head of Quality and Standards guided members through the two diagrams of proposed structures (section 2.1) outlining the governance/challenge structure and the management/operational structure, respectively, it was noted that:

- The governance/challenge structure, already presented to Ofsted, has been updated to include the Teaching and Learning Committee (min ref: AB/3/21/13).
- The management/operational oversight structure has been presented as a draft and next steps (6.1 of the report) outline that further discussions will take place with Colleges to agree local management and operational arrangements.
- The overall impact is intended to enhance decision making and provide scrutiny and challenge while retaining overall efficiencies and draw on staff time.

5.2 The Chair reminded members that leadership and management of the apprenticeship provision is an area that Ofsted will deliver a judgment at future inspection and a continued robust governance model is essential. In the subsequent discussion, University leaders and managers responded as follows to comments and questions from members:

- In response to a question raised about the presence of the employer’s voice in the governance structure, it was reported this was to be incorporated in line with employer engagement of other areas of provision. Further discussions are ongoing by Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Steering Group.
- It was confirmed that a hybrid approach to College and Department level progression boards was currently in operation. It was identified that small delivery areas can benefit from the efficiencies of a College level panel however, due to volume and complexity, this was not a practical approach in all cases. Members commented that clarity and consistency in communications relating to progression boards was important.
- In response to a question on confidence in the structure, assurance was given to the Academic Board that it demonstrated appropriate delineation and clear delegations to ensure clarity of decision making and authorities.

**ACTION: Head of Quality and Standards & Head of Business Engagement and Growth**

5.3 The Academic Board **approved** the draft governance structure and **noted** the next steps.

Agenda item 6.1	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience: Student Experience Update and Planning for 2021/2</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/6
Paper Ref AB/3/21/6.1		

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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 throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) thanked the co-authors when introducing the report and highlighted the following points for the Academic Board's attention:

- Under Government guidelines, all remaining students could return to campus from 17 May 2021. However, undergraduate courses were well into the assessment period, so few additional courses returned to campus in practice. Master's students are now largely back on campus as May/June is a standard delivery period.
- A University programme has been developed complementing department enrichment activities to recover lost or delayed learning that includes a calendar of activities, spanning careers and employability, research, external speakers, and events. The summer enrichment programme will take place from mid-May.
- A summary was provided on the Autumn delivery framework and meetings have been taking place with all Heads of Departments to review progress.
- Further to the developed Fair Outcomes measures (AB/1/21/6), as of mid-May, there were substantial but anticipated increases in Requests to Extend a Submission Deadline and for Requests to Repeat an Assessment, in comparison to the 2019/20 academic year.
- As of 25 May 2021, significantly less complaints have been received in comparison to the 2019/20 academic year, although in line with previous patterns it is anticipated more could be received following the 2020/21 reassessment period.
- Several Academic Misconduct cases have been considered during the current academic year including an increase in the number of allegations of collusion associated with the 24-hour online exams. In response, the Head of Student Engagement has been reviewing e-cheating more broadly and technological support is being explored.
- Findings from the Hallam 'Welcome Back' survey demonstrates that work to support the visibility and impact of academic advisers continues to be effective. The Head of Academic Advising is leading on work to share best practice across the institution.
- Academic Development and Diversity have been developing several key resources to address institutional priorities relating to the degree awarding gap and the embedding of the Hallam Values.

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6.2 The Academic Board welcomed the report, commending the breadth of the update provided by the authors and the positive progress that continues to be made in relation to the student experience. The subsequent discussion particularly focused on assessments with the following points being raised:

- It was recognised there had been a greater awareness by students of the support available through the Request to Extend a Submission Deadline and Request to Repeat and Assessment processes, because of improved communications and from working closely with the Students Union. Members noted that some staff have reported increased pressures on colleagues due to the management of the volume of requests. In response, the Head of Student Policy and Compliance confirmed that some increase had been anticipated and the process for the review of these submissions is intended to minimise workload impact where possible.
  - Members queried the reported increase in the number of allegations of collusion associated with the 24-hour online examinations. The importance of a solution was emphasised given the potential continuation of approach to examinations. The Dean of Students reported that solutions are being explored and links to a bigger piece of work in relation to the development of pedagogy in assessment.
  - Members supported the increase in awareness of Academic Advisors and advocated their pivotal role on closing the degree awarding gap.
  - Students Union representatives reported that assessment support from the academic teams was appreciated and a positive response from students has been received.
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The Chair thanked members for focused contributions to an interesting discussion which encompassed a range of matters, outlining that continued progress was required in preparation for the next academic year.

**ACTION: Dean of Students**

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

Agenda item 6.2	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience:</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/7
Paper Ref AB/3/21/6.2	<b>University Grade Descriptor</b>	

7.1 The paper proposes a revision to the University Grade Descriptors (previously agreed at the Academic Board meeting in May 2019) in response to feedback from the review of initial implementation. The intention is to implement the proposals from September 2021.

The Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (Social Sciences and Arts) supported by the Dean of College (Social Sciences and Arts) outlined the proposed revisions, as outlined in section 2.1 of the report, that includes:

- A change to the number of grade categories in line with similar assessment models across the sector.
- Removal of ‘percentage ranges’ to encourage markers to think in terms of the classification and grade point rather than percentage.
- Highest and lowest ‘equivalent percentage’ adjustment.
- Minor changes to descriptor wording to include applied and / or work-based learning.

The rationale for the change, as outlined in section 2.2 of the report, is in response to concerns raised about the inadvertent skewing effect of the categorical marking highest and lowest categories, especially when combined with the current university degree algorithm which works on a percentage average model.

7.2 The Academic Board highlighted the importance of addressing risks of grade inflation to ensure this is given appropriate attention to protect academic standards and continued confidence in the value of student qualifications. Key points from the discussion were as follows:

- Members queried marks that fall outside of the stated percentages in the proposals against the 0-100 scale. The Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (Social Sciences and Arts) outlined that current percentage scaling was evidenced to be a key contributor to differential outcome impacts, particularly at the higher percentage levels. The proposals aim to address these issues.
- Members queried the level of attainment that constitutes a fail and the impact this could have on a compensated pass. In response, it was assured that the mark was appropriate and proportionate as a technical measure to eliminate unfair skewing.
- There was confidence that the approach outlined in the proposals was the right and has been informed by learning experiences and sector best practice from other institutions.
- Numeric disciplines / assessments remain exempted for a further transition year but are encouraged to consider how their assessments relate and can be more consistent with this approach.
- The Students Union representatives were in support of the proposals and were confident they will improve consistency across the institution.

- The Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (Social Sciences and Arts) confirmed that the changes were being delivered with the Office for Students Conditions for Registration B3 – B5 as the driving force. These conditions require the institution to deliver successful outcomes, ensuring qualifications hold their value and ensuring academic standards are of the highest quality.
- Several technical questions were raised in relation to specific course delivery. It was identified that the development of a supplementary Frequently Asked Questions document would be helpful to support implementation.

In conclusion of the broad support for the proposals, the Chair emphasised that members had a responsibility to ensure the changes are delivered at a local level.

**Action: Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching, SSA**

7.3 The Academic Board **approved** the proposal to revise the University Grade Descriptors.

Agenda item	6.3	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience:</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/8
Paper Ref	AB/3/21/6.3	<b>Student Regulations and Policies 2021/22</b>		

- 8.1 In introducing the Standard Assessment Regulations for 2021/22, the Head of Student Policy and Compliance confirmed there were no significant changes other than those already approved by the Academic Board and highlighted the following amendments to the Academic Board:
- Progression changes implemented following the last Academic Board (Min ref: AB/2/21/5) will roll forward.
  - The current temporary measures in place to remove the assessment cap for referral work for students under continuous reassessment from the 19.20 academic year, and for students undertaking retakes will no longer apply in the 21.22 Regulations.
  - A holistic review of the approach to capping will continue as part of the Assessment Review under the Learning and Teaching workstream of The Future Strategy Programme.

8.2 In response to the discontinuation of the temporary capping measures, the Academic Board commented that careful consideration needs to be given to the language used in communications with students, positively emphasising they will continue to be supported through the Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) and other processes.

8.3 The Academic Board **approved** the Standard Assessment Regulations for the 2021/22 Academic Year.

Agenda item	6.4	<b>Academic Regulation and Student Experience:</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/9
Paper Ref	Verbal update	<b>Department Assessment Boards Outcomes</b>		

- 9.1 The Head of Student Policy and Compliance provided a verbal update on the progress of the Department Assessment Boards. The following points were highlighted for the Academic Board's attention:
- The majority of Department Assessment Boards are due to take place week commencing 14 June 2021. This was to account for changes from the no detriment policy which extended the deadline from 5 to 10 working days following the submission of a Request to Extend a Submission Deadline (RESD).
  - There were no reported outcomes to date but there is an expected impact from the amount of Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) submissions in the volume of considerations that will need to be made by re-assessment boards (also referenced in minute AB/3/21/6).

9.2 The Academic Board **noted** the progress update on Departmental Assessment Boards.

Agenda item 7	<b>Condition of Registration C1 Review – Stage 2</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/10
Paper Ref AB/3/21/7		<b>Confidential</b>

10.1 Further to consideration of the Condition of Registration C1 review stage one at the previous meeting (AB/2/21/4), this report provided the Academic Board with sight of the second stage of the internal review. The review was conducted in response to a request from the Office for Students, received on 14th January 2021, that Higher Education providers conduct a review of compliance with registration condition C1, on the extent to which due regard has been given to guidance in relation to consumer protection law for the 2020/21 Academic Year.

10.2 A minute confidential to the Board was recorded.

10.3 The Academic Board **endorsed** the conclusions and recommendations.

Agenda item 8	<b>Quality and Standards Report</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/11
Paper Ref Verbal update		

11.1 The Head of Quality and Standards was invited to provide the Academic Board with an update on significant issues relating to quality and standards since the previous meeting in April 2021. The report was presented verbally and headline points not covered elsewhere on the agenda were:

- Course Improvement Plans have been agreed.
- Progress is being made on the curriculum structure and employer-led curriculum.
- Validations are going well.
- Academic Quality and Standards are exploring a technical system already in use with apprenticeships to help on development and reporting on Course Improvement Plans.

11.2 The Academic Board **noted** update on quality and standards.

Agenda item 9	<b>Academic Board Constitution and Membership</b>	Minute Ref AB/3/21/12
Paper Ref AB/3/21/9		

12.1 Revisions are proposed to the Academic Board's Terms of Reference and membership considering changes to internal governance structures and increased expectations on the Board of Governors to engage with academic governance matters. The following points were highlighted from the proposals by the Chair and Secretary to the Board for the attention of members:

- The updated wording in the terms of reference will enable the Academic Board to consider the Student Disciplinary regulations to ensure it retains an overview of the whole student regulatory landscape.
- Some additional ex-officio representatives have been suggested to attend the Academic Board which will provide enhanced input from Student and Academic Services and Academic Development and Diversity.
- That a selection panel be convened in advance of the first meeting of the 2021/2 academic year to fill the remaining vacant position. Priority in this selection process should be given to academic areas which are currently under-represented.
- In January 2019, all nine academic representatives appointed by the selection panel were informed their terms of office would end in July 2021. It is proposed that exceptionally these members are invited to express an interest in extending their terms of office by 12 months. The extension will support the timeframe for a review of appointments to selected members to ensure business continuity.
- The proposed revisions are consistent with the constitutional documents (the revised Instrument and Articles and standing orders approved by the Board of Governors) which come into effect on 01 August 2021.

**Action: Secretary to the Board**

- 12.2 The Academic Board **agreed** the revised Terms of Reference and membership as a basis for consultation with the Board of Governors.

Agenda item	10	<b>University Governance: Teaching &amp; Learning and Research and Innovation Committees</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/13
Paper Ref	AB/3/21/10			

- 13.1 The paper outlines the proposed Term of Reference of two new internal executive level committees that will support the academic decision making, assurance and compliance activities of the University (Teaching & Learning Committee and Research & Innovation Committee). In introducing the paper, the Head of Governance and Sector Regulation highlighted the following key points for the Academic Board's attention:

- Proposals for a revised internal governance structure was approved by the University Leadership Team in January 2021. These proposals are focused on the re-establishment of more permanent forms of internal governance as the University transitions out of Covid arrangements.
- Subject to approval, both committees will become operational sub-committees of the Academic Board with immediate effect commencing a full business cycle in the Autumn.
- Members of the proposed Teaching & Learning Committee met informally in late May to receive these terms of reference and consider an indicative business cycle and an initial meeting of the Research & Innovation Committee is to be scheduled for early Autumn.

- 13.2 In discussion members were mindful in their scrutiny to ensure the inclusion of key stakeholders, with particular emphasis on continued progress with regards to inclusion and diversity. In conclusion it was recognised that these committees should be lean and agile to meet changing demands. Assurance was given by senior managers that boundaries can be mailable where there was a clear business need for specialist expertise.

Members further highlighted the importance of communication in effectively managing the relationship between the standing and working groups as well as maximising the opportunity of learning and decisions across formal groups.

- 13.3 The Academic Board **approved** the Terms of References for the Teaching & Learning and Research & Innovation Committees.

Agenda item	11	<b>Annual Reports on Honorary Doctorates</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/14
Paper Ref	AB/3/21/11			<b>Confidential</b>

- 14.1 The report, introduced by the Chair of the Honorary Awards Committee, updated the Academic Board on the progress of Honorary Doctorate Nominations for 2021. The public announcement of awards will be taken forward by the University's External Engagement team in August 2021.

- 14.2 The Academic Board **noted** the accepted nominations and next steps.

Agenda item	12	<b>Annual Business Cycle</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/15
Paper Ref	AB/3/21/12			

- 15 The Academic Board **noted** the forward programme.

Agenda item	13	<b>Review of Meeting</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/16
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- 16 The Chair thanked all staff and students present in the meeting for their contributions that included 54 interventions (49 from members of staff (28 male, 21 female) and 5 from students).

Agenda item	14	<b>Other Urgent Business</b>	Minute Ref	AB/3/21/17
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- 17 No urgent business was raised.



Agenda item 15

**Date of Next Meeting**

Minute Ref AB/3/21/18

18 Provisional date 22 September 2021