

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2020

PRESENT (viaWebex):

Professor Paul Wiles (Chair)	Professor Julietta Patnick
Professor Jeff Bale	Dr Stephen Timothy
Elaine Buckley	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michaela Boryslawskyj, Clerk to the Board of Governors
 Professor Roger Eccleston, DVC Academic
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
 Dr Neil Mckay, Dean of Students
 Professor Alison Metcalfe, PVC Teaching and Learning
 Pete Sweeney, Governance and Sector Regulation Adviser (Minute Secretary)
 Hannah Boyce, Governance and Sector Regulation Senior Administrator

Agenda item 2	Declaration of Interests	Minute Ref AAC/20/23
Paper Ref		

23.1 There were no declarations of interest.

Agenda item 3	Meeting on 22 May 2020	Minute Ref AAC/20/24
Paper Ref AAC/2/20/M		

24.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Agenda item 4	Matters Arising	Minute Ref AAC/20/25
Paper Ref		

25.1 There were no matters arising.

Agenda item 5	Report from the meeting of the Academic Board held on 1 July 2020	Minute Ref AAC/20/26
Paper Ref AAC/3/20/5		

26.1 The Committee noted the report which set out the main points from the meeting on 1 July 2020. These would be addressed during discussion of the relevant items on the agenda.

Agenda item 6	Ensuring No Detriment in Assessment Outcomes	Minute Ref AAC/20/27
Paper Ref AAC/3/20/6i		

27.1 The Committee received a copy of the report that had been presented to the Academic Board at its meeting on 1 July. The report provided initial observations about the impact of the 'no detriment' measures in 2019/20 and set out the measures proposed to be carried forward for inclusion in the 2020/21 Standard Assessment Regulations and other policies and processes. The Committee was informed that at that meeting, the Chair of the Academic Board had directed that those measures should not be considered for approval at the current time and that the Academic Board would return to the matter at its next meeting in September 2020.

27.2 The Chair asked the University representatives present to explain the rationale for this decision given that the proposals had appeared to be a central part of the University's positioning for Autumn 2020. The following points were made in response:

- I. The original intention had been to bring the measures to Academic Board in July in order that changes to assessment regulations could be published and communicated over the summer. The decision to not proceed had been made because it was felt more evidence was needed about the impact of the 'no detriment' measures introduced for 2019/20. This evidence would not be fully available until September 2020 at the end of the summer reassessment boards.

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- II. The University had made rapid changes in March and April 2020 to ensure no detriment for 2019/20. Not all the measures introduced then may be needed for 2020/21. It had therefore been the right decision not to commit to things now that might not be needed later. The approach to 2019/20 was compliant with regulatory requirements and struck the right balance between fairness to students and making justifiable awards and progression decisions. It was essential to maintain this balance going forward through making evidenced-based decisions
 - III. A line of discussion at Academic Board had been around the need to strengthen the evidence of equality impact and there was not enough time to do this now. It was possible that some students would struggle in their environments and this could impact on particular socio-economic groups. It was important to understand this and to support those students appropriately.
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- 27.3 The Committee discussed the implications of the Academic Board decision and how these would be managed. Comments and questions from members explored the risk of students being confused and concerned by the change to the language being used, the risk of the University being out of line with other institutions and how it would respond to requests from students to defer study for a year. The following points were made in response:
- I. It was important to stress that there was no change to the overall message being communicated to students about 2020/21, which was that they would receive a high quality teaching and learning experience comprising a blend of on-site and remote activity. The decision not to proceed with the proposals set out in the Academic Board reflected the fact that it was too early to tell whether they were necessary.
 - II. The University's priority was to ensure that the approach to 2020/21 was the right one for its students. There was a breadth of understanding of the position across the sector but the focus was on what was appropriate and deliverable for the University's particular context. The 'safety net' campaign had demonstrated how certain measures that might be appropriate for some institutions could not be applied at Sheffield Hallam. The DVC Academic and Dean of Students continued to engage with the leaders of the 'safety net' campaign to explain the University's position.
 - III. The current approach to requests to defer study was that this was generally permitted with requests being considered on an individual basis. There were no plans to change this, which aligned with recently issued guidance from the Office for Students that institutions should continue to deal with requests to defer as they would do normally.
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- 27.4 The Committee agreed that it could assure the Board that whilst the timing of the decision had been unfortunate, it had been made for the right reasons. It was essential that the approach to 2020/21 maintained the standards of awards and regulatory compliance whilst taking full account of equality impact analysis. At present, there was insufficient evidence around the impact of the measures applied during 2019/20 to do this. Clear communication to students about the approach to 2020/21 was critical.

Agenda item 6.2
Paper Ref

Arrangements for Autumn 2020

Minute Ref AAC/20/28

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- 28.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) gave an update on plans for delivery of teaching and learning in Autumn 2020. These included:
- I. A set of design principles had been provided to staff (circulated to the AAC following the May meeting). These had been supplemented by guidance and advice from various University teams.
 - II. Information had been issued to students regarding the arrangements for Autumn 2020 including the balance between on-site and on-line provision.
 - III. Five silver groups were overseeing the development of various aspects of delivery. These

- groups reported to the Gold Group.
- IV. A blended learning website had been launched to support staff to develop and deliver a high quality offer to students.
 - V. The Hallam Model principles were being used as a positive way of framing what the University would be doing in Autumn 2020.

28.2 The following points were made in response to comments and questions from members

- I. The University did not currently have lecture capture but had recently procured a system to deliver this. Students already had access to learning materials via module Blackboard sites and lecture recording options were available through Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom. Teaching space was being equipped to accommodate lecture capture and software would be available to staff shortly. Discussions were ongoing with the University and Colleges Union (UCU) around its concerns over the implementation of lecture capture.
- II. Work was taking place on the infrastructure to accommodate courses which required the delivery of on-site practical sessions or specialist workspaces and equipment.

28.3 The Committee acknowledged the volume of complex work that was taking place to facilitate delivery in Autumn 2020. This required a steep learning curve for academic staff in particular who were been asked to go over and above their normal role to make this work. It was important to make the Board aware of this so that it could express its appreciation.

Agenda item 7

Quality and Standards Highlights Report

Minute Ref AAC/20/29

Paper Ref AAC/3/20/7

29.1 The Committee noted that a series of reviews were being undertaken to consider the portfolio and curriculum in order to inform and prepare for Autumn 2020 delivery. The Academic Quality and Standards team was working in collaboration with Student and Academic Services to determine a robust approach and establish a consistent way of supporting academic colleagues to make the required changes. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that work was ongoing to support partner colleges, especially around helping them to understand and implement the no detriment policy.

Agenda item 8

Review of the Student Disciplinary Regulations

Minute Ref AAC/20/30

Paper Ref AAC/3/20/8

30.1 The report set out amendments to the Disciplinary Regulations for Students. The amendments comprised:

- A revised introduction.
- Revisions to the Student Code of Conduct which underpinned the Disciplinary Regulations aimed at simplifying this Code.
- Examples of behaviour that could be in breach of the Code included towards the beginning of the document rather than in an annex as previously.
- Clearly stated general principles.
- Inclusion of anti-harassment behaviour described in the Student Anti-Harassment Policy with a view to removing that Policy.
- Inclusion of timeframes for dealing with allegations in line with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) good practice framework.

30.2 The Committee noted that the proposed amendments were supported by the Academic Board which had considered them at its meeting on 1 July 2020, and endorsed comments made at that meeting around ensuring greater diversity amongst University staff involved in disciplinary cases.

Agenda item 9

Update on Apprenticeships

Minute Ref AAC/20/31

Paper Ref Verbal

31.1 The Committee received an update on the University's readiness for the Ofsted monitoring visit

which had been due to take place by the end of March 2020. At present, there was still no formal indication of when Ofsted might resume monitoring visits and inspections. The University continued its preparations for both. The Committee noted that the extent of redundancies amongst the University's apprenticeship provision was still uncertain and could have implications for the monitoring visit if widespread.

Agenda item 10	Academic Governance Update	Minute Ref AAC/20/32
Paper Ref AAC/3/2/10		

32.1 The report sought the views of the Committee on proposed revisions to the Academic Board's Terms of Reference as well as providing a timetable for the review of the Committee's own remit. In discussion, members welcomed the clarity the revisions provided around the relationship between the Committee and the Academic Board and felt this would further enhance the developments that had already taken place to establish working protocols between the two bodies. It was suggested that Term 7 should be revised from 'advising the AAC' to 'demonstrating to the AAC a robust academic governance framework'.

32.2 Further consultation on the revised Terms of Reference for Academic Board would take place at the Board of Governors meeting on 28 July 2020. The Committee agreed that it could assure the Board that the revisions would help to enhance academic governance arrangements.

Agenda item 11	PVC Portfolio Reports	Minute Ref AAC/20/33
Paper Ref AAC/3/20/11		

33.1 The Committee noted the report.

Agenda item 12	Annual Business Cycle	Minute Ref AAC/20/34
Paper Ref AAC/3/20/12		

34.1 The Board noted the forward programme.

Agenda item 13	Any Urgent Business	Minute Ref AAC/20/35
Paper Ref		

35.1 The Chair reported that this would be the final meeting attended by Stephen Timothy before he retired from the Board at the end of July 2020. He thanked Dr Timothy for his contribution to the Committee since its inception in October 2017. This contribution had helped demonstrate the importance of having a range of perspectives on the Committee including those from members who did not have a background of working in the higher education sector.

Agenda item 14	Next Meeting	Minute Ref AAC/20/36
Paper Ref		

36.1 23 October 2020