

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT (via WebEx):

Prof Sir Chris Husbands (Chair)	Dr John Freeman	Dr Neil McKay
Andrew Adegbola	Dr Sam Giove	Prof Alison Metcalfe
George Alvey	Geff Green	Prof Lisa Mooney
Dr Helen Best	Catriona Hynes	Dr Christine O'Leary
Dr Julie Brunton	Praise Ishola	Dr Lucian Tipi
Elaine Buckley	Laith Jaafar	Susan Wakefield
Dr Claire Cornock	Prof Kevin Kerrigan	Prof Chris Wigginton
Prof Roger Eccleston	Dr Eileen McAuliffe	Rob Wilson
Prof John Francis		

APOLOGIES:

Dr Rebecca Hodgson	Dr Elizabeth Freeman	Dr Vishal Parikh
Dr Toni Schwartz		

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michaela Boryslawskij, University Secretary (Secretary)
 Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards
 Dan Lally, Head of Business, Growth and Engagement (for agenda item 7)
 Pete Sweeney, Governance and Sector Regulations Adviser (Minute Secretary)
 Carolyn Taylor, Head of Student Policy and Compliance
 Alison Wells, Director of Academic Services

Agenda item Paper Ref	Additional	Opening Comments	Minute Ref
39.1		The Chair welcomed George Alvey, Praise Ishola and Laith Jaafar to their first meeting of Academic Board in their role as Students' Union College Officers.	AB/20/39
Agenda item Paper Ref	Additional	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	Minute Ref
40.1	2 AB/3/20M	The Board <u>approved</u> the minutes of the meeting on 1 July 2020 as a correct record.	AB/20/40
Agenda item Paper Ref	Additional	Matters Arising	Minute Ref
41.1	3 verbal	Minute AB/20/33.3: The Secretary reported that the Board of Governors had approved the Instrument and Articles of Government for submission to the Office for Students.	AB/20/41
Agenda item Paper Ref	Additional	Evaluation of No-Detriment Assessment Measures	Minute Ref
42.1	4 AB/4/20/4	The report set out the findings from the evaluation of the no-detriment assessment measures introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Key findings from the evaluation included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. There had been large but proportionate increases in the use of extensions to submission deadlines. This increased use had supported students to complete their learning in a meaningful way. 	AB/20/42

- II. Module and individual scaling were used, but in low numbers compared to the number of modules and student record.
- III. The evidence indicated that there was high application of no detriment measures in Departments which may have suffered the greatest disadvantage from Covid-19 restrictions
- IV. Less than 1000 No Detriment Retakes were recorded (as of early August) which was low when considering the number of assessment tasks during 2020/21.
- V. Very early indicators suggested that average module marks across all levels of study were broadly in line with previous years. This measure would eventually be supported by the analysis of HESA data on good honours outcomes which was due in late September 2020.
- VI. The number of formal complaints submitted at Stage 1 of the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure was relatively low (around 100) in comparison to the overall student population. Many of these had been submitted before Departmental Assessment Boards had met to review their performance under the no detriment principles.

42.2 The Board welcomed what was viewed as a positive outcome for students from what had been a very difficult year. The following points were raised in discussion of the findings and recommendations from the evaluation:

- I. Student members welcomed the acknowledgement that initial communication with students had not been good enough. The University should aim to be more transparent in the future.
- II. The rise in allegations of academic misconduct in semester 2 online exams was noted and members asked how the University planned to address this given the intention to continue with this form of assessment. In response, the Dean of Students reported that further analysis was necessary to fully understand the issues. However, there was time to plan for and address within assessment design. Overall, the focus should be on promoting positive academic behaviour.
- III. Members supported the intention to use Pass and Progress only with caution in the event of future occurrences and suggested that it should not be applied to any student in two consecutive years. Whilst Pass and Progress had been supportive to students, it did mean they had missed out on opportunities to become familiar with assessment practices. Members asked how the University planned to ensure this did not impact on future years. In response, the Dean of Students reported that academic advice and support for these students was being frontloaded to the beginning of the year.
- IV. Some students on professional courses had been delayed in being able to register for practice due to additional time taken to confirm marks. In response, the Dean of Students reported that it had taken a little longer on some cases for Departmental Assessment Boards to confirm results due to the scrutiny applied to module and individual student performance. Whilst delays had only been for a matter of days, this had impacted on some students.
- V. The analysis did not address questions around equality of impact across student groups. In response, the Dean of Students acknowledged that the analysis needed to go further than just outcomes. However, there were limitations around data that was available to use. He would raise this with Student Planning and Intelligence to see what other information was available. **Action: Dean of Students**
- VI. There was little in the report about international students and further detail would be helpful. It was noted that online exams were generally seen as being of benefit to international students.
- VII. A substantial amount of learning had been achieved from this process. It was important to build on this to ensure consistency alongside the maintenance of quality and standards.

42.3 The Chair commended the Dean of Students and his team for the thoroughness of the report. He acknowledged the communication issues raised by students adding that this was one of the challenges to be addressed when making decisions at speed.

43.1 The report set out proposals for changes to assessment for the 2020/21 academic year, and the development of assessment practices and policies for 2021/22 and beyond. The PVC Teaching and

Learning reported that the University would not normally introduce changes to assessment this close to the start of an academic year. However, as discussed at the meeting in July 2020, it was necessary to wait for the evaluation of the no detriment assessment measures in 2019/20 before deciding what needed to be applied for the current academic year.

43.2 In discussion of the proposals for 2020/21, members queried why the temporary change to the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure which increased the duration of an extended submission deadline to 10 working days (from 5 working days) was not being continued into 2020/21. They pointed out that anxiety and fear still existed for many students who would require support from extended deadlines. In response, the Chair stated that the University needed to be cautious about taking a liberal line on extensions at this stage as it moved towards what would be considered the 'normal' delivery pattern.

43.3 The Board approved the following changes to assessment for 2020/21

- I. Examinations to remain online.
- II. The creation of a standing panel to consider complex and exceptional cases arising from the application of assessment regulations.
- III. Re-takes of modules failed in 2019/20 to receive uncapped marks.
- IV. Continuous reassessment carried over from modules studied in 2019/20 to receive uncapped marks.

43.4 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that the proposals for the development of assessment policies and processes were based both on the experience and evaluation of changes made in response to Covid-19, and on work that was already underway before the pandemic struck. The proposals recommended:

- I. A review of Foundation Year assessment.
- II. A review of Level 4 assessment.
- III. A fundamental review of assessment, grading and classification.

43.5 In discussion, the Board welcomed the scope of reviews commenting that these were the areas on which the University should be focussing. Students' Union representatives stressed their desire to contribute to these reviews and referred to other issues that might also be covered. It was agreed that these should be raised with the Head of Academic Quality and Standards in the first instance with any further proposals being brought to the next meeting. Members stressed the importance of considering equality, diversity, and inclusion impact from an early stage.

43.6 The Board approved the proposals for the development of assessment policies and processes.

Agenda item 6

Update to the Process for Validation of New Courses

Minute Ref AB/20/44

Paper Ref AB/4/20/6

44.1 The report proposed changes to pre-validation processes to ensure that courses went to validation having explicitly considered University strategic drivers and in tandem with University planning cycles. The most significant of the changes was the requirement of course planners to engage with a range of University stakeholders including EDI and the Hallam Model. This engagement was essential to ensure the University could deliver its strategic aims.

44.2 In discussion, members welcomed the systematic approach towards bringing consideration of EDI and the Hallam Model into mainstream consideration. The importance of doing this should be articulated very clearly in guidance documents. It was suggested that the group looking at how to operationalise the processes should consider creating models and templates for course design to provide a framework for course planners. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that he would work with the College Officers to determine who they would nominate for the validation panels

44.3 The Academic Board approved the proposals.

Agenda 7
item AB/4/20/7
Paper Ref

Ofsted Readiness Update

Minute Ref AB/20/45

- 45.1 The report provided an update on progress regarding the Apprenticeship Improvement Plan and Position Statement relating to a visit from Ofsted. The key points were that:
- I. Ofsted had announced a revised inspection approach which involved an interim visit in Autumn 2020 which would be ungraded. They were expected to return to a normal inspection regime from January 2021.
 - II. The Position Statement had been updated to account for the changes in provision and the impact of actions with specific considerations around the headline impacts of Covid-19.
 - III. The Apprenticeship Improvement Plan had been updated to account for the actions completed, new actions identified and the updated data position.
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- 45.2 The Department for Education had recently announced that Ofsted would take over responsibility for the inspection of all apprenticeship provision. The University had expected this to happen and was in a strong position following the decision to implement changes and improvements to all apprenticeship provision, not just the relatively small number within the scope of the original Ofsted inspection. Preparations for the wider Ofsted role including setting up systems and preparing staff for a different style of inspection to what they had experienced previously. This had required a lot of work at a difficult time. The Head of Business Engagement and Growth reported that governance structures were already in place to support the revised approach. The key thing now was to identify any risks and decide how to work with the relevant Departments to address these.

Agenda item 8
Paper Ref Presentation

National Student Survey Outcomes

Minute Ref AB/20/46

- 46.1 The Chair prefaced the report by referring to the recent announcement by the Office for Students of a radical root and branch review of the National Student Survey (NSS). The terms of reference for the first stage of the review included consideration of whether the NSS drove the lowering of academic standards and grade inflation. The review would not significantly impact on the 2021 NSS although it had been agreed to reduce the burden on providers by no longer requiring them to promote the survey internally to their students. Turning to the 2020 outcome, he stressed that the results were very disappointing and that the University had to turn this around quickly. The University Leadership Team had identified several priority areas for action with a focus on short-term issues where the University could make a significant impact over the autumn term.
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- 46.2 The Dean of Students provided an overview of the results. The headlines included:
- I. Overall student satisfaction had fallen by 4% against a decrease of 1% in overall satisfaction across the sector. This translated into a drop in quartile position for most questions though some did remain in the top quartile.
 - II. There had been a decrease against all questions and scales to varying degrees. The questions with the most pronounced decrease were Organisation and Management and Assessment and Feedback.
 - III. The net result was a fall from the top quartile to an average position. The University now sat in the middle of the competitor pack. It was on benchmark for most questions but below for Organisation and Management.
 - IV. There was a strong correlation between a high number of staff in a Department taking industrial action and a decrease in the overall satisfaction rate and performance in some questions in that Department. Some areas had managed this better than others.
 - V. A quarter of subjects were in the top quartile and a quarter below average with some on the bottom quartile. There was variation in overall satisfaction for courses within subjects which had an impact on the subject performance.

- 46.3 The following points were made in discussion:

- I. Students being unable to contact staff was something that should be possible to improve quickly. The Dean of Students referred to the impact on the results of staff not responding to students during the periods of industrial action. He added that where Departments had worked hard to maintain relationships with students during this period, they had not experienced the same drop in performance.
- II. Timetabling was noted as an ongoing issue and members asked whether interventions were required. In response, the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic reported that work was taking place to make it as good as can be for semester 2. It was important to separate short-term issues from long-term work taking place and to not undo this because of the results this year.
- III. Performance on the question about how the Students' Union effectively represents students' academic interests demonstrated why the recent restructure of the Union's representative structure had been necessary. It was important that the University bought into this and enabled appropriate Students' Union representation on groups and committees.

Agenda item 9 **Annual Quality Review Update** Minute Ref AB/20/47
Paper Ref Verbal

- 47.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards reported that the Annual Quality Review Report would now be presented to the meeting in January 2021. This was because the full set of data from the no detriment analysis had not been available in time to incorporate into report and due to the desire to not distract Colleges and Departments from autumn readiness preparations.

Agenda item 10 **Student Voice Report** Minute Ref AB/20/48
Paper Ref Verbal

- 48.1 The President of the Students' Union gave an overview of the issues raised in the report relating to the student academic experience. The Board would consider these in detail at the meeting in January 2020. In the meantime, a copy of the report would be circulated to members.

Action: Secretary

Agenda item 11 **Terms of Reference and Constitution** Minute Ref AB/20/49
Paper Ref AB/4/20/11

- 49.1 The Secretary reported that following discussion at the meeting in July 2020, the revised terms of reference had been considered at the Academic Assurance Committee and Board of Governors, both of which supported the proposals. Changes to the Board's constitution were now necessary to ensure that student representation was consistent with the revised Students' Union elected officer structure which included a College Officer for each of the three colleges and discontinuation of the Education Officer post. These would be reported to the Board of Governors at its meeting in November 2020.

- 49.2 The Academic Board approved the revised Terms of Reference and noted the revised constitution.

Agenda item 12 **Annual Report and Review of Effectiveness** Minute Ref AB/20/50
Paper Ref AB/4/20/12

- 50.1 The Annual Report reflected on how effectively the Board has discharged its remit during 2019/20. A series of emerging issues including the response to the Ofsted inspection of apprenticeship provision, industrial action by the University and Colleges Union, and the Covid-19 pandemic had required the Board to place particular attention to its remit to monitor and report on the quality and standards of awards and regulatory matters. In discussion, comments were made about the Board needing to focus more on the impact of changes to academic policies and processes to be able to close the loop when reviewing those changes and also about achieving an appropriate balance between teaching and research oversight. It was agreed to give further consideration about how best to do this.

Action: Secretary

Agenda item 13 **Forward Programme** Minute Ref AB/20/51
Paper Ref AB/4/20/13

- 51.1 The Board noted the forward programme.

Agenda item 14 Paper Ref	Review of Meeting	Minute Ref AB/20/52
52.1	The Chair thanked members for their contribution to discussions that had brought a wide range of comments from all categories of membership. He invited each member to submit a comment about the effectiveness of the meeting via the WebEx chat function. These would be collated and reflected in the minutes of the meeting.	
52.2	The comments received reported very positively on the quality of the presentations, the opportunity this provided for inclusive and open discussions and the level of scrutiny afforded to the evaluation of no detriment and NSS outcomes items. The contribution from the Students' Union members was widely welcomed and members offered the support in helping student members prepare for meetings. It was noted that all four student members on the Board were male. The following suggestions were made for improvements to future meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Given the Board only met four times per year, it may be useful to have a smaller number of issues distilled by paper authors, pitched as questions/provocations for the Board to debate. II. Zoom or Teams might be a better platform for remote meetings of this size. A couple of members reported problems with accessing the meeting. 	
Agenda item 15 Paper Ref	Other Urgent Business	Minute Ref AB/20/53
53.1	There was no urgent business.	
Agenda item 16 Paper Ref	Date of Next Meeting	Minute Ref AB/20/54
54.1	The date of the next meeting is 20 January 2021.	
Agenda item 17 Paper Ref AAC/3/20M	Academic Assurance Committee Minutes: 3 July 2020	Minute Ref AB/20/55
55.1	The Academic Board <u>received</u> the Academic Assurance Committee Minutes of 3 July 2020.	