

ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed minutes of the Meeting held on 12 February 2014

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Martin Beer, Professor Mike Bramhall, Professor Karen Bryan, Diane Burkinshaw, Emily Connor, Howard Duffy, Sonja Ellis, Jean Flanagan, Dr Graham Holden, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Professor Ann Macaskill, Tanya Miles-Berry, Oliver Redfern, Professor Norman Wienand, Liz Winders (Secretary)

In Attendance: Professor Simon Bromley, Faculty of Development and Society; Professor Doug Cleaver, Chair of the Research Degrees Sub Committee; Maura Sorensen (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Professor Liz Barnes, Stephanie Coates, Professor Roger Eccleston, Professor John Leach, Dr Christine O'Leary, Stella Jones-Devitt, Joe Rennie

Paper ref	Minute
	<p>AB/14/1 Apologies</p> <p>1.1 Apologies were noted. The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professor Paul Harrison, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation to his first meeting.</p>
AB/4/13/M	<p>AB/14/2 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013</p> <p>2.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>AB/14/3 Matters arising</p> <p>3.1 There were no matters arising.</p> <p>AB/14/4 Urgent Business</p> <p>4.1 There was no urgent business.</p>
AB/1/14/6	<p>AB/14/5 University Strategy to 2020</p> <p>5.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report. Members noted that the strategy was the result of an iterative process of development which had included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the University's current position and exploration of key external drivers, a process initiated at a Board of Governors / University Executive Group (UEG) strategy event in October 2012 and considered further at three leadership forum sessions between January and May 2013. • Consideration of feedback from staff on the potential themes and ambitions through the all staff conference in July 2013 and via online discussion boards. • An exploration by UEG-led groups about how high level ambitions might be delivered, also generating detailed actions under each of the potential ambitions. • Refining the University's vision and goals as a result of

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discussion and feedback from UEG, Governors and staff to create the draft strategy.

It was confirmed that work was currently underway on plans to support delivery of the strategy, assess the resource implications and develop a performance framework to monitor and review implementation.

- 5.2 Reference was made to the mission, vision and values statements in the draft strategy with particular reference to:
- i. provision of a challenging and stimulating student experience;
 - ii. encouraging a sense of identity, belonging and engagement amongst students so they see themselves as members of a vibrant learning community, building a strong affiliation with the University that continues long after they have completed their studies;
 - iii. building a sense of identity and pride in departments and academic programmes;
 - iv. imaginative and engaging use of technology.
- 5.3 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the draft strategy had been presented to the Board of Governors on 11 February. In discussion Governors had sought clarification on a number of issues including:
- i. how management will ensure the appropriate staff are in place to implement the strategy and how under-performing staff would be challenged;
 - ii. the extent to which the impact of external factors was being considered e.g. the removal of the HEFCE student control number (SNC) in 2015-16;
 - iii. whether there should be further consideration of what the University could deliver beyond the current campus-based model.
- 5.4 In discussion members commented on the draft strategy and the points raised by Governors, as well as highlighting other issues. It was strongly suggested that the University's primary focus should be on the core business of campus-based delivery. The growth in full-time undergraduate programmes in recent years was noted and it was suggested that too great a focus on other delivery models, including collaborative provision, risked diverting focus from the core business. In relation to new challenges and/or opportunities members suggested that consideration needed to be given to whether the University was sufficiently agile to respond quickly.
- 5.5 Members noted the significant changes in student numbers in recent years and the potential impact on the University of the removal of the SNC in 2015-16. The Vice-Chancellor outlined a number of scenarios regarding student numbers at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the next few years. Reference was also made to further cuts to come in funding for higher education and more widely across the public sector, and the potential impact on income and student numbers. It was

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highlighted that, though the University was currently in a strong financial position, the possibility of any significant drop in student numbers and attendant income needed to be addressed. In response to a question from the Students' Union it was noted that any significant reduction in student numbers could potentially lead to a reduction in course provision and/or the size of the course intake.

- 5.6 Members endorsed the aims to build a sense of identity and pride in departments and academic programmes, and to foster a sense of identity, belonging and engagement amongst students. Reference was made to the significant ongoing work on IT provision and on teaching and learning. It was suggested that there should be greater reference to the quality of teaching and learning in the strategy.
- 5.7 The need for further work to be undertaken was acknowledged including the development of a performance framework and key performance indicators. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that, subject to the issues raised by Governors at their meeting on 11 February being addressed, the Board of Governors had indicated that they anticipated approving the strategy at their meeting in March 2014.
- 5.8 The Board **received** and **discussed** the report.

AB/1/14/7

AB/14/6 **Concordat to Support Research Integrity**

- 6.1 The Head of Research Ethics introduced the report outlining the background to the Concordat which was developed in collaboration with the Funding and Research Councils, the Wellcome Trust and various government departments. It was noted that all higher education institutes (HEIs) are expected to comply with the Concordat in order to be able to access funding. It was confirmed that University research policies, procedures and guidance were being reviewed to ensure alignment with the Concordat. It was noted that once the review was completed the University should be fully compliant with the Concordat.
- 6.2 The Board **noted** the report and **approved** the University's commitment to the Concordat to support research integrity.

AB/1/14/8

AB/14/7 **Annual Review of Research Degrees Activity**

- 7.1 The Chair of the University Research Degrees Sub-Committee introduced the report. Reference was made to the alignment of the majority of PhDs with REF 2014. It was noted that two, both in psychology, fell outside REF criteria. Members noted that the University had participated in the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), for the first time. Research students also completed the University's annual monitoring exercise focusing on student engagement and formal progress monitoring. Feedback was gathered from both surveys. With reference to the outcome of the PRES it was noted that the University had featured in the top quartile across many areas.

- 7.2 In relation to the annual review of research degrees the variation in progress and attainment across the faculties was noted, highlighting the need for work to be undertaken to achieve greater consistency. Reference was made to changes to the postgraduate research structures with further changes to come.
- 7.3 Members discussed issues around funding and completion of PhDs including whether students undertaking a PhD had a realistic picture of meeting the time commitments while managing conflicting demands and being able to fund themselves throughout. It was suggested that greater emphasis could be placed on ensuring candidates were presented with a realistic picture of the demands at their admissions interview, for example it was suggested that a full-time student should consider undertaking a PhD for three years as the equivalent of a full-time job with an average input of 35-40 hours per week. It was also suggested that supervisors should take a lead on this issue with their students.
- 7.4 It was noted that in order to help students with completion the University was able to keep fees low in the 'writing up' year. In terms of completion rates, members noted that the rules in relation to full-time students were clearer than those for part-time students. Members acknowledged that implementation of actions highlighted in the discussion should help, but that further consideration needs to be given to managing student expectations around funding, supporting themselves throughout their PhD and timely completion. It was suggested that forthcoming changes to the application process for confirmation of approval of research programmes and confirmation of PhD registration may help to improve timely completions.
- 7.5 Reference was made to other initiatives to support PhD students including buddying and peer support networks. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation suggested each PhD student should have their own desk/space and a sense of membership of a Sheffield Hallam PhD community should be fostered. Members suggested further work needs to be undertaken to ensure a research culture is firmly established in the University.
- 7.6 The Board **received** and **noted** the report.

AB/1/14/9

AB/14/8 **Research Strategy**

- 8.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation introduced the report. Reference was made to the eleven strategic priority Units of Assessment (UOAs) submitted to REF 2014, reflecting the areas in which the University has developed research excellence and established a track record of working with organisations to apply the outputs of that research. It was noted that, for REF 2020, other areas of research may be included. Reference was made to REF case impact studies and reinforcing a message to researchers about the need to

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consider for whom they are producing their research and where / how their research outputs may have an impact.

- 8.2 Members raised some specific queries. Researchers in biological sciences were seeking clarification on how they should pursue publishing their research outputs in order to be considered for inclusion in REF 2020. The Pro Vice-Chancellor addressed the query, however it was suggested that it highlighted a more general issue around researchers needing to consider, at this early stage, producing evidence of the impact of their research and publishing it appropriately in order to be considered for inclusion in REF 2020.
- 8.3 Reference was made to the initiative to nurture the University's research base including greater permeability between research and teaching. Members queried the action relating to 'Ensuring the University is developing and appointing academics with PhDs who both research and teach ...' It was emphasised that this was not intended to exclude the appointment of staff with other doctoral degrees or to require PhDs in all areas. In relation to encouraging academic staff to undertake scholarship and research staff to undertake some teaching, it was suggested some changes may be needed to current structures to implement this initiative. With regards to REF 2020, it was suggested that quality related (QR) funding was likely to reduce and that the University may need to take a creative approach to funding if staff are to pursue research. Reference was also made to involving students in research and it was suggested that teaching and research staff who regularly participate in research should promote this to their students.
- 8.4 The Board **approved** the Research Strategy.

AB/1/14/10

AB/14/9 **Impact Strategy for Research and Knowledge Exchange**

- 9.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation introduced the report. The detailed action plan, which covers the period to July 2014 when the new University Strategy will be implemented, was highlighted. Members noted the action plan will be refreshed as necessary to ensure alignment with the new University Strategy and supporting thematic plans.
- 9.2 Members commended the public engagement strand which aligns with the mission and vision in the new University Strategy. It was noted that a core group of individuals, members of the public, had already indicated their willingness to actively engage in the research process, as appropriate.
- 9.3 It was suggested the Impact Strategy could help highlight the outcomes of research which does not meet the REF criteria.
- 9.4 The Board **approved** the Impact Strategy for Research and Knowledge Exchange.

AB/1/14/11

AB/14/10 **Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee; Collaborative Sub-Committee; and Student Voice Committee: changes to terms of reference and membership**

10.1 The Head of Quality Enhancement introduced the report highlighting the proposed changes to the terms of reference and membership of all three committees. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation noted that, after due consideration, a further proposal was being put to the Board; that the Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC), currently a sub-committee of the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC), should instead become a sub-committee of the Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC). Members noted that in previous incarnations of these committees the RDSC had been a sub-committee of the University's quality committee.

10.2 The Board **endorsed** the amendments to the terms of reference and membership of the Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee; Collaborative Sub-Committee; and Student Voice Committee; and **approved** the incorporation the Research Degrees Sub-Committee as a sub-committee of the Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee. It was noted that there may need to be some associated amendments to wording in the AQSEC terms of reference and it was agreed these could be approved by Chair's Action.

AB/1/14/12

AB/14/11 **Course and Institutional Approval Matters**

11.1 The Head of Quality Enhancement introduced the report. The Board:

- **Approved** the recommendations of the University and Faculty Approval Committees relating to proposals where conditions have been met.
- **Noted** the proposals recommended for approval subject to conditions being met or where the approval process is still pending.
- **Noted** the course closures approved by Faculty Business Development Groups.

AB/14/12 **Students' Union**

12.1 The Board **received** an oral report. Members noted the following:

- i. the Christmas postcard campaign had been successful and a report summarising the responses would be produced shortly. Some of the issues arising out of the responses included concerns about assessments and the cost to students of going on placement;
- ii. reference was made to a recent University conference 'Changing the Learning Landscape' in which students had participated. It was noted this was intended to

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become an annual event and would be an opportunity for students to contribute to the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy and other consultations;

- iii. the new Students' Union logo, retitled 'Sheffield Hallam Students' Union', had been launched. It was noted that the new name removed any ambiguity regarding the Union's identity;
- iv. reference was made to a new initiative, the Belonging Project, examining how engaged students feel with the University and the city.

AB/14/13 **Faculty Academic Boards**

- AB/1/14/14.1 13.1 The Board **received** a summary report of the meeting of the ACES Faculty Academic Board held on 9 January 2014.

AB/14/14 **Research and Innovation Committee**

- AB/1/14/15.1 14.1 The Board **received** the minutes of the meeting of 26 September 2013.

- AB/1/14/15.2 14.2 The Board **received** the minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2013.

AB/14/15 **Next meeting**

- 15.1 It was noted that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15 April 2014, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, Boardroom, City Campus.