

ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2014

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Professor Liz Barnes, Martin Beer, Professor Karen Bryan, Jean Flanagan, Dr Graham Holden, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Professor John Leach, Professor Ann Macaskill, Tanya Miles-Berry, Dr Kevin Nield, Oliver Redfern, Joe Rennie, Liz Winders (Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Professor Mike Bramhall, Diane Burkinshaw, Stephanie Coates, Emily Connor, Howard Duffy, Professor Roger Eccleston, Sonja Ellis, Professor Paul Harrison, Stella Jones-Devitt, Dr Christine O'Leary, Professor Norman Wienand,

Paper ref	Minute
	AB/14/16 Apologies and quorum
	16.1 Apologies were noted. It was noted that the meeting had not achieved the quorum. It was agreed that agenda items that required decisions would be discussed by those present and members not present would be consulted after the meeting and decisions informed by Chair's Action.
	16.2 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Kevin Nield to his first meeting, Members noted that he had been nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Sheffield Business School (SBS) to replace the previous senior academic SBS staff member, Rona O'Brien.
	AB/14/17 Chair's Business
	17.1 It was confirmed that the Board of Governors had approved the University Strategy to 2020 at its meeting on 25 March 2014. The Vice-Chancellor would be holding a series of open meetings with staff across the University to discuss implementation of the strategy.
AB/1/14/M	AB/14/18 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014
	18.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.
	AB/14/19 Matters arising
	19.1 There were no matters arising.
	AB/14/20 Urgent Business
AB/2/14/5 <i>Late paper</i>	20.1 A report outlining contingency measures to be undertaken in the event of a marking boycott by members of UCU had been circulated. The Secretary and Registrar introduced the report. The main impact of a marking boycott was highlighted and contingency measures to reduce the impact on students, and apply exceptional assessment arrangements where necessary, were outlined.
	20.2 It was highlighted that no final awards would be confirmed until all marks had been confirmed and, where appropriate, public,

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statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements had been met. In the interim students would have access to their transcripts, including any provisional marks where available, online. With regards to the University's Standard Assessment Regulations, specific areas where the regulations would need to be waived or varied, on a temporary basis, were outlined.

- 20.3 It was confirmed that a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) would be produced and posted online. Members queried student admission to further Sheffield Hallam courses without full and final results. It was confirmed that students could be admitted at our discretion; however it was acknowledged that careful consideration would need to be given in these instances as the University would need to stand by admission decisions.
- 20.4 The Board:
- **approved** the guiding principles underpinning the contingency planning;
 - **approved** such variations to academic regulations and procedures as are necessary to put the contingency plans into action;
 - **delegated** authority to the Chair to approve variations as necessary;
 - **noted** that the Academic Board will receive a further report at its next meeting on the contingency arrangements.

AB/2/14/6

AB/14/21 **Standard Assessment Regulations**

- 21.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report. The background to the proposed changes was outlined. Members noted that the introduction of compensation in line with the general practice in the higher education sector and the removal of mixed level study were approved by Academic Board in 2011. Following approval a working group was formed to take the proposals forward. During the process concerns were raised with respect to the impact on student progression and achievement of removing mixed level study. As the initial proposal to introduce 40 credits compensation by level was found to place the University outside normal sector practice it was agreed to reduce the compensation to 20 credits by level. It had also been agreed to consider whether to allow a small amount of mixed level study but this was not subsequently reconsidered or implemented.
- 21.2 The external environment had changed significantly since then and there were signs that students were increasingly sensitive to circumstances that might affect their progression and retention. Discussions in the faculties had highlighted the negative impact of the removal of mixed level study, including on international students who were less likely to make good failed modules on a part-time basis. It was suggested that permitting 20 credits of mixed level study would mitigate this and it was proposed that a small amount of mixed level study should be permitted and that the Standard Assessment Regulations should be changed accordingly to accommodate

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this provision. It was noted that the change needed immediate approval if it were to be applied in progression decisions at the end of semester two of the current academic year. It was highlighted that a late change of this nature was permissible because it could only be of benefit to current students.

- 21.3 Some potential anomalies were highlighted. In unusual circumstances, affecting a very small number of students in exceptional circumstances, a student may be able to take forward a combination of continued reassessment and failed modules amounting to 60 credits. It was intended that students in these circumstances would be both counselled and supported to ensure that the total amount of credit being undertaken was in their best interest. Measures would also be considered to assist students to complete continued reassessments as soon as possible. This should be applicable to all students. It was noted that currently students pick up reassessments in the next academic year and it was confirmed that staff support students to undertake this as early as possible in the academic year.
- 21.4 It was noted that the regulation pertaining to compensation in relation to Integrated Masters had been clarified. Members also noted that, for some courses with PSRB requirements, there were no compensation allowances.
- 21.5 Reference was made to the 40% pass rate including at postgraduate level. It was noted that this issue was still to be considered.
- 21.6 The Board **approved** the revised Standard Assessment Regulations.
- 21.7 Subsequent to the meeting clarification of the wording of two regulations, which necessitated minor drafting changes, was notified. These changes would be incorporated through an Assessment Circular as is the normal practice.

AB/2/14/7

AB/14/22 **Student Attendance Statement**

- 22.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report. It was noted that the University did not currently have a specific policy on student attendance. The University Executive Group had asked that a statement on attendance be agreed; any policy on monitoring student attendance would be considered separately. The statement had been welcomed by the Students' Union. It was suggested that the statement should be included in the Student Charter and any other relevant publications. It was noted there may need to be some amendment to the wording of the Student Charter to include reference to the Student Attendance Statement and that the amended Student Charter would be presented to the Board in due course.
- 22.2 The Board **approved** the Student Attendance Statement for dissemination as proposed.

AB/2/14/8

AB/14/23 **University Exemptions Panel**

- 23.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report. Members noted that the changes to current processes, approved by the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC) at a meeting on 13 March 2014, reflected the need for greater institutional oversight of exemptions from the Academic Awards Framework, Standard Assessment Regulations, Ancillary Regulations and the Academic Calendar. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Health and Wellbeing highlighted that, with regards to courses with PSRB requirements, there may have been an over-reliance on exemptions previously and that consideration should be given to other mechanisms. This was acknowledged and it was noted that the issue was currently under consideration.
- 23.2 The Board **noted** the establishment of a University Exemptions Panel.

AB/2/14/9

AB/14/24 **Extenuation Policy: Review of the Extenuating Pass**

- 24.1 The Deputy Registrar introduced the report. Members noted the circumstances in which an extenuating pass may be given and the choice with which students are currently presented namely:
- taking an exception deferral whereby they forfeit their task mark and take the assessment again as if for the first time; or
 - keep the mark and pass result they have attained.

It was highlighted that the use of and demand for the exceptional deferral was out of all proportion with the complexity created by the extenuating pass. Removing the extenuating pass from the Standard Assessment Regulations would remove a significant amount of complexity and simplify messages to students. It was noted the proposal would require a number of amendments to the Standard Assessment Regulations and Associated Regulations (Extenuation Policy) as listed in Annex A.

- 24.2 The Board **approved** the removal of the Extenuating Pass and the resulting amendments to the Standard Assessment Regulations and Associated Regulations for the academic year 2014-15.

AB/2/14/10

AB/14/25 **Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee; Research Degrees Sub-Committee; Research and Innovation Committee - Chair's action to approve changes to the terms of reference**

- 25.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report. Members noted that following the proposal from Academic Board in February 2014 (Minute AB/14/10 refers) to change the reporting line for the University's Research Degrees Sub-committee (RDSC) to report to Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC) instead of the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC), the terms of reference for all three

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committees were subsequently amended to reflect the change. It was confirmed that Academic Board Chair's Action had been taken to approve the changes. The Board **ratified** Chair's Action taken to approve the amended terms of reference for the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, Research Degrees Sub-Committee and Research and Innovation Committee.

AB/2/14/11

AB/14/26 **Creation of the Sheffield Institute for Policy Studies**

26.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Development and Society introduced the report. Members noted the University's longstanding academic expertise in policy research across all four faculties. Reference was made to the research centres within the Faculty of Development and Society, often involving academic staff from other faculties. Following discussions involving all four faculties it had been agreed to establish an Institute in the Faculty of Development and Society given the weight of policy-relevant work in the research centres within the faculty. In the first instance the Institute would be directed by the Assistant Dean, Research and Knowledge Transfer, Faculty of Development and Society.

26.2 The Sheffield Institute for Policy Studies was intended to be a vehicle through which the University's expertise in work relating to policy could be presented, particularly to external stakeholders. The Institute would be used to showcase policy research across all faculties without cutting across existing management and governance structures.

26.3 The Board **noted** the report.

AB/2/14/12

AB/14/27 **Course and Institutional Approval Matters**

27.1 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/14/28 **Students' Union Oral Report**

28.1 The Student Course Representative provided a brief oral update on recent activities including:

- i. that the University of Sheffield had won this year's varsity games;
- ii. that Students' Union officer elections had taken place and new officers for 2014-15 had been confirmed.

AB/14/29 Faculty Academic Boards

- AB/2/14/14.1
AB/2/14/14.2
- 28.1 The Board **received** the minutes of the meetings of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Faculty Academic Board held on 23 January 2014 and 4 March 2014.

AB/14/30 Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee

- AB/2/14/15.1
- 30.1 The Board **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee of 15 December 2013.

- AB/2/14/15.2
- 30.2 The Board **noted** a report on the establishment of the Teaching and Learning Practitioner Forum by the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. It was suggested that forums are meant to be informal meetings where people speak freely and contribute openly; they therefore should not have agenda or papers, though they could have `notes' recording agreed actions and decisions.

AB/14/31 Next meeting

- 31.1 It was noted that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 10 June 2014, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, Boardroom, City Campus.