

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2013

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Martin Beer, Professor Mike Bramhall, Diane Burkinshaw, Emily Connor, Howard Duffy, Professor Roger Eccleston, Sonja Ellis, Jean Flanagan, Dr Graham Holden, Professor John Leach, Professor Ann Macaskill, Professor Philip Martin, Tanya Miles-Berry, Dr Christine O'Leary, Oliver Redfern, Joe Rennie, Professor Norman Wienand, Liz Winders (Secretary)

In Attendance: Dr David Mayall, Head of Teaching Operations (for Items 6 and 7); Maura Sorensen (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Professor Karen Bryan, Stephanie Coates, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Stella Jones-Devitt, Rona O'Brien.

Paper ref

Minute

AB/13/53 **Apologies**

- 53.1 Apologies were noted. New members were welcomed - Professor Mike Bramhall, nominated senior academic staff representative, ACES, taking over from the previous representative Professor Terrence Perera; and Oliver Redfern, Student Course Representative.

AB/13/54 **Chair's Business**

- 54.1 The Vice-Chancellor referred to a recent speech by David Willetts, Minister of State for Universities and Science to Universities UK (UUK) on further changes to student admissions. The Minister confirmed that between them universities will be able to recruit an extra 30,000 students in 2013-14 and that the Student Control Number (SNC) will be abolished in 2014-15. The Vice-Chancellor noted that these proposals had not been anticipated and, although welcomed by some as an opportunity for growth, others, including the Russell Group, had expressed concern about the lack of detail. The Vice-Chancellor noted that there had not been time since the announcement to consider the potential impact of these proposals on the University.

AB/3/13/M

AB/13/55 **Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2013**

- 55.1 The minutes were **approved** as a correct record.

AB/13/56 **Matters arising**

- 56.1 **Minute AB/13/43 Academic Misconduct Policy 2013-14:** the Deputy Registrar provided an oral update noting that, following the discussion at the Academic Board meeting on 8 October, it had been acknowledged that it was too far into the 2013-14 academic year to make significant changes to the policy. Staff had been made aware that the current policy remains in place. A meeting of the assessment practitioner forum was scheduled early in 2014 to discuss and consult on changes to be made to

the policy for 2014-15.

- 56.2 **Minute AB/13/44 Verification of Moderation Policy and Procedures 2013-14:** the Deputy Registrar provided an oral update. As with the Academic Misconduct Policy it was noted that, following the discussion at the Academic Board meeting on 8 October, it had been acknowledged that it was too far into the 2013-14 academic year to make significant changes to the policy. Work would be undertaken, in association with the Academic Quality and Standards team, to review the policy for 2014-15. It was acknowledged that lessons had been learnt in terms of the time needed to consult on and review major policies.

AB/13/57 Urgent Business

- 57.1 There was no urgent business.

AB/4/13/6

AB/13/58 Academic Awards Framework

- 58.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic and the Head of Teaching Operations introduced the report. Members noted that the Framework was last developed and approved in 2001, with some subsequent amendments. Since then there have been significant changes in the national and institutional environment. A report to the University Executive Group in May 2012 noted that the academic framework "should sit at the heart of the University's planning, delivery and regulatory processes for all academic programmes".
- 58.2 The Head of Teaching Operations outlined the purpose of the framework and the key principles which had informed the revision and review noting that the revised framework maintained flexibility but reduced the considerable variation in practice and design which had arisen under the current framework. Reference was made to the course design principles which were approved by the University Executive Group on 22 July 2013 and the two amendments subsequently made to the Masters' Award and Integrated Masters' Award. The benefit of the changes to the course design principles to students was outlined including a stronger transition year for those entering the first year of an undergraduate degree course. Members noted the consultation process undertaken in revising the framework and that dependencies would be highlighted during the implementation process.
- 58.3 The Head of Research Ethics suggested there was some inconsistency around core models and compensations. The Head of Teaching Operations responded that this had been considered during the consultation process and it had been agreed that the proposals were acceptable. The Head of Quality Enhancement referred to the relationship between modules and learning outcomes highlighting that students are given more than one opportunity to demonstrate learning outcomes. It was suggested that the separate document mapping and outlining the rationale against each of the revised course design principles clarified the compensation proposals.

Confirmed

Members suggested paragraph 3.14.1 of the framework report be amended to reflect the points raised in the discussion however it was proposed they would be better reflected in the guidance.

- 58.4 In response to queries it was confirmed that a communications and engagement plan was in process. Queries were also raised about the transition to the new framework. It was suggested that there were substantial issues in some areas and a plea was made for sufficient flexibility to create solutions consistent with the framework. The Head of Teaching Operations reiterated that the framework was being phased in over two and a half years however the expectation was that the majority of courses would be aligned to the framework unless there were significant reasons for alternative arrangements to be made. It was confirmed that staff across all faculties should have been working to the new course design principles since July 2013. A query was raised about courses, such as Masters' awards, which do not fit the one year model however it was confirmed that there was no restriction and it had been recognised that such courses may run for a period from a year upwards.
- 58.5 Thanks were recorded to the Head of Teaching Operations and the Head and Deputy Head of Academic Quality and Standards for the significant amount of work undertaken to achieve the final proposals.
- 58.6 The Board **approved** the revised Academic Awards Framework and its phased implementation, to be completed by the end of 2015-16.

AB/4/13/7

AB/13/59 **Postgraduate Academic Calendar 2014-15**

- 59.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic and the Head of Teaching Operations introduced the report. It was noted that the calendar had been produced in response to a report which had identified a need to differentiate provision and timescales for taught postgraduate awards from taught undergraduate awards and the recommendation that a postgraduate calendar be provided to complement the standard undergraduate calendar.
- 59.2 The rationale, benefits and key features were outlined. It was confirmed that there were no resource implications and that consultation would be undertaken early in 2014 on implementation of the calendar. In response to a query about different start dates it was confirmed that some courses will have a January start date. It was highlighted that implementation of the postgraduate calendar alongside the revised Academic Awards Framework would ensure that all related matters were considered as part of a single process.
- 59.3 The Board **approved** the key design principles of the proposed Postgraduate Academic Calendar and its implementation in 2014-15.

AB/4/13/8

AB/13/60 **Military Education Committee Annual Report 2012-13**

60.1 The Secretary and Registrar introduced the report. Members noted that Professor Mike Bramhall represents the University's Academic Board on the Military Education Committee. The Board **received** the report.

AB/3/13/9

AB/13/61 **Course and Institutional Approval Matters**

61.1 The Head of Quality Enhancement introduced the report. He highlighted that the TARC awards referred to under the proposed course title changes had been established prior to the recent review. Reference was also made to the apparent high number of course closures however it was noted that it was simply a matter of timing in presenting them at this meeting. 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.
- **Approved** the proposed title changes.
- **Noted** the course closures approved by Faculty Business Development Groups.

AB/13/62 **Students' Union**

62.1 The Board **received** an oral report. Members noted that the Union had been working with the Head of Quality Enhancement on learning and teaching issues and that a consultation was being undertaken with students on the University's digital strategy. Reference was made to the Union's ongoing sports campaigns. Reference was also made to the 'What I want for Christmas' postcard campaign and it was noted that responses from students will be collated and a report on the outcomes will be provided to the Vice-Chancellor. It was highlighted that officer elections would be held in the new year. Reference was also made to the renewed focus on improving communications with students at the Collegiate Campus.

AB/13/63 **Faculty Academic Boards**

AB/4/13/11.1

63.1 The Board **received** a summary report of the meeting of the ACES Faculty Academic Board held on 31 October 2013.

AB/4/13/11.2

63.3 The Board **received** the 2012-13 annual report of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Faculty Academic Board.

AB/4/13/11.3

63.4 The Board **received** the 2012-13 annual report of the Sheffield Business School Faculty Academic Board.

63.5 Some potential inconsistencies in the terms of reference across the four faculty academic boards were highlighted and it was proposed some further investigation be undertaken.

AB/4/13/12

AB/13/64 **Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee**

- 64.1 The Board **received** the minutes of the meeting of 18 September 2013. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic referred to **Minute 13/02 Quality for Students in Teacher Education**. It was confirmed that a mock inspection would be undertaken in preparation for a possible forthcoming Ofsted inspection of teacher education. Reference was also made to **Minute 13/09 Supporting BME Attainment**. It was acknowledged progress in improving attainment figures had been slow and it was confirmed that an application had been submitted for funding to undertake further research on this issue. In the interim an awareness raising campaign was in progress across the University to ensure staff were kept informed of developments and were made aware that supporting and improving BME attainment was a key equality and diversity priority for the University.

AB/13/65 **Farewell and thank you**

It was noted that this was the final Academic Board meeting for Professor Philip Martin, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic who was shortly to retire from the University. On behalf of the Board the Vice-Chancellor thanked Professor Martin for all his hard work and dedication and for his input in bringing significant improvements to the academic infrastructure of the University.

AB/13/66 **Next meeting**

- 66.1 It was noted that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 February 2014, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, Boardroom, City Campus.