

ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed minutes of the Meeting held on 14 October 2014

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Professor Liz Barnes, Martin Beer, Professor Mike Bramhall, Diane Burkinshaw, Emily Connor, Professor Roger Eccleston, Jean Flanagan, Stephanie Glen, Dr Graham Holden, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Stella Jones-Devitt, Professor John Leach, Professor Ann Macaskill, Dr Kevin Nield, Dr Christine O'Leary, Kieran Pearson, Liz Winders (Secretary)

In attendance: Nuala Devlin, Assistant Director, Learning and Information Services (for items 13 and 14); Denise Elliott, Manager, Assessment Awards and Regulations (for item 11); Leopold Green (for items 6, 7, 8 and 15); Dr Neil McKay (for items 9 and 10); Maura Sorensen (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Professor Karen Bryan, Sonja Ellis, Professor Paul Harrison, Tanya Miles-Berry, Joe Rennie, Professor Norman Wienand

Paper ref	Minute
	AB/14/49 Apologies
	49.1 Apologies were noted. Kieran Pearson, Students' Union Education Officer for 2014-15, was welcomed to his first meeting.
	AB/14/50 Chair's Business
	50.1 The Chair noted that he would have some input on recent external developments in relation to individual agenda items.
AB/3/14/M	AB/14/51 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2014
	51.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record.
	AB/14/52 Matters arising
	52.1 AB/14/42 Peer Review and Enhancement Policy: a report had been considered at the June meeting where it was agreed that Chair's Action could be taken to approve the policy once issues highlighted by members had been addressed. Members noted that work has been undertaken by the Head of Quality and Enhancement in consultation with faculty heads of learning, teaching and assessment. Revisions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an explicit requirement for permanent staff engaged in teaching to undertake peer observation on an annual basis; • clarification with regards to those staff members to whom the policy applies; • production of a detailed handbook to support implementation.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that the revisions were satisfactory. The policy was **approved**.

AB/14/53 **Urgent Business**

Two tabled reports

- 53.1 Reports were presented relating to name changes for two departments in the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing. It was proposed that the Department of Biosciences be renamed the Department of Biosciences and Chemistry and that the Department of Sport be renamed the Academy of Sport and Physical Activity. Both name changes were **approved**.

AB/4/14/6

AB/14/54 **Quality at Sheffield Hallam University**

- 54.1 The Vice-Chancellor made reference to the article in the Times Higher Education issue of 9 October regarding the future of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the review of quality assessment for the sector. Reference was made to the aims to develop approaches that are risk-based, proportionate, affordable and low burden. It was suggested that reducing the regulatory burden had also been an aim under current practice, however it had not been fully achieved. Members noted that the University would continue with current practice with regards to quality processes and oversight, but would be alert to the impact of any external changes. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards noted that it was likely that the University would still, as planned, be reviewed in 2016-17 against the current Quality Code. He added that the quality-related reports on the agenda for this meeting had been prepared prior to last week's announcements by HEFCE.
- 54.2 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards highlighted that the report on Quality at Sheffield Hallam University was intended to provide a coherent narrative outlining the changes in the University's approach to quality since the 2010 institutional audit. Reference was made to forthcoming developments including a proposal to introduce departmental boards and the implementation of academic service standards.
- 54.3 In discussion members suggested that the report did not highlight where and how the burden on staff had been reduced, also emphasising the importance of clear and timely communication with staff. Reference was made to an example of a positive change, the introduction of periodic review, replacing re-validation, which had started to reduce staff workload.
- 54.4 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards noted that oversight of the University's quality processes was at the heart of the report. It was reiterated that the introduction of departmental boards would strengthen quality oversight at course level.
- 54.5 With regards to impending external changes in quality assessment, it was suggested that institutions might adopt some fresh thinking about their approach to academic quality processes. Referring to communication with staff it was agreed that it was important to make clear why changes were being introduced and to be mindful of the broader context of changes in the University. It was intended to produce a Quality Manual.

54.6 Reference was made to the other quality-related reports on the agenda: the Academic Awards Framework and Preparation for HE Review. It was noted that preparations for the expected review of the University in 2016-17 would continue.

54.7 The Board:

- i. **noted** the essential revisions to the Academic Quality Framework and the plans for its further development over the next two years;
- ii. **approved** the changes to the underpinning principles of the Framework and the revised title of the Framework - to be known as the Quality Framework from 2014-15 onwards.

Members noted that there may be further changes as a result of any external changes in HE quality assessment.

AB/4/14/7

AB/14/55 **Academic Awards Framework: Revisions and Updates**

55.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report.

55.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted an amendment to be made: under Section 4, UG Taught Provision, where larger module sizes of 40 or 60 credits can be proposed at L4 to meet specific PSRB requirements. It was noted this should also apply to L5 modules subject to the same requirements. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards agreed to incorporate this change.

55.3 In response to a query from a member it was confirmed that certificates in relation to non-credit bearing activities, events and training sessions must be agreed with Registry Services. It was suggested this should not be too onerous, but it was important for the University to have oversight of any certificates provide by the University in recognition of achievement.

55.4 The Board **approved** the revisions and updates to the Academic Awards Framework subject to inclusion of L5 in the proposal for larger module sizes of 40 or 60 credits can be proposed at L4 to meet specific PSRB requirements.

AB/4/14/8
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AB/14/56 **Preparation for Higher Education Review (HER) in 2016-17**

56.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report. It was highlighted that the essence of the University's preparation was to review current University policies and practice against the QAA Quality Code.

56.2 It was noted that preparations for HER in 2016-17 would be shared across faculties and directorates but coordinated centrally. Reference was made to the need to prioritise relevant management information, working with the University's Strategic Planning and Intelligence team. Reference was made to the resource implications for institutions preparing for audit

or review.

56.3 In the context of possible changes to HE quality assessment it was suggested that the final stages of preparation might be subject to clarification of future quality assessment requirements.

56.4 The Board **received** the report.

AB/4/14/9

AB/14/57 **Module Evaluations**

57.1 The Head of Student Feedback and Information introduced the report. Members noted that the University Executive Group had approved the adoption of a University-wide approach to module evaluation, aligning student feedback on modules with key indicators of course experience including the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. It was noted that this approach would replace current module evaluation activities. It was noted there were likely to be further developments of the evaluation process.

57.2 Members considered the draft module evaluation form. The form would be used in paper form only initially; experience across the sector suggested that there was a significantly lower completion rate for online responses. Members noted that an implementation team was being convened. The team would consider how best to responses to students in the light of their feedback.

57.3 With regards to resource implications it was noted that a similar model to that proposed was already in place in some areas. It was highlighted that there would need to be close liaison between professional services staff and academic staff. It was noted that some professional services staff had highlighted a potential increase in workload.

57.4 The Board **noted** the University's adoption of a University-wide approach to module evaluation.

AB/4/14/10

AB/14/58 **National Student Survey 2014: University Performance**

58.1 The Head of Student Feedback and Information introduced the report. Members noted that 2014 had been the University's strongest performance in 10 years with the highest response rate (78%) and the highest rate of overall student satisfaction with the University's courses. As a result the University had risen 39 places in the league of comparator institutions.

58.2 It was noted that there had been 100% satisfaction rates in some areas. With reference to the longer-term it was noted that over the last five years the University had achieved a 10% increase in satisfaction. However improvement had not been consistent year on year. In order to achieve its target of a top 50 place the University would need to improve at a faster rate

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than competitor institutions. It would be necessary to consolidate and maintain improvements made and to make significant further improvements in underperforming areas.

58.3 Members asked how we know that we can and will improve. The Head of Student Feedback and Information referred to some of the detailed action planning at department level, including using course reviews as an opportunity to discuss how to implement and consolidate meaningful changes. A significant indicator of student satisfaction was being able to contact staff easily and receiving a prompt response; it was suggested that this could be considered, and improvements made where necessary, across all courses. Reference was made to areas which performed less well, for example some joint honours courses. Reference was also made to how better to manage academic staff changes as these could have a significant impact on student satisfaction. Reference was made to ensuring that sources of dissatisfaction were addressed quickly.

58.4 It was noted that NSS action planning had been incorporated into course monitoring and specific monitoring arrangements were in place for each action. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the contribution of staff to the strong performance of the University in the NSS for 2014.

58.5 The Board:

- i. **received** the report on the University's performance and challenges ahead in the context of the sector changes identified, and progress required, to meet the University's target of 90% overall satisfaction;
- ii. **noted** that the report and breakdown of the University's corporate performance in the 2014 NSS was being disseminated as appropriate within faculties and directorates.

AB/4/14/11

AB/14/59 **Standard Undergraduate and Postgraduate Calendars 2015-16**

59.1 The Secretary and Registrar introduced the report. Changes to the calendar from the previous year were highlighted including extending the deadlines for submission of coursework to allow students additional time to complete assessments and to avoid assessment bunching. The Manager, Assessment Awards and Regulations highlighted the deadlines for continuing reassessment. A footnote to that effect would be added. It was noted that these reassessment deadlines presented an opportunity for students, but were not a requirement.

59.2 The Board **approved** the Standard Undergraduate and Postgraduate Calendars 2015-16.

AB/4/14/12

AB/14/60 **Sheffield Hallam Students' Union Student Voice Report 2013-14 and University Response**

60.1 The President of the Students' Union and the Deputy Vice-

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Chancellor introduced the report. Members noted that an initial report had been presented to the Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC) in May. Since then members of AQSEC had worked with the Students' Union to review the report and to agree the key priority areas detailed in the University's response. It was noted that some of the actions had already been met. It was noted that the University's response identified jointly owned priorities as well as those priorities which were faculty/course specific. It was highlighted that the Student Voice Committee (SVC) would monitor progress with the actions.

- 60.2 Reference was made to the decrease in satisfaction with the Students' Union in the NSS for 2014. In the course of discussion members touched on the impact of spaces on students' perception of the Students' Union and that, in some institutions, students' unions may have to redefine their purpose.
- 60.3 The Board **received** the Hallam Union Students' Voice Report and the University's response.

AB/4/14/13

AB/14/61 **Open Access Publication Policy**

- 61.1 The Assistant Director, Learning and Information Services introduced the report. Members noted the emergence of a new open access agenda with funders of research increasingly mandating open access of research outputs and the sharing of research data. Reference was made to the RCUK policy on open access effective from 1 April 2013 and the HEFCE post-REF 2014 policy with new eligibility requirements being applied to all journal articles and conference proceedings accepted for publication after 1 April 2016.
- 61.2 The five aims of the policy, and the policy requirements, were highlighted. Links with related University policies were noted including the Research Data Management Policy, Research Ethics Policy and the Principles of Good Research Practice for Publications and Authorship. With regards to resource implications it was noted that responsibility for delivery and oversight of the policy lay with Learning and Information Services (LIS).
- 61.3 The Board **approved** the University's Open Access Publication Policy.

AB/4/14/14

AB/14/62 **Research Data Management Policy**

- 62.1 The Assistant Director, Learning and Information Services introduced the report. Reference was made to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's (EPSRC) 2011 policy framework which sets out the principles and expectations for how institutions will manage and share research data generated through EPSRC-funded research. Implementation of a University Research Data Management Policy will help the University achieve compliance with the EPSRC policy framework by the deadline of 1 May 2015.

Confirmed

Reference was made to the challenges to the University and the wider sector to ensure compliance including a significant change in research culture and behaviour, and investment in infrastructure.

62.2 The aims of the Research Data Management Policy, and the policy requirements, were outlined. It was suggested that the policy did not apply to the work of students other than postgraduate research students. Members highlighted some concerns expressed by researchers including intellectual property and how the integrity of research data might be protected. Members asked about the implications of non-compliance with the EPSRC deadline and it was noted that compliance would be a condition of future funding.

62.3 Reference was made also to the potential resource implications. It was noted that, in the first instance, the University needed to ensure compliance for EPSRC funding but further consideration will be given to the issues raised in discussion.

62.4 The Board **approved** the University's Research Data Management Policy.

AB/14/63 Course and Collaborative Partnership Matters

AB/4/14/15.1 63.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report on Chair's action taken during the summer on courses approved during 2012-13 subject to approval conditions being met. It was confirmed that all approval conditions had now been met. The Board **ratified** Chair's Action.

AB/4/14/15.1 63.2 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report. It was highlighted that, in the list of approvals of cross-faculty collaborative development with an existing partner organisation, the dual award programmes - International Public Relations, and International Media - between the University's Faculty of Arts, Computing, Engineering and Sciences (ACES) and Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) are intended to be BA (Hons) awards - not BSC (Hons) as noted in the report. The Board:

- i. **approved** the recommendations of the University and Faculty Approval Committees relating to proposals where conditions have been met - noting the amendment highlighted, above;
- ii. **noted** the proposals recommended for approval subject to conditions being met;
- iii. **noted** the course closures approved by Faculty Business Development Groups.

63.3 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards suggested that the detail in the course and collaborative partnership matters reports outlined a point made earlier in the meeting about the workload around validation and revalidation of courses. It was suggested that this highlighted some poor curriculum management and it was noted a particular culture had

Confirmed

developed around the course approval process. It was suggested that the embedding of periodic review, and the introduction of departmental boards, will help to address the issues.

AB/14/64 **TAR University College (TAR UC)**

64.1 The Board **noted** that an extraordinary meeting of the Board was convened for Wednesday 5 November to consider regulations in relation to proposals on TAR UC.

AB/14/65 **Academic Board Committees: Annual Reports 2013-14**

65.1 The Board **received** the annual reports for the following committees:

- AB/4/14/17.1 i **Honorary Awards Committee**
- AB/4/14/17.2 ii **Professoriate Committee**
- AB/4/14/17.3 iii **Military Education Committee**
- AB/4/14/17.4 iv **Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee**
- AB/4/14/17.5 v **Research and Innovation Committee**
- AB/4/14/17.6 vi **Faculty of Development and Society Faculty Academic Board**
- AB/4/14/17.7 vii **Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Faculty Academic Board**

AB/14/66 **Students' Union Report**

66.1 The President of the Students' Union provided a brief oral update on recent activities including:

- i. welcoming thousands of new students in the first few weeks of term through fresher fairs etc;
- ii. the start of a campaign to ensure students are on the electoral roll in time for the 2015 general election;
- iii. ongoing involvement with the Time to Change mental health initiative;
- iv. ongoing involvement with the Future Spaces project.

66.2 In relation to satisfaction rates with the Students' Union in the NSS for 2014 it was suggested the amount of hard work undertaken in and by the Students' Union had not been adequately reflected.

AB/14/67 **Research and Innovation Committee (RIC)**

AB/4/14/19.1 67.1 A report proposing changes to the terms of reference and constitution of the Research and Innovation Committee was received. Some issues were highlighted around the specialist areas to be represented and the appointment of representatives. It was agreed that further consideration, and possibly some amendments, were needed before the

proposals could be approved.

AB/4/14/19.2 67.2 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2014.

AB/14/68 **Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC)**

AB/4/14/20.1 68.1 The Board **received** the minutes of the meeting of 23 June 2014.

AB/4/14/20.2 68.2 The Board **approved** AQSEC membership changes.

AB/14/69 **Next meeting**

69.1 Members noted that a special meeting to consider regulations in relation to TAR University College had been convened for Wednesday 5 November, 2.30pm to 3.30pm, in the Boardroom, City Campus.

69.2 It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place on Tuesday 16 December 2014, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, in the Boardroom, City Campus.