

ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2014

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Professor Liz Barnes, Martin Beer, Professor Mike Bramhall, Professor Karen Bryan, Emily Connor, Professor Roger Eccleston, Sonja Ellis, Jean Flanagan, Professor Paul Harrison, Dr Graham Holden, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Stella Jones-Devitt, Professor John Leach, Professor Ann Macaskill, Dr Kevin Nield, Dr Christine O'Leary, Kieran Pearson, Professor Norman Wienand, Liz Winders (Secretary)

In attendance: Claire Gandy, Head of Student Services (for item 11); Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards (for items 6, 7 and 12); Dr Neil McKay, Head of Student Feedback and Information (for items 8 and 9); Sarah Swales, Assistant Director, Human Resources Directorate (for item 10); Maura Sorensen (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Diane Burkinshaw, Stephanie Glen, Tanya Miles-Berry, Joe Rennie

Paper ref	Minute	
	AB/14/70	Apologies
	70.1	Apologies were noted.
	AB/14/71	Chair's Business
	71.1	The Chair referred to the forthcoming REF 2014 outcomes, to be made public on Thursday 18 December, noting that a breakfast briefing by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation had been arranged.
	AB/14/72	Minutes of the following meetings
AB/14/4/M	72.1	The minutes of the meeting of 14 October 2014 were <u>approved</u> as a correct record.
AB/14/5/M	72.2	The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of 5 November 2014 were <u>approved</u> as a correct record.
	AB/14/73	Matters arising
	73.1	There were no matters arising.
	AB/14/74	Urgent Business
	74.1	No urgent business had been notified.
AB/6/14/10	AB/14/75	Academic Progression to Reader
	75.1	The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation and the Assistant Director, Human Resources Directorate introduced the report. Members noted that the programme of work relating to Professors and Readers was originally presented to the Academic Board at the meeting of 19 February 2013. The recommendation that Professor be established as a Senior Staff Grade (SSG) role had been implemented. Proposals in

this report outlined an internal promotion process for Readers, aligned to that of Professors, based on academic merit with individuals making the case for Readership. Members noted that the Professoriate Committee had discussed the proposals at a meeting on 4 November 2014 and that the wider University and College Union (UCU) had been consulted. Feedback from UCU included:

- i. that the guidance on academic expectations - typical indicators and examples of evidence and/or performance outputs - should not be treated as a checklist;
- ii. suggestions regarding the constitution of the Faculty Academic Progression Committees (FAPC);
- iii. that a review be undertaken after a year of implementation.

It was noted that a Reader was a research-led post and that further consideration will be given to a progression route focused on teaching and learning.

75.2 In relation to the constitution of the FAPC, members suggested that membership should be broader than the Faculty Executive. Members also echoed the point raised through the UCU consultation that the examples of evidence and/or performance outputs should not be treated as a checklist by applicants or by the FAPC.

75.3 Members discussed the need for a clear progression path for staff whose work was learning and teaching-led noting that they should have parity with Readers. Practice in other institutions was noted including the use of different titles such as Associate Professor. The importance of external recognition of achievement, for example the Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition of Senior and Principal Fellows, was highlighted.

75.4 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Development and Society referred to a working group which he was leading with a remit to consider the whole range of academic posts in the University. He proposed considering the issues raised regarding progression of learning and teaching-led staff, at the working group.

75.6 The Board:

- i. **commented** and provided feedback on the guidance and expectations framework;
- ii. **approved** the proposed approach;
- iii. **agreed** the proposed next steps.

AB/6/14/6

AB/14/76 **Departmental Boards**

76.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report noting that the introduction of Departmental Boards and Departmental Assessment Boards was intended to:

- i. enhance course focus;
- ii. provide a clear focus for academic quality and standards management at departmental level;

- iii. streamline and strengthen assessment processes;
- iv. fully engage external examiners.

It was noted that many HEIs operate a similar structure. Reference was made to the forthcoming Higher Education Review in 2016 and it was suggested that establishing Departmental Boards and Departmental Assessment Boards will enable the University to evidence more clearly the embedding of quality management.

- 76.2 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards noted that this report should be seen as a starting point and that there was scope for discussion regarding how Departmental Boards and Departmental Assessment Boards would work across departments which varied significantly in size, type and provision. It was acknowledged that further work needed to be undertaken on the constitution and membership, and the number and timing of meetings. It was also noted that the proposals had highlighted issues with how Faculty Quality Committees operate, which would require further consideration. It was suggested consideration also be given to the impact on, and any changes necessary to, Faculty Academic Boards.
- 76.3 It was confirmed that the Computing Department in ACES had already piloted this initiative and the need for flexibility in the process had become apparent. The need for clarification of the purpose and responsibilities of the Boards, vis-a-vis the responsibilities of post holders such as the Head of Department, was highlighted. After further discussion it was suggested that this illustrated the need for greater clarity in academic management and academic governance. It was suggested that the issues highlighted also raised questions about wider academic governance, possibly indicating the need for a wider review. Nonetheless it was noted that Departmental Boards will to strengthen quality management at course level.
- 76.4 Members noted that further consideration would be given to the constitution of the Boards. It was highlighted that practice may vary significantly across departments and it was suggested that a timely evaluation would need to be undertaken to review consistency of practice.
- 76.5 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor emphasised the need for the Boards to be forward-looking. The Head of Academic Quality and Standards noted that the Boards will subsume some of the quality work undertaken elsewhere.
- 76.6 Acknowledging the need for clarity on the points raised in discussion, and with appropriate amendments to be made as a result, the Board **approved** the proposals for the introduction of Departmental Boards. It was highlighted that, should it emerge that any further changes to the terms of reference or constitution of Faculty Quality Committees or Faculty Academic Boards were necessary, the approval of the Academic Board should be sought.

AB/6/14/7

AB/14/77 **Masters of Fine Art Award (MFA)**

- 77.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report on the proposed introduction of a new masters-level qualification - the Master of Fine Art (MFA) Award - to be added to the University's Academic Awards Framework (AAF). Members noted that the MFA award was a postgraduate qualification which had been gaining wider acceptance in art and design education across the UK HE sector and internationally. It was further noted that many of the University's competitors had already introduced MFA qualifications. In order to stay competitive within the postgraduate art and design market, the introduction of an MFA qualification was timely and of strategic importance to the Department of Art and Design.
- 77.2 It was highlighted that the MFA would be distinct from the Master of Art (MA) degree in a number of ways. The MFA would comprise a larger than average volume of level 7 credits and would be delivered full-time over two years.
- 77.3 Members queried whether appropriate market research and analysis of the benefits had been undertaken and whether there had been consideration of staffing needs. It was emphasised that, for now, approval was being sought in principle. Before any proposed new courses could be introduced they would go through the usual validation processes through which all resource implications would be considered.
- 77.4 The Board **approved** the addition of a Master of Fine Art (MFA) qualification to the University's Academic Awards Framework with effect from January 2015 noting that any new course proposed would be considered through the usual validation process.

AB/6/14/8

AB/14/78 **National Student Survey 2014: Subject Performance**

- 78.1 The Head of Student Feedback and Information introduced the report. Members noted that the overall trend had been for improvement in quartile position with 19 subjects increasing their position, 7 losing position and the remaining subjects unchanged. It was acknowledged that the 11 subjects in the bottom quartile, which were also bottom in 2013, were a concern.
- 78.2 Members noted that both Initial Teacher Training, and Nursing, substantial and important areas of provision for the University, featured in the top quartile. Reference was also made to subjects in the top quartile with significantly fewer students, including Journalism. Members noted that, four years ago, journalism had been in the bottom quartile. This rapid and marked improvement in student satisfaction was an example of what could be achieved. It was suggested that, in areas where students indicated a 'neutral' response, it may only take some

relatively minor changes to steer them towards a positive response.

- 78.3 The Board **noted** the report and analysis and considered subject performance and the key subjects and factors influencing overall satisfaction.

AB/6/14/9

AB/14/79 **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2014: University Performance**

- 79.1 The Head of Student Feedback and Information introduced the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2014: University Performance report. It was highlighted that recent changes to the survey aligned it more closely with the NSS. However the survey changes also meant some lack of continuity with previous PTES outcomes. Members also noted that the PTES was not marketed to the same extent as the NSS and that there was a significantly lower response rate to the PTES.

- 79.2 Members noted that the PTES outcomes indicated that:
- i. the University was 1% above the sector average for student contact time;
 - ii. score ratings in relation to assessment were very positive - better than in the NSS;
 - iii. resources and services were rated highly.

Students had on the whole been positive about support with dissertation, however some aspects, for example always ensuring appropriate supervision, merited following up. Members also highlighted issues with support for students outside the standard teaching year, for instance for those working on their dissertations over the summer. Members suggested the PTES outcomes indicated that greater consistency was needed in some areas such as contact hours, and access to support and advice.

- 79.3 Members asked if efforts were being made to disseminate good practice from highly rated courses, such as teacher education. It was also suggested that consideration needs to be given to the extent to which the University can use PTES results to position the University externally. Reference was made to forthcoming changes to the Higher Education Academy (HEA), however it was noted that the HEA intended to continue with the PTES.

- 79.4 Reference was also made to a HEFCE announcement on piloting changes to the NSS in 2015-16 which may then be implemented in 2016-17.

- 79.5 The Board **noted** the report on the University's performance in the context of sector changes.

AB/6/14/11

AB/14/80 **Student Mental Health Policy and Procedure**

- 80.1 The Head of Student Services introduced the report. Members noted that this new policy and procedure had been written as

guidance for both staff and students, aiming to provide clear information, set out in a logical way, following the student journey. It was intended to be part of a suite of policy documents providing greater clarity on supporting students within a diverse student population including those who may be vulnerable. It was noted that, in developing the policy, the University had looked at examples from other HEIs.

80.2 Encouragement of early disclosure was noted so that students' needs could be met at the earliest possible opportunity. To that end the University was working to create an environment in which students felt comfortable to disclose. It was highlighted that the University had recently signed the Time to Change Pledge, demonstrating a commitment to tackling the stigma associated with mental health issues. Creation of a Student Mental Health Policy and Procedure was one of the University objectives in the Pledge Action Plan.

80.3 Members welcomed the emphasis on encouraging students to make an early disclosure of mental health issues. It was noted that the University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for all disabled students who meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act. It was further noted that students might experience a period of mental ill health, where they do not meet the definition of disability, and where the University would look to put appropriate, short-term arrangements in place to support them. It was noted that it was important that the distinction was made clear in the policy. A note of caution was raised with regards to consideration of reasonable adjustments and being clear that any proposed adjustments were realistic and could be implemented. Reference was made to issues which have arisen under Fitness to Practice (FtP). In relation to the outline of reasonable adjustments under FtP it was recommended that it be made clear that the process outlined was intended to enable students to manage the demands of their course and their health condition where possible.

80.5 The Board **approved** the Student Mental Health Policy and Procedure subject to clarification of the points raised in discussion, and appropriate amendments.

AB/6/14/12

AB/14/81 **Course and Collaborative Partnership Matters**

81.1 The Head of Academic Quality and Standards introduced the report. The Board:

- i. **approved** the recommendations of the University and Faculty Approval Committees relating to proposals where conditions had been met;
- ii. **noted** the proposals recommended for approval subject to conditions being met or where the approval process was still pending;
- iii. **approved** the recommendations arising from Departmental and Collaborative Partnership Periodic Reviews;
- iv. **approved** the proposed title change;
- v. **noted** the course closures approved by Faculty Portfolio and Partnership Groups.

AB/14/82 **Faculty Academic Boards**

82.1 There were no reports from Faculty Academic Boards.

AB/14/83 **Students' Union Report**

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

- i. Officer elections had been held and all posts filled;
- ii. a housing campaign had been launched;
- iii. a student learning and teaching conference had been held providing an opportunity for students to discuss and have some input on future learning needs.

Reference was also made to forthcoming activities including:

- i. the 'What if' campaign looking at student provision including the Students' Union;
- ii. outcomes of the 'What I want for Christmas' campaign - to be reported to the Board in February.

AB/14/84 **Research and Innovation Committee (RIC)**

AB/6/14/15 84.1 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 25 September 2014.

AB/14/85 **Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee**

AB/6/14/16.1 85.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee introduced a report outlining proposed changes to the terms of reference and constitution of the Collaborative Sub-Committee as recommended by the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. The Board **approved** the changes.

AB/6/14/16.2 85.2 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 22 September 2014.

AB/6/14/16.3 85.3 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 24 September 2014.

AB/14/86 **Next meeting**

86.1 Tuesday 17 February 2015, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, in the Boardroom, City Campus.