

ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2015

Present: Professor Philip Jones (Chair), Professor Liz Barnes, Professor Karen Bryan, Diane Burkinshaw, Emily Connor, Professor Roger Eccleston, Sonja Ellis, Edward Hatherley, Dr Graham Holden, Professor John Leach, Professor Ann Macaskill, Dr Kevin Nield, Dr Christine O'Leary, Kieran Pearson, Liz Winders (Secretary)

In attendance: Rosemary Goerisch, Assistant Registrar, Assessment, Awards and Regulations (for items 6 and 8); Helen Aram, Assistant Registrar, Student Administration (for item 6); Dr Neil McKay, Dean of Students (for items 9 and 10); Maura Sorensen (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence: Martin Beer, Professor Mike Bramhall, Jean Flanagan, Professor Paul Harrison, Professor Adrian Hopgood, Stella Jones-Devitt, Joe Rennie, Professor Norman Wienand

Paper ref	Minute
	AB/15/01 Apologies and membership changes
	1.1 Apologies were noted. Edward Hatherley, the new Student Course Representative, was welcomed to his first meeting. It was confirmed that Stephanie Glen, Professional Services Staff representative, had left the University. Members noted that elections to all staff constituencies would be held later this year.
	AB/15/02 Chair's Business
	2.1 There was no Chair's Business.
	AB/15/03 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2014
AB/14/6/M	3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2014 were <u>approved</u> as a correct record.
	AB/15/04 Matters arising
	4.1 There were no matters arising.
	AB/15/05 Urgent Business
	5.1 No urgent business had been notified.
AB/1/15/6	AB/15/06 Policy on Departmental Assessment Boards
	6.1 The Assistant Registrar, Assessment, Awards and Regulations and the Assistant Registrar, Student Administration introduced the report. It was noted that the proposals to introduce Departmental Boards were approved by the Academic Board in December 2014 and that Departmental Boards were now being established in each faculty. Introduction of Departmental Assessment Boards, in 2015-16, would further facilitate academic ownership of courses. The proposals were approved

by the Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (AQSEC) at a meeting on 20 January 2015. However, it was noted that some changes had been made since then relating to quoracy and the governance structure.

- 6.2 It was highlighted that in order for the Departmental Assessment Boards to operate smoothly it was paramount that marks were submitted on time. Members highlighted the numbers of courses to be processed noting also that 'teething problems' can arise with the implementation of any new process and suggesting an early review be scheduled. The Assistant Registrar, Student Administration confirmed that the student administration teams in each of the faculties was currently considering the best way to group courses together within departments and were also considering appropriate deadlines for groups of courses. Reference was made to consideration of some changes to the moderation process which would further support the smooth operation of the Departmental Assessment Boards.
- 6.3 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Development and Society commended the proposals reiterating that the initiative will help to embed academic ownership of courses at departmental level.
- 6.4 The Board **approved** the Policy on Departmental Assessment Boards.

AB/1/15/7

AB/15/07 **Academic and Professional Advice Framework**

- 7.1 The Director of Learning and Teaching introduced the report. Members noted that the Framework supported the University's ambition to become one of the best universities for the quality of teaching and learning as articulated in the new University Strategy. The context for the framework, its purpose and principles and the roles and responsibilities of those who will be involved in implementation were outlined. Reference was made to a significant focus across the higher education sector on the provision of academic advice and support.
- 7.2 Members noted that National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes indicated that, overall, our students were satisfied with the academic advice and support offered, though some inconsistencies had been highlighted. Reference was made to the National Union of Students (NUS) Student Charter with regards to expectations of personal support in higher education and to the QAA UK Quality Code on enabling student development and achievement.
- 7.3 Reference was made to models of current practice in academic and professional advice across the University. Organisation of academic advice and support on the Geography and Environmental course was cited as exemplary practice. Reference was also made to some issues which needed further attention including:
 - the tension between support being student-driven and student-led, or timetabled by staff, alongside a

recognition that ad hoc meetings generally result in poor engagement and attendance;

- the need for clarity about the purpose of academic and professional advice i.e whether it was pastoral support, academic advice, placement advice or careers advice.

7.4 Members commended the clarity of the Framework noting that staff should find it helpful and supportive.

7.5 The Board **approved** the Academic and Professional Advice Framework.

AB/1/15/8

AB/15/08 **Standard Undergraduate and Postgraduate Academic Calendars 2015-16**

8.1 The Assistant Registrar, Assessment, Awards and Regulations introduced the report. Members noted the minor revision to the end date for the standard teaching year. The Board **approved** the revised Standard Undergraduate and Postgraduate Academic Calendars 2015-16.

AB/1/15/9

AB/15/09 **Assessment Journey Programme**

9.1 The Dean of Students introduced the report. It was highlighted that delivery of coordinated improvements to assessment practice, delivery and management should result in improved scores for the University in this area in the NSS. Reference was made to the deliberative and governance strands of the process. It was noted that there were significant resource implications and it was confirmed that that the business case had been considered and approved by the Academic and Student Process Improvement Board (ASPI) and by the Process Improvement Portfolio (PIP) Board. Although there was a long lead-in to introduce the programme across the University it was currently being piloted in the Academy of Sport and Physical Activity and in some areas of ACES.

9.2 It was confirmed that it was intended that staff will initially undertake online assessments via Blackboard. The advantages to using Blackboard were noted i.e. that it was familiar to staff and students. However members highlighted some problems experienced in using Blackboard, particularly in conjunction with Turnitin. The Dean of Students confirmed that the University was liaising with a software developer on developing a model, appropriate for the University's needs, to deliver online management of assessment. A number of options were being considered and staff input and feedback would be sought. Members noted that there will be a need for staff training in undertaking online assessment.

9.3 It was confirmed that, despite the complexities, good progress was being made with developing and implementing the programme. It was highlighted that the approach outlined was increasingly becoming the sector norm and implementing the Assessment Journey Programme will ensure the University is in line with sector practice and, in some instances, will place the University ahead of other institutions. The Students' Union

commended the opportunities for student involvement and input.

9.4 The Board:

- i. **noted** progress on the Programme to date;
- ii. **noted** the timeframe for implementation of key changes to practice and policy;
- iii. agreed to **support** the success of the Programme through awareness raising and dissemination of information as required as the Programme progresses.

AB/1/15/10

AB/15/10 **National Student Survey (NSS) 2014: Corporate Themes and Actions**

10.1 The Dean of Students introduced the report. Comments had been received from over 9000 students and were reasonably evenly spread between positive and negative. Students had mostly commented positively on teaching and learning and academic support. Comments on assessment and feedback, and organisation and management, were more negative.

10.2 Student comments had pinpointed what works well for them, for example clarity regarding staff roles in delivering advice and support. Although feedback on teaching and academic support had generally been positive, dissatisfaction had been expressed with a few individual members of staff and it was highlighted that any level of dissatisfaction can have an impact on NSS scores.

10.3 Members referred to student comments on the English language skills of some members of staff. In discussion members noted this could cover a range of issues from students experiencing some difficulties understanding international staff or international students struggling with regional accents. It was explained that the University did not require a specified standard of English Language, such as IELTS, for staff. Members suggested the issues raised may be as much a matter of communication as language skills. It was suggested it was best left to individual departments to consider and deal with issues arising. An example was cited, from the Academy of Sport and Physical Activity, where candidates for teaching posts were asked to deliver a reasonably lengthy teaching session to demonstrate their communication skills. Members suggested that consideration should be given to whether student comments relating to staff and language skills would also apply in a work setting or if there would be a greater expectation of tolerance and cooperation. It was further highlighted that the University is an institution that embraces diversity and welcomes students and staff from across the world. The Students' Union suggested consideration be given to the impact on communication of the spaces in which lectures and seminars were delivered.

10.5 The Board **noted** the analysis of student comments, key themes and improvements underway, continuing to maintain a corporate focus on the improvement of teaching, assessment,

student support and the facilities and services that support the educational experience.

AB/1/15/11

AB/15/11 **Course and Collaborative Partnership Matters**

- 11.1 The Director of Learning and Teaching 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** recommendations 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. **noted** course closures approved by Faculty Portfolio and Partnership Groups;
 - v. **approved** the proposed title change.

AB/15/12 **Faculty Academic Boards**

AB/1/15/12.1

- 12.1 The Board **received** notes of a meeting of the Faculty of Development and Society Faculty Academic Board held on 21 January 2015.

AB/1/15/12.2

- 12.2 The Board **received** notes of a meeting of the Faculty of Health and Wellbeing Faculty Academic Board held on 30 October 2014.

AB/15/13 **Students' Union Report**

- 13.1 The President of the Students' Union provided an oral update on recent activities including:
- i. the "All I want for Christmas" campaign. Issues highlighted included:
 - timetabling;
 - the cost of food on campus
 - ii. the continued drive to get students registered ahead of the May general election;
 - iii. the development of the Student Manifesto;
 - iv. the recent BME student conference focusing on the attainment gap for BME students;
 - v. the Students' Union's internal and external consultations with an aim to produce a draft strategy by the end of April 2015;
 - vi. NSS 2015 and the recruitment of 30 student ambassadors to encourage a strong response;
 - vii. progress with the "What if" campaign;
 - viii. a review of the system of course representatives;
 - ix. a conference session on graduate employability;
 - x. a panel session attended by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of Students.

AB/1/15/14

AB/15/14 **Research and Innovation Committee (RIC)**

- 14.1 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 2 December 2014.

AB/1/15/15

AB/15/15 **Academic Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee**

- 15.1 The Board **received** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2014.

AB/15/16 **Next meeting**

- 16.1 Tuesday 29 April 2015, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, in the Boardroom, City Campus.