ACADEMIC BOARD

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AB18/22
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Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019

Present: J Mennell (Chair), T Barry, J Brown, C Coghill, J Colclough, D Cox, K Fox, A Hampson, R Harrison-Palmer, S Henderson, A Hunt, R Hunter, L Johnson, A Lane, E Lees, S McCarthy-Grunwald, D McGregor (for J Robinson), L Nelson, C Rouncefield (to end 18:22), N Rourke, I Sinker (to end 18:22), C Sloane, K Small, C Watson, K Watson, B Webster-Henderson (from 18:20)

In attendance: H Rhodes (for 18:22c), J Whitfield (Committee Secretary)

18:17	**Apologies for absence:** L Bates, M Leek, A Marshall, J Robinson, K Stuart, I Todd, S Wilson	Verbal
18:18	**Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2018:** The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record. Ongoing action log items were noted.	AB18/12
18:19	**Vice Chancellor's Report**	Verbal

Received: A verbal update from the Vice Chancellor

RDAP
An update was provided on the current status of the University's RDAP submission. The outcome was expected shortly.

The Director of Research confirmed that the approvals process for the validation of research degrees was now in place, in preparation for a successful outcome. The postgraduate Regulations, Assessment Guide and Appeals Procedures had been approved by Academic Board at its last meeting. Minor changes to a single regulation would be presented to Academic Board for approval at the February meeting.

A review and update of research webpages had also been conducted, and transition arrangements had been agreed with the Lancaster University in respect of current research students.

Auger Review of Higher Education Funding
An update was provided, and it was reported that scenario planning was taking place in advance of formal publication of the review outcomes by the summer 2019.

Strategic Planning
An update on the current institutional position was provided. The University remained on track against its financial objectives for 2018-19. Planning was now commencing at departmental, executive and Director level for 2019-20 and beyond.

Value for Money
The Vice Chancellor reported on her recent attendance at a meeting of the Universities UK Value for Money Group, established to provide a forum to demonstrate how UK Universities are providing value for money for their students and demonstrating efficiency.

Vice Chancellor's Executive
It was confirmed that, following the recent appointment of the incoming PVC Academic, Professor Rob Trimble, the membership of the Vice Chancellor's Executive was at full complement.

Amongst other areas, Professor Trimble would lead the forward development and positioning of the University portfolio.

Outcome: To note the update provided

18:20   **Academic Departments' Report**   AB18/13

Received: A report on departmental updates

Key highlights of departmental updates were presented by Heads of Department, as outlined in the paper.

The Head of Department MSS offered formal thanks to L Rowe for her work as acting Head of Department during his recent sabbatical.

The Vice Chancellor offered thanks to all colleagues involved in the development of new programmes.

Actions agreed:
- A launch event to be arranged for the Institute of the Arts MA programmes at the Ambleside Campus. **Action:** Director of the Institute of the Arts and Head of Department SNROS.
- To publish details of the student support services offered by the newly established group of Trauma Assessors. **Action:** Head of Department NHPP.
- The Institute for Industrial Practice to provide updates for inclusion in the Academic Departments' Report at all future meetings. **Action:** Director (Operations) Institute for Industrial Practice.

Outcome: To note the report

18:21   **Students' Union Report**   AB18/14

Received: A report from the Students' Union Academic Officer, including an update on UCSU operational priorities for 2018-19

A report was provided on recent activity undertaken by the UCSU to improve responses under NSS question 26, relating to the work of the Students' Union, and broader aspects of the student experience. Detailed sessions had been held with a large number of student representatives in support of activities in this area.

A review of Welcome Week support and activities had taken place to analyse outcomes and to plan for future events.

It was confirmed that new UCSU representation was in place at both the Ambleside and Brampton Road Campuses, to ensure sufficient student support, and improve vibrancy and the student experience. Academic Board members stressed the importance of a proactive approach by UCSU campus representatives to raising the profile and awareness of their activity at these campuses, and securing student engagement.

Outcome: To note the report

Received: **a) Casework Report: Student Complaints, Academic Appeals & Malpractice**
The Director of SAAS confirmed that the annual report had been scrutinised in detail by the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee. Further work was currently being undertaken to finalise the report, which would return to the Committee for additional review in due course.

An overview of the analysis of student complaints, appeals and malpractice cases was provided.

Academic Board colleagues asked regarding any emerging trends. The Dean for Student Success confirmed that caution must be exercised when reviewing the data in this way, as the student cohort size had changed since the 2016-17 report.

Academic Board sought clarification as to what extent the University was able to compare itself against the sector. The Director of SAAS reported that in terms of the formal elements of complaints, appeals and misconduct, the University was broadly within the current sector norms. Disciplinary, health and conduct and fitness to practice were areas currently undergoing further analysis to fully understand the current position.

Action: The Director of SAAS to discuss the data analysis with the incoming PVC Academic in February 2019.

b) Graduate School AER & Action Plans for Research
A summary of the key findings of the Graduate School Annual Evaluatory Report was provided by the Director of Research, as outlined in the paper.

It was reported that a section on supervisor audit and capacity was planned for inclusion in the 2018-19 report, along with further detailed sections on Equality & Diversity and research appeals, disciplinary and malpractice (which were nil returns for the current year).

It was confirmed that staff members undertaking research and research-based courses were included within AOP reporting, rather than the student number data provided by the Graduate School.

It was noted that under the PRES Action Plan 2017-18, all actions had been completed and activity remained on track with regard to research degree validation.

It was suggested that further discussion should take place at a future meeting of Academic Board regarding the planned future strategic focus and approach for professional doctorates.

Action: The Director of Research to discuss with the Vice Chancellor out with the meeting and to advise regarding the appropriate timing for an agenda item.

c) Safeguarding: Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults
An overview of the highlights of the report was provided by the Head of Student Support, as outlined in the paper. It was confirmed that consideration in relation to Ofsted for Higher Level Apprenticeships would be included in future reports.

It was reported that a significant increase in cases of student self-harm had been seen during 2017-18. In response, a range of initiatives in support of students and staff were being progressed by the Head of Student Support, in liaison with Heads of Department, under the institutional health and wellbeing agenda.

It was also confirmed that new guidance for Directors regarding Safeguarding had been issued in December 2018, which would be used to inform forward Safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the institution. It was highlighted that the University exceeds national averages in terms of the support it offers in respect of Safeguarding, and that best practice sharing was planned across the institution.

It was agreed to add mental health and wellbeing support to the agenda for a future SLT meeting, to include the focus and plans moving forward, sector guidance and opportunities to further innovate and integrate activity in this area.

Action: The PVC Health and PVC/Director of Student & Staff Services to present an agenda item for a future SLT meeting.

Outcome: To note the annual reports as presented

18:23   Student Outcomes   AB18/16

Received: An overview of the current position and forward reporting timeline

The Dean for Student Success provided an overview of the main findings of the degree outcomes and student retention data for 2017-18, as outlined in the paper.

It was reported that a number of initiatives had been introduced nationally to protect against alleged grade inflation within higher education institutions. Careful data-informed work was being undertaken to fully understand the current institutional position in respect of degree outcomes, the improvements seen in general in this area and any areas of reduction in outcomes.

Further analysis of the data set was currently being undertaken at subject group and programme level, as well as by student group and by student characteristic. It was proposed and agreed that this work would follow the following reporting schedule:

- SSQAC: 24 January 2019 – details of analysis undertaken, key findings and proposed actions for discussion. To include proposals for further analysis as appropriate.
- Academic Board: 13 February 2019 – focussed summary of analysis and proposed actions.
- Academic Governance Committee: 26 February 2019 – report of headline data, trends, analysis and the University's response.

Additional data was requested by Heads of Departments to demonstrate the correlation between student entry points at Level 3 and outcomes at Levels 6 and 7. It was confirmed that data would be provided to highlight the most recent 4-year trends across departments. **Action:** Dean for Student Success.

Outcome: To note the report provided and forward reporting timescales

| 18:24 | **NSS** | AB18/17 |

Received: a) An update on progress against NSS Action Plans
b) Presentations from the Departments of Education and Nursing, Health & Professional Practice

An update on progress against NSS action plans was presented by the Dean for Student Success, as provided in the paper.

It was confirmed that the NSS 2019 would run from 4 February to 30 April 2019. As an incentive towards completion, it had been agreed that £1 per completed survey would be donated to the UCSU's chosen RAG Charity, however the University's completion rates remained significantly above the national average.

In order to inform students about the purpose and process for completion of the NSS, all eligible students would be invited to attend a briefing to include a short introductory video, localised information from Programme Leaders and details of initiatives taken in response to previous years' feedback.

The Vice Chancellor confirmed that progress in respect of the institutional NSS action plan was on track against targets.

Presentations were then provided by the Heads of Department for the Institute of Education and Department of Nursing, Health & Professional Practice to provide overviews of the departmental analysis of outcomes and activity undertaken to bring about necessary improvements.

Following the presentations, Academic Board discussed and noted the importance of positive staff morale to ensure that improvement initiatives were engaged with and driven forward, and that new curriculum developments were fully supported.

Academic Board expressed satisfaction at the focus and achievements being made so far to improve NSS outcomes and the wider student experience.

Outcome: To note the reports and presentations provided

| 18:25 | **Office for Students** | AB18/18 |

Received: Details of the University's registration, an overview of conditions of registration and the requirement to inform the University Secretary of any potentially 'reportable event'

It was confirmed that the University was now listed on the OfS register of higher education providers, with no specific conditions of registration. The ongoing conditions of initial OfS registration were now live, with a range of additional conditions (for all institutions registered) to come into force from 1 August 2019.

The conditions currently in force and of relevance to Academic Board were presented, as outlined in the paper, and the full Access & Participation and Student Protection Plans and CMA self-assessment documentation were received and noted.

It was confirmed that the University had an obligation to report a number of specific occurrences to the OfS, such as any intended subject closure or new partnership arrangements.

Academic Board colleagues were asked to notify any potentially reportable events to the University Secretary in the first instance, for consideration for onward reporting to the OfS. If in any doubt, colleagues were urged to raise issues for consideration.

It was confirmed that matters relating to regular course activity should be discussed with the Academic Programmes Manager, with any substantial changes to programmes to be notified to the University Secretary.

Outcome: Academic Board noted the report provided and University's obligation to notify the OfS of appropriate reportable events

18:26	**TEF Year 4**	AB18/19

Received: An update on the current position

It was agreed to defer this item to a future meeting of Academic Board, for a detailed paper to be presented following consideration by the incoming PVC Academic.

Outcome: To note the intention for a full report to return to a future meeting following consideration by the incoming PVC Academic

18:27	**Graduate Outcomes (formerly DLHE)**	AB18/20

Received: An update on changes to Graduate Outcomes (DLHE) and the forward institutional approach

An update on the new process introduced by HESA for collecting employment and further study data from recent graduates was provided by the Director of SAAS, as outlined in the paper.

Previously, all employment outcomes data had been collected internally by the University within six months of graduates completing their courses, as part of HESA's Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys.

This process had now been replaced (for 2017/18 graduates) by HESA's new Graduate Outcomes survey, which would involve graduates being contacted by an external contractor around 15 months after having completed their courses.

It was reported that HESA had recently given all higher education institutions an opportunity to add a small number of optional question banks to the standard Graduate Outcomes survey template, and the questions selected for inclusion by the University were confirmed.

Any potential risks associated with the change in approach to collecting outcomes data were highlighted in the paper provided, and any mitigating activity outlined.

Outcome: To note the report

18:28	**Start Dates 2019/20**	AB18/21

Received: The outline start dates for 2019/20 for consideration and endorsement

It was confirmed that, during the 2017-18 academic year, Academic Board had approved a significant reduction in the number of start dates from 97 to 13.

In the paper provided, it was proposed to roll forward the start dates for 2019-20 under this approach, subject to the additional review of a remaining 14 programme starts on 25 different non-standard start dates to ensure further streamlining.

Academic Board considered and approved the recommendations as outlined in the paper.

The UCSU Officer confirmed UCSU's endorsement of the approach and requested advance notification of the number and dates of starts from an admissions perspective.
Action: Director of SAAS.

The Dean for Student Success reported on the ongoing work of the Welcome Week and Admissions Group, and the involvement of the Students' Union in its work.

Outcome: To approve the proposals in respect of 2019/20 start dates, as outlined in the paper

18:29	**Minutes from Academic Board Committees**	AB18/22

Received: The minutes and associated key points of the meeting of the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee on 19 November 2018 were received. In particular, Academic Board noted:

The Committee's consideration of:
- Updates on NSS actions
- The Primary & Secondary Self-Evaluation Documents (Ofsted)
- The Expectations of Engagement for all core University QA and enhancement activity
- The institutional approach to published information/consumer protection
- Programme withdrawal action plans
- An update on the development of the Employability action plan

The Committee's approval of:
- The Digital Capabilities Framework
- Procedures and processes for approval of Research Degrees

Outcome: To note the Committee minutes and summaries presented

18:30	**Next meeting:** 13 February, by videoconferencing Lancaster and Carlisle Fusehill Street Campuses	Verbal