

ACADEMIC BOARD

Notes of the meeting held on 26 April 2017

Present: J Mennell (Chair), T Barry, S Booth, R Cooper-Gritten, G Haigh, A Hampson, R Harrison-Palmer, S Henderson, L Kenward, A Lane, E Lees, S Longstaffe, L Mansfield, J Robinson, C Rouncefield, I Sinker, R Talbot, K Watson

In attendance: E Jubb (for item 6 – minute 16:075), J Whitfield – Committee Secretary

16:069 Apologies for absence: R Crehan, D Cox, N Harris, L Kenward, T Pellegrino, N Rourke, F Sapsford

16:070 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2017: AB16/46
The minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record. a)

It was agreed to propose to University Board that all Heads of Department be appointed as members of Academic Board with immediate effect. The full forward membership of Academic Board to be confirmed prior to the commencement of the 2017-18 academic year.

Action points: b)
It was confirmed that there were no outstanding action points to be discussed.

16:071 Vice Chancellor's Report: Verbal

Future institutional size and shape:

The Vice Chancellor reported on the commencement of the formal process with regard to the forward size and shape of the organisation, to ensure the appropriate resources, structure, organisation and skills were in place to deliver in terms of the University's aims and to achieve future success and sustainability. There were two key elements underpinning this process: to achieve clarity of focus, priorities and deliverables under the new Strategic Plan; and to equip the University to deliver against both internal and external expectations.

The Vice Chancellor stressed the need to ensure sufficient funding was directed towards spend on delivery, environment and infrastructure, whilst also allowing for investment to maintain and enhance this activity in the future. There was an essential requirement to balance the University's current staffing figure as a percentage of income, which was significantly above the sector average, and which was preventing necessary investment to support the student experience and environment.

Preparedness for the 2017-18 academic year:

To support the change process, the Vice Chancellor provided an outline of the specific need for preparedness and institutional risk assessment, identification, planning and mitigation to ensure the smoothest introduction possible for students and staff for the next academic year. An update on the development of an accompanying risk register and action plan was to be provided under item 8 of the agenda (see minute 16:077 below).

League Tables:

It was confirmed that the Complete University Guide published that day had reported the University's position as 123rd compared with 121st the previous year, despite some good improvements being seen in terms of NSS results. A step change was required moving forward, particularly with regard to professional destinations for graduates (despite an excellent overall employability rate). The Vice Chancellor expressed confidence in the institution's ability to make the necessary improvements.

DLHE:

It was reported that the University's formal submission to HEFCE was in train. The Vice Chancellor expressed thanks and congratulations to all for their input and ongoing support to students. An improvement in DLHE results was expected, which was felt would be beneficial to the institution.

Stakeholder engagement:

The Vice Chancellor reported on a high volume of stakeholder engagement across Cumbria and Lancaster with City Councils, County Councils, significant employers, Chambers of Commerce and FE Colleges to drive messaging and engagement with the University's forward plans and strategy. Specific initiatives relevant to each academic area were also being progressed with Heads of Department and area institutional leads. Responses to date had been extremely positive.

Appointment of new DVC Academic:

An announcement would be made later that week to confirm the appointment of the new DVC Academic, with a start date of 24 July 2017 and a series of planned interactions with Heads of Department and Service Directors in June/July.

RDAP:

Completion of the University's submission was confirmed, and it was reported that additional activity was now ongoing prior to the commencement of the formal scrutiny period in September 2017. The submission was to be considered by the HEFCE QAA committee responsible for research degree awarding powers at their May meeting, for progression to the scrutiny team.

UCSU Student Staff Success Awards:

The Vice Chancellor expressed thanks and congratulations to UCSU staff for a wonderful and very well-received event. The UCSU Sabbatical Officer in attendance provided an overview of the academic awards presented.

16:072 Deputy Vice Chancellor's Academic Report:

AB16/47

Key areas of focus and achievement were presented by all Heads of Department, and the Vice Chancellor stressed the significance, volume and standing of ongoing activity across the departments, particularly in the context of ongoing change and challenge.

It was confirmed that a stronger focus and emphasis on academic departments, staff and student achievements was planned for the July 2017 graduation ceremonies.

Action: Heads of Department and Service Directors to provide examples of key activity and achievements for presentation at the graduation events, and to make suggestions for student awards, to be sponsored by Honorary Fellows.

[R Cooper-Gritten left the meeting at 2.55pm.]

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

16:073 Strategic Plan:

AB16/48

The Vice Chancellor highlighted the draft Strategic Plan circulated to all staff for comment and consultation. The Plan recognised the challenges and risks within the existing landscape and portfolio, and sought to focus in such a way as to ensure the growth of student numbers and the reach and reputation of the University moving forward. She confirmed that further work was ongoing to reformat the draft document

The VC confirmed that alongside, work was ongoing to reformat the Strategic Plan document for a range of key internal and external audiences, to invite engagement.

Comments and feedback were provided for incorporation into the draft, which would be finalised for presentation to University Board at its May meeting.

The Director of Marketing & Recruitment reported on the use of the draft Strategic Plan in staff briefings and to inform discussion and activity within teams across the institution.

16:074 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy:

AB16/49

The Principal Lecturer in Academic Development, Academic Enhancement & Innovation outlined the process of collaboration and consultative approach adopted in developing the draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

The Strategy sought to capitalise on the identity and strengths of the University, and to be aspirational in terms of delivering aspirational education to learners at all levels and stages. It was organised around 4 themes:

1. Excellence in Learning and Teaching
2. Responsive Learner Support
3. Employability & Graduateness
4. Developing Digital Capabilities of Students and Staff

Its aims were to:

- Develop confident, resilient and socially aware learners;
- Provide an environment for the development of professionally relevant, research informed and innovative programmes;
- Champion the institutional values of respect, professionalism, aspiration and integrity;
- Support staff in the development and enhancement of their role in providing excellence in higher education.

Comments and feedback were invited and provided as follows:

- Value-added: examples of best practice above the standard academic-learner experience to be provided for inclusion.
- Expansion of the definition and aims with regard to work experience was urged, to embed work experience across programmes for value-added. The need to encompass general principles across a wide range of areas and learners was stressed in response, to avoid a granular approach. It was confirmed that

emphasis had been placed on assessing all elements in terms of traditional and non-traditional classroom and online/dispersed educational experiences.

- Widespread support was expressed for the format of the Strategy document, including pull-out boxes and key indicators. A numbering system was requested to facilitate referencing.
- Reconsideration of the term 'authentic assessment opportunities' was suggested.
- Greater clarification of intent with regard to staff involvement in the student journey was requested.
- Digital capabilities – the need to equip students for the future was stressed, to encompass how to engage with technology more widely as well as using it to support teaching and learning. Greater reference to professional competencies was also suggested under this theme. Concern was expressed over the need to ensure the capacity of the University to develop theme 4 following the implementation of the change programme.

The Vice Chancellor confirmed the need to be explicit in terms of expectations of how teams and departments would use the Strategy document in the context of their activities with different learners and subject areas.

A rolling 2-year Learning and Teaching Action Plan was requested, to cover 4-5 key areas for institutional progression under the Strategy. This to form a significant piece of work for the Learning Quality and Student Outcomes Committee. A similar document to be developed by the Research and Enterprise Committee to devise an Institutional Action Plan for Research and Enterprise.

Action: The Learning and Teaching Action Plan and Institutional Action Plan for Research and Enterprise to return with the final Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to the June meeting of Academic Board.

Outcome: Academic Board endorsed and supported the proposed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The final Strategy document to return to the June meeting for formal approval.

16:075 Industrial Strategy:

Presentation

The Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise, Business Development and Engagement outlined the Industrial Strategy as a key piece of policy development nationally, and the opportunity for the University to position its Strategic Plan and focus within a Government and regional context. It was confirmed there was significant emphasis on and overlap with Industrial Strategy within the forward Strategic Plan.

The key focus areas of the University's response were outlined as: positioning for the future; establishing focus and priorities; preparing for future funding requests; and to tie in with sector and place-based responses nationally, and commercial responses regionally. This was intended to reinforce the University as an anchor institution for Cumbria and Lancashire.

Key investment and funding opportunities were highlighted, with over £4.7 billion in funding available over the next 4 years. A key focus for development for the University was to target the £170 million of funding earmarked for the establishment of Institutes of Technology, to drive levels of education in STEM and digital enabled learning environments. It

was confirmed that the University was marshalling the collaborative response for Cumbria in this area.

The 10 pillars of the Industrial Strategy were presented, with particular reference to key focus areas for the institution, and opportunities for the University to strategically augment its role in terms of place, economic role in reducing disparity in cold spots, and within the region. Sector deals and key areas of Cumbria's economy were also emphasised (nuclear, rural and visitor economy, digital), alongside the link between higher-level skills and national and regional productivity.

Key objectives of the University's response were shared. In particular, to develop more explicit contributions and case studies around Policing, the Project Academy, CCOP, Paramedic Science and the institution's LEP involvement.

It was confirmed that the response had been developed in partnership with key stakeholders, to ensure a consistent thread running through Cumbria's response and recognising the key strengths and experience of each stakeholder. To support this, a consistent evidence base had been adopted by all stakeholders, taken from the Cumbria LEP skills Plan. The University had taken the lead role, on behalf of the LEP, for higher level skills, and was developing an approach to ensure its leadership position.

The PVC encouraged ongoing engagement from all Academic Board colleagues for the further development of the strategy and initiatives.

Next steps were confirmed as follows:

- Development of the University of Cumbria Industrial Plan – the institutional blueprint for cross-sectoral developments regionally and nationally. To be led by the VC, PVC and new Director of Industrial Strategy, Andy Gale.
- Development and progression of the proposal to establish an Institute of Technology for Cumbria.
- Positioning as a significant and sought after institution – the relevant and right institution already in place for the county.

The Vice Chancellor reported on engagement within the region to establish Cumbria's bid for an Institute of Technology, based on existing STEM expertise and world-class provision within the region. Use of the regional asset base to raise educational attainment within the school system was built in to the aims of the initiative. It was confirmed that, at its last Board meeting, the Cumbria LEP had confirmed their support only for the proposed Cumbria solution.

16:076 Preparedness for 2017-18 Academic Year:

AB16/50

The Deputy Dean reported on the current status of development of the risk register and associated high-level action plan to capture all major risks arising to core and student facing business from the change programme. Local operational action plans were also to be developed as required, informed by the top-level risk register.

It was confirmed that the documents would be stored centrally to enable regular updates and input from Heads of Department and Service Directors. The activity was being led by the Deputy Dean and Registrar & Secretary, who were meeting weekly to progress and update the documentation, with reporting to UEG at each of their fortnightly meetings. Individual leads would be briefed and tasked as appropriate.

Action: Concerns, comments or suggestions for inclusion to be reported to the Deputy Dean.

16:077 Academic Regulations:

AB16/51

The Director of AQD summarised proposals for significant changes to the Academic Regulations for implementation from September 2017, which had been developed by AQD and SAAS in conjunction with the Associate Dean and Deputy Dean.

The key elements were to:

- Reduce reassessment opportunities at undergraduate level to allow one reassessment.
- Extend condonement at Levels 3 and Level 4s from 20 credits to 40 credits at each level (also change terminology to compensation).
- Change progression requirements, for Level 4 to Level 5 and for Level 5 to Level 6, from 80 to 100 credits.
- Permit students who have gone into confirmed failure following reassessment to re-register to re-take a failed module on one occasion, providing them with an opportunity to retrieve their position.
- Apply the 'fit to sit' principle for Extenuating Circumstances to coursework as well as examinations, streamline EC panel and review processes, limit ECs to one claim per assessment item (normally). Also, change terminology from extenuating to mitigating circumstances.
- Streamline Module Assessment Boards (remove the requirement for an independent member and confirm accuracy of marks through the agreed process of submission of marks prior to the MAB).
- Streamline University Assessment Boards (manage decisions for proceeding students under devolved responsibilities through the Director of SAAS or nominee).
- Remove prescribed limits on reassessment for postgraduate taught awards (PGT).
- Remove 'Waiver' of Regulations.

Academic Board's attention was drawn to the timeline for implementation in light of CMA guidance, and in the context of ensuring UCSU input to ensure the resulting regulations were not disadvantageous to students, and approval was sought in principle to implement the changes with effect from September 2017.

Comments and questions were fed back as follows:

- Concern was expressed regarding the provision to reduce opportunities to retake failed modules. It was confirmed that the recommendation was in line with the practice of other peer institutions, but that there was no single sector benchmark in this area.
- Concern was raised over the proposal to increase the condonement threshold from 20 to 40 credits, and lengthy discussion followed as to the advantages and disadvantages of allowing module retakes and reassessments. The importance of student success at the first opportunity was stressed, and the identification of a wider sector 'norm' as urged.
- Detailed UCSU feedback was stressed as an essential requirement.
- There was broad support for the review of MABs and UABs.

Whilst recognising the need to progress confirmation of the forward approach, the Vice Chancellor requested that additional sector benchmarking be conducted by a focussed task and finish group to

confirm the aims, consequences and implementation plan for the initiative. It was felt that there was a further requirement for greater testing and validation from a range of perspectives, through engagement with a wider representative body of staff.

Outcome/Action: An evidence-based document with associated rationale, implementation plan and risk register to return to Academic Board for approval at the June meeting.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

16:078 Student retention:

AB16/52

The Deputy Dean reported on revisions to shorten and streamline the Framework for Improving Student Retention and Continuation, and sought approval of the Framework for full implementation for the start of 2017/18 academic year to support a refreshed focus on retention across the institution.

Comments and questions were provided by Academic Board as follows:

- Admissions should be included in the strategy to ensure earlier identification of students at risk of non-continuation. The establishment and embedding of a robust process to identify and manage at risk students was stressed as an essential requirement.
- The high levels of responsibility assigned to Programme Leaders under the revised Framework was highlighted, and additional support for Programme Leaders and Personal Tutors was requested to manage the process. Appropriate analysis and tie-ins to the Academic Workload Model were also encouraged.
- A central record-keeping model and underpinning systems requirements were seen as essential.

Outcome: It was agreed that further redevelopment work should be undertaken by the incoming DVC Academic, including the extension of the Framework to cover the pre-enrolment stage onwards, and tie-ins in the longer term to the student support, regulatory and QA frameworks to provide key infrastructure for the future.

For 2017-18, there remained a requirement for a focussed, pragmatic, deliverable approach that did not require a large additional staffing resource to implement, whilst re-examination of the institutional framework and approach to retention was conducted.

Actions agreed:

- The Deputy Dean to revisit the Framework document to establish an interim solution as outlined above.
- The Vice Chancellor to review the Framework with the incoming DVC Academic, alongside the institutional Admissions Policy, and with particular regard to clearing offers.

16:079 Programme suspensions and withdrawals:

AB16/53

The Deputy Dean reported on the current status of work to identify programmes, modules and pathways for suspension or closure, and accompanying actions with regard to holding offers, revalidations or minor modification processes.

Throughout the process, careful attention had been given to the University's obligations and CMA requirements, and in all cases, it had been sought to achieve the minimum possible disruption to very small numbers of applicants.

It would be necessary to work to tight implementation timescales, reflecting the urgency of communicating with offer-holders to explore their options and assist them with alternatives as early as possible.

Recommendations were also presented to suspend some courses immediately for 2018 entry, pending a wider portfolio review.

Outcome: Academic Board noted the document and the requirement for further development.

Actions agreed:

- The Vice Chancellor and DVC Academic to review and determine the timescales and channels for final approval.
- Heads of Department to feed back any inaccuracies or concerns to the Deputy Dean and DVC Academic.

16:080 Associate Partners:

AB16/54

- a) The Annual Summary Partnership Review 2015-16 was provided by the Collaborative Provision Manager.

Outcome: Academic Board noted the review outcomes.

- b) The following applications for continuation of institutional approval were provided for endorsement:

- Blackburn College
- Gen 2
- Furness
- Kendal
- Lakes
- Carlisle

Outcome: The Vice Chancellor queried the timing of the submissions and the wider re-approval process, and requested the opportunity to discuss the applications further with the Associate Dean.

Action: The Vice Chancellor and Associate Dean to discuss out with the meeting, providing approval as appropriate by Chair's Action and reporting outcomes to the next meeting of Academic Board in June.

- c) New institutional approval was sought for Associate Partner status for St Marks Church of England Primary School.

Outcome: As above, the Vice Chancellor to discuss with the Associate Dean out with the meeting, providing approval as appropriate by Chair's Action and reporting the outcome to the next meeting of Academic Board.

16:081 Centres of Excellence:

AB16/55

a) Centres of Excellence Policy:

a)

The Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise, Business Development and Engagement outlined the role of Centres of Excellence in achieving the University's strategic priority to enhance its reputation and standing. The introduction of Centres of Excellence, linked to domains where the institution had distinctive and significant expertise, had the potential to enhance the organisation's profile and raise its credibility at local, national and international level.

The draft Centres of Excellence Policy set out the purpose, process and criteria that would be used to assess proposals to establish a Centre of Excellence, and had been developed and approved by the Research and Enterprise Committee. A draft reporting template had also been developed to set out the common impact and output headings against which performance would be measured.

In the first instance, Centres of Excellence would be commissioned by UEG in line with the Strategic Plan and priorities, with the first two proposals being for Centres of Excellence in Policing and in Paramedic Practice.

To ensure consistency with Departmental business plans and the planning process, the recommendation was to approve a two-stage process whereby a proposal for a Centre of Excellence could be agreed by Academic Board with the business plan/investment case approved separately.

Outcome: Academic Board approved:

- the proposal for the introduction of Centres of Excellence;
- the draft policy and reporting template;
- the proposal that Policing and Paramedic Practice should be the first two centres approved in principle under the policy, to be progressed on Research & Enterprise Committee Chair's action.

b)

b) Research data management principles:

The Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise, Business Development and Engagement reported that the sector and University had identified Research Data Management as a strategic development area necessary for complying with future REF submissions, as a component of Open Access mandates, as an essential element of research governance, and a key part of the research information lifecycle.

A task and finish group, led by the Director of LiSS, with input from the Research Office, Research Co-ordinators, and others had been set up in 2015 to develop a Policy for RDM that could be implemented across the university. Arising from this work, a set of high-level principles had been produced as a forerunner to a formal Policy, concerned with guiding and assisting researchers to consider, plan and manage how they would make their data secure, compliant and longer-term, openly available. A template had also been produced and agreed with IT Services to aid staff with the process.

An implementation plan, including communications to highlight the benefits and embed good practice in RDM, plus advocacy, training and guidance were also identified as essential requirements for implementation of the future RDM policy.

Outcome: Academic Board:

- Approved the Research Data Management Principles;
- Approved the discretionary Research Data Management planning template;
- Approved the continuation of the RDM Task & Finish Group, with a remit to provide continuing oversight within Information Services on behalf of the Research & Enterprise Committee and of Academic Board.

Action: Further policy development to take place by the Research & Enterprise Committee, to return to Academic Board for approval once available.

ITEMS TO NOTE

16:082 Annual Student Retention and Achievement Annual Report 2015-16: AB16/56

Outcome: Academic Board noted the final report approved by Chair's Action on 1 March 2017.

16:083 Committee minutes: AB16/57
The following minutes and associated key points were noted:

- a) Academic Strategy & Planning Committee – 14 March 2017 a)
- b) Research & Enterprise Committee – 23 March 2017 b)
- c) Learning & Teaching Committee – 29 March 2017 c)
 - To note the approval of the Student Voice Strategy
 - To note the approval of the Student Evaluative Feedback Policy

16:084 Next meeting: Wednesday 21 June 2017, 10.30am – 1.00pm, Room B105, Fusehill Street Campus, Carlisle

Papers deadline: Tuesday 13 June 2017, 5pm