

CONFIDENTIAL

AB16/74 CONFIRMED

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017

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

In attendance: B Cutter (for T Pellegrino), M Leek

16:085 Apologies for absence: D Cox, S Henderson, E Jubb, L Kenward, S Longstaffe, K Riley, T Pellegrino, N Rourke

16:086 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2017: AB16/58
Subject to a minor amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

Institute of Technology:

An update was provided by the Pro Vice Chancellor, who was chairing a group to marshal the response to the Government's call for the establishment of regional Institutes for Technology. It was reported that a shift in emphasis following the election was now seeing universities being cited as appropriate leads to drive forward the initiative.

Action points:

The actions in progress were noted.

16:087 Vice Chancellor's Report: Verbal
The Vice Chancellor welcomed incoming Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic to the meeting and to Academic Board.

Publication of institutional and sector results:

It was confirmed that the outcomes of the TEF Year 2 would be published in the public domain on 22 June. The DLHE results were expected on 6 July, and a positive outcome was expected, to show an improved position in relation to the sector. The institutional NSS results would be issued at the end of July and made publically available in August. It was confirmed that significant stakeholder engagement and communications plans were being drawn up in respect of all releases.

Strategic Plan:

The forward Strategic Plan for the institution had been approved by the University Board of Directors at its last meeting in May. The Vice Chancellor thanked all colleagues for their input into refining and focussing the final draft, which had been very well received by the Board. Work was now being undertaken to operationalise the Strategic Plan to establish clear priorities, specific actions and leads, in the form of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP), a draft of which was to proceed to the Board for review at the end of July.

The Strategic Plan and AOP would form a key focus of the next round of Staff Forums and Conferences in the Autumn 2017, to ensure clarity around priorities for the year ahead and measures of success and Key Performance Indicators. A series of workshops would also be held across areas such as Apprenticeships, FE, business and academic systems, portfolio development, Ambleside strategy etc. with the opportunity for staff to engage, inform and be informed.

A workshop was also being held later that day with all Heads of Department and Service Directors to ensure the focus and direction of travel in alignment with the Strategic Plan and AOP.

Newcastle College Group:

The university executive was currently considering the implications of the merger of Newcastle College Group (NCG) with Carlisle College. The Vice Chancellor had held a positive meeting with the Chief Executive of NCG and established a firm commitment to work together for mutual benefit and for Cumbria.

Change programme:

The Vice Chancellor confirmed that the Voluntary Redundancy scheme had now closed and applications had been agreed by the panel. It was anticipated that by the end of July, the future shape and size of the university would be in place. The Vice Chancellor thanked all colleagues for their professionalism and commitment to the university during a challenging process.

Significant institutional projects for 2017-18:

It was confirmed that a full portfolio review was to be undertaken as a significant institutional project for 2017-18, to ensure that the institutional portfolio was considered and developed within the context of the Strategic Plan. The work was to be completed by December 2017, with the development of the forward strategy for the Ambleside Campus to take place simultaneously.

RDAP:

The Registrar & Secretary reported on the current position with regard to the institutional application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP).

The university's application had been considered by the QAA committee on 12 May, when it had been approved for progression to full scrutiny. An institutional lead contact had now been appointed and was in liaison with the Director of Research and Head of Graduate School to arrange a preliminary visit.

16:088 Deputy Vice Chancellor's Academic Report: AB16/59
Academic Board noted the detailed report as presented.

16:089 Students' Union Report: AB16/60
The reporting focussed on UCSU's comments and concerns around the Academic Regulations, as discussed under Minute 16:090 below.

Sabbaticals Officers' Report:

It was confirmed that reporting on the new Course Representative system would follow at the next meeting of Academic Board in October 2017.

A summary of Course Representative issues and resolutions was presented, and it was confirmed that the Students' Union was satisfied with the communication and responses from Heads of Department with regard to any issues.

Academic Board recorded formal thanks to the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers for their work during the 2016-17 academic year.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

16:090 Academic Regulations:

AB16/62

Detailed discussion took place on the proposed changes to the institutional Academic Regulations.

It was confirmed that focussed group meetings involving the Students' Union and internal colleagues had been held to further develop the Academic Regulations following the recommendations from the last meeting of Academic Board. UCSU feedback had shaped the proposals, particularly with regard to changes to the principles around extenuating circumstances and the removal of a proposal to change terminology around extenuating circumstances to mitigating circumstances.

During discussions, the following issues were highlighted for further focus and development:

- The need to ensure that individuals and departments were equipped to provide the best levels of support to the university's high number of students with learning difficulties.
Action: The Head of Department Nursing and Midwifery and Director of AQD to confirm the percentage of fees payable by students towards dyslexia assessments.
- Concerns were raised over the risk of the timetable not being able to support students re-registering to attend failed 20 credit modules alongside their ongoing Level 5 and 6 work, and the capacity to enable students to take time out to re-take further credit bearing modules in cases of more substantial failure.
- The main objections raised by the Students' Union with regard to the proposals to move to one reassessment opportunity at undergraduate level and to limit extenuating circumstances to one claim per assessment item. They had additionally raised concerns about the financial implications of the re-registration to re-attend proposal and had sought more detail on fees and funding implications.
- There was general support for the proposed changes to condonement regulations, however further review was urged to ensure the academic rigour of the proposals.
- There was general support for the proposal to change the requirements for progression from 80 to 100 credits.
- There was general support for the proposal to offer condonement at Levels 3 and 4 in addition to 5 and 6.
- It was suggested that shortening the timeline for re-assessment could support the process, student success, and student finance regulations. Peer-assisted student study was also suggested as a possible element to support student success.
- Further work was ongoing to re-assess current 2-tier assessment board processes and tie-ins to the reassessment opportunity timescales for students.
- Reconsideration was urged of the timing of submissions for extenuating circumstances, along with consideration of whether rulings on ECs could be delegated to a dedicated panel.

Academic Board agreed the following:

- To approve proposals to streamline Module Assessment Boards;
- To approve proposals to streamline University Assessment Boards;
- To approve proposals to remove the 'Waiver' of Regulations;

- To task the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Heads of Department, Directors of Service and Students' Union Sabbatical Officers with further review of the remaining proposals to identify a phased programme of amendment and implementation. This process to include robust supporting advice and guidance to students, the establishment of early identification and support mechanisms for students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and the development of support programmes for students undergoing reassessment.
- Remaining elements for further consideration and development were identified as follows:
 - To move to a single reassessment opportunity at undergraduate level;
 - To allow those students failing both original assessment and reassessment a single subsequent retake of each module;
 - To extend condonement at Levels 3 and 4 from 20 credits to 40 credits;
 - To increase progression requirements from Level 4 to Level 5 and from Level 5 to Level 6, from 80 to 100 credits;
 - To remove prescribed limits on reassessment for postgraduate taught awards;
 - To extend the 'fit to sit' principle for Extenuating Circumstances to coursework as well as examinations but to allow extenuating circumstances to be claimed for, after the result of the assessment is known, through the academic appeal process;
 - To streamline the Extenuating Circumstances panel and associated processes;
 - To limit Extenuating Circumstances to one claim per assessment item (normally).
- The Vice Chancellor proposed that single-issue meetings be held with the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Heads of Department, Director of AQD, Director of SAAS, Director of Student & Staff Services and Director of Information Services plus UCSU representatives to:
 - Identify amendments for possible implementation on a phased basis during 2017-18;
 - Consider what advice and guidance can be given to students, and when, to ensure they continue to make informed choices and decisions about their programmes of study with timely support and counselling;
 - Consider how to identify at an early stage that a student has specific learning needs and how to support these in a timely way;
 - Consider how best to support students to pass following difficulties, in terms of first sit to referral and beyond.
 - Consider condonement of failure at first reassessment.
 - Consult with Chairs of MABS and UABS for their views and input.
- Approval via Chair's Action to be sought for those proposals progressed for implementation during 2017-18. 'Before and after' scenarios to accompany the proposals.

16:091 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy:

AB16/61

It was confirmed that the changes requested at the last meeting of Academic Board had been incorporated into the Strategy document.

It was noted that work was still in progress to group identified actions under the accompanying Action Plan according to key strands within the institutional Strategic Plan.

Outcome: The final Strategy document was approved without amendment. The final Action Plan to proceed to Academic Board for approval at the October 2017 meeting.

16:092 Change programme and portfolio review:

AB16/63

Outcome: Academic Board noted the programme suspensions approved by the DVC Academic and approved the four programme withdrawals recommended by the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee.

16:093 Student Charter 2017-18:

AB16/64

A streamlined Student Charter was presented, which was recommended for approval with strong support from the Student Experience & Retention Committee and the Students' Union.

It was planned to make the revised Charter available to students through a series of high visibility actions and locations to drive awareness and engagement. It was hoped that the new streamlined version would be more meaningful and easier for students to engage with.

Action: The Director of the Institute of the Arts to work with the Director of AQD to develop a staff and student-led communication campaign with associated graphic design for materials.

During discussion, the following elements were suggested for inclusion:

- Detail of the behavioural expectations of students whilst off-site and during fieldwork, particularly with regard to appropriate clothing and equipment to ensure safety during risk bearing activities.
- More explicit reference to the University's collaborative partnership with the Students' Union and encouragement of students to commit to the Students' Union through participation and engagement to underpin the wider community of the university.
- The themes of aspiration-raising and learner attainment.
- Review of the language of the charter, in alignment with CMA and other legal requirements. The Director of AQD confirmed that formal legal advice had not been sought, as the charter was a statement of intent and as such did not form part of the terms and conditions of the formal legal contract entered into by students.

Action: The Registrar & Secretary and Director of AQD to conduct a final sense check from a legal perspective.

Outcome: Subject to minor amendments, Academic Board approved the Charter for implementation from September 2017.

16:094 Collaborative Provision Plan:

AB16/65

An updated Plan was presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor, as recommended by the Academic Strategy and Planning Committee.

A change of emphasis was reported, as the University was now looking to work more strategically with partners around growth, progression and relationships management to ensure a more focussed approach with partners within the region and nationally. Where appropriate, the institution was moving away from validation to franchise provision up to and including Level 5 with clearer progression routes to onward study at the University of Cumbria.

It was confirmed that partnerships currently being progressed had been approved in terms of the guidelines and process under the new Plan.

Pipeline initiatives were to proceed to the Academic Strategic and Planning Committee for consideration in the future, as a significant strand of the Committee's activity. The Director of AQD reported that the institutional collaborative provision guidelines and processes were also to be reviewed by AQD during the summer.

Outcome: It was agreed that there was a much closer focus and clarity within the Plan, however Academic Board also requested the inclusion of an FE Plan and distillation of the existing Relationship Management Framework to ensure clarity of key leads, processes and timescales. The final document to proceed for approval at the next meeting of ASPC, for subsequent reporting to Academic Board in October 2017.

16:095 Antisemitism on campus – Student Disciplinary Procedure:

AB16/66

Outcome: Following a request from the Chairman of the Campaign Against Antisemitism to use the charity's formal definition of antisemitism, it was proposed and agreed not to adopt the definition as stated, but to incorporate a reference to antisemitism within institutional student and staff procedures. It was confirmed that this course of action had the full support of the Students' Union, following consideration of the matter at their May 2017 Congress.

16:096 Honorary Awards:

AB16/67

Outcome:

- All nominations for Honorary Fellowships were approved for onward recommendation to University Board.
- The establishment of the new Alumnus of the Year Award and Chair's Approval of the first nomination was noted.
- The establishment of the new Student Fellowship Award was noted.

The Pro Vice Chancellor urged all colleagues to re-familiarise themselves with the criteria and process for awards, and to drive nominations moving forward. Proposals to align Honorary Fellows with the new Strategic Plan and associated developments were also reported.

ITEMS TO NOTE

16:097 Academic Governance:

AB16/68

European Standards and Guidelines:

The Director of AQD confirmed the requirement under the revised operating model for quality assessment for a detailed mapping to be undertaken of UoC Policy and Process to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

It was confirmed that the mapping would proceed to the University Board Academic Governance Committee for formal noting in August 2017.

Outcome: Academic Board noted the mapping.

Mid-year review of Academic Departments' AERs:

An in-year update on progress against AER actions was provided and it was confirmed that a number of actions were still in progress and subject to ongoing monitoring.

Action: The Vice Chancellor and Director of AQD to discuss out with the meeting to close down outstanding actions.

HEFCE APR outcomes in relation to quality and standards:

It was confirmed that HEFCE had introduced a new operating model for quality assessment in 2016-17 with the Annual Provider Review (APR) as the core mechanism to assess quality in HEIs. The key features of the APR were:

- It drew on existing data and information;
- Indicators and metrics would be used in a contextualised and rounded way;
- Existing risk processes would be used to make more consistent judgements about financial sustainability and good management and governance;
- Judgements on quality and standards would be reached through peer review

The new operating model for quality assessment included a requirement for the University Board to submit to HEFCE, on an annual basis, assurances about the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes and the reliability of degree standards. The assurance given by the Board about quality and standards, alongside those around financial sustainability, good management and governance would be used in the APR process to confirm that the University was discharging its responsibilities in all these areas. The deadline for submission of the APR was 1 December 2017.

Tie-ins to TEF metrics, overall NSS outcomes and the university's benchmark position were outlined, and it was confirmed that concerns had been flagged by HEFCE in relation to the University's non-continuation data and NSS results. The Vice Chancellor reported that an APR Action Plan had been submitted to HEFCE on 9 June, with a strong focus on both non-continuation and NSS. She expressed thanks to all colleagues involved in the significant work to develop and submit the Action Plan, which would be further aligned to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Action Plan.

Further updates would be provided to HEFCE on a quarterly basis to monitor progress.

TEF Year 2 outcomes:

This item had been covered under the Vice Chancellor's Report (Minute 16:087).

16:098 Support for students in reassessment Summer 2017-18:

AB16/69

The Vice Chancellor requested that all colleagues provide assurance that students in reassessment were signposted to relevant support.

In addition, students with specific questions or concerns should, at any point before their exam, be able to contact a named colleague for support.

Action: Support activity to be the focus of the next meeting of the DVC Academic's Group, with outcomes reported to the Vice Chancellor by the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic.

- 16:099 Preparedness for 2017-18 academic year:** AB16/70
- The Registrar & Secretary provided an update on the Preparedness Risk Action Plan as at 31 May, which had been presented to the University Board Audit & Risk Committee on 8 June.
- The Registrar & Secretary and Dean of Student Success were working with a focussed task group to ensure preparation for key activity.
- Any potential impact in terms of the institutional RDAP submission was being closely monitored, but was reported to be on track currently.
- Knowledge transfer to key colleagues by those staff leaving the organisation under the change programme had been identified as a key risk area, with measures in place to ensure PSRB compliance.
- It was confirmed that a watching brief on business development-related activity was included in the Plan under 'external partners', but overall the focus of the plan was on the student experience and directly and indirectly associated academic activity.
- A review of Health & Safety processes was also urged as part of the preparedness work. The Registrar & Secretary confirmed that the Health & Safety Committee was to review the Health & Safety Strategy and operating context following the change programme.
- A specific theme around staff development was urged for inclusion under the 2017-18 Risk Action Plan.
- It was confirmed that the Workload Allocation Model and links to SSRs would be an area of focus for the Vice Chancellor's Executive with the Senior Leadership Team at a forthcoming strategic away day.
- 16:100 Complete University Guide:** AB16/71
- A summary of outcomes of the Complete University Guide results was presented.
- Outcome:** Academic Board noted the report.
- The Registrar & Secretary confirmed that work was ongoing to review the outcomes of the WhatUni Student Awards to feed into future planning.
- 16:101 Associate Professors:** AB16/72
- Outcome:** Academic Board noted and endorsed the conferrals of title approved by the Professorial Titles Conferment Committee.
- The confidentiality of this item was stressed until formal communication of the titles was undertaken.
- The Pro Vice Chancellor confirmed the importance of the Professoriate in driving University initiatives and the reputation and standing of the institution.
- 16:102 Associate Partners:** Verbal
- Outcome:** Academic Board noted and endorsed the approval via Chair's Action by the Vice Chancellor of proposals for the institutional approval and continuation of approval of associate partner organisations.

16:103 Committee minutes:

AB16/73

The following minutes and associated key points were noted:

a) Learning & Teaching Committee – 30 May 2017

a)

- The SED Education updates and in-year actions were noted.
- The revised definitions for collaborative provision were agreed, as recommended by the Committee. It was confirmed that the revised definitions were more closely aligned with the sector.

b) SERC – 13 June 2017

b)

- The changes to the DLHE survey were noted.

16:104 Next meeting: Wednesday 25 October 2017 – details to be confirmed under the 2017-18 calendar of committee meetings

Papers deadline: Tuesday 17 October 2017, 5pm