

ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13 October 2022

Present: Professor Julie Mennell (Chair), Eleanor Armstrong, Emma Bales, Victoria Barbe, Dr Elizabeth Bates, Dr Jean Brown, Tom Davidson, Professor Tom Grimwood, Dr Karen Hadley, Dr Ruth Harrison-Palmer, Tina Harvey (until part way through item 22:16), Cathy Lambert, Dr Helen Manns, Jessica Robinson, Nigel Rourke, Professor Karen Shaw, Associate Professor Ian Sinker, Dr Mike Toyn, Professor Rob Trimble and Professor Brian Webster-Henderson (until part way through item 22:16).

In attendance: Kirsten Miller (item 22:01), Emma Shaw (Minutes)

22:01 Introduction

Verbal

The Vice Chancellor welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the academic year and introductions were made. Those present were asked to reflect on the purpose of Academic Board, the senior academic committee at the University. All staff worked hard and shared a passion for the region and putting students first, however it was not always the case that the University was seeing the results and outcomes that were being worked for. The Vice Chancellor commented that the University was at a particular point in its evolution, with its strategic significance and credibility being seen in the investment being made by government, meanwhile there were immediate challenges to be resolved, for example in relation to the NSS results and student continuation.

The Vice Chancellor set out how all present needed to make sure they were focused on the right things, that the means by which matters were being tackled was appropriate, and that time was being well used. One element of this was Academic Board's focus, with some changes to be made through the upcoming meetings.

Kirsten Miller was introduced, a previous student who had recently joined the University as a Graduate Intern. In order to remind members of the overarching purpose, she was asked to describe the three best things about the University. These were the supportive staff, the resources available for students, for example in the Library, and the way that things were taught.

The Director of Academic Quality and Development (AQD) facilitated a discussion in response to what had been raised, in particular with respect to Academic Board. The following comments were received:

- Honesty, openness and the ability to challenge were key attributes;
- Some staff felt that they would not be listened to and were disenfranchised because of this;
- With respect to Academic Board, staff provided feedback but did not receive a response. A suggestion was made that key messages from the discussion could be shared with staff to make them aware their feedback had been listened to;
- Communication and engagement was a key issue in the staff survey; it was noted that the feedback from this discussion would be taken into account in considerations of how best to address and improve in this area;

- A busy agenda left the focus on the papers and the important questions were sometimes missed;
- It was felt like there were elements of the University not working together, with hierarchies not helping;
- Action plans were produced but did not seem to have worked or dealt with the issues;
- Some students had poor experiences with staff being defensive and not accepting feedback well, when this has happened once students were less likely to provide feedback in future;
- It was commented that many of the papers submitted to Academic Board had been reviewed by a subcommittee, with duplication of input from some members of Academic Board;
- It was suggested that other staff from the institutes could attend the sub committees, allowing different voices to be heard and making the conversation richer;
- Whether the Academic Board minutes were available publicly was asked;
- An offer of observation could be made to staff to gain an insight of what was discussed at Academic Board;
- The overall volume of papers and the balance between compliance and strategy was highlighted for consideration, particularly with respect to SSQAC, which had a significant scope.

The Director of AQD summarised the discussion, highlighting the strong commitment from staff who sometimes feel that they achieve despite rather than because of the ways of working, the need for honest discussions, a willingness to challenge and for views to be listened to. There was a need for staff 'to listen to understand' feedback and not to appear defensive. There were practical considerations to be reviewed regarding the role of the academic representative and reflections on the purpose and membership of the sub committees. Comments had been made regarding communication, engagement, trust and finally the length, volume and balance of papers presented.

The Vice Chancellor thanked everyone for their comments and honesty. It was proposed a high-level summary of what was discussed at Academic Board be circulated following the meetings, with the purpose of creating a feedback loop to staff and increasing the visibility of discussions. It would be considered how the papers which had already been reviewed by sub committees could be managed. A suggestion was made of a core group of staff which may review the compliance papers, for example. There was a need for more consistency in the papers in terms of clarity of purpose and ask. A new approach should be adopted, with, where relevant, the criteria for how a matter should be considered agreed by Academic Board, followed by the presentation of a recommendation and actions for implementation once the matter had been considered. The Vice Chancellor would meet with the University Secretary to consider these actions and present to the next meeting. **Action:** CO to set up a meeting.

22:02	Apologies for absence	Verbal
	Apologies were received from Dr Colette Conroy, Dr Alex Dittrich, Alison Hampson and Dr Signy Henderson.	
22:03	Minutes and actions from the previous meeting	AB21/66 a) b)
	The minutes of the 14 June 2022 meeting were approved as an accurate record. The action log was noted.	

22:04 Chair's Actions

Verbal

Received The actions taken by the Chair, as Chair of Academic Board, since the last meeting

The Vice Chancellor reported signature of a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of a framework for the development of Natural Capital Laboratory, Australia. The revised Academic Regulations (taught) had been approved, as agreed at the previous meeting.

AGREED: To note the actions taken by the Chair

22:05 Terms of Reference and Membership

AB22/01

Received The outcomes of the Committee Effectiveness Review 2022, the Terms of Reference, Membership, Schedule of Business and the Committee Structure Chart for 2022/23

The Uni Sec spoke to the paper thanking those that had provided feedback via the committee effectiveness survey at the end of the previous academic year. She went on to set out that the terms of reference for Academic Board, and those for its sub committees, had been updated for the coming year. The tracked changes version of the document was available upon request. There were two committees which had not yet held their first meetings of the year; their terms of reference would be put forward for approval by Chair's action. The Vice Chancellor commented that the membership of all sub committees would be reviewed in response to the discussion earlier in the meeting. **Action:** Uni Sec.

In response to a query, Tom Grimwood's role on Academic Board would be reviewed. It was asked if the membership should include the new Director for the Centre for Digital Transformation; this addition was agreed. It was agreed that the terms of reference for the Professional Titles Conferment committee would be updated to the current version. **Action:** CO.

The Vice Chancellor stated that in light of the discussion, the schedule of business would be reviewed in terms of the shape and format of future meetings. The DVC(HE&I) added that matters relating to RKE would be added. It was agreed to take offline discussion into how much apprenticeships were embedded into business or whether they needed to be drawn out explicitly. **Action:** Uni Sec.

The Committee Structure chart was noted.

AGREED:

- To note the outcomes of the Committee Effectiveness Review 2022;
- To approve the Terms of Reference & Membership for Academic Board and its committees for 2022/23 and to delegate approval of any further changes to the Chair, as appropriate;
- To review the Schedule of Business for Academic Board for 2022/23 in light of discussions;
- To note the Committee Structure Chart for 2022/23.

22:06 Vice Chancellor's Report

Verbal

Received An overview of the current position

The Vice Chancellor reported that staff Q&A sessions had been planned, with updates on key matters, including the ITT accreditation appeal, to be communicated once known.

In the discussion that followed, it was commented that staff had concerns regarding the ITT appeal and the implications if the University was not successful. The Vice Chancellor responded that in the case of an unsuccessful appeal the financial sustainability of the University would not be at risk. She set out that a clear case for appeal had been submitted; following receipt of the outcome, if not successful, the University would deal with the consequences, noting that recruitment to ITT courses could continue until and beyond (with partner) September 2024.

It was commented that work was ongoing with School Direct partner schools, with the partners understanding the process.

It was asked if communications had been sent to staff in relation to this matter. The Vice Chancellor confirmed that staff had received an e-mail the day after the outcome of the accreditation process was communicated, with further information in the Global a few days later. Consideration would be given to why this had not been picked up on by all staff, and whether particular channels were better than others in terms of communication.

AGREED: To receive the report

The agenda order was changed at this point, items have been minuted as received.

22:07 Academic Strategy

AB22/03

Received The final version of the Academic Strategy

The DVC(A) introduced the paper and stated that, following updates from the last meeting and review from University Board, the final version of the Academic Strategy was presented. This would be communicated to all staff, following the launch of the Towards 2030 Strategy, with the addition of an infographic on student population and enhancement of the academic development section. The Vice Chancellor added that the scope of the strategy was important, with this being an opportunity to further reinforce with staff the range of programmes, study routes and student types at the University.

As part of the discussion, how the strategy would be implemented and brought to life was asked. The DVC(A) responded that three year rolling plans would be agreed by Academic Board, with consultation across the University included as part of their development. Part of the communication of the strategy would be via the VCE Q&A sessions.

It was asked when Academic Board would receive updates on the Barrow and Citadel projects. The Vice Chancellor responded that this could be considered for the schedule of business. **Action:** Uni Sec.

AGREED: To receive the final version of the Academic Strategy.

22:08 Student Outcomes Overview

AB22/04

Received The NSS Outcomes 2022, Graduate Outcomes Survey and ESFA apprenticeships KPI monitoring

The DVC(A) gave an overview of the headlines from the Graduate Outcomes Survey, noting that he would like to see specific actions to sustain the increases seen to date and in areas that had seen decreased

performance. With respect to the outcomes from a specific London top up programme, the University either needed to accept the position or support these students to step up in their employment outcomes.

The Vice Chancellor commented that it was difficult to get a sense of where the University wanted or was required to be from the paper, and what needed to be done to achieve this. The DVC(A) agreed that this would be made clearer for future reporting.

As related news, it was reported that twenty five apprentices from across the country had started on the new professional forester apprenticeship programme which had been created in collaboration with the Forestry Commission.

The ESFA data was commented upon, with it noted that whilst this data was received by other committees, it was important for Academic Board to have visibility of it as there were key metrics that the University needed to adhere to within the report.

AGREED: To receive the report

22:09 Revisions to Collaborative Provision Processes and Procedures AB22/07

Received The revisions made to the University's Collaborative Provision processes and procedures

The Director of AQD spoke to the paper stating it had been discussed at Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC) and prior to that at Collaborative Provision Sub Committee. The changes were outlined in the cover paper and it highlighted that detailed mapping had been undertaken on the revised OfS B conditions of registration to ensure requirements were embedded in processes.

In response to a question, the DVC(A) reported that the strategic focus of collaborations was covered by Academic Success and Planning Committee (ASPC). It was agreed that it was an area to consider further at Academic Board as part of the theme of getting to know the University better.

Action: DAQD / Uni Sec to add to business schedule, via ASPC.

AGREED: To approve the proposed revisions to the University's Collaborative Provision processes and procedures

22:10 Professorial Conferment Policy & Process AB22/08

Received The proposed enhancements to the Professorial Conferment Criteria

The DVC(HE&I) introduced the paper which had been reviewed by a working group and was presented for approval. The aim had been to make the criteria clearer with some procedural changes also required, however these would not require approval from Academic Board.

In response to a question, the DVC(HE&I) stated that the next round of applications would be in early November 2022.

It was asked whether there was a need to take the proposals through the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC). The DVC(HE&I) responded that this was not required as the criteria had not changed, only enhancements made.

The changes were welcomed. Consideration of the inclusion of a definition of the role, once appointed, was also welcomed. A suggestion was made to consider whether different grades of professor could be introduced. The DVC(HE&I) responded that career pathways would be part of the considerations when the policy and procedures were reviewed, with a link to development opportunities.

AGREED: To approve the proposed enhancements to the Professorial Conferment Criteria

22:11 New Office for Students B (Quality Conditions) and Implications

AB22/09
a) & b)

Received An update on actions agreed by Academic Board in June 2022 and plans to address the additional OfS requirement in relation to technical proficiency in English

The Director of AQD spoke to the first paper, which gave an update on the action plan drawn up in relation to the revised B conditions of registration noting that the majority of actions had been completed. Greater clarity was still awaited in terms of expectations regarding the retention of assessments.

With respect to the new requirement to assess proficiency in English, the Director of AQD referred to the second paper. As this would be a significant change, a need to review the options and any unintended consequences was proposed before a preferred option, proportionate and appropriate for the University, was put forward. It was also preferred not to make a change to requirements in-year. The Director of AQD set out that it was important to ensure appropriate academic support was in place for students and that staff were equipped to make the required judgements. The range of approaches seen across the sector were set out.

In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that the requirement be incorporated into the learning and teaching plan that was to be developed to deliver these aspects of the Academic Strategy, to ensure it was appropriately embedded.

It was agreed that input from academics was important, with it agreed that a session would take place to gather feedback from the institute academic staff representatives before looking at wider input from the academic body.

Other comments were made as follows:

- It was commented that grade descriptors were very important and that as marking criteria and rubrics were already in place, this could simply be added to the template. The DVC(A) responded that it would be easy in some subject areas but not in others.
- It was raised that academic involvement was important to ensure ease of delivery and consistency of application across programmes;
- It was noted that the Skills@Cumbria team were available to support the requirement, but that they were not English language experts;
- It was agreed that an Equality Impact Assessment would need to be completed to look at the impact for both students and staff;
- How CAPE would support the requirement was discussed. The DVC(A) set out that once there was agreement on how the requirement would be implemented, CAPE would be asked to support with training and development. The Director of AQD added that CAPE colleagues were

- aware of the requirement and that they would be involved alongside academic staff in inputting into the proposal;
- The need for the requirement to be simple and able to be applied consistently was emphasised, as was the need for staff to ensure students understood the requirements;
 - It was raised that with increasing numbers of international students, further support mechanisms may be required and consideration of alignment of English language proficiency thresholds with entry standards.

The DVC(A) summarised that workshops would be held to gather feedback on the three options, these would involve the institute representatives and the UCSU Academic Officer. A proposal would then be presented to the next meeting of Academic Board for approval. Once approved staff training would be developed and communications made to students, as and when required. The Vice Chancellor added that inclusion of the requirement in the learning and teaching action plan needed to be explicit as to when matters were a requirement and where there was some flexibility, to increase consistency. **Action:** DVC(A) / D AQD to progress and return to the next meeting of Academic Board with a proposal.

AGREED: To note the update and the approach to developing the University's response.

22:12 ITE Ofsted Action Plan Update

Received The Institute of Education's progress in relation to the Primary and Secondary Ofsted improvement plans, along with the approach to Ofsted preparedness.

AB22/10

The Vice Chancellor introduced the item by clarifying the difference between the Ofsted inspection and the ITT accreditation process, noting that the latter was a desk-based exercise. The upcoming Ofsted inspection was a re-assessment following the inspection earlier in the year which was the first the University had been through under the new inspection framework. As with many other institutions, the University's outcome had dropped under the new framework, with it having been assessed as requiring improvement.

The Director of the Institute of Education spoke to the paper, highlighting the changes made since the last inspection and key areas of focus. She confirmed that the actions were either complete or in progress to the required timeframes.

In the discussion that followed, it was asked if the lessons learnt could be applied to other areas. The Director of AQD responded that a monthly Ofsted Apprenticeship monitoring group had been set up which had reviewed the questions which might be asked and had benefited from the experience within the Institute.

The Vice Chancellor thanked the staff in the Institute of Education for their work in this area and asked that it be raised if there was more support that would be useful from other parts of the University.

AGREED: To note the update.

22:13 Academic Calendar

Verbal

Received An update on the Academic Calendar for 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26.

The Director of AQD reported that work on the draft academic calendars for the next three years was in progress, with pressure points being looked at with academic staff.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that the timing of assessment boards and appeals would be looked into to design out any issues in the new calendars.

It was agreed that the Director of AQD would present a paper to the Vice Chancellor to review, with it anticipated that it would then be circulated to Academic Board with a recommendation regarding approval. **Action:** Director of AQD.

AGREED: To receive the update

22:14 Annual Report of CMA Compliance 2021/22 AB22/12

Received The Annual Report on Compliance with consumer protection law and associated Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidance.

The Director of AQD spoke to the paper setting out that Academic Board could have confidence that the University was operating in line with Consumer Protection Law and CMA guidance. She went on to highlight details of the self-assessment activities undertaken to date and areas that needed ongoing focus.

The Vice Chancellor concluded that work would always be ongoing in this dynamic area, however the report gave reasonable confidence that the University was compliant with the requirements.

AGREED: To receive the report

22:15 B3 Condition of Registration and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) AB22/13

Received An update on outcomes of consultation and forward planning

The DVC(A) introduced the paper highlighting that the data relating to the B3 condition of registration and the TEF had been received from the OfS. A working group had been formed to review the data, with no significant issues identified to date. A paper would be presented to the next meeting of Academic Board with more detail.

AGREED: To note the update

The second half of the meeting took the form of a workshop focusing on the Student Experience through the lens of the NSS (discussion of several papers were included)

- 22:16 NSS Workshop**
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| Received | • Students' Union Matters - a report from the Students' Union Academic Officer | AB22/02 |
| | • NSS Action Planning 2022 - the summary of actions taken to date, and future plans, in response to the results of NSS 2022 | AB22/05 |
| | • Director NSS updates - an update in relation to their Institute | AB22/06 |
| | • Student Services Update - an update on Student Services | AB22/11 |

The Director of the Centre of Excellence in Paramedic Practice (DCEPP) chaired this part of the meeting. Members were asked to reflect upon the papers provided surrounding the student experience, through the lens of the NSS, and to give thought and reflection on how improvement could be approached.

The following comments were received, starting with input from the institute representatives:

- Positives were drawn in the embracement of change and teams which had come together to share best practice;
- Staff were disappointed with the results and a nurturing approach was suggested to move forward;
- Feedback had been received that services did not consistently and effectively support academic staff or support the improvement of practice, and that communication between different areas could be improved;
- It was reported some staff were not sure what to do in response to the NSS results, with some feeling that the approach was too top down with their views not being listened to;
- The Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE) was described positively, fostering welcoming, open and honest discussions;
- The feedback received from students in year and the NSS results did not align, with it questioned whether there may be misinterpretation of the NSS questions by students;
- The NSS Framework had been useful with some good results achieved;
- The balance of time available to support students to develop skills was worthy of review, with the academic structure particularly in need of review at level 6 in the area in question;
- A comment was made of the higher number of students requiring additional support with staff frustrated that they were not able to deliver the requirements and support students as they would like to;
- Further training on how to adapt teaching to support students with greater needs was identified as being required in some areas;
- It was commented that programmes being delivered by the same staff had achieved different scores in terms of student satisfaction which made it difficult to understand root causes of the results;
- The NSS Framework was problematic for some staff, with some feeling unsupported.

Moving on to wider inputs the following points were raised:

- Whether there was a miss-match of expectations was suggested, with there being an expectation that an academic working in a university would be open to feedback by any route and have the resilience to receive feedback without needing to be nurtured;
- The need for a whole University approach was discussed;
- It was seen as valuable to see things from a student perspective and to ensure the student voice was being heard and feeding into planning for the University's response to the NSS results;
- Whether the UCSU had provided enough in terms of student support and open day presence was suggested. Each campus was different, with different student demographics and needs, which were important to consider;
- Some wider issues with respect to the basics being right were raised, for example, a lack of self service where it would be

expected by students, the approach to student communications, and difficulty in accessing student policies, all of which would be taken forward in the creation of the Registry.

The DCEPP summarised, highlighting the sharing of best practice as a positive, with areas for consideration being how staff were engaged with so it was not a top down approach to making improvements; the support provided to implement the plans; the balance of the bigger picture with the detail; and how to engage and get further feedback from students to support enhancements.

The Vice Chancellor thanked everyone for their contributions which had been actively listened to and understood.

She asked those present to provide a comment on what they would like to see done or stop being done in order to improve the student experience.

These were:

- Stop seeing the student experience as an object within itself and move to where it is more of a relationship with the University;
- Recognise that the answer is in a collective, collaborative approach;
- Tap into the expertise of tutor teams;
- Not to underestimate the importance of the relationship staff have with students;
- Focus on what is going well and draw upon lessons;
- A focus on building the relationship with the student from when they apply;
- Make it easier for staff to navigate their way around policies and procedures;
- To be clear what will be delivered and to deliver it;
- To have a better understanding of student expectations and delivering on them;
- To improve two-way communications to better understand where the barriers are and increase the time listening to staff;
- Make plans early, i.e. work on those for next year now;
- Learn lessons from what has been successful in other areas;
- Utilise student engagement via the student representatives;
- Celebrating success and discussing openly when things are not going well.

The Vice Chancellor thanked everyone for their contributions which VCE would reflect upon, and update at the next meeting. **Action:** DVC(A)

22:17	Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-25	AB22/14
Received	The outcomes of monitoring of the APP for 2020/21	
AGREED:	To note the outcomes	
22:18	Senior Academic Board Committees	
Received	Minutes from the meetings of Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee 13 September 2022	SSQAC22/17
AGREED:	To receive the minutes	

22:19 University Board Minutes

UB21/76a

Received Minutes from the meetings of University Board 19 May 2022

AGREED: To receive the minutes

22:20 Forward Meetings

Verbal

Thursday 15 December 2022

Thursday 9 March 2023

Tuesday 20 June 2023