

ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 December 2022

Present: Professor Julie Mennell (Chair 22:21 – 22:25), Professor Rob Trimble (Chair 22:26 – 22:38), Eleanor Armstrong (until 22:36), Emma Bales, Victoria Barbe, Dr Jean Brown, Tom Davidson (from 22:27), Dr Alex Dittrich (until 22:30), Professor Tom Grimwood, Dr Karen Hadley, Dr Ruth Harrison-Palmer (from 22:23), Dr Signy Henderson, Cathy Lambert, Dr Helen Manns, Jessica Robinson, Nigel Rourke (from 22:23), Professor Karen Shaw, Associate Professor Ian Sinker, Professor Amanda Taylor-Beswick, Dr Mike Toyn and Professor Brian Webster-Henderson (from 22:23).

In attendance: Emma Shaw (Minutes) Julie Armstrong (Observer), Paul Armstrong (22:29), Andrew Heron (22:35), Paula Kennerley (22:35)

22:21 Apologies for absence Verbal

Apologies were received from Dr Elizabeth Bates, Dr Colette Conroy and Tina Harvey.

22:22 Minutes and actions from the previous meeting AB22/15
AB22/16

The minutes of the 13 October 2022 meeting were approved as an accurate record. The action log was noted.

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

22:23 Senior Academic Board Committees

Received	- Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee 15 November 2022	SSQAC22/40
	- Academic Strategy and Planning Committee 20 September and 28 November 2022	ASPC22/11 ASPC22/33
	- Research Knowledge Exchange Committee 27 September 2022 and verbal update on the meeting held on 6 December 2022	RKE22/12 Verbal

The Vice Chancellor reported that the format of the agenda had been changed in response to the discussion at the last meeting with respect to representation and potential duplication across different committees. The need to review the focus, business and membership of Academic Board and its sub committees was noted.

With respect to the agenda for the meeting, the Vice Chancellor set out that there was too much coming to the meeting, and without enough specificity with respect to the ask of Academic Board. Members of Academic Board were asked for their thoughts with the following feedback received:

- There was duplication of discussion of papers at Academic Board and its sub committees, with many of the same staff being on both entities. It was suggested that, for example, Heads of Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience could attend SSQAC and the Director attend Academic Board, with this arrangement also providing an opportunity for staff development;
- It was suggested that Academic Board membership was imbalanced, with a need for it to be more academically driven;

- A clear remit was needed for each committee as, for example, Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC) could feel like a rehearsal for Academic Board;
- It was suggested that it be investigated why staff were not volunteering to sit on committees, where membership was not determined by role;
- Institute level deliberative committees were suggested, with these flowing into the university level committees, where appropriate. It was noted that consideration would need to be given to how the sub committees were replicated, particularly within smaller institutes;
- It was commented that a potential reason behind the similar memberships could be due to the relatively flat structure of the University;
- The large remit of SSQAC was at times a challenge, with the focus on student experience limited;
- The volume of the items to review was raised, with either too much coming to Academic Board or a need to meet more frequently;
- The importance of enabling people to voice their opinions, if needed via anonymous feedback routes, was noted;
- It was noted that it was important to keep in mind the gravitas of Academic Board and how being a member was more than attendance at meetings, with a suggestion that there were more discussions outside of the meetings.

In concluding the Vice Chancellor thanked everyone for their feedback. The DVC (A) added that it had been useful to receive the feedback, with the approach to identifying problems, irrespective of structure, as well as tackling issues promptly was fundamental to success.

AGREED: To receive the minutes and note the matters discussed.

22:24 Chair's Actions

AB22/17

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

The Vice Chancellor reported that the actions that she had taken since the last meeting, as Chair of Academic Board, were included in the paper. One of the actions had been approval of the Academic Calendar for 2023/24. Following circulation of the paper feedback had been received from the academic staff representatives on Academic Board which was being reviewed by the Director of AQD. The Director of AQD added that discussions would take place with the academic staff representatives regarding the pinch points in semester two which were a challenge across the sector in terms of marking and moderation timeframes. This would be fed back to Academic Board via the action log. **Action:** Director of AQD.

The academic staff representatives were thanked for their feedback, which was constructive and helpful. They were encouraged to keep providing feedback the help the University improve.

AGREED: To note the actions taken by the Chair

22:25 Matters to note

Received • The Student Services Annual Report

AB22/18

• NSS update	AB22/19
• The Student Casework Annual Report 2021/22	AB22/20
• The External Examiners Annual Summary Report	AB22/21
• A Summary of the Annual Review of Validation	AB22/22
• Access and Participation Plan Update	AB22/23
• TEF Provider submission Update	AB22/24
• The Research Degree Programmes Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22	AB22/25
• Knowledge Exchange Framework 2 feedback	AB22/26
• The RKE Institutional Income forecast	AB22/27
• The HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2022-24	AB22/28
• The annual report from AGC to University Board for 2021/22	AB22/29
• Minutes from the meetings of University Board 14 July 20 and 20 October 2022	UB21/97a UB22/14a

The Vice Chancellor stated that no matters had been flagged by members of Academic Board in relation to papers in this section of the agenda, so she was not expecting to discuss them in detail, however she raised a few observations:

- With respect to the Student Services Annual Report, the feedback from SSQAC needed to be seen by Academic Board;
- With regards to the NSS Update, it was not clear what SSQAC was doing in relation to the NSS, with significant variability in the institute action plans to the extent that they did not provide assurance that the key priority areas were being appropriately addressed.
- On the NSS, Academic Board needed to be confident that arrangements for briefing students, including what and when, were appropriate to avoid the same pitfalls as previously in terms of timings.
- With regards to the Student Casework Annual Report, a large number of actions were identified with no detail of responsibility or timeframe; the actions needed to be prioritised and this information added along with actions already taken or in train.
- The Student Casework report highlighted the large number of appeals in the Institute of Health with a significant number that were upheld – whether this issue was identified at the time, the drivers for it and how it was and is being responded to were aspects that needed to be covered in the report.
- Lastly, how the various research and knowledge exchange papers on the agenda had influenced the draft Research and Knowledge Exchange plan was of interest.

The Vice Chancellor commented that Academic Board needed to focus on the right areas, with actions taken to identify and tackle underlying causes of issues, promptly at the time.

The Interim Academic Registrar (IAR) responded that a version of the Student Casework Annual Report 2021/22 was available that included detail of action owners and deadlines, but the feedback to prioritise the actions would be taken onboard. The Dean for Student Success (DeanSS) added that the number of appeals was high as retrospective extenuating circumstances could only be submitted via the appeals process. In response to a question on whether this had been changed, the IAR

responded that work on the relevant policy would be prioritised, with it investigated whether any change could be made at this time. **Action:** IAR.

AGREED: To receive the reports and minutes

22:26 Vice Chancellor's Report

Verbal

It was noted that the Vice Chancellor would provide updates throughout the other agenda items.

22:27 Students' Union Matters

AB22/30

Received A report from the Students' Union Academic Officer

The UCSU Academic Officer (UCSU AO) spoke to the paper starting by setting out the conclusions from the analysis of responses to question 26 in the 2022 NSS and the actions being taken in response. With respect to the current challenges with the cost of living, the Christmas gift appeal was drawn to Academic Board's attention and it noted that the Students' Union were looking into which areas would benefit from support from the University, for example, the cost of travel to placements.

The UCSU AO reported that the position had been taken to remain neutral regarding the outcome of the ITT accreditation appeal whilst students' feelings and concerns were explored. The Vice Chancellor responded that the communication received from the Students' Union was excellent and would be shared with Academic Board. The Director of the Institute of Education was assembling a working group with respect to the next steps, with the UCSU AO to be part of discussions regarding how to involve the Students' Union.

The Vice Chancellor set out that the outcome from the ITT process had not been as the University would have preferred, with the expectation having been that it would be successful in round one. There had been a strong evidence base for the appeal, which had been tested externally, however no appeals had been successful. The Vice Chancellor set out that she was confident that there was a clear position going forward, working in partnership to deliver the Qualified Teacher Status element of a teaching qualification from September 2024. Q&A sessions led by the Director of the Institute of Education had been organised and advertised.

The UCSU AO continued speaking to her report by stating that work was ongoing to remedy why feedback was not being received whilst students were studying and only being raised via the NSS. As part of this, the student representative system was being revamped.

The DVC(A) responded to the matters raised in the paper regarding students' understanding of communication from the University relating to reassessments. With an assessment period coming up this needed to be addressed swiftly. It was agreed that the IAR and DeanSS would review the communications prior to the next round of assessment boards; it was suggested that a visual representation may help some students. **Action:** IAR / Dean SS.

It was commented that in some areas it was difficult to recruit student representatives with academic staff not knowing what further action could be taken to support their recruitment. The UCSU AO responded that further work could be done on what was preventing students from becoming representatives and how this could be resolved. The DVC(A)

noted that the increase in student representatives was welcome, as was any further work on both recruitment and keeping them engaged.

AGREED: To receive the report

22:28 Research and Knowledge Exchange Plan

AB22/31

Received The Research and Knowledge Exchange Plan

Noting that the plan had been reviewed at the recent Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) with the feedback from RKEC yet to be incorporated, the Director of Applied Research and Knowledge Exchange (D of AR&KE) spoke to the paper, starting by setting out how the plan had been drafted, using the Academic Strategy as the starting point. Polarised views had been provided through the consultation that had been undertaken, which required some strategic decisions to be made on how to progress. It was proposed to separate out development of the plan into two phases with the first to resolve simple actions and the second to address the more strategic issues over a longer period of time. A review of Research Centres was also ongoing with overlapped with the RKE Plan.

In the discussion the Chair commented that it was expected that the RKE Plan would include some of the strategic enablers, with these not being left for the next stage. An example of simple action was asked for. The D of AR&KE responded that these were actions that were measurable and could be implemented quickly such as the number of research outputs and grants submitted.

It was commented that the relative priorities of research and knowledge exchange needed to be clarified with staff often busy delivering teaching and supporting students and not accessing their RASA time for research and knowledge exchange related activities. The Chair responded that this was an issue that the plan needed to address.

It was suggested that when line managers were not research active it was more difficult for them to advise and support others to build research skills, with a greater reference to the expertise of academic line managers suggested for inclusion.

The Chair asked that clear links be made to the Academic Strategy, with objectives and key metrics set out so that progress could be measured.

Following a discussion regarding when the plan would be ready for approval, the Vice Chancellor emphasised that the agreed timescales should be met. **Action:** D of AR&KE to put forward a revised RKE Plan for approval at the next meeting of Academic Board.

AGREED: To receive the current draft of the RKE Plan

22:29 Ofsted

AB22/32

Received The Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Report 2021-22 and Quality Improvement Plan 2022-23, and the ITE Self Evaluation Documentation

The DVC(A) stated that the ITE papers, as detailed on the agenda, would not be discussed at the meeting, with the focus on the apprenticeships documentation. The ITE documentation would undergo further scrutiny before it was reviewed by Academic Board, including taking some good practice from the Apprenticeships documentation into account.

The Director of AQD spoke to the Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan which had been reviewed by the Apprenticeship Steering Group and SSQAC. Feedback had been received from an external which was being acted upon and would lead to updated documentation. A decision was yet to be made as to whether or not to submit the documentation to Ofsted. Challenge was welcomed, with Academic Board a key element of the governance structure.

The Vice Chancellor noted that she had provided detailed feedback to the Director of AQD. She went on to comment that the documents were excellent, demonstrating what had been put in place and why. Three key areas were highlighted for further emphasis: the strategic focus of the University supporting the national skills agenda, with work ongoing strategically with new sectors and with a large number of very small employers; some examples needing to be clearer that they were due to institutionally led initiatives; and the expertise that the University has and the way it brings expertise in in different ways to inform and deliver, for example with the Professors of Practice.

All involved were thanked for their work in this area. The DVC(A) stated that a decision would be made in terms of the timeframe for submission to Ofsted.

AGREED: To approve the Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Report 2021-22 and Quality Improvement Plan 2022-23 subject to the comments made.

22:30 Assessment of Proficiency in English: Additional Response to Revised OfS B Conditions

AB22/33

Received The recommendation for the Assessment of Proficiency in English

The Chair set out that the University's response to the revised Condition of Registration with the OfS had been discussed at the meeting in October 2022, following which a workshop had taken place. The Director of AQD reported that the three options that had been presented to Academic Board in October had been discussed at the workshop, with the proposal outlined in the paper agreed to be the appropriate approach for the University. If approved it would take effect from August 2023 as although it was a small change it was significant and required support for academic teams, for example in terms of changes to assessment briefs, and would need to be communicated to students. Implementing such a change in year had not seemed to be the correct approach.

Feedback included:

- Support for staff with a disability such as dyslexia needed to be considered in the staff development to be provided and support considered;
- That there was a typo in criteria 3, where 'wholly' should read 'partly';
- It was suggested that more time be given to deliver some actions, with the deadlines allowing for this;
- A creative approach to staff development would be advantageous, for example using videos, to build knowledge and understanding;
- Partner Colleges would also need advance notification of the change.

The Director of AQD agreed to update the proposal based on the feedback. **Action:** Director of AQD

It was agreed to approve the proposal with the amendments suggested.

AGREED: To approve the recommendation subject to the amendments suggested

22:31 Student Support Plan 2022, including the Student Health and Wellbeing Plan

AB22/34

Received The Student Support Plan and the Student Health and Wellbeing Plan

The Director of Student Services (DSS) spoke to the paper, starting by setting out that the Student Support Plan was aligned with the key pillars of the Towards 2030 Strategy and that the aims and objectives aligned with the student support aspects of the Academic Strategy. The main feedback from SSQAC had been a query regarding wider support offered to students from other areas, for example the placement team. There was one area to close off in terms of the Student Health and Wellbeing plan with an alignment to the timetabling policy needed over the length of taught sessions, this was being worked on with the IAR.

It was asked if the feedback from SSQAC had been incorporated into the plan; the DSS responded that it had not. It was commented that the wider support offered, from areas outside of the Student Support Service, should be included in the plan

The level of student feedback which had informed the plan was welcomed, as was the clear alignment with the Towards 2030 Strategy and the University being a University of Sanctuary.

It was commented that the metrics did not reflect the ambitions in the plan; how the broader changes in approach would be picked up was asked. The DSS responded that the metrics had been taken from the Academic Strategy.

It was agreed that the Student Support Plan was approved subject to the actions from SSQAC being completed and the feedback received from Academic Board taken into account. The final version of the plan would come to the next Academic Board for information. **Action:** DSS

AGREED: To approve the Student Support Plan subject to the revisions agreed.

22:32 Student Outcomes Reporting

AB22/35

Received A report on Retention, Student Attainment (Upper Second and First Class Degrees) and Apprenticeships data

The DVC(A) stated that the position in terms of attainment and retention was not at the required standard and was now subject to a higher level of external scrutiny in terms of the OfS B3 condition of registration and the TEF. There had been a significant decrease in attainment with it not yet understood why, with some of the issues relating to retention being self-inflicted, for example in terms of the timings of assessment boards and intercalation policies.

He went on to set out that accountability and ownership of these issues across the University was not where it needed to be, with it a collective

issue to resolve. One aspect of this was the availability of data and the ability to understand and act on it in a timely manner. In addition to delivering the actions in the paper, work would be undertaken to understand what was behind the attainment issue; to understand why it wasn't known about earlier; and to look at policies etc to see how they impact in other parts of the student journey. A workshop was being arranged for after the submission of the TEF which would focus on the availability of the data, where the data was reviewed, relevant policies and processes and the accountability and responsibilities of key roles.

It was commented that there was a need to improve the data available to assessment boards so that they could understand what was happening in real time. The DVC(A) responded that in order to assist in identifying solutions it would need to be known if this was a resource or systems issue.

The Vice Chancellor commented that as the leader of an academic function the Institute Directors should feel empowered and accountable. The process of chairing an assessment award board should provide them with excellent insight into details such as areas of underperformance. Institute Directors were asked to consider what was holding them back from this position and to feed into the considerations.

The Vice Chancellor went on to ask that the work to be undertaken looked at the scale of unclassified degrees awarded and the outturn in the Institute of Health, among the other aspects highlighted, to investigate what had happened with the aim to implement changes to prevent it happening in the future. It was emphasised that this was a collective challenge.

AGREED: To receive the report

22:33 UoC Student Feedback Mechanisms

AB22/36

Received An overview of student Feedback Mechanisms in use across the University

The DVC(A) welcomed the overview noting that the feedback mechanisms needed to be revisited across the University. It was agreed that for the next meeting a paper would be provided giving a clear outline of what technology could support the gathering of feedback from students and at what cost, and setting out the essential points when feedback needed to be sought and how the feedback would be best analysed. Input from key members of Academic Board would expect to be taken into account in the drafting of the paper. **Action:** DeanSS

AGREED: To receive the paper and commission further work for the next meeting.

22:34 Honorary Awards nominations

AB22/37

Received A paper with nominations from the Honorary Awards Committee

The Uni Sec presented the honorary award nominations as detailed in the paper.

In the discussion it was flagged that one of the honorary doctorate nominations would be the second award to an individual in the area of occupational health which may give a perception that it was a large part of the University's provision.

With respect to another of the honorary doctorate nominations, it was questioned whether an honorary doctorate should be awarded to an individual who was already an honorary fellow and had not engaged particularly with the University. It was agreed to reconsider this individual's nomination outside of the meeting. **Action:** Uni Sec / Vice Chancellor.

AGREED: To endorse for recommendation to University Board the nominations, except for the individual that was an existing honorary fellow.

22:35 Student Numbers Overview

Presentation

Received A presentation on the University's student composition

The Deputy Director of Finance and Planning (DDF&P) introduced himself and the Academic Planning Manager (APM). They spoke to the presentation, which detailed the University's students in 2021/22, with the data cut in different ways, at university and institute level. The presentation ended with information about a new tool in Tableau that would be launched in the new year.

The DVC(A) noted that details of the composition of the University's students would be added to the Academic Strategy.

It was asked whether research could be conducted to understand the potential shift of full time students onto apprenticeship. The APM responded that this could be looked into, but it was difficult to assess without directly asking students.

The increase in students with known disabilities was commented on, with further consideration suggested to be needed on how to amend delivery to support these students. The need for disability assessments to be in place rapidly was highlighted as an issue as numbers increased.

Whether all staff had access to Tableau was asked. The APM responded that the majority of those present would have a license and if not there were licenses available. Training could also be provided as data could be exported and shared with other staff.

It was asked to what extent colleagues were engaging with Tableau and how staff could help the planning team to help them get to the bottom of the issues they were looking at. The APM responded that it could be utilised more with only 22% of licence holders being active users. In response to the second question, knowing the reason for the question helped the team determine the best data to respond with. A Director added that further training would be welcomed.

The DDF&P and APM were thanked for the presentation.

AGREED: To receive the presentation.

22:36 University AOP 2022-2025: Approach to Portfolio Development and Positioning

Presentation

Received A presentation

The Vice Chancellor set out that a session on the approach to portfolio development and positioning was required in order to explore the area

and understand the opportunities and challenges. The invitation would be extended to colleagues from the sub committees. **Action:** CO to arrange.

The DVC(A) spoke to his presentation, starting by providing the context to the work, which was an AOP objective for the year. He noted that the University's diversification strategy had been successful, however it had led to some consequences that needed to be worked through. The approach to the work was set out, with the aim to address four themes; programmes with unviable numbers; developing new areas of provision; increasing volumes on existing programmes; and developing value propositions. The outcomes of the work would be reported back to Academic Board.

It was commented that support was required from marketing and recruitment for postgraduate courses, with programmes being validated but not marketed sufficiently internally or externally. The DVC(A) responded that marketing and recruitment was a theme in the work. The Director of Marketing and Recruitment added that campaigns were now in place.

AGREED: To note the approach to Portfolio Development and Positioning

22:37 Matters for Onward Communication

Verbal

Received Agenda items to be fed back to institute colleagues and staff

The Vice Chancellor reported that in response to feedback at the last meeting a summary would be circulated of the meeting highlights.

Action: Uni Sec.

22:38 Forward Meetings

Verbal

Thursday 9 March 2023
Tuesday 20 June 2023