

ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2020

Present: Rob Trimble (Chair), Julie Mennell (from 20:21), Emma Bales, Jean Brown, Colette Conroy, Diane Cox, Lucy Haddath, Karen Hadley, Alison Hampson, Signy Henderson, Helen Manns, Kath Norris, Steven McCarthy-Grunwald, Jessica Robinson, Nigel Rourke, Ian Sinker, Kaz Stuart, Susie Wilson

In attendance: James Bellhouse

20:01 Apologies for absence: Verbal
Apologies were received from: Elizabeth Bates, Jeremy Colclough, Ruth Harrison Palmer, Amanda Lane, Ian Todd, Katie Walker-Small, Chris Watson, Brian Webster-Henderson

20:02 Minutes and actions of the previous meeting AB19/67
The minutes of the 22nd June 2020 meeting were approved as an accurate record. (a)

The action log was reviewed with updates given as follows: (b)

It was agreed that the actions for the Students' Union would be picked up by the DforSS with the new Sabbatical Officers.

With respect to the action from minute 19:04: Student Union Matters, and the proposal for '*each Institute to gather their student representatives together with key staff within the Institute, possibly once a semester.*' It was noted that this would be undertaken in a digital format and that possible formats to facilitate this were being explored.

It was reported that the data on staff completion of CMA training (minute 19:17) had been reviewed again at the most recent meeting of the CMA Compliance Group and information on all staff who had engaged with the training had been sent out to Institute Directors. It was noted this was being followed up by Institute Directors and would be discussed at the next CMA Compliance Group. As such this action could be marked as complete.

With respect to the action from minute 18:71: Professional Doctorates, it was noted that the validation event had taken place and subject to conditions and enhancements they would be ready to sign off and advertise from November. As such this action could be marked as complete.

The DVC(A) thanked colleagues for completing outstanding actions and asked that items still marked as 'in progress' be completed in the time frame specified.

20:03 Terms of Reference and Membership AB20/01
Received a) The Terms of Reference & Membership for Academic Board for 2020/21 a)
b) The Schedule of Business for Academic Board for 2020/21 b)

- c) The final outcomes of the Committee Effectiveness Review 2020 and the resulting Terms of Reference and Memberships for Deliberative Committees for 2020/21.

c)

The University Secretary spoke to the papers noting that the report on the annual review of Committee Effectiveness had been received at the last meeting of Academic Board in June 2020. The Board's attention was drawn to the actions undertaken as a result of the feedback, and the recommendations for committee chairs and secretaries to consider on an ongoing basis.

Academic Board was asked to approve the Terms of Reference and Membership for Academic Board for 2020/21; the Schedule of Business for the year; the final outcomes of the Review of Committee Effectiveness 2020; and resulting terms of reference and membership for the deliberative committees for 2020/21. It was noted that once approved, the terms of reference and membership for the deliberative committees for 2020/21 would be placed on StaffHub.

The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) was agreed to be added to the Schedule of Business, the frequency would change year on year when the schedule of business was considered. **Action:** Uni Sec.

Updates to membership and role titles were proposed by members of the Board, including that HR representation on the Knowledge and Research Committee to be organised. **Action:** Uni Sec to update the document.

It was noted that from January 2021, the Director of the Institute of Arts would chair the Research Ethics Panel.

- AGREED:**
- To approve the Terms of Reference & Membership for Academic Board for 2020/21 subject to amendments.
 - To approve the Schedule of Business for Academic Board for 2020/21 subject to the addition of KEF update as a substantive item.
 - To approve the final outcomes of the Committee Effectiveness Review 2020 and the resulting Terms of Reference and Memberships for Deliberative Committees for 2020/21 subject to amendments.

20:04 Vice Chancellor's Report

AB20/02

Received An update from the Vice Chancellor including the current draft of the Towards 2030 strategy

The DVC(A) spoke to the report, noting that it had been a positive start to the Academic Year due to careful planning, execution and hard work by all across the University in the preceding months.

As the Assessment Board period came to an end he reported that the Emergency Academic Regulations looked to have had the desired impact to ensure that no students were disadvantaged as a result of Covid19. Thanks were given to staff involved in the design and execution of the Emergency Regulations as well as those involved in supporting students through the 2019/20 academic year.

The significant work undertaken across the University in preparation for 2020/21 delivery had come to fruition with staff and students back on campus in the limited manner planned for under the blended model of

delivery. Feedback to date indicated that staff and students had been adapting well to the new way of working.

The DVC(A) reported that, whilst the student recruitment position for 2020/21 still needed to settle, the numbers to date were better than where they had been expected to be.

It was noted that there had been two pleasing sets of results since the last meeting of Academic Board, with both the Graduate Outcomes and the NSS results positive, reflective of the substantial amounts of work undertaken. The DVC(A) set out that the aim was to minimise fluctuation in student outcomes between years, once the desired position had been attained. The impact of the improvements were reported to have fed through to the improvement of 18 places in the recently published Guardian University league table, with a smaller increase seen in the Sunday Times league table.

The need to continue to develop the University's business while dealing with the implications of the pandemic was noted.

The DVC(A) confirmed that the University has systems in place to deal with any outbreaks of Covid19, as well as contingency plans in the event that the University needs to progress through the DfE education tiers to reduce the element of face to face delivery. Work to look at arrangements for semester two was about to commence.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:05 Institute Representatives

Verbal

Received Updates and comments via Institute Staff Representatives

The DVC(A) asked Institute Representatives for their input, including any comments they had following on from the Vice Chancellor's report.

Institute of Health

It was reported that it had been the most challenging start to a semester ever with colleagues working well together and trying their best in difficult times. It was noted that it had been necessary to deliver some teaching sessions multiple times due to the Covid19 restrictions, with difficulties also being experienced with finding placements for students. Students were appreciative of the support being offered by staff, with a lot of positive feedback being received. It was noted that some delivery of teaching was taking place both online and face to face at the same time and that this was going well with IT help.

It was noted that there was further work to do to enhance delivery for students, with the lack of ability to use closed captions in Blackboard Collaborate raised as an example that was causing difficulties for students with hearing difficulties.

Institute of Education

The time put in by staff to make their online delivery as good as it could be was recognised. It was noted that student feedback had been very positive, particularly with regard to the blended approach to learning.

It was reported that staff had been nervous prior to returning to work on campus, but this had receded once they had returned. It was noted that the Institute was starting to look ahead at upcoming projects.

Institute of Business Industry and Leadership

It was noted that the new Dashboard and PebblePad software for use with students was taking up staff time which was not being reflected in workloads. It was requested that any when changes to interactions between academic colleagues and students were considered, consultation time was built in regarding the impact on workloads.

A mixed position was reported with face to face teaching, with some students not wanting to come onto campus. It was noted that as not all rooms being used for teaching were IT enabled this had caused problems for students wishing to join via MS Teams or any other facility. Staff were having to repeat sessions.

The representative commented that the new software made available for use by academics was helpful, however there had been little time to prepare and test its use. Some colleagues were feeling fatigued and overwhelmed by the pace of change and the increased workloads.

It was reported that some students were recording on-line sessions, which should not be happening without consent from the other students in the session and the member of staff. It was raised that some communication to students regarding this was required.

With respect to academic workloads, the DVC(A) confirmed that information would be gathered from the Institutes on the difference between face to face teaching and on-line delivery to determine whether adjustments needed be made in time for semester two delivery.

The DVC(A) noted that CAPE had done an excellent job in supporting academic colleagues over the summer by providing advice on how to provide a good online experience, and where further support was required staff should make contact with the Centre.

With respect to functionality in Blackboard Collaborate to support those with hearing difficulties, the DAQD confirmed that this functionality was available within the system, however it was recognised that training was required for staff if this was not known about.

It was noted that connectivity with Blackboard was being monitored on a daily basis. There had been no alerts, however some staff were experiencing issues with Wi-Fi connectivity.

The DfSS reported that a decision had been made not to allow students to join face to face sessions via online means, however, this decision would be reviewed at the Teaching and Learning Group and updated guidance issued to staff and students. **Action:** DfSS. An Institute representative reported that IT had been very helpful to staff wishing to provide this facility for students who were self-isolating, the feedback from whom had been positive.

In summarising, the DVC(A) set out how the principles to be operated to have been communicated and adhered to. Provision was in place to manage students on a case by case basis via Extenuating Circumstances.

AGREED: To note the updates.

Received A report from the Student's Union Academic Officer

The DVC(A) welcomed the new Students' Union Academic Officer to her first meeting of Academic Board.

The Students Union Academic Officer started by noting the high volume of positive feedback received from students regarding academic staff and the level of support they have provided and the work undertaken to deliver online learning.

It was noted that online learning had been very beneficial for mature students and in particular those with parental or caring responsibilities. It was commented that students had been able to watch pre-recorded lectures at their leisure to fit in with childcare arrangements.

The Academic Officer then spoke to her report, noting that the NSS results had improved by 2.9%. Rather than an action plan, the UCSU manifesto for the year would explain the aims of the Sabbatical officers for the year, what they were working on and why.

An overview of the Networks was provided, including reference to a new Parents and Carers Network that had been established following feedback from students. The support service had mainly dealt with academic appeals, as expected at this time of the year, however, an increase in the complexity of cases was reported due to the impact of Covid19. The desire to set up more academic societies was noted.

The Academic Officer reported that the Students' Union had been working hard to ensure there was a good online presence for students. An online community had been formed through the 'Discord' platform which had enabled very successful peer to peer support.

The DVC(A) acknowledged the importance of academic societies and suggested that it would be useful for the Students' Union Academic Officer to discuss ways of increasing the number of academic societies up with the DVC(HEI) and the DfSS in their monthly meetings.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:07 Emergency Academic Regulations

AB20/04

Received A report on the application and outcomes of the Emergency Academic Regulations in 2019/20 and proposals for 2020/21

The DAQD spoke to her report which provided a high-level overview of the impact of the Emergency Academic Regulations introduced over the summer, specifically in relation to student progression. She reported that 82% of students were expected to be awarded in 2019/20 compared to 81% in 2018/19 which was reassuring in that the application of the Emergency Academic Regulations had been enabling without compromising academic standards. It was reported in relation to progression, 97% were able to progress in 2019/20 compared with 96% in 2018/19. The need to continue to support students who were trailing more credits than would normally be the case to make sure they were able to achieve in 2020/21 was noted.

It was reported that it was not proposed to extend the Emergency Academic Regulations into 2020/21 in full, but to retain the provisions within the Emergency Regulations which enable processes to be more flexible, as required, such as the sections that enable Assessment Boards to operate remotely, as set out in the paper. The proposals for approval by Academic Board were summarised, noting that if circumstances change in 2020/21, and bringing the full Emergency Academic Regulations back into operation was thought to be appropriate, this would be brought back to Academic Board for approval.

It was reported that the streamlined processes for Assessment Boards had had a real benefit for staff in terms of decision making and consistency. Some aspects of the changes were suggested as being worthy of consideration for the longer term.

The changes for 2020/21 were approved. The DVC(A) confirmed that consideration of any permanent changes would be undertaken in due course.

It was agreed that academic staff and other stakeholders (external examiners, staff at partner institutions, employers with students studying on apprenticeship programmes etc.) needed to be made aware of the Regulations for 2020/21 and a set of FAQs needed to be developed for students. **Action:** DAQD / DfSS.

AGREED: To note the report and approve the Academic Regulations for 2020/21.

20:08 Academic Delivery 2020/21

AB20/05

Received A report on the plans for academic delivery in Semester 1 2020/21

The DVC(A) spoke to the paper noting that contingency planning was taking place at a module level to enable the University to react quickly to local or national Covid19 arrangements. The implementation plan would be presented to the next meeting.

AGREED: To note the contents of the report.

20:09 Academic Regulations

AB20/06

Received A paper outlining changes to Academic Regulations

The DAQD spoke to the paper noting that the PgR regulations had been considered at the last meeting of Academic Board. It was noted that through the process of development, design and validation of the new research degrees it had been identified that there were some minor changes to be made to the PgR regulations, highlighted by the yellow shading in the report.

AGREED: To approve the changes to the Academic Regulations.

20:10 NSS Outcomes and Actions

AB20/07

Received a) A report on the outcomes of the NSS 2020 and actions being taken in response.
b) A presentation from the Institute of Health

The DfSS spoke to her report and started by a reminder that staff could access the Tableau Software for full interrogation of the results. The overall upward trajectory of results, with a rise of 2% in Overall Satisfaction and on all of the main themes except 'Learning Community' was a positive outcome. It was noted that the University remained above the sector average for the Learning Community theme, with the drop potentially due to the move to online learning.

The DfSS noted that the average masked considerable variation across subject areas, however there was less variation than the previous year. The analysis in the paper looked at areas with the strongest performance and explored what could be learnt from these, and the areas with the weakest performance to understand the reasons.

It was noted that the University was still below the sector average on 'Overall Satisfaction', however, it was above the sector for a number of the themes, with 'Organisation and Management' an area requiring ongoing attention.

The Director of the Institute of Health gave a presentation on the results of NSS2020 with a particular focus on nursing programmes. She set out how there was a mix of results across the programmes, with a drop in the outcome for nursing. The programme team had analysed the scores and identified main areas for improvement, with a task force established with the aim of improving student experience, working across the entire leadership team within nursing.

A question was asked regarding whether the right balance had been found with third year students and whether more individualised work should be undertaken with them in matters such as career planning. The point was noted as something that could be considered, however the importance of building a relationship with the student from year one was emphasised.

The DVC(A) thanked the Director of the Institute of Health for her presentation and asked how the Institute was planning to build enhanced communication channels between staff and students and monitor response times for consistency. The Director responded that work on communications had already commenced in a range of different formats and that response times would be monitored as part of the work of the task force.

The DVC(A) thanked colleagues for their work on the report and noted that there was an opportunity as well as a threat with Covid19. He asked for a verbal update on progress in the Institute of Health to be provided to the next meeting of Academic Board. **Action:** D of Institute of Health / Uni Sec.

AGREED: To note the report.

20:11 Academic Calendar 2021/22

AB20/08

Received The 2021/22 Academic Calendar for approval.

The DfSS introduced the item noting that it was for approval by Academic Board. She noted that in the process of putting the calendar together it had been recognised that there was no institutional process

for agreeing and recording term dates for all programmes. A process was set out in the paper with the aim for this to be piloted within one Institute.

A question was raised regarding whether any benchmarking had taken place with other institutions in relation to this matter. The DfSS responded that simple benchmarking had taken place, with some institutions publishing multiple calendars and others publishing one calendar noting that it may not represent an individual student's term dates with a link to alternative term dates provided.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference of the pilot would be finalised, with inclusion of what the aim of the work was and learning from across the sector. **Action:** DfSS.

AGREED: To approve the Academic Calendar for 2021/22.

20:12

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy

AB20/09

Received An update on delivery of the action plan

The DAQD spoke to the report noting that good progress had been made on the actions intended to be completed in the last academic year, however some projects had been impacted by the implications of the Covid19 pandemic. It was noted that progress in relation to digital confidence and competence had been accelerated as a result of the move to online teaching and learning.

The DAQD summarised the remainder of her paper and noted the intention to establish a University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Group, chaired by the DVC(A), with the first meeting scheduled for the end of October.

It was noted that Institute Learning Teaching Plans would be developed to focus on localised priorities to compliment the University LTA plan and would be presented to the December meeting of Academic Board.

The DofSS noted that work had begun to progress the development of the Academic Skills framework in relation to objective 5 within the Action Plan.

The DVC(A) noted the valid reason for the slippage seen and asked for an update on the plan at the next meeting of Academic Board. **Action:** DAQD.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:13

CMA

AB20/10

Received An update on compliance with the CMA guidance

The DAQD summarised her report noting the first part of her report provided an update to Academic Board on the Annual Report on CMA compliance and the work being undertaken to follow up on outstanding actions. It was noted that most actions were expected to have been closed off by the next meeting.

The DAQD summarised the second part of her report noting that it provided Academic Board with an update on the work that had been

undertaken over the summer with regard to communicating with applicants and continuing students regarding the changes being made to the delivery of their programmes in response to the Covid19 pandemic.

The DAQD reported that there had been a small number of applicants who wished to defer and some students wished to explore intercalation; these had been passed to Academic Institutes to discuss with the students.

The DVC(A) commented that the work undertaken to communicate with all applicants and continuing students was very significant. He went on to ask the meaning of the sentence 'further review instances of missing programme specifications' in the table of Annex 1. The DAQD responded that there had been a number of instances identified through audit work where course webpages did not have a programme specification link, it was commented that the action was to ensure there were legitimate reasons for there not being a programme specification.

Processes in relation to website content creation were reported to be operating slowly at times. The DVC(A) asked that the issues be picked up with the Director of Marketing and Recruitment. **Action:** DAQD.

The DVC(A) noted that Uniac had recently completed a review of the University's approach to CMA with a very positive outcome. He thanked DAQD and colleagues on the compliance group for their work.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:14 Research and Knowledge Exchange Matters

AB20/11

Received a) An update on REF 2021
 b) A report on the KEF

REF2021

The Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (DR&KE) spoke to her report on REF noting that the University has a REF Steering group through which the REF process is governed. She reported that good progress had been made. The changes to the timeline for submission to REF, now the 31st March 2021, replacing the previous deadline of 30th November 2020 was noted as was the new deadline for impact case studies of 31st December 2020.

It was noted that the census of staff submitting for REF had been completed with the numbers of those submitting double that in 2014. In addition it was noted that the quality of outputs had also improved. Work on the impact and environment case studies was progressing well.

KEF

Moving onto the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), the DR&KE noted that the KEF was new, with the report providing an outline of what KEF is, when it started and its remit. A good outcome from the KEF would put the University in the position to potentially receive HEIF funding in the future.

The narratives being produced were outlined along with the deadline for submission. The establishment of a KEF Steering Group was proposed.

The DVC(A) requested that the proposed Membership and Terms of Reference for the KEF Steering Group be presented to Academic Board when available. **Action:** DVC(HEI).

AGREED: To note the updates on REF 2021 and the KEF

20:15 Annual Report on Student Casework (Appeals, Complaints, Malpractice) AB20/12

Received The 2018/19 annual report on Student Casework.

The DVC(A) introduced the report noting that it had been reviewed at SSQAC in the 2019/20 academic year with further information requested, hence the delay in reporting to Academic Board.

The DAQD provided an overview of the report, noting that there had been a reduction in student complaints but an increase in relation to academic appeals submitted and in the number of incidents of minor malpractice. The work being undertaken in response to the increase in ghost writing was set out in the paper.

The DVC(A) thanked the DAQD for the thorough report commenting that it was important that the information within it was learnt from. SSQAC were asked to ensure that all issues identified in the report were appropriately addressed. The DfSS, as Chair of SSQAC, confirmed that this work was in train and that more active monitoring throughout the year was being considered to enable a faster response.

AGREED: To receive the report.

20:16 Student Protection Plan 2020/21 AB20/13

Received The Student Protection Plan 2020/21

AGREED: To receive the Student Protection Plan for 2020/21.

20:17 Access & Participation Plan 2020/21-2024/25 AB20/14

Received An update on the APP 2020/21 – 2024/25

AGREED: To note the update.

20:18 Employability Plan AB20/15

Received The Employability Plan

The DofSS noted the employability plan had been signed off by SSQAC at the end of the previous academic year and noted there had been a need to flex and adapt due to the implications of the Covid19 pandemic. She reported that the Employability Service already had a very strong online platform through 'My Career Enriched' which provided engagement for students in a digital format and that online sessions had been running to continue to support students in 2020/21.

The DVA(A) drew the Board's attention to the appendix containing the positive Graduate Outcomes results and noted that the University needed to ensure that it was continuing to support students as much as possible in this area.

AGREED: To note the plan.

20:19 Senior Academic Board Committees

AB20/16a,b,c
ASPC 20/11

Received The minutes and associated reporting from the meetings of:

- a) Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee
25th March 2020, 10th June 2020 & 14th September
- b) Academic Strategy and Planning Committee – 16th September

AGREED: To receive the minutes.

20:20 University Board Minutes

UB19/73a
Ub19/86a

Received The minutes of the meetings of University Board held on 19 May 2020 and 15 June 2020.

AGREED: To receive the minutes.

20:21 Any Other Business

The DVC(A) and the Vice Chancellor thanked the outgoing Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange for her service to the University, in particular for her leadership in the process that successfully led to the University attaining Research Degree Awarding Powers.

20:22 Matters for Onward Communication

Verbal

It was agreed these would be collated following the meeting.

20:23 Forward Meetings

Verbal

Monday, 14th December 2020
Monday, 8th March 2021
Thursday 24th June 2021