

ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8th March 2021

Present: Rob Trimble (Chair), Julie Mennell (until 20:64), Emma Bales, Jean Brown, Jeremy Colclough, Colette Conroy, Lucy Haddath, Karen Hadley (for 20:65), Alison Hampson, Signy Henderson, James Hodge, Helen Manns, Steven McCarthy-Grunwald, Jessica Robinson, Nigel Rourke, Ian Sinker, , Brian Webster-Henderson, Elizabeth Bates

In attendance: James Bellhouse, Kath Norris (for 20:65)

- 20:53 Apologies for absence:** Verbal
Apologies were received from Kaz Stuart, Ruth Harrison-Palmer, Amanda Lane, Ian Todd, Katie Walker-Small, Chris Watson, Susie Wilson
- 20:54 Minutes and actions of the previous meeting** AB20/39
The minutes of the 14th December 2020 meeting were approved as an accurate record. (a)
- The action log was noted along with the need to have an update regarding Academic Infrastructure in due course with particular focus on the formation of the Registry and changes to Student Services. (b)
- 20:55 Vice Chancellor's Report** Verbal
- Received An update from the Vice Chancellor
- The Vice Chancellor started her report by noting that there were many reasons to be positive. She noted that the second tranche of students and staff were returning to campuses, following the change to the guidelines from the DfE, with the return going smoothly to date.
- It was reported that the University was in a good position with regard to student recruitment for the 2021/22 academic year, with a 14% increase in applications compared to the previous year. Applications to the Institute of Arts continued to be mixed, with work continuing to improve the position.
- The Vice Chancellor set out that it was pleasing that the University was on track to deliver against its budget in the current year as well as against its five-year financial forecast, which had recently been approved by University Board. The forecast showed the University's income growing over the next few years.
- It was reported that the planning process for 2021/22 had commenced. The planning round would look to recognise current pressures on the University from the pandemic as well as drawing on the learning from the last year in terms of, for example, academic practice, estates operation, meetings and interactions. It was noted the considerations would also be examined in the context of the 2030 strategy.
- The Vice Chancellor summarised that the University was in a very positive position, however it was important to recognise that it had been a difficult year and the pandemic would continue to present difficulties for some time. It was noted that the University would continue to recognise the difficulties faced by all and try to alleviate and mitigate them where possible.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:56 Institute Representatives

Verbal

Received Updates and comments via Institute Staff Representatives

Institute of the Arts

It was reported that it had been a difficult start to the second semester as a result of the number of changes to delivery in the Institute as a result of the lockdown. Students and staff had found this lockdown more difficult than previous ones, with more anxiety observed. It was noted that the general decline in motivation had been lifted for a number of students with the return to campus for blended learning. It was suggested that the emergency regulations may be required more in this academic year than the previous one.

Whether there was anything the University could be doing that would be helpful for the Institute was asked. In response it was noted that testing of visiting practitioners had been difficult as they were not members of the University, however this had been addressed. It was also noted that a number of parents from Scotland and Northern Ireland had asked for more of a steer from the University where students were negotiating different lockdown arrangements. The DVC(HE&I) noted the issues for consideration by the relevant groups.

Institute of Health

It was reported that there had been a need to adapt over both periods of lockdown to ensure that the needs of students learning remotely were being met, with some fatigue from studying online being observed. The impact of the different ways of working had been evident in the marks from first year students, with a higher number of academic fails, often as a result of poor academic writing skills; this was reflective of sessions that would normally be put on for students but could not be conducted in the current situation. Staff fatigue was also an issue with ways to manage this being looking into.

It was reported that there had been a number of complex issues with placements due to the pandemic impacting on staffing at some providers. The resulting capacity issues were being worked through.

Whether there was anything the University could be doing that would be helpful for the Institute was asked. In response it was noted that the delay in commencement of the Masters programme had been helpful. It was noted that flexibility with regard to staffing levels or an expanded or dedicated team for new cohorts would be appreciated. It was noted that the Institute did have new staff starting, however they would require induction into the University and the teaching environment.

Institute of Business Industry and Leadership

The Institute representative started by noting that it was International Women's Day. He reported that small academic teams were experiencing fatigue and the current semester had posed particular challenges regarding double teaching and using specialist facilities on site. It was raised that double teaching had not been accounted for in the workload allocation and noted that staff had found it difficult to access research and scholarly activity time as a result of teaching and assessment pressures. Third year graduating students had asked for clarification regarding graduation ceremonies and whether they would be taking place.

In response to the question regarding graduations, the Vice Chancellor noted that it was hoped that it would be possible to have graduation ceremonies in the current year, with options being explored for communication in the coming weeks. It was noted that the University would do all it could to celebrate the success of the classes of 2020 and 2021.

The DVC(A) commented that it had been a particularly unusual year and it had been more difficult than the previous year due to the 'stop-start' nature. It was noted that it had been agreed at JNCC that the academic workload model would be explored for the coming year to examine whether changes were needed. It was noted that it was important to conclude the current academic year in the best way possible for staff and students remembering that there were approximately 1000 students who had not yet returned to campus.

The pressures on support and technical staff was raised, with many noted as also feeling fatigue as a result of increased workload. The flexible support delivered for students was noted, with many services provided both remotely and on-campus when this had been possible.

The Vice Chancellor noted that it was important to continue to be mindful of the ongoing strain colleagues were under and where possible seek to understand and alleviate this.

AGREED: To note the updates.

20:57

Students' Union Matters

AB20/40

Received A report from the Students' Union Academic Officer

The Students' Union Academic Officer spoke to her report, starting by reporting that the UCSU Manifesto had been released; it was on the website and would be circulated to students.

It was reported that a number of workshops had been delivered to the student academic representatives in the current semester on issues such as stress and conflict management. The workshops had been well received with a number of the representatives indicating a desire to present the workshops to their own classes.

It was reported that recruitment of the representatives would be targeted more in the next academic year, with work undertaken to ensure that the Students' Union was aware of all that had been recruited so that they could benefit from the support offered. The student networks were continuing to grow, with a need to ensure that those engaging on social media registered with the Students' Union.

It was reported that student elections had taken place the previous week; all three sabbatical officers had been re-elected for another year.

The Academic Officer noted that the feelings of fatigue resonated with the Students' Union. There had also been an increase in group complaints for refunds.

The Vice Chancellor offered her congratulations to the Students' Union Academic Officer and her colleagues on their re-election.

The DVC(HE&I) commented that he and the Dean for Student Success were meeting with the Students' Union on a monthly basis to discuss issues as they arose, which was working well.

A question was asked regarding whether there was anything that could be done to support the recruitment of the academic representatives and what a realistic target would be for the coverage of representatives the following year. In response, the Academic Officer said she would consider what support the University could provide, and suggested that a target could be have 80% of representatives in place.

A comment was made regarding students complaining about other students' behaviour online over the past 12 months, particularly on social media, and it was asked whether there were any plans to address the issue at a Students' Union level. In response to the question it was noted that the issues had been addressed at Institute level, with the issues raised relating one institute.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:58 Covid19 Update and Implications for Academic Regulations

AB20/41

Received a) An update on implications of Covid19 and changes to Academic Regulations in relation to 2020/21 in response to Covid19
b) IoH Response to Emergency Standards

The DVC(A) spoke to the first paper, providing an overview of the recent government announcement which allowed some students to return to blended learning from 8th March. It was noted that, following this return of more students to blended learning, there would be approximately one thousand students still studying online. Further instruction was awaited from the government on when they would be able to return.

It was noted that Academic Board had approved the Academic Regulations for 2020/21 in October 2020, which reflected the intention to offer a year of blended learning. However, in recognition of the further disruption to studies due to the lockdowns, additional regulations for 2020/21 were proposed, covering progression, compensation and reassessment.

It was noted that the changes introduced in 2019/20 had worked well, enabling students to continue on their programmes and progress where they had been disrupted. It was advised that the intention was to reintroduce elements of the changes for the current year.

It was noted that the process for awards profiling in the 2019/20 Emergency Regulations could not be applied in the current year as the process had relied on credit achieved before the disruptive effects of the pandemic to create the profile. The modifications proposed would take the disruption throughout 2021 into account.

The impact of the amendments had been modelled, with the outcomes as set out within the paper. It was suggested that the changes were appropriate and proportional and aligned to the scale of the disruption.

It was commented that different models across the sector had been studied and the proposed approach appeared to be the clearest and fairest way to account for the disruption to students' studies. However, as last year, the proposed amendments require students to continue to engage with their studies and assessments.

A question was asked regarding the extent to which there had been consultation with partner colleges on the model being used. In response

the DVC(A) noted that there had not been consultation as the regulations were the University's responsibility, however partner colleges and students would be made aware of the changes.

The consequences of the approach were asked, for example what the deadline would be for extensions to allow finalists to graduate with their cohort. Whether the schedule of examination boards could be maintained, or whether they should be pushed back, was asked. In response, the DVC(A) noted that the points raised were valid and being explored, with the outcomes to be communicated over the coming weeks.

The Vice Chancellor thanked colleagues for their work on the Academic Regulations, which were approved, and noted that it provided Academic Board with ongoing confidence in the approach being adopted.

IoH Response to Emergency Standards

The Director of the Institute of Health spoke to her paper which provided an overview of how the Institute of Health had responded to the implications of the pandemic on placement arrangements, and the introduction of Emergency Standards by the Nursing and Midwifery Council. It was commented that the Institute had been very proactive and had followed all of the relevant guidance. It was reported that 15 students were still out on paid placements with students providing support to the NHS.

A question was asked regarding double teaching of students and whether teams had capacity to deal with double teaching. The Director of the Institute responded that the amount of double teaching had been kept to an absolute minimum, with the team fully involved in deciding on the approach to be taken.

- AGREED:**
- To approve changes to Academic Regulations as set out in the paper.
 - To note the IoH response to Emergency Standards

20:59 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy Action Plan Progress AB20/42

Received A progress update.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:60 Employability Plan AB20/43

Received An update on progress to date re the delivery of the 2020/21 Employability Action Plan

The Director of Student Services noted that the nine actions which were red in the action plan had been delayed due to reprioritisation as a result of the Covid pandemic and the practical impact of not being able to deliver things in a face to face format.

AGREED: To receive the report.

20:61 Access & Participation Plan 2019/20 and 2020/21 – 2024/25 AB20/44

Received An update on 2019/20 monitoring and action planning for 2020/21 – 2024/25.

The Dean for Student Success spoke to her paper, noting that the APP for 2021-22 had been approved. It was reported that outreach activity had had to be adjusted substantially in the context of the pandemic, with a mechanism to reflect this to the OfS in place.

It was noted that the monitoring for the APP 2019/20 was being concluded, with the OfS data set anticipated to arrive imminently. It was reported that internal data had been used to predict most of the metrics and there was confidence that the University would be judged to have made the progress expected of it. It was noted that the deadline for submission of the monitoring return was 16th April 2021.

AGREED: To receive the updates

20:62 TEF Update

AB20/45

Received An update on the OfS communications regarding TEF and the UoC approach.

The Director of Academic Quality and Development spoke to her paper, which provided a summary of the current position in relation to TEF. Consideration was being given to ensuring that the University would be ready to respond when it had the requirements and data.

The Vice Chancellor asked for an update on the current year's NSS and how the results may or may not factor into 3-year average and future TEF submissions. In response the Dean for Student Success noted that the OfS had committed to running the NSS but not to communicating the results. It was suggested that a three-year average of NSS results could be used in the TEF.

AGREED: To receive the report.

20:63 Approval of a New Partner – Kings Leadership Academy

AB20/46

Received Proposal of Kings Leadership Academy as a new collaborative partner.

The Director of Academic Quality and Development spoke to the paper noting that it was a proposal to add a new School Direct partnership to the well-established model operating in the Institute of Education. It was reported that the Academy had been rated 'Outstanding' in a recent Ofsted inspection and had been through due process internally.

The Vice Chancellor asked how many School Direct partners the University had. The Director of AQD responded that there were currently 20 active school alliances.

AGREED: To approve Kings Leadership Academy as a new collaborative partner.

20:64 Additional item – Hardship funding

Verbal

The Vice Chancellor commented that there had been various communications over the past few weeks including from the Universities Minister and the Office for Students regarding support for students in hardship. The Vice Chancellor asked the Director of Student Services to provide a summary of what had been made available to students and how the University was focusing on the issue.

In response, the Director of Student Services noted that late in 2020 the government had made a tranche of funding available to the University, with a further tranche at the beginning of February, to support students in hardship. It was noted that the funds needed to be allocated before the end of March. How best to distribute the funding had been considered, with a particular focus on students finding themselves in hardship as a result of paying double accommodation costs, in line with the guidance.

The Vice Chancellor asked for the approach with regard to University owned accommodation to be set out. The Director of Student Services reported that it had been recognised at the start of the current academic year that student experience in halls would be negatively impacted by the pandemic and therefore the decision was made for the standard room rate to be discounted by 20% for the whole year. In addition, the University had committed to the position that if national, regional or local restrictions impacted upon a student's ability to access or use their accommodation, the University would apply an appropriate fee waiver for the period of time affected. It was noted that between 4th January 2021 and 12th February 2021 a number of students had been asked not to return to campus and therefore a fee waiver had been applied for all of these students.

It was noted that when the government had announced the planned phased return from 8th March 2021, the University extended the fee waiver from 12th February until 8th March. It was noted that for those students who continued to be in an online only delivery mode and unable to return to University accommodation, the University had extended the fee waiver again until 12th April which was the next review point.

20:65 Institute NSS Activity Updates

Presentation

Received An update on NSS activity and presentations from the Institute of Business Industry and Leadership and Institute of Education.

Institute of Business Industry and Leadership

The Director of the Institute of Business, Industry and Leadership spoke to her presentation, summarising progress and areas of focus in each of the subject areas. The areas of focus for the Institute as a whole were noted as were the actions in train to drive improvements.

The challenges of the pandemic were noted, with it reported that staff had worked hard to ensure provision was the best it could be in the circumstances. A business society had been set up which had been very active. It was noted that aspects of student voice and learning community needed improvement, with work being undertaken to enhance these areas, however it had been proving challenging online. It was noted that good results had been achieved as a result of working with CAPE on digital literacy.

It was commented that it would be interesting to compare apprenticeship outcomes and experiences with programmes when apprenticeship courses came under the remit of NSS.

Institute of Education

The representative from the Institute of Education spoke to her presentation, starting by providing an overview of the overall scores for the Institute. Areas of good practice were detailed followed by areas that were being focused on for improvement.

It was noted that assessment and feedback was an area of particular focus for improvement; the 4-year degree had received 97% satisfaction in these questions and was being examined as a model for best practice. The Institute was in the process of doing a peer review of Blackboard sites with a focus on assessment guidance and criteria.

It was noted that actions from the previous year were being rolled over as they had worked well.

The DVC(A) thanked the representative for her report and commented that it was positive to see successful actions being carried over and the focus on assessment and feedback.

AGREED: To note the updates.

20:66 Research Matters

AB20/47

Received	-REF Institutional Environment Statement.	a)
	-An update on REF2021	b)
	-Update on Research Degrees and Professional Doctorates	Verbal

REF Institutional Environment Statement

The Interim Director of Research introduced the REF Institutional Environment Statement. It was noted that the document was intended to provide an overview of the University of Cumbria in general as well as on the University's research and knowledge exchange environment. The statement would not feed into the final scores, as it was being run as a pilot exercise for subsequent exercises, however it could influence the panels' view of the University as other aspects of the submission were assessed.

It was noted that the process of internal and external review had been rigorous. The statement had recently been to Vice Chancellor's Executive and was presented to Academic Board for final approval.

The Statement was approved for submission.

Update on REF2021

It was reported that the University's REF submission was anticipated to be submitted in the current week, with the results received in just over a years' time.

The DVC(A) acknowledged the hard work of colleagues over a number of years to prepare the University's REF submission.

Update on Research Degrees and Professional Doctorates

The DVC(HE&I) reported that that the research degrees for DBA, MD and Professional Doctorate had been approved in the previous year. The University was in a position to recruit to the DBA in September, with further work required on the other professional doctorates. A group was being established to progress the introduction of these programmes.

AGREED:

- To approve the REF Institutional Environment Statement
- To note the update on REF2021
- To note the update on Research Degrees and Professional Doctorates.

20:67 Honorary Awards

AB20/48

Received Proposals from the Honorary Awards Committee for approval.

The proposals for Honorary Doctorate, Honorary Fellow and Alumnus of the Year were noted and agreed to be proposed to University Board for approval.

AGREED: To endorse the proposals for Honorary Doctorate, Honorary Fellowship, Alumnus of the Year.

The order of the agenda was changed at this point – items have been minuted in the order that they were taken at the meeting

20:68 Annual Operating Plan 2020/21 AB20/50

Received A progress update against the 2020/21 AOP.

AGREED: To note the update.

20:69 Academic Calendar and Start Dates AB20/51

Received An update on progress

AGREED: To note the update.

20:70 OfS and Consumer Protection Requirements AB20/52

Received The requirements and actions in train.

The DAQD noted that since the paper had been written, guidance had been released regarding plans for the rest of the year.

The report on the review, a requirement of the letter from the OfS, would be presented to Academic Governance Committee. It was noted that a robust approach had been taken to informing students of changes to programmes, including taking legal advice; no matters for concern had been raised.

AGREED: To note the paper.

20:71 Approach to Clearing AB20/53

Received The outcomes of the consultation.

AGREED: To note the outcomes of the consultation.

20:72 Student Achievement Strategy AB20/54

Received An update on the Student Achievement Strategy

AGREED: To note the update.

20:73 Senior Academic Board Committees AB20/55
a,b,c,d

Received The minutes and associated reporting from the meetings of:

- a) Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee
10th February 2021

- b) Academic Strategy and Planning Committee – 11th February 2021
- c) Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee – 30th November 2020
- d) Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee – 15th February 2021

A question was raised regarding the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes of 15th February 2021 in relation to size of unsuccessful bids from a Research Centre and whether there was any understanding of why the bids were unsuccessful. In response the DVC(HE&I) noted that the level of unsuccessful bids was not a particularly high figure considering the size of the institute and the number of bids submitted. It was noted that research income remained small for the size of the institute and plans were in place to grow this income.

A further question was raised regarding the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee minutes of 30th November 2020 regarding the number of doctoral supervisors and research and scholarly applications. In response the DVC(HE&I) noted that the heads of the graduate school were reviewing the model used for the supervision of doctoral students; once the suggested new model had been approved by Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee it would come to Academic Board for consideration.

AGREED: To receive the minutes.

20:74 University Board Minutes

UB20/32a
UB20/35a

Received The minutes of the meetings of University Board held on 19th November 2020 and 21st January 2021.

AGREED: To receive the minutes.

20:75 Towards 2030 Strategy workshop

AB20/49

Received A paper to introduce the workshop

The DVC(A) introduced the discussion, noting that the December meeting of Academic Board had received a draft of the Towards 2030 Strategy and that the aim was to have the strategy approved by the July meeting of University Board.

The focus of the workshop was to be 'digital', an aspect of prominence in the draft strategy.

The DVC(A) asked whether attendees felt the draft strategy adequately captured the benefits of redesigning pedagogy to make use of digital skills and technology and how the University should approach the delivery of redesigning pedagogy, programme content and assessments.

Feedback included:

- the draft did not appear to break down the distinct and overlapping areas of digital, for example what digital skills graduates may need in the workplace, versus to what extent digital could be seen as a subject of study, with reference made to digital health, digital creativity and digital social models.

- that a balance was required between pedagogy and external technological drivers in order to support students in the types of careers they would be going into and the technologies they would be working with. It was noted that it was important that pedagogy reflected developments in the external environment.
- that it would be important to involve students in the design process.

The DVC(A) noted there had been a paper recently published regarding how to approach redesigning pedagogy and curriculum and programmes. The paper stated that it was important to adopt a 'pedagogy first' approach rather than technology first.

The DVC(A) moved on to ask about the technology and tools that should be used as part of a curriculum.

Feedback included:

- that CAPE had done a remarkable job in a short period of time to provide the number of technological options available.
- it was suggested that there were two ways of looking at the use of tools and technologies with the potential for streamlining and increasing colleagues' abilities or having a wide range of technologies to allow for creativity.
- that a balance was important to allow flexibility for colleagues to have autonomy in designing and delivering programmes.
- that it was important to make the most effective use of academic infrastructure and technology for the purposes of learning and teaching. It was suggested that the IT Strategy could be examined in relation to interoperability.
- that the student experience needed to be considered as too much switching between technologies could prove unsettling.
- that students with disabilities may face extra barriers with using digital technology and this would need to be taken into consideration as not every tool was designed with accessibility in mind.

The DVC(A) asked colleagues to consider how the University could capitalise on opportunities to use digital technology available to create flexibility for students and how they could be included in programme development and design.

Feedback included:

- that further work could be undertaken on market testing and research.
- that it was important to examine supporting strategic plans as it was important to increase flexibility but also to identify the boundaries within which changes could be made.

The DVC(A) asked colleagues to consider how the University could ensure effective digital access for students.

Feedback included:

- that considerations needed to take hardware into account as well as software for those students who were working off campus. It was noted that the University could not assume students had a phone or a laptop, particularly in light of the widening participation agenda.

- that it should be very clear what equipment would be required before students were due to commence programmes and any support available.
- with regard to the design of pedagogy and learning materials, that it was important not to exclude students who may not be able to access certain resources.

The student connectivity funding that had been made available in the current year to ensure there was hardware available for students and dongle access where Wi-Fi access was poor was noted.

The next question was with regard to how the University could ensure that students understood what digital skills they would need before they joined the University or how they could be provided with those skills in the early weeks of their induction. How the University could enable students to understand and log their digital skills when they leave the University and were looking to enter employment was also asked.

Feedback included:

- It was noted that 'Headstart' was offered to students as a transition platform into HE level learning and there was scope for the introduction of a diagnostic element with regard to student skills into the programme if it was not already there.
- the Career Ahead award could be enhanced to include more work on digital skills for the workplace.
- employability could be built in as part of module assessment and with it clearly articulated to students how assessment of their digital skills would take place.
- the example of apprenticeship programmes could be considered with regard to how clearly students were made aware of the knowledge and skills they would gain by the end of the programme.
- that consideration should be given to how the postgraduate research community could be involved with a wider group of students, noting that it was a diverse community who may be able to offer guidance with digital skills.

The DVC(A) noted that it was important to ensure all staff had the appropriate tools available to them and were supported to use them in a targeted and tailored way. The Towards 2030 strategy would set out the intent, however it would be the supporting strategies such as the Digital Strategy, LTA Strategy and Staff Development Strategy which would facilitate the achievement of the objectives.

The DVC (A) thanked the Board for their feedback and asked if there was any further feedback following the meeting that it is sent to the DVC(A)'s EA.

AGREED: To note the feedback received in the workshop.

20:76	Matters for Onward Communication It was agreed these would be collated following the meeting.	Verbal
20:77	Forward Meetings 24 th June 2021	Verbal