

## ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 March 2022**

- Present:** Julie Mennell (Chair), Rob Trimble, Emma Bales, Victoria Barbe, Jean Brown, Tom Davidson, Alex Dittrich (from 21:51), Tom Grimwood, Karen Hadley, Alison Hampson, Richard Harrison, Ruth Harrison-Palmer, Tina Harvey, Signy Henderson, Amanda Lane, Helen Manns, Jessica Robinson, Nigel Rourke, Ian Sinker, Mike Toyn, Brian Webster-Henderson
- 21:48 Introduction and Apologies for absence** Verbal  
Apologies were received from Elizabeth Bates, Colette Conroy, Lucy Haddath and Karen Shaw
- 21:49 Minutes and actions of the previous meeting** AB21/31  
The minutes of the 14 December 2021 meeting were approved as an accurate record.  
a)  
b)
- The action log was noted. It was agreed that the bringing together members of Academic Board and its committees was now possible, with the DVC(A) to determine a theme linked to the T2030 strategy. **Action:** DVC(A).
- 21:50 Vice Chancellor's Report** Verbal  
Received An update from the Vice Chancellor
- The Vice Chancellor started by noting that the graduation ceremonies for 2020 and 2021 cohorts were to take place week commencing 25 April, with seventeen ceremonies planned over the week. In addition, the new University Chancellor would be formally inaugurated.
- Moving on to external sector updates, as well as the OfS consultations that would be covered later on the agenda, the Vice Chancellor spoke about the Levelling-Up white paper and the Augar Review outcomes both of which had been published in February. The Levelling-Up white paper included areas of relevance to the sector and University, including spend on research and innovation, and looking at place, vibrancy, labour supply and the higher-skills agenda. The Augar Review outcomes included a mix of policy changes and consultations, with changes to student loans set out along with decisions regarding student fees. The Vice Chancellor commented that the fee freeze to at least 2024/25 was equivalent to a fee of £6,300 taking inflation into account. The expectation was that universities would be increasingly required to deliver more efficiently and effectively while delivering an excellent student experience.
- The Vice Chancellor confirmed that the Towards 2030 strategy was nearing finalisation and was informing the planning focus for the next three years. The financial forecast was positive but the University continued to be constrained with respect to the funds available. The Vice Chancellor concluded by setting out that there needed to be a continued push for improvements to student outcomes.
- In the discussion that followed it was suggested that the University would benefit from scoping out potential opportunities from the various policy announcements and consultations. The Vice Chancellor agreed, noting that examples of initiatives where the University was in the position to benefit were already available.

It was noted that the graduation ceremonies would include the University's first PhD student being awarded their doctorate. The potential changes and areas of emphasis for research were commented on.

The diversification in the portfolio, for example the move to delivering apprenticeships alongside under-graduate courses, and the impact on staffing was commented on. The Vice Chancellor responded that the proportion of income spent on staff costs was slightly higher than the sector, there was a premium for the number of campuses the University had, but even with this taken into account the ratio was higher than others. The ratio of academic to professional service staff was circa 1:1.2, a little higher than the sector. She was, however, reasonably comfortable with the current level of staff costs and the ratios, but there was not the potential to increase staff costs as a proportion of income. Flexibility was needed to ensure staff were allocated, supported and enabled to deliver as required. The Academic Registrar added that VCED had been asked to think about their challenges and pinch points in order to identify areas where business processes could be developed to free up resource to increase value added activity.

In response to a comment the Vice Chancellor set out that the University was in a period of transition, having turned decline into growth in student numbers. The implications of this were being seen, with the appropriate resource and systems needed to deliver. The work outlined was part of the means to address these issues.

**AGREED:** To receive the update.

**21:51 Institute Representatives**

Verbal

Received Feedback from the institute academic staff representatives

The Institute Academic Staff Representatives provided feedback from staff in their institutes on the priorities that they would like to see addressed through the planning process. The feedback of relevance to Academic Board included the following points:

- The timing of the end of term, assignment deadlines and Boards was asked to be reconsidered, with the timing of enhancement weeks adding to a challenge with deadlines;
- Academic staff would like the ability to input more into the planning and delivery of enhancement weeks;
- Academic staff would like to be freed up to do more work directly with students;
- That the staffing workload model does not accurately reflect the distribution of hours over a year which means there are pinch points that are not identified by the model;
- With changes to staffing, a suitable range of expertise was required, including staff with a research track record as well as subject expertise. Linked to this, there could be challenges related to succession planning when budget constraints did not facilitate recruitment prior to experienced staff retiring;
- Whether there could be development in the timetable to prioritise research time and support colleagues who have flexible, part-time work patterns;
- Actions to facilitate cross-institute teaching and learning opportunities would be beneficial;

- Creation of a community for on-line students /enhancing the look and feel of online environments and related processes;
- That some staff did not know what Academic Board did, with a summary of each meeting potentially useful;
- A review of the MCB process was requested;
- The need to ensure academic staff time was optimally used in supporting marketing and recruitment activities;
- Access to RASA time needed to be thought about to ensure it was able to be used for research and scholarly activity;
- The disciplinary and progress review systems required refreshing and reviewing;
- The extension process could be centralised;
- The processes for fitness to study and fitness to practice required review;
- It was suggested that a threshold standard of operations was introduced to support a move away from day to day planning to more strategic;
- It was commented that a number of systems, such as RASA and budgeting, work on an annual cycle that does integrate well with the cycles of RKE opportunities and activities.

The Vice Chancellor thanked the representatives for their open and honest feedback. She noted that some was relevant to fora other than Academic Board, however the feedback would be collated and the most appropriate place for ongoing discussions would be identified. **Action:** Uni Sec.

**Secretary's note:** The feedback was provided to the University Secretary by e-mail following the meeting and forwarded on to colleagues working on the planning process.

**AGREED:** To receive the feedback for onward consideration.

**21:52 Students' Union Matters**

AB21/32

Received A report from the UCSC

With the Students' Union Academic Officer having sent her apologies for the meeting, the Dean for Student Success (DeanSS) gave an update on some of the matters within the report. She noted that the student representative system was working well and thanked the Institutes for their help. The elections for the Students' Union sabbatical officer posts were taking place at the time of the meeting. With low numbers of candidates for the posts it was commented that it could be helpful for there to be further support for the Students' Union to increase interest in the roles.

**AGREED:** To receive the report.

**21:53 Director Updates**

Verbal

Received An overview of how the Cumbria Local Skills Report was informing thinking and planning for the future

The Vice Chancellor set out how she had spoken about the Levelling Up agenda, and how this further aligned to the requirement to increase higher level skills, in her update. The Director of the Institute of Business, Industry and Leadership (DIBIL) and Director of Applied Research and Knowledge Exchange (DAR&KE) had been asked to collate

an overview of how the Cumbria Local Skills Report was informing thinking in relation to this agenda.

The DIBIL spoke to her presentation starting by providing an outline of the key points of the Cumbria Local Skills Report. She then stepped through the areas of alignment within each Institute and key service.

In the discussion that followed it was commented that 'young people' were mentioned. Whether this was referring to a demographic that the University was not providing for or reference to the University's student mix was asked. The DIBIL responded that it was both, with there being a need to ensure that local areas of high unemployment were being addressed as well as routes to bring people into higher education. In light of labour shortages, aspects such as career change routes for the older workforce needed to be considered to support them to acquire the skills required by employers.

It was commented that not everyone required a three-year undergraduate degree to be upskilled and able to move into a new career. The DIBIL agreed and set out how a range of CPD programmes at level 4 or 5 would create routes through education for people as their careers developed.

The Vice Chancellor set out how the Lifelong Learning Entitlement would bring opportunities for both employers and individuals. In addition to more young people being upskilled, there was a need for older people to up skill / reskill to support the labour requirements in the County.

It was commented that the University was an anchor institution in the ecosystem supporting delivery of the required skills.

The Vice Chancellor thanked those involved for the presentation and discussion.

**AGREED:** To note the update.

**21:54      Towards 2030 Strategy      AB21/33**

Received      A paper on the Towards 2030 Strategy

The Vice Chancellor introduced the paper confirming that University Board had approved the T2030 strategy in January. Work on internal and external communications were ongoing, with different formats being prepared for different audiences.

The DVC(A) set out that one of the core strategies was the Academic Strategy, this was being drafted, building on the detail within the T2030 document. He set out the supporting strategies that would come from the T2030, including a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that the DeanSS was leading on with input from AdvanceHE. A Student Achievement Strategy, covering student outcomes and experience was being developed, building on the current strategy. Other strategies, as set out in the paper, would need to be drafted so that the documentation worked together to deliver the overarching strategy.

**AGREED:** To receive the update.

**21:55      Office for Students Update      AB21/34**

Received      An update on Office for Students matters

The DVC(A) gave an overview of the open consultations on the OfS B3 Condition of Registration and the TEF. It was noted that the University was working with MillionPlus on a response to the consultations. With respect to the potential implications it was noted that a submission could be required to the new TEF in the Autumn, with a group being formed to start work on the submission in anticipation of the outcome of the consultation.

Moving on to the outcomes of the consultations on the other B Conditions of Registration, the DVC(A) reported that the detail was being reviewed and a paper would be produced for the next meeting of Academic Board explaining the differences from the old Conditions of Registration and any changes to practices that would be required. The DVC(A) concluded by noting that the Conditions were all underpinned by student outcomes, the NSS, completion, continuation and progression, with these a focus across the University.

**AGREED:** To receive the update.

**21:56 Honorary Awards nominations**

AB21/35

Received A paper relating to the work of Honorary Awards Committee

The University Secretary introduced the paper, with a recommendation from Honorary Awards Committee to approve a nomination for Alumni of the Year.

**AGREED:** To recommend to University Board the nomination for Alumni of the Year.

**21:57 Changes to Assessment Board Processes**

AB21/36

Received Two changes to elements of the revised assessment board processes that were brought in for implementation from 2021/22

The Director of AQD (DAQD) spoke to the paper which sought amendments to procedures for Assessment Boards. It was noted that a full evaluation of the new processes, first implemented for 2021/22, would be undertaken at year end. The reasons for the proposals for the two changes, changes to timing of Quality Enhancement Boards (QEBs) and to the Chairing of University Progression and Award Boards (UPAB), were detailed.

In the discussion that followed the following points were raised:

The third bullet point within paragraph F11.7, relating to the referral of any issues to the UPAB, was crossed out; if this was not the route for issues to be raised it was asked where they would progress to. The DAQD responded that this would be via the Module Confirmation Board processes. It was agreed that this would be added to the Regulations. It was also agreed that a summary of the outcomes would be reported to SSQAC and Academic Board, and that this would be added to the Regulations. **Action:** DAQD.

It was commented that the University had a large number of non-standard programmes, and with some flexibility on top of this there was potential for confusion and complexity. Where the QEBs fitted within the Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) processes, and whether there was an opportunity to streamline the processes was asked. The DAQD set out how the flexibility on number and timing of QEBs had been intentional,

with a minimum and maximum set. She noted that there were challenges with a one size fits all approach, but it could be considered. In addition she set out how the AMR process was planned to be looked at again to see if there were opportunities to streamline and consider how the QEBRds feed into it. It was agreed that the approach would be reconsidered, with programmes reviewed at key points in time, possibly every 12 months, with a single review potentially covering more than one cohort. **Action:** DAQD.

The importance of confirmation of external moderation at the MCBs was commented upon, with clarity requested on when External Examiners should submit reports. The DAQD responded that guidance could be provided.

It was agreed that a revised proposal would be approved via Chair's action, or if required would come back to Academic Board for review and approval.

**AGREED:**

- To receive the report
- That a revised proposal would be approved by Chair's action, or, if required would return to Academic Board for approval.

**21:58 National Student Survey**

Verbal

Received An update on the NSS 2022

The DeanSS provided a brief update on the response rate to date, noting that targeted follow-up would be undertaken where additional responses were required to meet thresholds for reporting.

**AGREED:** To receive the update

**21:59 Student Feedback Mechanisms**

AB21/37

Received An overview of student feedback mechanisms in place, and themes identified in the course of the current year

The Vice Chancellor thanked the DeanSS for the paper, which provided a useful overview of the various student feedback mechanism in place. Further work was requested, mapping the mechanisms for feedback against the HESA return categories of students and those not-included in the return e.g. TNE students. **Action:** DeanSS.

The DVC(A) commented that the feedback mechanisms in place needed to be evaluated to see which provided robust response rates, then look at how to distil the data to use at institutional level. For example, he set out how the module evaluation questionnaire response rates were generally fairly low, with the response rates for the mid-module evaluations typically higher.

It was commented that when programmes were delivered across different campuses it was useful to be able to cut the data by campus.

**AGREED:** To receive the report with further review and evaluation of student feedback mechanisms to be undertaken.

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

**21:60 Admissions Procedures – Updates**

AB21/38

Received Proposed amends to the Admissions Procedure

The Director of SAAS spoke to the paper which set out proposed changes to the admissions procedures. It was noted that the changes were considered and supported by ASPC.

**AGREED:** To approve the proposed changes.

**21:61 Collaborative Provision Annual Partnership Review**

AB21/39

Received A paper on Collaborative Provision

The DAQD introduced the paper, setting out the two parts to it, firstly the mid-cycle partnership review of Nelson and Colne College, the detail of which had been to Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee. No issues of concern had been raised within the report, with a small number of outcomes that would be monitored. The second part of the report provided proposals to renew collaborative provision agreements with Furness College, Gen2, Kendal College and Lakes College. Any issues identified had been addressed. SSQAC had reviewed the proposals and recommended approval.

In the discussion that followed it was agreed that the agreements with the Colleges be reviewed with respect to clauses relating to competition and wider implications with respect to developments in the OfS Conditions of Registration. **Action:** DAQD.

In response to a question it was noted that no new fees applied before September 2023, when the renewals would come into force. Fees would be reviewed with a recommendation to come forward in due course. **Action:** DAQD.

The position with Carlisle College was asked. **Secretary's note:** following the meeting it was confirmed that the University no longer has a live Collaborative Provision agreement (i.e. validation/franchise) with Carlisle College. Work is, however, ongoing with the College around progression and outreach.

It was commented that in considering a new partner or renewal of an existing partner the strategic fit of the partner with the University and the academic quality of the partner were important. Whether the DAQD was satisfied that each partner met the quality threshold was asked. The DAQD confirmed that she was confident in the academic quality of the proposed partners. She set out how the partner renewal process looked through the lens of strategy, quality and business model. She added that a review of all collaborative provision processes was planned by the end of the year.

**AGREED:**

- To note the mid-cycle partnership review of Nelson and Colne College
- To approve the renewal of collaborative provision agreements with Furness College, Gen2, Kendal College and Lakes College.
- To review the agreement prior to passing to the Colleges for signature.

## 21:62 Access and Participation Plans

AB21/40

Received An update on our current Access and Participation Plan (APP) actions, and OfS processes.

The DeanSS spoke to the paper setting out that information had now been provided on the monitoring of the 2020/21 APP and in relation to the 2021/22 APP. She set out how significant changes were to be implemented from September 2024 with work to be undertaken through the autumn on replanning of Key Performance metrics as a sector and at the University. She set out how a 'mass variation exercise' was planned, with further guidance to follow relating to this.

**AGREED:** To receive the update.

## 21:63 Annual Student Case Work Report

AB21/41

Received The Annual Student Case Work Report

The DSAAS spoke to the paper, which had been considered by SSQAC. The ask from SSQAC was set out, with further work to be undertaken as set out in the paper. With respect to the data it was noted that case work activity had increased for the majority of types of case work. With respect to cases referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator it was noted that there had been an increase across the sector however this was not being seen at the University.

In the discussion it was commented that:

- future reporting would benefit from further detail on, for example, the focus of appeals, so that learning could be drawn from the review of the data;
- there needed to be a review of the complaints process to ensure that it was appropriate for all provision;
- student progress reviews were viewed as a positive process in the Institute of Education, with students requiring help identified and supported, however the way the numbers were reported these reviews could be seen as negative;
- complaints related to accommodation were noted to be higher due to decisions regarding the waiving of fees, and it was noted that some complaints were only partially upheld which was not picked up in the reporting;
- the separating out allegations of sexual harassment and misconduct from general complaints was being looked into.

The DSAAS agreed with the comments raised, with a review of insights and assurances from the report to be undertaken. She added that the complaints, appeals etc processes were all due for review. **Action:** DSAAS.

The Chair set out the importance of scoping a report before it was written, to confirm who was in scope and what the report was for. In the case of this report, this would include the addition of benchmarking with respect to student population and profile.

**AGREED:** To receive the report and the actions to be undertaken.



<b>21:64</b>	<b>Ofsted inspections</b>	Verbal
	Received      An update on Ofsted inspections	
	The DVC(A) reported that the University would have an Ofsted inspection of Apprenticeship provision before 2025. A review was being undertaken of how the University manages Apprenticeships. With respect to the ITE inspection, a report had been received with Academic Board to be appraised of the outcome once it was out of embargo.	
	The Vice Chancellor noted the significant increase in students in scope for the next apprentice Ofsted inspection and the importance of the work being undertaken to prepare for it.	
	<b>AGREED:</b> To receive the update.	
<b>21:65</b>	<b>Student Services Presentation</b>	Presentation
	Received      Student Services Presentation	
	The Director of Student Services (DSS) spoke to her presentation, starting by detailing the vision of the Service and the breadth of its work in supporting students on and off-campus with range of physical and digital services. The external and internal drivers of the work of the Service were set out. The role of the new Student Engagement Coordinators roles was detailed with it reported that they were already having a positive impact.	
	The objectives of the Service for 2021/22 were outlined, with key areas of progress and outcomes delivered set out. The presentation concluded with an overview of future developments.	
	The DSS was thanked for her presentation.	
	<b>AGREED:</b> To receive the presentation.	
<b>21:66</b>	<b>LTA Strategy Action Plan Progress Update</b>	AB21/42
	Received      An update on LTA Strategy Action Plan Progress	
	<b>AGREED:</b> To note the update	
<b>21:67</b>	<b>Student Achievement Strategy Implementation Plan update</b>	AB21/43
	Received      An update for the interim SAS for 2021/22, and plans to develop the SAS 2022-27.	
	<b>AGREED:</b> To note the update	
<b>21:68</b>	<b>Programme Withdrawals</b>	AB21/44
	Received      A paper on programmes that have been withdrawn via Chair's action by the Chair of Academic Strategy and Planning Committee	
	<b>AGREED:</b> To note the report	
<b>21:69</b>	<b>REF Update</b>	AB21/45
	Received      The communication plan for the REF results	

**AGREED:** To note the communication plan

**21:70 Senior Academic Board Committees**

SSQAC21/61  
ASPC21/33

Received Minutes from the meetings of:

- Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee 10 February 2022
- Academic Strategy and Planning 14 February 2022

The context within which the comment regarding red areas in minute 21:55 in the SSQAC minutes was questioned.

**AGREED:** To receive the minutes

**21:71 Matters for Onward Communication**

Verbal

To be determined outside of the meeting.

**21:72 Forward Meetings**

Verbal

Tuesday 14 June 2022