

CONFIDENTIAL

ACADEMIC BOARD

**AB18/33
CONFIRMED**

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2019

Present: J Mennell (Chair), T Barry, J Brown, C Coghill, J Colclough, D Cox, R Harrison-Palmer, S Henderson, A Hunt, R Hunter, L Johnson, A Lane, M Leek, E Lees, S McCarthy-Grunwald, J Robinson, C Rouncefield, N Rourke, I Sinker, C Sloane, K Small, K Stuart, C Watson, K Watson, S Wilson

In attendance: I Donnelly (Head of Learning & Teaching Development), J Whitfield (Committee Secretary)

The Vice Chancellor welcomed PVC Academic, Professor Rob Trimble and Senior Lecturer, Susie Wilson to the meeting and to Academic Board.

18:31 **Apologies for absence:** E Bates, K Fox, A Hampson, A Marshall, L Nelson, I Todd and B Webster-Henderson. Verbal

18:32 **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019:** AB18/23
The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

Closed items were reported, and updates were provided against ongoing action log items as follows:

18:20 The Director of the Institute of the Arts provided an update on the launch of MA programmes at Ambleside Campus. It was agreed that a report on plans and actions should be provided directly to the Vice Chancellor out with the meeting.

Action: Director Institute of the Arts.

18:28 The Director of SAAS reported that work to finalise start dates for 2019-20 was in train. For the academic year, data had identified that there were 114 programme starts on 25 different non-standard start dates. Work was ongoing to ensure that any variations were limited, and full details would be published University-wide shortly.

17:69 The Vice Chancellor confirmed that further consideration of possible AOP deep dive sessions was being undertaken for future meetings.

[It was agreed to defer the next agenda item, the Vice Chancellor's Report, to the end of the meeting.]

18:33 **Academic Departments' Report** AB18/24

Received: A report on departmental updates

The Vice Chancellor expressed thanks to all academic colleagues for the volume and range of ongoing work, and the successes achieved to date across departments.

Academic Board noted the departmental updates, activity and successes, as presented within the paper.

The PVC (Academic) sought updates from departmental/institute heads and representatives in respect of activities and initiatives to drive recruitment, improvements to the student experience, the impact and outcomes of action plans, portfolio development and

growth, and retention and continuation. Lengthy discussion took place around current developments, planned future initiatives and the overarching strategy and approach in each academic area. The Vice Chancellor provided an update on the revised focus and activity of the institutional Recruitment Management Group, and plans to provide additional support across departments for marketing and recruitment activity.

Academic Board members sought clarification as to whether all departments needed to follow a single route and process in respect of IL3. The PVCA reported that he was currently reviewing the provision of IL3 across the institution. Updates and recommendations would progress to the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee in the first instance, for return to Academic Board as appropriate.

In advance of forward meetings of Academic Board, members were asked to consider and identify any issues and questions they would like to propose for further discussion, particularly any matters requiring an agreed institutional rather than departmental approach. **Action:** All colleagues to provide suggested agenda items to the Administration & Governance Manager for consideration by the Vice Chancellor and PVC Academic for agenda planning.

It was suggested that additional discussion could be held at Academic Board in respect of the development of new areas of provision and recruitment that may not easily complement existing programmes. The Vice Chancellor reported that the work of the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee would be key to this, under the direction and oversight of the new PVC Academic, who would take over the Chair of the Committee from the next meeting.

It was also proposed that additional agenda items should be arranged to focus specifically on Apprenticeships, in line with the objectives of the Strategic and Annual Operating Plans for the University.

Outcome: To note the report

18:34 Students' Union Report

AB18/25

Received: A report from the Students' Union Academic Officer, including an update on UCSU operational priorities for 2018-19

The Students' Union Academic Officer reported that a full Strategic Review of UCSU activity was currently taking place, and an outline of the proposed forward strategic objectives was provided. The UCSU Annual Operating Plan for 2019-20 was also being finalised and would be published in due course.

Academic Board noted the importance of this key activity, and agreed the following associated actions:

- The PVC Academic would provide input into the final development of the UCSU AOP to ensure appropriate alignment with University activity and objectives. **Action:** PVC Academic.
- UCSU should provide an update at the outset of the next academic year of its key priorities and objectives for the coming cycle, to invite input and comment from Academic Board. **Action:** Vice Chancellor, PVC Academic and UCSU Officers.
- The PVC Academic reported that he would like to work closely with UCSU to ensure appropriate levels and quality of student representation under a defined Student Rep Policy. **Action:** PVC Academic and UCSU Officers to progress.

- Heads of Department requested access to UCSU's planned programme of activity to ensure that they could support with marketing and promotion to drive student engagement.

Action: UCSU Academic Officer.

The Director of AQD reported on recent engagement by UCSU Student Reps as Student Reviewers within the revised validation process.

The UCSU Academic Officer confirmed that lower levels of student casework interventions had been seen during 2017-18 in comparison with previous years. A further casework report would be provided by UCSU in due course.

It was confirmed that UCSU Officer Elections had now commenced, and the outcomes would be known by 11 March. Academic Board endorsed the establishment of a formal induction process to support incoming Sabbatical Officers, and it was requested by the Vice Chancellor that the institutional leads for this activity should report to the next meeting on the arrangements currently in development.

Action: Dean for Student Success and PVC/Director of Student & Staff Services.

Outcome: To note the report

18:35 Annual Operating Plan 2018/19

AB18/26

Received: a) An update on the Academic Infrastructure Project
b) An update on the Digital Capabilities Framework
c) An overview of progress to date against the Annual Operating Plan 2018/19

Academic Infrastructure Project

The Director of SAAS provided an update on the work streams ongoing under the Academic Infrastructure Project and progress in key areas, as outlined within the paper.

Specific attention was drawn to the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee's recent review and analysis of the proposals for undertaking periodic review across departments.

In addition, further work was ongoing to revisit programme design principles, particularly with regard to the Learning Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTAS) Action Plan.

The PVC Academic reported that he was currently meeting with academic leads to ensure clarity of the current status of all development projects and the forward focus, actions and responsibilities to embed revised processes across the institution.

Academic Board members stressed the importance of clarity and efficiency of processes and procedures in support of the student experience, alongside the need to ensure that colleagues across the institution were kept sighted of developments and progress in respect of this wide-ranging project.

Digital Capabilities Framework

An update was provided by the Director of Information Services on the current progress of the Digital Capabilities Project under the Annual Operating Plan 2017/18, and the proposed future direction and approach to embedding digital capabilities across the university.

Two clear work streams had been identified under the framework: Functional/Resources and Academic/Pedagogic. Associated updates were provided in respect of online resources, the procurement of additional online training resources, the development of new pathways for learners, the implementation of a JISC digital capabilities tool pilot, and the scoping of the academic staff Digital Capabilities Framework.

The Director of AQD reported that digital confidence had been established a key theme of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTAS) Action Plan, and work was currently ongoing to develop a baseline level of digital confidence for both staff and students, using existing projects to drive forward new developments.

Academic Board members queried whether there was sufficient resource in place to provide online examinations, as a number of elements were identified in this area for further development following pilot programmes during 2017-18. Subsequent discussion took place around some of the technical challenges of providing online examinations, noting that otherwise online assessment was well embedded. The PVC Academic reported on his emerging review of LTAS and its relationships to the Digital Capabilities Project. It was agreed to include consideration of online assessment elements as part of this review and analysis.

Action: PVC Academic.

AOP 2018/19

The Vice Chancellor presented an update on current progress in the delivery of the 2018/19 Annual Operating Plan, as outlined within the paper, and it was noted that the format and reporting of AOP progress tracking was currently under review by the Vice Chancellor's Executive.

The Director of Research confirmed that improvements had been seen across all RDAP measures, which had been amended to 'green' ratings since the circulation of the papers set.

The PVC Academic drew members' attention to the data in relation to HESA T3a (continuation of full time first degree students in higher education). He reported that HESA had recently released an update on institutional positions against this metric. The University's rate for 2016-17 entry had increased by 1.5%, a pleasing result which would inform future TEF ratings. An information release to communicate this achievement would be circulated shortly for cascade to departmental and service teams. However, it was highlighted that, according to internal data, this figure had dropped again during 2017-18, and there remained further work to do in this area.

Outcome: To note the updates as presented

18:36 Degree Classifications

AB18/27

Received: The Annual Report 2017/18

An introduction to the degree classifications data provided within the report was presented by the PVC Academic. It was reported that 67.5% of undergraduate students awarded a degree in 2017/18 achieved a First or 2:1, representing a rise compared to 2016/17 of 6.4 percentage points. The increase for full-time students, to 68.8% was 8 percentage points.

Despite welcoming the results, PVC Academic stressed that the factors leading to these increases needed to be clearly understood.

The Dean for Student Success was working to provide a detailed analysis and evidence base of the factors leading to the positive increase in outcomes. However, there was already confidence that all underlying marks had been appropriately scrutinised by External Examiners, and it was confirmed that there had been no changes in assessment practice during the period covered by the data.

Academic Board noted that the data and underpinning narrative would feed into the institutional Access & Participation Plan for 2019-20.

Outcome: To note the report and ongoing detailed analysis of outcomes

18:37 Access Agreement

AB18/28

Received: The Access Agreement Monitoring Return 2017/18

The University Secretary reported that the first institutional Access & Participation Plan under the new OfS framework had been approved by Academic Board and University Board during 2017-18 for the 2018-19 academic year.

The report presented under the current agenda had been generated against the 2017-18 Access Agreement.

Overall, the University had met its obligations in this area and the majority of the targets set in the Access Agreement and Resource Plan for 2017-18 had been achieved.

Work had begun to prepare for the next Access & Participation Plan (2019-20) under the oversight of the PVC Academic.

It was agreed that the full return documentation would be circulated to members following the meeting for additional information.

Action: Administration & Governance Manager.

Outcome: To note the return

18:38 NSS

AB18/29

Received:

- a) An update on progress against NSS Action Plans
- b) A departmental presentation on NSS from the Head of Department Science, Natural Resources & Outdoor Studies
- c) A departmental presentation on NSS from the Director of the Institute of the Arts

Progress Update

An update on current progress against NSS action plans was provided by the PVC Academic, as outlined in the paper.

The Dean for Student Success confirmed that the completion rate for the 2019 Survey currently stood at 58% of eligible students. This was 8.2% lower than at the same point the previous year, due to large cohorts of students currently out on placement.

It was confirmed that appropriate measures were in place to support completion of the survey upon their return.

The Vice Chancellor expressed thanks to the Dean for Student Success, Director of Marketing & Recruitment and all academic leads for their work and input to produce a video guide on the value and process of the NSS survey for students.

SNROS NSS Presentation

An overview of departmental results, action plans and NSS supporting activity was provided by the Head of Department for Science, Natural Resources and Outdoor Studies.

Particular attention was drawn to the department's introduction of a staff development plan aligned to the live action plan for NSS, supported by interventions throughout the year. It was confirmed that action plans were also referenced against the programme level Annual Monitoring Report for the department.

Student feedback and comments, as returned within NSS outcomes narratives were also presented for information.

In response to members' questions around the key learning points of NSS 2018 results, the Head of Department reported that they had highlighted a need for more reflective practice, the importance of regular planned team meetings to plan programme delivery, and the requirement to conduct regular audit of peer reviews and staff development.

IoA NSS Presentation

An overview of departmental results, action plans and NSS supporting activity was provided by the Director institute of the Arts.

Areas of lowest departmental performance were highlighted, alongside the identification of key priority areas and the specific objectives of the departmental action planning process.

The Vice Chancellor offered formal thanks to all Heads of Department and their teams for their work and efforts to bring about improvements in NSS outcomes.

Outcome: To note the update and presentations provided

18:39 Research Matters

AB18/30

- Received:**
- a) An update on Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and the associated Communications Plan
 - b) An update on developments in respect of the Research Excellence Framework (REF2021)
 - c) A verbal update on the development of proposals for the establishment of the Institute of Health Research Health-related Centre
 - d) Minor changes to the PgR Regulations and the Guide to the Examination of Research Degrees (MPhil, PhD) for Academic Board approval
 - e) Recommendations for Academic Board approval following the review of the Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas

RDAP Update

The Director of Research reported that there was no further update in respect of RDAP at the present time. The decision of the Privy Council in respect of QAA's recommendation would be notified in due course.

REF2021

An update on current developments and progress in preparation for REF2021 was provided, as outlined in the paper.

An Equality Impact Assessment was in the process of being completed, in association with the PVC/Director of Student & Staff Services, in respect of REF activity and the Code of Practice which was also currently in development.

Health Research Institute

It was confirmed that a detailed update on current progress to establish an Institute of Health & Research Health-Related Centre would be provided at the next meeting by the PVC Health.

Engagement and stakeholder events were currently in progress, and full proposals would proceed to the Research & Enterprise Committee and Academic Board at the next meetings.

PGR Regulations

Academic Board noted and approved minor changes to the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations and associated Academic Appeals and Examination Guidance as outlined within the paper.

Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA)

The Director of Research reported on the activity, outcomes and recommendations of the review and refresh of the focus and scope of the CNPPA to ensure it continued to meet the University's goals with regional, national and international relevance, reach and impact.

Academic Board approved proposals to:

- Retain the Centre's name.
- Change the subject themes to:
 - a) Wildlife Conservation
 - b) Cultural Landscapes and Ecology
 - c) Rural and Visitor Economy
 - d) Human-Nature Relationships
- Request applications for theme leads from the current professoriate, with clear roles and responsibilities to drive the themes forward across the institution.
- Reconsider the Director of the Centre role as an external/internal appointment following further discussions with VCE and potential partners.
- Agree the continuance of Dr Elspeth Lees as interim director until the forward arrangements for the role of Centre Director were confirmed.
- Plan a series of events to seek to establish the research themes, rather than re-launching the Centre at this time.
- Agree to develop a complete governance structure for the Centre, including the opportunity to establish an external steering group.

It was confirmed that a stakeholder event originally scheduled for March 2019 was currently paused, pending confirmation of subject theme leads and the establishment of a steering/advisory board.

The Vice Chancellor commented that it was timely to review the focus of the Centre at this stage, under the overarching focus of the institutional Strategic Plan and other areas of academic delivery, and that the intention and subsequent process had been well received by key stakeholders.

- Outcome:**
- To approve the proposals
 - To note that proposal 6 was currently paused

18:40 Competition & Markets Authority Presentation

Received: A presentation on current consumer protection requirements for communication to departments and services

It was agreed that a summary presentation would be delivered under the current agenda, with a longer agenda item to be arranged for the May meeting of Academic Board to enable more detailed exploration of the key elements of CMA guidance.

The Director of AQD provided an overview of the importance of consumer protection law for all staff, and it was confirmed that compliance with CMA regulations was an ongoing condition of the University's registration with the Office for Students.

The particular responsibilities of Heads of Department in respect of CMA compliance were highlighted, with specific reference to programme withdrawals and associated teach out plans under the institutional Student Protection Plan.

It was reported that an advisory internal audit had been completed by the University's internal auditors, Uniac to ensure initial levels of compliance with CMA regulations.

The Academic Strategy & Planning Committee was playing a key role in compliance monitoring and oversight of the academic planning cycle. Ongoing activity included the establishment of general and role-specific staff development and training plans for CMA by the end of the 2018-19 academic year.

Outcome: To note the presentation and intention for a more detailed overview of CMA requirements to be presented at the next meeting

18:41 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTAS) AB18/31

Received: An update on the 2-year Action Plan

Academic Board noted the update provided, as presented within the paper.

Outcome: To note progress against the 2-year Action Plan

18:42 Minutes from Academic Board Committees AB18/32

- Received:**
- a) The minutes of the meetings of the Research & Enterprise Committee held on 14 December 2018 and 22 January 2019
 - b) The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee held on 23 January 2019
 - c) The minutes of the meeting of the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee held on 24 January 2019

The minutes and associated key points of the meetings of the Research & Enterprise Committee on 14 December 2018 and 22 January 2019 were received. In particular, Academic Board noted the Committee's consideration of:

- The Action Plan for the Research Office & Graduate School.
- The Action Plan for Growth, Partnerships & Enterprise 2018/19.

- The Graduate School AER (Annual Evaluatory Report).
- The Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS) 2017/18.

The minutes and associated key points of the meeting of the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee on 23 January 2019 were received. In particular, Academic Board noted the Committee's consideration of:

- Academic Planning Cycle compliance.
- Programme approvals, renewals, suspensions and withdrawals.
- The Higher Level Apprenticeships Report.
- International activity reporting.

The minutes and associated key points of the meeting of the Student Success & Quality Assurance Committee on 24 January 2019 were received. In particular, Academic Board noted the Committee's approval of:

- The renewal of the collaborative partnership with Brathay Trust.
- A one year extension of the collaborative partnership with Northumberland College.
- In light of the Committee's decision to approve Subject Level Periodic Review, the approval that the end date on existing provision should be lifted, with all such provision to go through Periodic Review by 2025/2026.

Academic Board approval for the partnership arrangements agreed by the Committee was sought, and it was agreed that these would be approved by the Vice Chancellor out with the meeting via Chair's Action.

Action: Vice Chancellor

The Committee's consideration of the following elements was also noted:

- Graduate School Annual Monitoring Report
- Departmental Annual Monitoring Reports
- NSS Action Plans
- UKPSF Update on Data & Engagement
- Annual Retention Report (continuation/completion)
- Employability outcomes (by different student characteristics)
- Fitness to Practice Outcomes Annual Report
- NMC/Mott Macdonald Annual Report

Outcome:

- To note the Committee minutes and summaries presented
- To delegate authority to the Vice Chancellor to approve proposals for the renewal and extension of existing collaborative provision agreements by Chair's Action following the meeting

18:43 Vice Chancellor's Report

Verbal

Received: A verbal update from the Vice Chancellor

Academic Board Staff Representatives

The Vice Chancellor reported on a recent meeting with departmental staff representatives to clarify the responsibilities of Academic Board membership and to ensure the best possible input and engagement from staff representatives.

Academic Board noted the intention to hold a further meeting to take forward the proposals identified.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that the role and remit of Academic Board was understood across all areas, and that all academic staff were clear as to how information would be disseminated following each meeting.

It was reported that there was widespread support for a mechanism by which departmental representatives could feed comments and concerns from staff into Academic Board, and report back as appropriate on discussions held during meetings. It was suggested that a standing agenda item could be introduced to enable the reciprocal flow of information.

Action: Administration & Governance Manager.

It was agreed that the PVC Academic would meet with departmental representatives prior to the next meeting to explore possibilities for them to join other formal deliberative committees.

Action: PVC Academic.

Academic Board discussed the importance of its external facing activity, and it was agreed that there was a key requirement to ensure appropriate discussion in relation to sector developments. It was suggested that a workshop session or away day could be arranged for strategic presentations and debate.

Action: The PVC Academic to consider.

Borderlands

The Vice Chancellor reported that an announcement on the quantum of the Borderlands deal was expected as part of the Chancellor's Spring Statement on 13 March. Further information would follow once available.

Brexit

The Vice Chancellor reported that the University Secretary was conducting work to further develop the institutional strategic Risk Register, to include the specific implications of each Brexit scenario from the perspectives of University suppliers, competitors and sector behaviours. Colleagues were asked to feed in any comments or concerns to the University Secretary for consideration.

Action: All Academic Board members.

Key Institutional Successes

An overview of key successes across departmental areas was provided. Congratulations and thanks were offered by the Vice Chancellor to all staff involved in the initiatives and activity reported.

Augar Review

The Vice Chancellor provided an update on the likely outcomes of the Post 18 Education and Funding Review (the Augar Review).

The recommendations had been scheduled for publication during March 2019, but were now anticipated during May 2019 at the earliest.

It was confirmed that three-year forecasts and scenario planning were being undertaken by the Vice Chancellor's Executive, and close monitoring of the situation was ongoing. Further updates would be provided once known.

Outcome: To note the updates provided

18:44

Next meeting: Wednesday 8 May 2019

Verbal