

ACADEMIC BOARD

Notes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016

Present: J Mennell – Vice Chancellor, Chair (C)
B Cutter – UCSU Community & Partnership Officer (C)
A Dickson – Associate Dean – Quality and Student Experience (La)
A Hampson – HoD representative (C)
C Hardcastle – Interim Pro Vice Chancellor Academic (C)
N Harris – Registrar and Secretary (La)
S Henderson – Deputy Dean (La)
L Kenward – Academic Representative NHPP (C)
A Lane – Interim Director of Student Academic Administration Service (SAAS) (La)
E Lees – HoD representative – H&S (A)
S Longstaffe – Academic Representative IoA (La)
L Mansfield – Academic representative – SNROS (A)
J Moses – Director, Institute of Education (La)
S Pankhurst – Deputy Dean (La)
S Patefield – Academic representative – MSS (La)
T Pellegrino – UCSU Academic Officer (C)
J Robinson – Head of Academic Quality and Development (AQD) (La)
C Rouncefield – HoD representative (La)
N Rourke – Academic representative – BLPSS (La)
F Sapsford – Academic representative – HPSS (C)
R Talbot – Executive Dean (La)
M Weaver – Director of Library and Student Services (La)

In attendance: J Whitfield – Committee Secretary
K Riley – UCSU Student Voice Facilitator (C)

16:001 Opening remarks:

The Vice Chancellor welcomed new Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Rosy Crehan to the University and to Academic Board. On behalf of Academic Board, she thanked the outgoing Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor, Cliff Hardcastle for all his input and support during his time at the University, and wished him well for the future. She also welcomed Theresa Pellegrino to the meeting in her role as Students' Union Representative.

Director of the Institute of Education, J Moses updated colleagues on the latest data release from the National College for Teaching and Learning, which showed the University at the top of the league table for Secondary PGCE completion – an outstanding result. Thanks and congratulations were offered to J Moses and the Institute of Education team.

16:002 Apologies for absence:

S Booth – Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise, Business Development and Engagement (C)
D Cox – Director of Research & Head of Graduate School (La)
R Harrison-Palmer – HoD representative (C)
G Haigh – Director of Marketing & Recruitment (La)
I Sinker – Associate Dean – Academic Development and Innovation (La)
K Watson – Academic representative – Ed (La)

- 16:003 Notes of the meeting held on 22 June 2016:** AB16/01
With minor amendments, the notes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 16:003 Terms of Reference and Membership:** AB16/02
a)
- a) To approve the Terms of Reference and Membership of Academic Board 2016-17:**
- Outcome:** Subject to the following amendments, the Terms of Reference for Academic Board were approved for recommendation to University Board:
- B Cutter to be removed from the membership, however it was noted she would act as deputy in T Pellegrino's absence.
 - Rosy Crehan to be named as new Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic.
 - Reference to Heads of Departments not members of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee to be removed, as it was confirmed that all Heads of Departments were now members of the Committee.
 - More explicit wording around academic quality and standards to be reflected in the Terms of Reference.
- It was also agreed that reference to new academic awards should be reflected in the Terms of reference once RDAP was achieved.
- b) To note changes to the Terms of Reference for the Learning & Teaching Committee approved by Chair's Action:** b)
- Outcome:** Subject to the following amendments, Academic Board approved the Terms of Reference for the Learning & Teaching Committee:
- K Riley to be removed from the membership as only T Pellegrino to attend, with B Cutter acting as deputy in her absence.
 - Additional wording to be drafted for inclusion in the Terms of Reference, to reflect the ambitions around the new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
 - The Terms of Reference to make explicit reference to the remit of the Learning & Teaching Committee to consider and review the outcomes of the annual review conducted by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.
- c) To note the establishment of the TEF Steering Group:** c)
- Outcome:** The Terms of Reference for the establishment of the TEF Steering Group were agreed and noted. It was confirmed that amendments may be required over time in line with developments within the Teaching Excellence Framework and process. The current Terms of Reference were agreed as appropriate to TEF Year 2.
- 16:004 Vice Chancellor's Report:** Verbal
- Further Education Area Review – Cumbria:**
The Vice Chancellor outlined recent developments. Two significant recommendations had resulted from the review:
1. Formalisation of the merger of the Lakes College and Carlisle College – process anticipated to be completed by the end of the current

academic year.

It was confirmed that the University was working closely with both Colleges to explore options for support, collaboration and progression opportunities for students.

2. The formation of joint venture organisation between the region's four FE colleges (Carlisle, Lakes, Barrow and Kendal) and the University of Cumbria, to:
 - provide an accessible entry point to industry, employers and stakeholders to the HE and FE offer in the county;
 - utilise combined capability and resource to put forward funding bids at county level (i.e. the Local Enterprise Partnership), and nationally (i.e. the Apprenticeship agenda).

It was reported that collaborative models were currently being explored, and a further update would follow in due course. It was confirmed that Newton Rigg College stood outside the scope of the area review and therefore the joint venture. However, the Vice Chancellor was to hold a meeting with the Principal to discuss potential future relationships.

An update was also provided on the Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders sub-set Post 16 Group, which was chaired J Moses. It was hoped the Group would interact actively with outcomes and monitoring of the Area Review.

Skills agenda:

The Vice Chancellor had accepted appointments to the Boards of the National College for Nuclear and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with more active involvement within the LEP Employment and Skills Committee. The University was also to act as lead for the delivery of Theme 4 of the Cumbria Skills Strategy – Apprenticeships and Higher Level Skills. It was felt that there were many positive opportunities for the University to position itself to best respond to the local and national skills agenda as a result of these developments.

London School of Commerce:

It was confirmed that the model being explored and furthered with the LSC had now been closed and would not be progressed. The Vice Chancellor expressed gratitude to all colleagues who had worked on the development of programme and delivery models.

Director of International Development:

It had not been possible to make an appointment following the recent recruitment round. Wider recruitment activity was ongoing and a further update would be provided once available. It was further agreed to defer consideration of the International Action Plan under the agenda for the meeting (see 16:015 below).

Key messages from staff forums:

The Vice Chancellor reiterated key messages from the recent staff forums held across all campuses. The institutional focus for 2016-17 was to achieve stability. Key priority areas had been identified as recruitment, reputation and standing, and staff confidence, morale and pride. Future focus and objectives to be provided through the new Corporate Strategy 2018-23, development to commence in January 2017.

Academic Board:

Discussion centred on the high level remit of Academic Board as the University's most senior deliberative committee, and its requirement to provide appropriate levels of challenge and steer. Work was ongoing to redefine clear lines of responsibility and reporting across committees on academic issues, with appropriate upward progression to Academic Board for challenge, consideration, approval and information.

As the work of deliberative committees progressed, it was agreed to review the current requirement that elected members of Academic Board were not also on the membership of other deliberative committees.

MATTERS FOR APPROVAL

16:005 Executive Dean's Report: AB16/03

Changes to the format of the document were discussed, to best reflect institutional strategic priorities moving forward. It was agreed that concise departmental reports would be retained in order to meet the reporting requirements of professional and statutory bodies, but that wider news and updates should be disseminated through the weekly Deanery and University global communications.

Outcome: The report was received and noted.

Action: R Crehan and R Talbot in liaison with K McLaughlin-Flynn to devise a new report template, reflecting academic and department priorities and targets, for approval by the Vice Chancellor.

a)

a) To approve proposals for programme withdrawals:

Outcome: It was agreed that programme withdrawals were to be prepared under the oversight of the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee (AS&PC), before proceeding to Academic Board for final approval once all documentation was completed and all assurances had been undertaken by AS&PC and the Departmental Quality Committees.

Actions agreed:

- Current proposals for withdrawals to be completed and reviewed by AS&PC – **R Talbot, J Robinson.**
- Any urgent matters to be directed to the Vice Chancellor for agreement by Chair's Action – **R Talbot, J Robinson.**

16:006 To approve proposals for updating the Academic Regulations for 2017-18: AB16/04

Outcome: Academic Board endorsed the intended approach and focus of regulations work during 2016/17 and approved the development of criteria and processes for the award of Honorary Degrees.

Action: Criteria and processes for the award of Honorary Degrees to be presented at the next meeting - **Agenda.**

16:007 Stern Review: summary of the outcomes, implications and considerations and approval of Research & Enterprise Committee recommendations: AB16/05

A summary of the 12 recommendations outlined in the Stern Report was provided, along with potential implications and actions.

It was confirmed that it had been announced by HEFCE on 14 October that the University was to take part in the Research Excellence Framework consultation.

Outcome: The paper was noted.

Clarification was sought as to possible impact on academic contracts.

Action: The Vice Chancellor to respond following discussion out with the meeting.

16:008 To note the forward system for appointment of Malpractice Panel Members: AB16/06

It was confirmed that Panel members were now identified by Heads of Department for the start of the academic year. As part of this process, Heads of Department confirmed that the nominated staff met the criteria for panel membership, and highlighted new members to the assessment team in SAAS. The Assessment, Awards and Compliance Manager was responsible for ensuring that panel members were trained/updated and each convened panel had appropriate membership.

Outcome: The paper was noted.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

16:009 Academic Forums November 2016 – J Mennell: Verbal

Following staff feedback at recent VC forum events, the Vice Chancellor outlined the potential for a series of academic forums to encourage debate and enable feedback to be collected, with a particular focus initially around issues and inhibitors hindering progress, performance and effective working.

Academic Board Representatives were supportive of the initiative, to gain greater input and expertise from academic colleagues, to better identify any areas of challenge, to check the understanding of key terms and definitions, and to explore the totality of academic roles and remits. Ensuring demonstrable actions and outcomes was seen as a key factor for the success of the forums, with clarity around timelines and responsibilities for staff. It was also suggested that staff fora could be used to inform new approaches to the development of academic regulations, whilst also providing a valuable opportunity to demonstrate greater engagement with the staff community, and to establish a sense of greater representation of staff issues at senior levels within the organisation.

Action: All **Academic Board members** to forward comments and suggestions for staff fora and key questions for inclusion, for consideration by the Vice Chancellor and Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, to the Committees Officer by Friday 28 October.

16:010 Update on Sector Developments (Quality): AB16/07

a) To receive an update on TEF2, NSS, new quality operating model, student protection plans: a)

Teaching Excellence Framework Year 2:

An overview of the specification for Year 2 of the TEF was provided, and it was confirmed that full metrics would be released at the end of October 2016. The deadline for submission of the University's TEF2 application and supporting documentation was January 2017, with results due to be announced in May 2017. It was felt that the new

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy would help to address the factors and metrics within the TEF, and to provide steer with regard to key deadlines and a strategic focus to ensure adequate levels of performance.

Discussion followed regarding the establishment of the new TEF Steering Group, and it was confirmed that the current membership had been targeted to providing a focus on readiness to meet the January 2017 submission deadline. It was confirmed that R Hunter, Director of the Institute of the Arts, was to join the Steering Group, with further academic representation to follow as both TEF and the development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy progressed.

It was stressed that understanding and consideration of the TEF needed to be embedded throughout the institution and the work of all academic staff.

It was requested that specific attention be directed at forward capability and capacity within LiSS, should the University be awarded Silver or Gold status. It was confirmed in response that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy would also act as the vehicle for establishing quantitative and qualitative indicators in staffing and resource areas for use against the TEF framework.

New operating model for QA:

It was confirmed that traditional periodic QAA reviews had now been replaced by a new operating model, whereby HEFCE would request annual assurances in relation to quality through the University Board. The specific criteria and assurances for Board sign-off were presented in the accompanying paper. A further HEFCE 5-year assurance review was designed to test University Boards on the mechanisms whereby they assured themselves of the criteria being met. The new operating model was seen as a positive opportunity to review the QA framework, and to streamline where possible.

The Board of Directors would be required by 1 December 2017 to provide a statement confirming that the University's QA framework met Part 1 European standards and guidelines. It was confirmed that principles already embedded meant that delivery of this requirement should be comfortably achieved.

The HEFCE 5-year assurance visit was scheduled to take place during 2018-19, and J Robinson and N Harris had begun to hold preparatory meetings. Business mapping was to take place to ensure timely consideration of required elements by Academic Board, for upward reporting to University Board. It was stressed that under the new system the assurance function of Academic Board was not being replaced, rather that University Board were being asked to demonstrate oversight and confidence that Academic Board was fulfilling its QA requirements.

NSS 2017:

HEFCE had announced changes to the National Student Survey from 2017, with new sections on Learning Opportunities, Learning Communities and Student Voice. It was also intended to develop proposals to capture feedback from students not currently included in the NSS, with an initial focus on one year courses and top-up programmes. HEFCE was also developing proposals in relation to a feedback survey for taught Postgraduate students.

It was agreed that there was an urgency to considering the new NSS sections, and how they would inform the new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, before the NSS opened in January 2017. Having clear definitions of terms would be a key factor, as understanding drove student responses. The Associate Dean, A Dickson confirmed that actions were ongoing to ensure the new themes were incorporated into work with students. The UCSU Representative, T Pellegrino stressed the importance of communicating to students what actions were being taken to address issues raised as part of the NSS. Responsiveness in this area was seen as a key driver of improved results moving forward.

Discussion took place regarding the detailed guidance in place to prevent student coaching to influence NSS results. It was stressed that continuous dialogue with students must be a focus in order to establish a learning community whereby students had input into the design and co-creation of the curriculum. In this way, the basis of the NSS themes and questions could be used to drive true student engagement.

Actions agreed – the Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic to lead and progress through committees as required:

- The new Terms of Reference for the development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to reflect NSS 2017 focus.
- The existing NSS Action Plan to be refreshed and refocussed in line with NSS 2017.
- The existing PYS to be reviewed and refocussed in line with new NSS questions.
- Programme questionnaires to be developed in line with TEF and NSS. Early warning indicators and clear reporting lines to be agreed to assist identification of key issues and actions.
- A specific set of immediate actions to be developed out with the NSS Action Plan to prepare for the NSS 2017 opening in January 2017, to include consideration of focus, actions and staff/student communications.

Student Protection Plans:

It was reported that the new Office For Students would require all institutions to publish Student Protection Plans, covering the mitigation of such risks as programme or institutional closure. An Information Note had been published to date, and it was confirmed that refinements would be required to programme withdrawal processes in line with the new guidance.

A UUK response to voluntary self-assessment had been issued in light of the Competition and Markets Authority's guidance to HE providers about their consumer law obligations to undergraduate students.

Action: J Robinson to circulate the report to colleagues.

Review of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy:

It was agreed that the thorough review of the current strategy should proceed to Academic Board for approval in April 2017.

- b) **To consider key questions to inform the work of the Learning & Teaching Committee:**
- c) **To consider Terms of Reference for the new Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy:**

b)

It was stressed that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) needed to clearly set out what the University was seeking to achieve and effect in terms of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and what that meant in terms of: learning, learners and their outcomes, graduate attributes, the learning environment, what it meant to be a member of academic staff, and what the expectations were of academic roles.

Key questions identified for the strategic review of the LTAS were as follows:

- Should the Strategy be focussed on the principles of learning, teaching and assessment, or should it consider wider elements, including those contained within the TEF e.g. learning environment?
- Is the new LTAS about enablement or prescriptiveness? Should the output be a holistic overarching strategy which allows for localised differentiation and a range of approaches or should the Strategy determine the academic model for the University, with little opportunity for variation and variety?
- Should we be explicit in respect of the type of learning we seek e.g. experiential learning recognising our roots, our portfolio and our strengths?
- Should we be explicit in respect of the learning and teaching role(s) and desired skills base of our academics?
- Should we have explicit focus on specific areas e.g. graduate attributes, internalisation of curriculum, digital literacy, global citizenship and employability?
- How should we recognise future learner types and study locations e.g. apprenticeships, distance learners?
- Where do students studying with our collaborative partners fit with our Strategy? How will this impact on our focus?
- What are questions we should be posing to our students, alumni, professional services and academy to inform the strategy development?
- In developing our Strategy how should we generate debate and engagement both across university and within subject discipline areas?
- How do we ensure our quality framework and processes are seen to work for staff rather than against?
- How should our Strategy seek to recognise and celebrate success in learning and teaching (individual and collective)?
- What measures of success (and metrics) are needed?
- How will TEF timelines need to influence our timescales?

Additional elements discussed by Academic Board for consideration included:

- Input from the academic community in terms of key academic groups and the capture of award winning or best practice and top NSS outcome areas.
- Further consideration of the term 'inclusive' in the wider University context, particularly with regard to disabled students and those with protected characteristics.
- That the existing LTAS should not be used as the starting point for the development of new objectives.
- The core vocational elements in the majority of the University's programme portfolio, and the relationship to Higher Level Apprenticeships and students outside the usual learning environment.
- The creation of an overarching strategy allowing for localised diversity.

- The importance of devising strategy rather than policy.
- The development of research-informed programmes.
- Student intake and recruitment, and the subsequent impact on the LTAS, including aspirations for recruitment processes and the characteristics of the student body.
- The capture of feedback from external partners, including External Examiners and Assessment Boards.
- Different types of learner and modes of learning.
- Clarity around the differentiation between education and training.

Outcome and actions agreed: Academic Board endorsed the tasking of the Learning & Teaching Committee to draft Terms of Reference for the development of the new LTAS, to include key objectives and considerations, engagement and involvement of staff and students, and the utilisation of internal expertise. The Terms of Reference to return to Academic Board for approval in December 2016.

16:011 To receive and consider the final Academic Strategy:

AB16/08

Outcome: Academic Board received the Strategy for consideration by the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee, to inform portfolio, product and partnership strategy.

Actions agreed:

- The Committees Officer to circulate the current Terms of Reference and Membership of the Academic Strategy & Planning Committee.
- R Crehan and J Robinson to consider the forward membership of the AS&PC.

16:012 To receive and endorse the NSS Task & Finish Group Action Plan:

AB16/09

Outcome: The plan was received, and approved subject to review in line with the new NSS Survey. Academic Board sought assurance that actions and objectives would be continually monitored and progress-tracked to ensure targets were met successfully.

Actions agreed:

- The Learning & Teaching Committee to identify the institutional themes emerging from current NSS results (including consideration of the DLHE Survey), and to make recommendations for improvement actions, to return to Academic Board as soon as possible.

16:013 Student retention and progression - Deanery and Departments to provide a summary of student retention and progression between 2015-16 and 2016-17, and arrangements in place to support new and continuing students:

Verbal

The Vice Chancellor outlined the current situation whereby the current year's results were significantly worse than anticipated, particularly with regard to the numbers of students failing to progress from Year 2 to Year 3. The results were of concern from institutional, financial, reputational and TEF perspectives, and particularly in relation to the personal impact on students. It was stressed that improved early warning systems were imperative, with accompanying support mechanisms for 'at risk' students.

T Barry, Head of Department Medical and Sports Sciences, joined the meeting to provide an update on his department's retention strategy,

current numbers of 'at risk' students, and intervention measures in place.

The establishment of new Student Regulations was discussed as a key contributor to the success of retention initiatives and recruitment targets, in addition to the current development of forward recruitment strategy and values-based recruitment plans.

It was agreed that First Assessment and Christmas milestones should be incorporated into support programmes as a key priority for Heads of Department, with attendance monitoring also a key focus for improvement.

Outcome and action agreed: As there was insufficient time for each Department to provide a detailed response during the meeting, it was agreed that Deanery colleagues should provide a deanery and departmental responses to the Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic by Friday 4 December, outlining:

- current retention and progression status
- intervention initiatives in place and assessment of their effectiveness
- identification of issues and problem areas
- proposed additional measures to support retention and progression

A professional services response also to be submitted – A Lane and M Weaver to provide, and to work with Deanery colleagues to devise a single list of data requirements, co-ordination and system capture issues, and review of accuracy. Student transfer data also to be considered.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

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|---------------|--|-------------------|
| 16:014 | Entry tariffs and detailed entry points range 2017-18 and 2018-19 – approved by Chair's Action 20/7/16 – N Harris:
Academic Board welcomed the changes to entry points ranges. It was urged that consideration of entry tariffs be considered in line with the development of the revised Academic Strategy.

Outcome and action: M Weaver to provide an outline of key concerns for the Vice Chancellor's consideration. The detailed entry points range to be further reviewed in light of comments and approved by Chair's Action. | AB16/10 |
| 16:015 | To receive the final version of the 2016-17 International Action Plan:

Outcome: It was agreed to defer this item, and to identify appropriate receipt points moving forward. | AB16/11 |
| 16:016 | To note the progress and timeline for the RDAP application and scrutiny process:

Outcome: Academic Board noted the progress and timeline for the RDAP application and scrutiny process. | AB16/12 |
| 16:017 | To note policy/statement reviews:

a) Framework for Communicating Information to Students – R Talbot: | AB16/13

a) |

Outcome: Academic Board noted the Framework for Communicating Information Students, which was approved by the Student Experience and Retention Committee on 27 September 2016.

b) Student Evaluative Feedback Policy – J Robinson:

Outcome: Academic Board noted the minor changes made to the Student Evaluative Feedback Policy, prior to its full review during 2016-17, to enable more flexibility in student evaluation with immediate effect, approved by the Student Experience and Retention Committee on 27 September 2016. b)

16:018 Minutes from Academic Board Committees: AB16/14

Outcome: The minutes of the following committees were received and noted: a)

a) Academic Quality & Standards Committee (and to note appointments of External Examiners) – 26 September 2016 b)

b) Student Experience & Retention Committee – 27 September 2016

16:019 Minutes of University Board of Directors – 7 July 2016 – N Harris: AB16/15

Outcome: The minutes were received and noted.

16:020 KEY MESSAGES & COMMUNICATIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING Verbal

Nothing further was noted.

16:021 Any Other Business:

It was agreed to note for later consideration that the question was raised as to whether the University's current management structure supported an effective flow of information to academic staff.

16:021 Next meeting: Tuesday 6 December 2016, 2pm-4.30pm, Room EG19, Carlisle Fusehill Street Campus. Verbal

Deadline for papers: 12 Noon, Tuesday 29 November 2016

The meeting closed at 5.10pm.