

ACADEMIC BOARD

Notes of the meeting held on 9 December 2016

Present: S Booth, D Cox, R Crehan (acting Chair), A Dickson, A Hampson, N Harris, R Harrison-Palmer, S Henderson, A Lane, S Longstaffe, J Moses, S Patefield, T Pellegrino, J Robinson, N Rourke, I Sinker, R Talbot, K Watson, M Weaver

In attendance: J Whitfield – Committee Secretary

16:022 Apologies for absence:

J Mennell (Chair), G Haigh, L Kenward, E Lees, L Mansfield, S Pankhurst, C Rouncefield, F Sapsford.

16:023 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016:

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

AB16/16

16:024 Action points:

Ongoing actions were noted and completed actions identified. An update was provided by the Director of Research & the Graduate School regarding the ongoing debate surrounding the adoption of the Stern Review, and it was confirmed that a response would be provided on behalf of the University if the consultation were still to go ahead. A further update on the potential impact on academic contracts to be provided at this time.

AB16/17

16:025 Vice Chancellor's Report:

Verbal

Student Recruitment:

A recruitment update was provided on behalf of the Vice Chancellor by the Registrar & Secretary. It was confirmed that weekly updates were being produced based on UCAS and SITS data. The picture across the sector was down on the previous year, with UoC's overall recruitment performance down 6%, and its NHS recruitment down 33% against 2015-16 figures. However, under the HEFCE contract, UoC's performance, despite being down, was better than the institutional peer group, and PGCE and PGT figures had seen increases over the previous year's performance.

It was confirmed that many additional initiatives and interventions were ongoing, under the oversight of the Recruitment Management Group, and all colleagues were urged to input as much as possible into the maximisation of recruitment activities. Increased competition was expected within the market moving forward, as other institutions began to adopt marketing initiatives already employed within the University.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic reported on her recent correspondence to Heads of Department, requesting maximum engagement between departmental staff and the Marketing team, to work in collaboration to achieve maximum effect in the key weeks before the January UCAS deadline.

Vice Chancellor's Inauguration:

The Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic offered sincere thanks on behalf of the Vice Chancellor to all colleagues for their contribution to the successful graduation and inauguration ceremonies.

Particular attention was drawn to the work of the SAAS team in organising and managing the events.

Other announcements:

The Academic Representative for the Institute of the Arts was sorry to announce the sad death of a student within the English Department at the end of October. All present offered sympathy and condolences to the students' family and all staff who had known and worked with him.

16:026 Deputy Vice Chancellor's Academic Report:

AB16/18

A report was provided on cross-institutional priorities and departmental focus areas for the immediate future in the following key areas:

- Progress against NSS
- Student feedback
- Portfolio development, including Apprenticeships
- Recruitment activities
- Building reputation and capacity

Discussion followed concerning timetabling issues identified through student feedback. The Deputy Dean confirmed that initiatives were in place to achieve improvements for the 2017-18 cycle, and that no further changes to the current year's timetable would be made, except to address areas of specific student concern.

Action: Any areas of concern regarding timetabling for the current academic year to be reported to S Henderson for immediate attention - **All**

Clarification was sought as to the scope of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy Group, and it was confirmed by the Institutional Lead for Health that the group's focus was predominantly academic, in order to establish a strong position for the University to maximise opportunities and respond to the changing NHS landscape and commissioning processes.

The new format of the DVC's Academic Report was welcomed, to underpin priority areas. It was further suggested that elements out with but directly impacting academic strategy and departments should also be included, along with updates from SAAS, LiSS and the Research Office, formally included in the Vice Chancellor's Report (which was now to be a highly-focussed strategic report).

The Associate Dean Academic Development and Innovation provided an update on recent developments resulting from the FE Area Review. The proposed merger between Carlisle College and the Lakes College had been paused, in order to explore collaborative opportunities with the Newcastle College Group.

Outcome: The report was noted.

Action: The report to be progressed to University Board for information - **J Whitfield, K Leigh.**

ACADEMIC STRATEGY & PLANNING

16:027 To note the minutes of Academic Strategy & Planning Committee - 7 November 2016: AB16/19a

It was confirmed that Deputy Dean S Pankhurst was the assigned lead for the work strands agreed by the Committee relating to the Academic Strategy.

Discussion followed concerning the expectations of members of all formal committees with regard to reporting and the production of papers and minutes, with particular reference to recording for TEF and RDAP and to Board assurance and the Annual Provider Review. The Registrar & Secretary confirmed that formal guidance would be issued shortly.

Outcome: The minutes were noted.

16:028 Entry tariffs: Verbal

It was confirmed that, following agreement reached at the last meeting of Academic Board, a working group had reviewed the detailed entry tariffs to address questions raised. The resulting amendments had subsequently been approved by the Vice Chancellor via Chair's Action.

In response to questions concerning future review timescales for entry tariffs, it was confirmed that a forward process had been agreed to bring forward the strategic development and communication of entry criteria, in line with the requirements for public information set by the Competition and Markets Authority.

Outcome: The revised tariffs were noted and endorsed.

LEARNING & TEACHING

16:029 To note the minutes of Learning & Teaching Committee 8 November 2016 and approve the forward Terms of Reference for the Committee: AB16/20a

Outcome: The minutes were noted, and the Terms of Reference approved, subject to minor amendments.

Actions agreed:

- **J Robinson** to review terms relating to target-setting and amend as appropriate.
- **R Crehan** and **J Robinson** to consider the inclusion of a SAAS representative within the membership of the Committee.

16:030 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTAS): AB16/20b

The Director of the Institute of Education outlined the process adopted to ensure a co-creative approach to the generation of Terms of Reference for the development of the forward LTAS, involving students, key stakeholders, and academic and professional services staff, and focussed around the key strands of:

- The learner
- The learning environment
- The curriculum
- The academic
- Partnership and external engagement

It was confirmed that during January and February 2017, Senior Fellows would be working to engage as many students and partners as possible across all campuses in the development of the Terms of Reference, with proposals to return to Academic Board for approval in March 2017.

A question and answer session followed, the key points of which were:

- The transition into RDAP would be covered by the new LT&AS, which was to cover a 5-year period from 2017.
- A funding requirement of £20k had been identified to establish the strategy and embed it University-wide, to cover elements such as professional workshops, external facilitation and HEA support. Funding was to be sought from the Innovation Fund to cover as much of the cost as possible.
- Specific reference to certain elements, such as vocational and experiential terminology had been excluded at this early stage as it was not wished to predict outcomes. However, it was fully expected that key UoC themes would be reflected in the co-creative process. However, it was agreed that the curriculum strand should be re-titled 'experiential curriculum' within the Terms of Reference.
Action: J Moses.
- The questions identified under each strand had been designed to try to capture the unique elements of the University's provision and its desired direction and intention, but at this stage they were not intended as a definite list of themes for stakeholder workshops and engagement.
- It was proposed that the Learning Resources Strategy should also be refreshed in line with the new LTAS.

Academic Board acknowledged the work and input of E Jubb, Principal Lecturer Academic Development to develop the Terms of Reference.

Outcome: The Terms of Reference were accepted as the starting point for further work to develop the forward LTAS.

ACADEMIC QUALITY & STANDARDS

16:031 Minutes:

AB16/21

Outcome: The following minutes were noted:

- Academic Quality & Standards Committee - 16 November 2016. Governance of the IL3 framework was highlighted as a particular area of note, to streamline and co-ordinate support for the work of Level 3 students. a)
- Academic Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee – 25 October 2016. b)
- External Examiner Panel Minutes – 16 November 2016. c)
It was confirmed that the Annual Summary Report would progress to University Board for information.

Following further discussion of the External Examiner Annual Summary Report, it was agreed to undertake further investigation as to the impact of small programme numbers on the student experience.

Action: A Dickson to liaise with **S Pankhurst** to tie in to the ongoing review of student numbers.

16:032 Programme withdrawals: AB16/21d

Outcome: The approvals of programme withdrawals by Chair's Action were noted and agreed.

Action: T Best and J Robinson to include details of withdrawal dates, teach out plans and student numbers within the summary report.

It was confirmed that Deputy Dean, S Pankhurst was conducting a full review of the number of programmes within the institution to streamline activities and reduce associated administrative and SITS support costs.

16:033 Teaching Excellence Framework: AB16/21e

The Director of AQD provided an update on preparation for Year 2 of the TEF, and presented high level data on the University's core metrics released at the end of October 2016. Key points were highlighted as follows:

- There were currently two negative flags in terms of mainstream activity, in the areas of "Teaching my course" from NSS Survey results, and the DELHE data with regard to skilled graduate employment. As a result, the initial assessment was that the University would be awarded Bronze status.
- Development of the University's Provider Submission (up to 15 narrative pages to contextualise the data), in which it was hoped to make the case for the award of Silver status, was ongoing, led by S Henderson and A Dickson. The draft submission was to progress to the University Executive Group for review and approval at the December 14 meeting, and all colleagues were urged to respond to any requests for input and information as a matter of urgency.
- Assurance was given of active engagement with the Students' Union as part of the TEF process, with feedback being sought on the key criteria directly from the student body via the UCSU Student Panel.
- The finalised provider submission was to be circulated in January 2017 for information and comment, and would form the basis of action planning to improve the University's position in the following year.

Outcome: The update was noted.

16:034 QAA: AB16/21f

An update was provided by the Director of AQD on recent QAA organisational change to reflect revisions to the remit of the organisation within the new external QAA Operating Model.

Outcome: The update was noted.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE & RETENTION

16:035 NSS Task & Finish Group Action Plan: AB16/22a

Associate Dean, A Dickson provided a report on the review of the NSS Action Plan in line with the new NSS questions for 2017-18, plus an update on progress in relation to plan actions.

The updated plan and associated RAG ratings were discussed, with particular reference to 3 Red rated areas:

1. **Continued implementation of Peer Review of Teaching as per University policy.** This had been given a red flag as the departmental reports on peer review for 2015-16 showed variable engagement with the process. The Red rating to remain in place until greater confidence in the new process was determined.
2. **Agreed protocols for informing students of unavoidable late changes.**
3. **Protocol for urgent notification to be published on programme Blackboard site.** The new framework for communication with students, which addressed both points 2 and 3, had now been approved and was being disseminated by the Comms team. Once embedded, the RAG ratings could be updated to Green. It was agreed that all positive updates to RAG ratings should be promptly reported to students to demonstrate actions taken in response to feedback and improvements made as a result.

It was confirmed that early communication to staff and students was planned prior to commencement of the 2017-18 NSS cycle to manage expectations.

Unavoidable timetabling changes were discussed, and it was agreed that a procedure for recording and tracking incidences, including cancellations due to tutor illness, should be established.

Action: R Crehan to discuss with S Henderson out with the meeting.

Departmental representatives were urged to update their Heads of Department on the matters discussed with regard to the NSS Action Plan, and it was agreed to review the inclusion of Heads of Department within the membership of Academic Board.

Action: R Crehan and J Whitfield to review.

Outcome: The Plan was noted and endorsed.

16:036 Student retention and progression:

AB16/22

Student Non-Continuation Report:

b)

It was reported that the paper provided had been requested by University Board, as it had been identified that institutional continuation rates were lower than anticipated, with implications for the student experience, institutional budget and following year's TEF if not addressed as an urgent priority.

A set of actions had been agreed for academic teams, with a full review to be led by Associate Dean, A Dickson. The aspects of good practise listed under point 5 of the paper were highlighted, and every department was urged to consider proactively what could be done to improve retention. A set of metrics was provided at the end of the report to enable targeted actions to be taken within departments.

Outcome: The report was noted.

Interim Retention and Achievement Report:

c)

An executive summary of the interim Annual Student Retention and Achievement Report was presented, with non-continuation implications highlighted.

The report indicated that reductions had been seen in student retention rates and in the percentage of students achieving first and 2:1 class degrees (an element of the Guardian League Tables). There was also a persistent difference in achievement amongst those students with disabilities, who were currently 15% less likely to achieve a First or 2:1.

It was confirmed that the Student Experience & Retention Committee would lead work on the forward retention strategy, with the committee membership to be reviewed to ensure appropriate representation. A review of issues specific to those students with disabilities would be led by the Director of LiSS to identify areas for remedial action.

The Director of SAAS also reported that a review of assessment-related support was being undertaken, supported by colleagues from the Institute of Education, to ensure parity with the sector in this area. A Data Group chaired by Deputy Dean, S Pankhurst would also look at data definitions and provision, and the schedule of data releases.

Discussion followed as to the need to identify the impact of admissions policy, entry tariffs and clearing recruitment on student retention, and it was confirmed that plans were in development to enable cohort analysis moving forward. However, it was stressed that the University had a duty of care to all students, regardless of entry routes, and the attainment of students from different backgrounds and with different entry points would be a measure according to the new Teaching Excellence Framework.

Concern was expressed at the downward trends identified, and initiatives to analyse data in greater detail were welcomed, whilst requesting consideration of data team resource implications. All colleagues were urged to closely examine the data provided and reflect on possible actions to assist with improvements and initiatives outlined in the plan.

Action: Following reports of inaccuracies in certain data within the report, A Dickson to review against the data held in the SITS system.

Outcome: The report was noted.

RESEARCH, ENTERPRISE & GRADUATE SCHOOL

16:037 Minutes:

AB16/23

Outcome: The following minutes were noted and key points highlighted:

- Research & Enterprise Committee (REC) – 6 October 2016 a)
- Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) Steering Group – 25 October 2016 – It was confirmed that the University was now moving into a phase of planning for the RDAP submission. Pre-briefings and briefings of staffing groups were being scheduled to ensure institution-wide understanding and awareness of the process. The 2016-17 Academic Survey had been launched the previous week. A 100% completion rate was required, with reminders also being sent to all academic colleagues to submit academic CVs to track additional research activity. b)
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) Steering Group – 11 November 2016 - Membership of the Group had now been extended to include all Heads of Department. c)

- 16:037 Validation Agreement for Research Degrees:** AB16/23d
 It was confirmed that the Agreement had been signed by the Vice Chancellor. The following revisions to the standing agreement had been made:
- The document had been streamlined to achieve greater focus.
 - Confirmation that the University would achieve Research Degree Awarding Powers during the period covered had been clearly stated in the Agreement, and transition arrangements outlined. Students would be asked to choose whether to follow the Lancaster University or University of Cumbria pathway at the appropriate point.
 - PHD by Practise was now written in to the Agreement.
- It was confirmed that inter-collations were also covered by the Agreement (including transition arrangements) under Schedule 2.
- Outcome:** The Agreement was noted.
- 16:038 RDAP application:** AB16/23e
 Agreement was sought from Academic Board of the intention to submit the RDAP application and a process outline presented. The Director of Research & the Graduate School confirmed the University had confidently met the criteria to submit.
- Outcome:** The intention to submit was acknowledged and approved.
- 16:039 To note the following annual reviews/reports:** AB16/23
- Graduate School AER:** f)
 It was reported that the AER document had been scrutinised by the Graduate School Sub-Committee, and subsequently reported to the Research & Enterprise Committee, before progression to Academic Board, and the key messages emerging from the document were highlighted.
- 6 PHD completions were confirmed for the 2015-16 academic year, and it was reported that a greatly improved conversion rate from application to registration had been seen, of between 10% and 25% above the sector average. Based on student feedback, the decision had been taken to withdraw the mid-year questionnaire from the monitoring process.
- Action Plans for Research:** g)
 It was confirmed that the Action Plans had been reviewed and approved by both the Graduate School Sub-Committee and the Research & Enterprise Committee. Objectives, a breakdown of activities, and key documents relating to the action plan were presented for further information.
- Outcome:** The reports were noted and endorsed.
- HONORARY AWARDS COMMITTEE** AB16/24
- 16:040 To note the minutes of 15 November 2016:**
- Outcome:** The minutes were noted.
- 16:041 To approve the Terms of Reference and Membership:**
- Outcome:** The Terms of Reference and Membership were approved without amendment.

16:042 To receive nominations for awards of Honorary Fellowships for approval and recommendation to University Board:

It was confirmed that criteria were under development for the award of Honorary Undergraduate and Masters Degrees, with Honorary Doctorates anticipated following the award of Research Degree Awarding Powers to the University. The current strategy for awarding Honorary Fellowships and Degrees was to be reviewed by the Committee to ensure alignment with strategic developments.

The Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise, Business Development & Engagement confirmed that a piece of work had been agreed by the Committee to map Honorary Fellows according to a range of characteristics, including gender, alignment with academic departments, strategic priorities and geography, to identify potential gaps and drive engagement initiatives.

In response to queries around the presentation of Honorary Fellows on the University's website, it was confirmed by the Committees Officer that work was ongoing by the Website team to enable a more user-friendly format to be adopted.

Outcome: All nominations presented were reviewed and agreed for recommendation to University Board.

STUDENT ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION SERVICE

16:043 Academic Calendar:

AB16/25a

The Director of SAAS reported that it was recommended to devise the Calendar two years in advance to assist with planning initiatives, to standardise wherever possible, and to support the introduction of an efficient mechanism for introducing programmes outside the normal delivery time. The scheduling of Assessment Boards was also under review to ensure earlier publication of results to students.

The initiative and its benefits in terms of more efficient working were welcomed, and the accessibility of the calendar to all staff was highlighted as essential to promoting uptake. The early communication of University closure periods was also urged, to enable effective communication around service provision. It was confirmed that there was a need to reinforce messaging to all staff and students that half-term closures did not take place under the semester system and that service provision should continue uninterrupted. It was noted that the schools' half-term period in February 2017 fell within the timeframe of the NSS 2017 Survey. **Action:** N Harris to hold discussions with Chief Operating Officer, D Chesser on this issue.

Outcome: Proposals for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 Calendar and subsequent forward planning were considered and approved. It was agreed to review the new arrangements after one year to make any interim amendments required, particularly with regard to Assessment Board schedules and deadlines.

Actions agreed:

- PGCE programmes to be added to non-standard provision.
- Clearing dates to be added.

16:044 To receive a casework report:

AB16/25b

The following reports were received in combined format, and key points highlighted for information:

- Annual Report of Complaints, Appeals and Academic Malpractice
- Student Code of Conduct and Adjudication Procedure Annual Reports
- Student Progress Review Annual Report

Changes to the Academic Regulations and their subsequent impact on malpractice cases were highlighted, and it was confirmed that it would be possible to include departmental breakdowns in future reports, along with additional data from Annual Evaluatory Reports. Work was ongoing with student officers to ensure greater narrative content moving forward.

It was confirmed that the majority of major malpractice claims were associated with a partner college's provision at Postgraduate level. Close monitoring was being undertaken by AQD following minor modification work on Module 1 provision, and additional checks had been established via the Annual Partner Review.

It was proposed that tutorial support and/or formal study skills sessions should be devised in order to prevent cases of minor malpractice, particularly with regard to minor plagiarism. It was stressed that effective reporting and addressing of minor malpractice was key to prevention of further incidences of major malpractice.

It was further reported that the University's Academic Appeals were in line with sector averages, with the majority of appeals relating to extenuating and mitigating circumstances. It was hoped to achieve reductions as a result of the review and redevelopment of the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure. Following discussion of the appeals summary data, it was urged that a review of EC Panels should be conducted.

Outcome: Academic Board welcomed the new format of the report and noted its contents.

16:045 Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Annual Report:

AB16/25c

Outcome: The report was received and noted.

Thanks were offered to H Rhodes for her work to date in compiling OIA reports, and it was confirmed that responsibility for forward production would rest with the SAAS team.

LIBRARY & STUDENT SERVICES

16:046 Safeguarding: Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Annual Report:

AB16/26

The Registrar & Secretary confirmed that a wider view of Safeguarding than the legal definition was taken by the University to ensure its additional duty of care was upheld. The following key points were highlighted from the report:

- Far greater engagement with Safeguarding was being demonstrated across the institution.
- Increased levels of work were ongoing with regard to suicide prevention, with 109 staff completing a targeted training programme during the current year.
- A review of the Safeguarding Steering Group was to be conducted in liaison with Safeguarding Officers, to determine whether the commitment to Safeguarding could be delivered differently, in order

to facilitate the closure of the group as part of an ongoing review of the University's executive and deliberative committee structures.

- Work was ongoing cross-institutionally with regard to the Prevent agenda.

Outcome: The report was noted.

OTHER ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE MATTERS

16:047 To receive and note reporting:

AB16/27

Outcome: The following reports were presented with key points noted:

- Institutional level (Academic Board) AER Action Plan: a)
The rolling action plan was discussed and outstanding actions confirmed for progression.
- Prevent Duty: b)
Minor amendments to the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and External Speakers Policy were noted and endorsed.
- Minutes of the University Board of Directors – 29 September 2016: c)
It was confirmed that the costings provided for Blackboard reflected a 3-year contract for remote hosting beyond the licensing cost. High rises in costs for IT systems and services were anticipated post-Brexit as a result of the currency markets. The Registrar and Secretary reported that recent sessions with academic colleagues and departments had been welcomed by the Board as highly engaging and valuable, and forward engagement with professional services teams was also planned.

16:048 KEY MESSAGES & COMMUNICATIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

Verbal

Nothing further was noted.

16:049 Any Other Business: None.

16:050 Next meeting: Tuesday 14 February 2017, 2.00pm-4.30pm, Room AXB209, Alexandra Building, Lancaster Campus.

Verbal