

**Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board
held at 1.00 pm on Friday, 22 May 2020
MS Teams**

Present

Pat Bailey (Chair)
Ian Albery
Craig Barker
Gilberto Buzzi
Patrick Callaghan
Alessio Corso
Geoff Cox
Kate Ellis
Gary Francis
Nadia Gaoua
Marc Griffith
Sajjad Hossain
Steve Hunter
Deborah Johnston
Janet Jones
Nelly Kibirige
Nicki Martin
George Ofori
Jenny Owen
Shushma Patel
Tony Roberts
Warren Turner
Helen Young

Apologies

Asa Hilton Barber
Steve Faulkner
Paul Ivey
Sarah Moore-Williams
Luke Murray
Carrie Rutherford
Lesley Roberts

In attendance

Michael Broadway
Dominique Phipp
Sally Skillett-Moore

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. The above apologies were noted.

2. Declarations of interest

No member declared an interest in any item on the agenda.

3. **Ratification of changes to academic regulations**

The Chair explained that the key purpose of the meeting is to discuss proposed changes to the academic regulations. These changes are necessary to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The Board noted that an Academic Delivery Group (ADG) was set up to consider the approach and draft the amended regulations.

The approach adopted in amending the regulations balances protecting students' interests with maintaining LSBU's degree quality standards. It also balances what the ADG would like to do with what is practical.

The Board noted that the amended regulations, though not yet approved, have already been used, as resit assessments held at the end of Semester 1 required early application of the amended regulations. The use of the amended regulations during these assessments provided a useful practice run for their application across the rest of the University. It demonstrated that further changes to the academic regulations were needed for them to be effective. Discussion of the addendum to the amended regulations was deferred until later in the meeting.

The changes in regulation are based on the following principles:

- Maintaining the integrity of our awards;
- Making sure our decisions are evidence based; and
- Making sure students' interests are protected.

The Board noted that the ADG has implemented a 'no detriment' addendum to the regulations for students' whose studies were impacted by COVID-19. This means that, where there is evidence that learning outcomes have been met, students will not be required to repeat assessments. Instead, Award and Progression Boards (APBs) are empowered to review a student's overall performance and seek to progress those deemed to have completed the required credits for their course.

The Board discussed how the APBs will assess student performance. It was noted that assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging, as its impact differs across the Schools and is unique to each course. It was noted that the new APBs will be co-chaired by a DESE from another School to ensure consistency of practice across the Boards.

In addition to the 'no detriment' approach, the APBs will also apply a compensation / condonement approach in suitable cases where a student has failed a module. Students may be awarded a compensated pass, or their failure may be condoned, if permitted by the exam board. If a student has not completed a module, APBs are also empowered to allow students to progress where it is permitted by professional bodies or course requirements.

Finally, a third exceptional resit has been introduced for those cases where a compensation / condonement approach is not possible. The resits will be equivalent to the original assessment and approved by the external examiner. The Board noted that the ADG has chosen not to change the resit dates from their original schedule, as it was felt that doing so would be detrimental to the students.

The Board noted that where none of these options are appropriate the student will not progress. The APBs will endeavour to make non-progression decisions as equitable as possible.

The Board discussed applicability of the amended regulations to apprenticeship schemes. It was noted that apprenticeship students may be at a disadvantage as the new regulations may not be permitted by their professional course providers. In principle, the Board agreed that the regulations should be applied as widely as possible. This issue will be discussed further outside of committee.

The Board discussed whether the introduction of third resits will place an additional burden on staff when their focus should be on the next academic year. It was noted that third resits will be an additional burden, but they will only be held in exceptional circumstances where compensation / condonement isn't possible and any reassessments through coursework should be completed early in the summer holidays.

The Board questioned at what point the application of compensation will be applied. It was noted that compensation will be applied after all resits have been taken as per normal regulations, however condonement may be applied sooner to progress or award where the pandemic is identified as an extenuating circumstance (see addendum).

The Board discussed why the 20 March 2020 has been selected as the cut off date for calculation of weighted average marks from semester 1. It was understood that this date was chosen to mitigate the risk of undermining degree integrity in the School of Health & Social Care in particular.

The Board noted that the opportunities of a third resit or to carry modules forward to the next academic year will be vital for students currently supporting the pandemic response full time, such as nursing and midwifery students.

It was noted that the proposed amendments are in line with policy changes made by regulatory bodies, most of whom are being very supportive in flexing their assessment requirements to support students.

The Board discussed how the amended regulations will apply to students with DDS requirements. It was noted that as much time as possible will be given to students to complete their resit assessments, and if students are unable to do their assessments the APBs will implement the no detriment addendum where possible.

It was noted that elements of the amended regulations will likely have to be carried forward to the next academic year, as the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning methods may be long lasting. The Chair requested that discussion of the future development of the academic regulations be included on the next meeting's agenda.

The Board discussed the application of the compensation scheme to top-up courses, but it was acknowledged that this would be a rare occurrence. This matter will be reviewed further out of committee.

The Board unanimously approved the changes to the academic regulations as written. It was noted that an addendum to these changes is in development.

The addendum

Following application of the amended regulations to resit assessments held at the end of semester 1, it is recommended that an addendum is added to allow greater flexibility in decision making.

The key changes this addendum would introduce to the amended academic regulations are:

- To enable APBs to apply a 'COVID-19 condonement' after a student has completed a resit of their assessment (their second attempt at the assessment). Students eligible for a condoned pass would include students who have earned 40 credits at Level S or Level 4, or 20 credits at Level 5, 6 or 7. Introducing condonement at this stage reduces the likelihood that students will require another resit.
- Students who are not eligible for a COVID-19 condoned pass will be able to do another resit of their assessment (their third attempt at the assessment).
- For students who cannot progress APBs will, in consultation with students and in line with OfS guidance, allow them to resit their assessment when possible, to repeat the module or to complete an alternative module or qualification for which the learning outcomes have been or can be achieved.

The Chair proposed circulation of the addendum via email for comments. If the Board has no concerns, the Chair will approve the addendum by Chair's action on behalf of the Board.

4. Academic calendar consultation

Due to the pandemic, consultation about the academic calendar was delayed. The Board agreed that confirming the calendar for the next academic year is a priority. The students are keen to know their course schedules as these will affect their personal and professional arrangements such as childcare, employment etc.

The Board noted some of the issues with the current academic calendar and briefly discussed whether maintaining the status quo or running courses in a looser way would be preferable.

The Chair proposed that consultation about the calendar takes place from now until the end of the calendar year. It was agreed that a discussion paper will be brought to the Board in June to agree how the consultation process should progress.

The Board noted that January-starting courses are particularly tricky to plan and improvements to the calendar are needed for 2021. It was noted that changes to the calendar are constrained by our system limitations.

The Board agreed to set up a Task & Finish Group to consider the timings of courses beginning in January 2021. The Group should provide an update in June for approval, or approval of the Task & Finish Group's recommendation will be delegated to the Chair if an update is not ready. The Chair requested that Board members volunteer out of committee if they wish to be part of this Task & Finish Group.

**Date of next meeting
1.00 pm, on Friday, 5 June 2020**

Confirmed as a true record

..... (Chair)