London South Bank University

	PAPER NO: EC.11(12)	
Board/Committee:	Educational Character Committee	
Date:	10 December 2012	
Paper title:	Academic Strategy	
Author:	Dr Phil Cardew, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	
Executive sponsor:	Dr Phil Cardew, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	
Recommendation by the Executive:	The Committee is asked to note the Strategy	
Aspect of the Corporate Plan to which this will help deliver?	Student Success	
Matter previously considered by:	Academic Board	On: 7 November 2012
Further approval required?	N/A	On: N/A
Communications – who should be made aware of the decision?	Board of Governors, University Staff	

Executive summary

The Academic Strategy is a supporting document to the Corporate Plan, underpinning aspects of delivery which relate to the academic operation of the University.

The Strategy is, itself, supported by a range of projects (annual and longer-term) which deliver particular aspects of the Strategy. Each project (or programme of projects) is supported by a business case which is subject to approval by the Executive.

The over-arching theme for this iteration of the Strategy is 'Creating an Engaged University' prompted by much recent research (not least, a report on 'Student Retention: What Works' commissioned by HEFCE and circulated to Board members over the summer period) which suggests that student engagement is at the heart of student retention and success.

The Strategy also focuses upon staff engagement and development, and support for technology-enhanced learning, this latter aspect feeding into a major development of the University's Virtual Learning Environment, which is currently underway and will be operational by the beginning of September 2013.

The committee is requested to note the paper.

London South Bank University

Academic Strategy: 2012-14

Creating an Engaged University

(This strategy is a supporting document to the University's Corporate Plan 2011-14 http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about/corpPlan.shtml which should be read in conjunction with this document.)

Our Academic Vision for the University:

To provide a relevant and research-informed academic portfolio for our students, delivered by engaged staff, within a supportive environment, which enhances progression, achievement and employment.

London South Bank University will:

- maintain a course portfolio which supports the needs both of our students and of our local communities;
- underpin our academic portfolio with relevant and applied research and enterprise activity;
- maintain a focus for our activities which enhances local impact within a global context;
- support all students who are capable of achievement;
- ensure our staff are able to support our students' achievement;
- ensure we are able to meet the challenges of delivery within an increasingly competitive environment.

Our Academic Vision for our students:

To enable students to enter the world of work prepared, professionally, intellectually and personally, to add value, both to their chosen career and to their professional, social and cultural communities.

London South Bank University's students will be:

- highly employable.
- intellectually inquisitive and demanding;
- engaged with their professional communities of practice;
- socially and culturally sensitive and aware;
- responsive to their ever-changing environments;
- supported by excellent staff, who are professionally committed and, themselves, supported to deliver the best-possible experience for their students.

We will know we have made appropriate progress in implementing the strategy when:

1. All appropriate courses have accreditation by a nationally-recognised professional, statutory or regulatory body.
2. All academic courses have high levels of engagement with their students, evidenced by student representation and participation in course and module evaluation.
3. Participation in the National Student Survey continues to increase, to a target of 80% response rate and other survey participation (internal surveys, the Postgraduate Taught and Research Engagement Surveys) achieve similar levels of engagement.
4. We achieve an overall National Student Survey satisfaction rate of 90%.
5. An average of 80% of students demonstrate satisfaction with the promptness and quality of feedback in the National Student Survey.
6. 80% of academic staff are engaged with a relevant professional body, with the HEA, with other higher education institutions (as external examiners or validation and review panel members) or within their relevant employment sector.
7. We can demonstrate a high level of staff engagement with their discipline(s), both through research and/or enterprise output and through participation in allied activity, such as conference participation, reviewing, membership of editorial boards, collaborative activity and work within their relevant sector.
8. 80% of students beginning a full-time course at LSBU graduate within 3 years.
9. 70% of students beginning a full-time course at LSBU achieve a first-class or upper-second class degree.
10. We achieve an employment indicator level of 90% in the Destinations of Leavers in Higher Education survey.

Student Engagement

Aim

To ensure that the University is best-placed to develop as an academic institution by establishing clear expectations of students, and staff, which emphasise professionalism, personal responsibility and accountability, mutual respect, openness and engagement.

Delivery

In furthering these aims, during 2012-14, we will concentrate activity in the following areas:

- Support the Students' Union in its re-structuring and improvement project, ensuring that activity in membership services, representation and democracy remains a central focus of their work.
- Continue to focus on response to the National Student Survey as a key activity.
- Further develop the Student Transition and Retention Programme of projects to more systematically track and respond to issues around student engagement.
- Implement a central module evaluation questionnaire, better enabling the identification of (and response to) generic satisfaction issues across the University (and providing an opportunity to cross-refer progression, achievement, engagement and satisfaction data at module and course level).
- Enhance participation in the Postgraduate Taught (PTES) and Postgraduate Research (PRES) surveys conducted by the Higher Education Academy.
- Ensure all courses have a minimum level of student representation, that Course Boards meet frequently and that students understand what happens as a result of their comments.
- Promote the Student Charter, including the consideration of the desirability of 'sanctions' (under the student and staff disciplinary procedures) where the Charter is not endorsed by an individual.
- Ensure we include student panel members as active participants in validation and review process and that the Students' Union sabbatical team engage with Academic Misconduct, Appeals and Complaints processes.
- Pilot the role of University Ombudsman within the complaints process.

Success

We will know we have made significant progress when:

- NSS overall satisfaction rates exceed 90%.
- We achieve internal survey participation in excess of 60%.
- Appeals fall by 25% and we have no cases partially or wholly upheld by the OIA.
- We have over 800 active course representatives in the University.
- Students' Union elections achieve the participation of over 5000 students.
- Students' Union sabbatical officers take an active role within NUS on a national level.

Academic Staff Development

Aim

The University will have academic staff who are well prepared for their role(s), are actively engaged in their academic communities and are supported in their development throughout their career.

Delivery

In furthering these aims, during 2012-14, we will concentrate activity in the following areas:

- Establish an Academic Staff Development Unit, to lead on the delivery of professional development to academic staff – focused on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, a development of the Doctorate in Education to focus on Higher Education Management, generic professional development activity and targeted activity for specific University roles.
- Establish common expectations and understanding of roles:
  o Academic staff
  o Module leaders
  o Year co-ordinators
  o Course Directors
- Ensure appropriate levels of staff development in place for named roles.
- Embed the CLTHE/PLTHE as a core staff-development activity across the University.
  o Better link to probation and appraisal.
  o Encourage greater engagement with HEA at fellow and associate levels.
- Ensure we have a 'fit for purpose' peer support framework, enabling peer development to take place across the University (and linked to other staff development activity).
- Develop (in collaboration with SDU) a comprehensive portfolio of staff development for academic staff – linked to roles and responsibilities.
- Enhance support for staff wishing to engage more widely in applied research and enterprise activity.

Success

We will know we have made significant progress when:

- There is a suite of staff development activity available for all academic staff.
- Staff development needs are fully identified during appointment and appraisal and staff are engaged and supported to address those needs.
- University engagement with the Higher Education Academy is more widespread, with a good level of individual engagement through fellowship (as well as participation in HEA activities).
- 80% of academic staff are engaged with a relevant professional body, with the HEA, or within their relevant employment sector.
- All academic departments have colleagues who are external examiners at other institutions and/or who engage with validation and review activity.
- Levels of professorial and readership appointment through a learning and teaching route are as high as through more 'traditional' research activity.

Learning and Teaching

Aim

The University will achieve a high reputation for the quality of our teaching, for the engagement of staff with their disciplines and with their students and for the delivery of exciting and innovative courses, which meet the needs of students, their professional environments and their future employers.

Delivery

In furthering these aims, during 2012-14, we will concentrate activity in the following areas:

1. Supporting pedagogic development:
   a. Increasing staff engagement with blended support and delivery
   b. Ensuring active staff engagement in academic development activities.
   c. Developing a peer support and development processes.
   d. Establishing common working principles for Technology-Enhanced Learning (developing a TEL 'toolkit').
2. Ensuring our academic courses are fully engaged with their professional environments:
   a. Reviewing accreditation – ensuring the best 'fit' between courses and professional bodies.
   b. Promoting active employer engagement both with staff and students.
3. Ensuring our academic courses retain currency and exemplify leading-edge practice and meet the changing demands of the workplace:
   a. Providing opportunities for engagement in the wider academic community, fostering awareness of benchmarks, new directions and industry-standard practice.
   b. Maintaining a focus on employability in all our academic programmes.
4. Continually improving our facilities and infrastructure:
   a. Space
   b. Specialist technical equipment and ICT.
   c. Library – stock and learning spaces.
5. Academic processes work effectively and with high levels of satisfaction in all areas:
   a. Enrolment (course and module).
   b. Timetabling.
   c. Assessment and Examination.
   d. Submission and return of work.
   e. Engagement with external examiners.

Success

We will know we have made significant progress when:

1. All courses maintain a minimum 'presence' within the Virtual Learning Environment, appropriate to the needs of the discipline, providing up-to-date information and support for students.
2. We achieve 80% satisfaction in the 'learning and teaching', 'course organisation' and 'feedback' sections of the NSS.
3. Fewer than 3% of complaints and appeals which progress to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator are 'upheld' or 'partially upheld'.
4. Our DLHE survey employability indicator is above 90%.

Quality and Standards

Aim

The University will have absolute assurance over the standards of our awards, wherever delivered. Quality processes will focus upon enhancement, have 'fast track' options wherever possible and be seamlessly integrated with the day-to-day operation of academic courses, facilitating, not impeding, development.

Delivery

In furthering these aims, during 2012-14, we will concentrate activity in the following areas:

- Focus on assessment as a foundation of the assurance of standards:
  - Ensure assessment supports learning and can be demonstrated to be:
    - Appropriate
    - Targeted on learning outcomes
    - Proportionate
    - Diverse
  - Ensure submission of assessment is secure and feedback both prompt and of good quality:
    - Fully implement Course Assessment Tracking system.
    - Develop systems for the on-line delivery and return of assessed work.
    - Drive up the quality and timeliness of feedback across all modules.
  - Ensure internal and external moderation processes are secure and maintain standards:
    - Establish minimum standards and guidelines for moderation and second marking.
    - Ensure external examining processes reflect best practice within the sector.
  - Ensure assessment is fair to all learners:
    - Enhance processes for extenuating and special circumstances.
- Review collaborative activity and ensure all award-bearing activity has identified link tutors in place and will be subject to periodic review (institutional and award) in the coming cycle.
- Continue to develop support activity for External Examiners.
- Enhance processes for logging course details onto the Student Records System alongside validation, re-validation and review, and ensure we have annual 'sign off' of all course information at department and faculty level.
- Ensure that course information to students is: standardised to a common format; of excellent quality; and includes information on course review and student feedback.

Success

We will know we have made significant progress when:

- We achieve excellent results from external assessments of our quality and standards, whether from external examiners, the QAA or the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies that accredit our courses.
- All new courses are validated to schedule and without significant conditions.
- All annual monitoring processes are completed to schedule and without the requirement for amendment or addition.
- We receive positive NSS responses regarding the return of work and feedback thereon (over 80% satisfaction).

Research and Scholarship

Aim

The University will have an active research ethos, which supports (and is supported by) teaching activity and which achieves a balance between income generation and academic enhancement. Academic staff will be expected to be fully engaged in their discipline or community of practice and to be active in the development of their subject within the context of learning and teaching in higher education within a professional context.

Delivery

In furthering these aims, during 2012-14, we will concentrate activity in the following areas:

- Ensuring the University is best placed to make as full a submission to the REF as is sensible (to ensure maximum impact and revenue from the submission).
- Implementing further research supervisor training so as to maximize our potential to support postgraduate research students.
- Continue with current activity focused on research internships and research student scholarships.
- Review Research Degree regulations to ensure fitness for purpose – especially in the 'fit' between taught and research regulations for professional doctoral students.
- Engage with faculties and departments to review current research activity and to develop mechanisms to better support early-career and mid-career researchers.
- Develop a research strategy which focuses not only on income generation, but also on the relationship between teaching and research, career development, and the impact of research activity within the scholarly community of the University.
- Engage with plans to better support research students through dedicated facilities and services.
- Support all academic staff in participating in research and scholarly activities through the development of an inclusive culture and supportive environment.
- Achieve an agreed threshold of research and scholarly activity in all subject areas to support teaching and enhance our reputation.

Success

We will know we have made significant progress when:

- All departments have research plans which play to the strengths of their staff.
- We have made a successful REF submission which maximizes our impact and research income.
- Staff development activity includes dedicated sessions for staff wishing to increase their research potential.
- We have at least 200 research students, operating across all faculties and with completion rates at sector benchmark level.