

**Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 24 February 2021
MS Teams**

Present

Pat Bailey (Chair)
Alessio Corso
Asa Hilton Barber
Craig Barker
Deborah Johnston
Gary Francis
Geoff Cox
Gilberto Buzzi
Harriet Tollerson
Helen Aston
Ian Albery
Jane Wills
Jenny Owen
Kate Ellis
Luke Murray
Marc Griffith
Md Fazle Rabbi
Nadia Gaoua
Patrick Callaghan
Paul Ivey
Ricardo Domizio
Rosie Holden
Sarah Moore-Williams
Steve Faulkner
Tony Roberts
Warren Turner

Apologies

George Ofori
Nicki Martin (sent representative)
Helen Young (sent representative)
Carrie Rutherford
Steve Hunter

In attendance

Dominique Phipp (Secretary)
John Cole
Sally Skillett-Moore
Andrew Read (for Nicki Martin and Helen Young)
Pamela Thomas (for item 10a only)
Musharrat Ahmed-Landeryou (for item 10a only)
Jannatul Ferdous (for item 10a only)
Peter Doyle (for item 14 only)
Richard Duke (for item 16 only)

1. **Welcome and apologies**

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

2. **Declarations of interest**

No member declared a conflict of interest in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 October 2020.

4. **Matters arising**

Review the mechanisms for shortening the course development – The Board agreed to mark this action as completed, as it has been subsumed into the wider curriculum and portfolio review workstream.

Progress of Task and Finish Group to agree how the degree algorithm should be reviewed in this academic year – The Board noted that this action would be deferred until the Curriculum Framework and Qualifications Framework are in place.

Response to concerns about the quality of English language provision for international students on some courses in 2019/20 – The Board noted that the response to this issue is ongoing and of increasing importance, as some courses are nearing the bottom limit of their international student quotas. An update would be brought to the next meeting.

Progress to full year calendar consultation – The Board noted that this action would be deferred until completion of the curriculum and portfolio review workstream.

Update on lecture capture policy discussions with the Unions – The PVC (Education) provided an update on the discussions with the Unions.

The Board noted it has been agreed that the opt-out approach to the policy, which was initially suggested for practical reasons, would be replaced by an opt-in process in the first instance. The PVC (Education) explained that the success of this approach would be evaluated after implementation and, if there is low opt-in to the policy, an opt-out approach would be considered. She added that students would also be surveyed for feedback on how the introduction of lecture capturing has benefited them.

The Chair noted that 83% of an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 students surveyed by WonkHE said that access to recorded lectures was the thing that they most valued from the changes delivered by universities in response to the

coronavirus pandemic. The PVC (Education) added that there is strong evidence that students who have difficulty attending lectures, as many of the University's students do, benefit the most from lecture capture.

The PVC (Education) explained that a draft policy and a framework for opting-in for lecture capture has been developed. The Board agreed that the policy would be circulated to the Board for feedback via email. If no significant concerns are raised, the Chair would approve the policy on behalf of the Board by Chair's Action.

The Board asked whether the policy would cover hourly-paid lecture staff and if they were included in development of the policy. The PVC (Education) explained that hourly-paid lecture staff and guest lecturers would be covered by the policy. They would be asked to opt-in and to give permission for their lectures to be recorded and shared with students studying the relevant module(s) in that particular cohort.

5. **Provost's report**

The Chair updated the Board on key activity underway across the University, including trends shown in the HESA continuation performance data for 2018/19 and 2019/20, the impact of Brexit on EU applicant numbers and EU student fees, and the continuing impact on students of the cyber-attack and the coronavirus pandemic.

HESA continuation performance indicators (CPIs) for 2018/19

The Chair summarised the key trends shown by the HESA CPIs preview data for 2018/19 full-time, UK-domiciled students. The Board noted that the final dataset would be published on 24 February and would be used widely by league table publishers and by the OfS for monitoring compliance with its ongoing registration conditions.

The PVC (Education) noted her concern that the OfS would increasingly be using HESA data to monitor universities' performance by subject level, and the University does not meet ongoing registration condition thresholds for numerous subjects. She added that the OfS are threatening to increase their thresholds, which could result in the loss of our degree awarding powers, or capping student fees at £6,000, or exclusion from student loans for some subjects. The PVC (Education) encouraged colleagues to urgently review their subject-level continuation data.

The Chair questioned whether a wider discussion of the continuation data was needed. The Board agreed to annually review HESA continue data in February.

The Chair requested that the data is broken down by division-level for further discussion at the next meeting.

Brexit

The Board noted that, as anticipated, recruitment of EU students in 2021/22 has decreased dramatically. It noted that numerous actions are underway to support existing and prospective EU students, including development of a new scheme to support international placements with the EU and the University's global partners.

The Board noted that many other universities plan to continue offering home-fee to EU nationals. It noted that the University is considering offering discounted fees to EU students on some courses, but this may not be the case for some courses for which we can command premium fees.

IT outage

The Chair applauded the significant and sustained effort that IT colleagues have made since 21 December 2020 to restore the University's IT systems. He outlined the challenges faced by the team to ensure the security of the University's systems and to restore access to programs.

The Board discussed the continued negative impact of the IT outage on students. Examples of the continued difficulties students face included an inability to access or submit assignments via Moodle, an inability to re-enrol interrupted students or enrol new students, challenges to process graduations.

The Board noted that courses with study-abroad options would need a specialized workaround for assessment submissions, as many are not appropriately set up on Moodle.

The Chair recommended that a manual process must be developed to enrol and re-enrol students and to approve completion of awards. The Board agreed, noting that the onus is on the University to communicate to students that they have successfully completed their awards.

The PVC (Education) noted that these issues are being discussed in the Academic Delivery Group (ADG) and workarounds are being developed.

The Chair requested that a proposal is prepared for him or the PVC (Education) to authorize a manual process for approval of awards.

The Chair noted his concern that these operational issues are being brought to this Board, and acknowledged colleagues' frustration. He noted that the Board needs assurance that these issues would be resolved outside of this committee and requested an update on ADG's progress at the next meeting.

COVID-19

The Chair highlighted that following announcement of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, the Executive has confirmed that all teaching

would continue remotely except for essential delivery requiring specialist on-campus facilities.

6. **Board and Sub-Committee Terms of Reference**

The Board received the draft terms of reference for the Quality and Standards Committee, the Research Committee, and the Academic Board.

The Board approved the documents, subject to minor amendments to the job titles of some members. The Chair requested that members send any further feedback on the documents to the Secretary by the end of the week.

The Board noted its concern about the possibility of a duplication of responsibilities for the graduate outcomes of post-graduate research students' in the remits of the University Standards Committee (USC) and the University Research Committee (URC).

The Chair of the URC agreed to discuss the division of responsibilities with the Chair of the QSC for clarification in the next iteration of their terms of reference.

7. **New requirements for peer observation of teaching**

The Acting Director for TQE summarised the rationale for establishing a workstream within the Academic Development Steering Committee (ADSC) to develop a scheme for peer observation of teaching. He noted that the workstream could draw on the experience of the ADSC members, which would include the DESEs and academic staff from across the Group.

The Board asked how the ADSC's scheme would take into account the different perspectives of the QAA, Ofsted and OfS on teacher observations. The PVC (Education) acknowledged that teaching across the Group is regulated differently and explained that the ADSC would seek to select an approach that works best for the University, rather than simply adopting an the approach most likely to receive regulatory approval. She noted that the model developed would be positive rather than punitive to ensure that staff are comfortable with the approach chosen.

The Board approved of the proposal to establish a work stream within the ADSC to develop a standardised scheme for peer observation of teaching for the University.

8. **Decolonising the curriculum**

Peter Doyle, Head of the Research Office, joined the meeting.

For Research & Place strategies

The Dean for the School of APS introduced the proposal. He highlighted the importance of ensuring that the language and terminology used to discuss decolonisation is carefully considered.

The Board noted that the Dean for the School of LSS has agreed to Chair the task & finish group to examine the research contribution to the University's decolonising vision. It noted the Anti-Semitism, terminology that runs alongside that, important that we get the language right.

The Board approved the recommendation to set up a task and finish group. It was noted that group would share its work in with the Board in Semester 2.

Patrick Callaghan left the meeting.

For taught courses

Pamela Thomas, the CRIT Learning Developer, joined the meeting.

Jannatul Ferdous, the Student Union's VP (Welfare & Equalities), joined the meeting.

Musharrat Ahmed-Landeryou, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, joined the meeting.

Rosie Holden, Director of Student Services, joined the meeting.

The Board received a presentation on the proposed vision for decolonising the University's curriculum, teaching, and ways of working.

The Board discussed the proposal.

The Board suggested changes to the language used in the proposal, including removing reference to racism "within the Higher Education sector" in the first statement in favour of "within the institution" to demonstrate greater ownership for the issue.

The Board suggested that the vision should be shared with colleagues across the Group through a roadshow. This would increase awareness of the vision's goals, support engagement within the Schools and Lambeth College, and support staff to take ownership for delivery of the vision in their areas.

The Board was supportive of the decolonising vision as outlined. It was noted that the item would be brought back for further discussion in 6 months.

The Chair requested to hear specific examples of where a change has been brought about by this workstream in the next report.

9. Update to Assessment and Examinations Procedure 2020/21

The Acting Director of TQE introduced the report. He noted that the introduction of a no-detriment approach was agreed at the Quality and Standards Committee on 20 January 2021. He explained that the change is

necessary to support students with their assessments during the new national lockdown and the IT outage.

The Board noted that if students do not experience a significant negative impact on their performance as a result of these factors, there will be no change to students' marks. If a detriment does occur, then application of a no-detriment approach by the Award and Progression Examination Boards would ensure that students are not disadvantaged by these factors.

The Chair noted that it is the responsibility of this Board to give assurance to the Board of Governors that the appropriate mechanisms are in place for students to complete their studies.

The Board discussed the use of 'no detriment' terminology and agreed that the term is useful for communicating with students.

The Board was supportive of the proposed changes.

10. **Proposal to improve personal tutoring**

The Director of Student Services introduced the report. She explained that the goal of the proposal would be to enable staff to easily communicate with students about the support available to them across their student journey.

The Board noted that the next stage of the workstream would be to collaborate with stakeholders to develop the proposed Integrated Student Development and Support Framework. The Board was supportive of the recommended approach.

11. **Portfolio / curriculum review progress update**

The PVC (Education) introduced the report. She explained that the purpose of the portfolio and curriculum review would be to improve students' graduate outcomes and support the University to become a sector-leader for professional and technical innovation. She added that the review would be aligned with work to decrease the racial awarding gap and improve progression rates.

The Board noted that the review would include a review of the coherence of the University's courses to ensure that the right amount of choice is available to students at different levels. The PVC (Education) noted that the review would result in change for colleagues which may initially be uncomfortable, including stopping some courses and increasing resource for others. She encouraged colleagues to engage openly and positively with the review.

The Board noted that the recommendations of the review would be presented at the next meeting. It requested a diagram to identify the leaders of each component of the portfolio and curriculum review project, a summary of each component, and how each component connects. It also requested a timeline

for the project and forecasts for when recommendations would come to the Board for approval.

The Board noted that the powerpoint presented to support this item would be made available in members' papers packs.

12. **AULA update on pilots and plans**

The PVC (Education) outlined the approach for evaluation of the Aula pilot and review of the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

The Acting Director for TQE explained that one of the key benefits of the AULA pilot was the questions it raised about the future and next generations of the University's VLE. He highlighted that, given the shift to online learning during the coronavirus pandemic, the University has an opportunity to challenge what the future of its teaching delivery looks like.

The Board noted that an intermediate year (in which the existing VLE would still be in use while the new VLE would be trialled) would likely be needed in 2021/22 to allow sufficient time to develop the University's approach.

The Board was supportive of the approach outlined.

Rosie Holden and Tony Roberts left the meeting.

13. **New resources to inform pedagogic practice**

The Director of TQE introduced the report. He outlined the ADSC's approach to develop a programme for continuous professional development of academic staff.

The PVC (Education) highlighted that colleagues would be asked to identify whether they would like to complete the PGCert in October 2021 and the PGCert would be made available to them from January 2022.

14. **Update on REF submission**

The Head of the Research Office provided a presentation on the progress of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission. He highlighted the results and recommendations of the Mock REF, which has been used to project the University's trajectory.

The Board noted that the University is on target to complete its REF submission by mid-March. It noted that following the early resolution of some minor issues, neither COVID-19 nor the IT outage has presented any persistent challenges to the submission process.

The Board noted that the University scored less well than expected in the REF 2014 and external factors have had a significant impact on research in

the lead up to the REF 2021, therefore colleagues have had to work extremely hard for this submission.

The Chair thanked the Research Office for its excellent work to support the REF submission.

15. **Student Union Issues (as required)**

The SU President and VP (Education) confirmed that there are no issues to raise to the Board, as students' concerns are being effectively dealt with outside of this committee. The SU President noted that the LSBSU is collaborating well with different divisions across the University.

Jenny Owen, Gary Francis, Craig Barker, and Helen Aston left the meeting.

16. **Review of academic KPIs 2020/21**

Richard Duke, Director of Strategy and Planning, joined the meeting.

The Director of Strategy and Planning explained that the performance indicator data presented includes all of the Group's targets for 2020-25, including KPIs still going through a process of definition and KPIs that currently have missing data due to the IT outage.

The Board noted that the KPIs, their associated targets, and the University's previous performance against these indicators are linked to the Group Strategy 2020-25 which was approved by the Board of Governors in July 2020.

The Chair suggested that the targets should be reviewed again at the next meeting and discussed alongside Years 1-2 and Years 2-3 progression data.

17. **Calendar consultation – update on planning for January starting courses**

The Board received an update during matters arising.

18. **Reports from sub-committees**

The committee received the reports.

19. **AOB**

The Chair thanked the Board for its contributions to the meeting.

The Chair noted that this meeting was Jane Wills', DORE for the School of HSC, last meeting. The Board thanked her for her invaluable support as a member of the Board.

Date of next meeting
2:00pm on Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Confirmed as a true record

..... (Chair)