Academic Board

Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2020.

Membership:

Present: Jo Midgley (Chair), Suleiman Al-Sa'Di, David Barrett, Sarah Bateman, Evan Botwood, Jackie Chelin, Elizabeth Cleaver, Amanda Coffey, Rachel Cowie, Jenny Dye, Chris English, Myra Evans, Delia Fairburn, Lisa Harrison, Rob Ingram, Fiona Jordan, Heather Moyes, Jane Ojiako, Gerry Rice, Andrew Rogers, Jackie Rogers, Richard Strange, Luke Rudge, Rebecca Smith (Officer), Iain Mossman (Secretary).

Apologies: Stanley Egeonu, Nadine Fry, Sarah Grabham, Saharla Ismail, Neidi Lemos, Vicky Nash, Jasmine Pow, Doris Schedlitzki.

In attendance: Will Hoskin

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
LTSEC20.04.1	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
LTSEC20.04.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 05th February 2020 as an accurate record.
LTSEC20.04.2	**MATTERS ARISING**
LTSEC20.04.2.1	Members welcomed the new Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost, Amanda Coffey, to her first meeting of LTSEC; and the Chair confirmed that Amanda would take over as Chair of LTSEC from the first meeting of the 2020/21 academic year.
LTSEC20.04.2.2	**Virtual Boards –** Members noted that the Examining Board Code of Practice has been updated to include the running of virtual boards.
LTSEC20.04.3	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
LTSEC20.04.3.1	**Covid-19 Pandemic response and recovery –** The Chair noted the significant efforts from across the University to respond to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, and thanked all LTSEC members for their involvement. The committee noted that the Vice-Chancellor, in his role as Chair of Academic Board, has approved a set of force majeure regulations for the remainder of the academic year which have been developed to mitigate the impact of the pandemic for students, while ensuring academic standards are maintained. The committee also noted the considerable work within programme teams, faculties and professional services to develop online teaching, alternative assessments, and support students during the unprecedented situation. The Chair highlighted communications from the Vice Chancellor that the focus of the University was now to move towards recovery, and that a number of sub-groups led by the Directorate–level Recovery Coordination Group, will consider different scenarios for moving into the next academic year. One of the sub-groups is considering impact on Education and the Student Experience, and LTSEC will be informed of, and involved in, actions arising from this group at subsequent meetings.
LTSEC20.04.3.2	**Student Voice and Engagement –** Members noted the written update from the SU. The VP Education thanked the University for efforts to support students through Covid-19 pandemic, and noted that the SU and the University have been working in collaboration to ensure the quality of the student experience under the current circumstances.
	ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT
LTSEC20.04.4	**Grade Descriptors**
LTSEC20.04.4.1	The Associate Director of Academic Practice provided the following introduction to paper LTSEC20.04.2:

1. The descriptors will have a phased implementation within 2020/21;
2. Once in place, the Grade Descriptors will form part of reporting within the Degree Outcome Statement, which will assure the Board of Governors (BoG) that the University is maintaining academic standards and assuring the quality of student outcomes. Once approved by the BoG the outcome statement will be published publically where it will be a reference point for Degree Outcomes at the University, and the OfS may refer to it;
3. Adoption of the descriptors across programmes will provide greater consistency in the approach to determining assessment outcomes across the University, which will build confidence in the continued comparability of academic standards;
4. The Grade Descriptors were drafted by a development group which took them to Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQCs) in March. ASQCs gave considerable

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

	constructive feedback, which has resulted in changes to the document now presented to LTSEC.
LTSEC20.04.4.2	During extensive discussions, members noted: 1. The document has reduced in length after feedback from ASQCs; 2. Further work is still needed to align the set of practice-led grade descriptors to existing marking criteria within faculties, and further alignment is needed with some points of the academic regulations; 3. It will still be important to ensure that higher level descriptors meet the Degree Apprenticeship Framework levels; 4. Faculties welcomed the development of the descriptors, the general view of members was that further consideration was needed to ensure that the descriptors can be contextualised by different disciplines with strong local interpretation, diversification and more detail; 5. Faculties noted that there are already examples of good practice where grading descriptors have been developed at a subject level. These have already had an impact resulting in a broader use of the marking range and bringing student outcomes more in line with the market. It would be useful to consider those already in place rather than starting from scratch, but to ensure that these align with other Faculties; 6. Members agreed that the next step should be to consider a process of translating the existing work on the descriptors for both staff and students, ensuring they are forward thinking and future proof. Training will be essential so that they can be interpreted in a useful way and ensure consistency across the Institution. The committee did not approve the Grade Descriptors, and agreed that further development work be completed in line with discussions at the meeting. It was agreed that the Degree Outcomes Statement will be updated to reflect the grading descriptors are currently in development, but would not be published at the same time. The Deputy Vice Chancellor agreed to take forward a working group with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning, members from the Academic Practice Directorate and the Director of Academic Apprenticeships. **Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor**
LTSEC20.04.5	**Degree Outcomes Statement**
LTSEC20.04.5.1	The Deputy Director (Policy Development and Student Experience), Student and Academic Services provided a verbal update on the development of the Degree Outcomes Statement: 1. The statement will be considered by Academic Board in May, and subsequently submitted to the Board of Governors meeting in July for sign off and publication by the end of the Academic year;

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

	2. The statement will set out how the Board of Governors is assured that our degrees are awarded in line with sector standards, and that any change in the institutional degree classification profile over time is justified in terms of student performance rather than changes in standards. It will assure the Board of Governors that assessment and marking standards are being maintained; 3. That the process for drafting a Statement has been a collective response by sector to political and media concerns about grade inflation at UK Higher Education Institutions, and is a voluntary exercise; 4. With the development of the force majeure regulations in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Statement will be useful tool to consider teaching methods and assessment without deviating from academic standards; 5. The statement looks at classification profiles over the last 5 years, considering variations and attainment gaps at subject level. It will describe actions taken in response to this data, and provide the rationale for the algorithms used by the University; 6. The University's degree outcomes have moved in line with the sector over recent years; 7. Following discussion with Directorate, the language and tone of the statement is being considered to ensure it is relevant for the right audience. The statement does not need to be submitted to the OfS, but they and other external organisations may look at it.
LTSEC20.04.5.2	Members suggested that examples of good practice from each Faculty could be provided within the supplementary information that will sit alongside the statement. The statement will be sent to LTSEC members to view at the same time as it is circulated to Academic Board members. **Action: Deputy Director (Policy Development and Student Experience)**
	ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
	None to report
	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
LTSEC20.02.6	**Faculty Survey Action Plans**
LTSEC20.02.6.1	Members noted that there have been no changes to the Faculty Survey Action Plans following the final meetings with the Vice Chancellor.
LTSEC20.02.7	**LTSEC Enhancement Session – The BAME Attainment gaps – moving beyond the data report**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
LTSEC20.02.7.1	Members noted paper LTSEC20.04.3 and the actions arising from the enhancement session.
LTSEC20.02.8	**Festival of Learning**
LTSEC20.02.8.1	Members noted the report in paper LTSEC20.04.4 detailing the preparations for the Festival of Learning.
LTSEC20.02.9	**Faculty of Business and Law Faculty Summary Report for External Examiners'**
LTSEC20.02.9.1	Members noted paper LTSEC20.04.5, which detailed the summary report on external examiners annual reports in FBL.
	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
LTSEC20.02.10	**Graduate Outcomes Survey –** The publication of the results for the first Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) has been delayed by HESA; this will now be released in June. There will also be a new UK performance indicator released by HESA in the autumn term. UWE, Bristol has had the first indications of the data, which shows that the University has stayed consistent and many other Universities (including some Russell Group Institutions) dropping fairly significantly.
	DATE OF NEXT MEETING 10th June 2020