



ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 February 2022

Present: Steven West (Chair), Paul Bennett, Martin Boddy, Tod Burton, Suzanne Carrie (item 4.3), Sally Clark, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Rachel Cowie, Hilary Drew, John Griffiths, Marc Griffiths, Antony Hill, Helen King, Vanique Kruger, Vikas Kumar, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Hannah Mathias, Raymond McDowell, Fidel Meraz, Jo Midgley, Christopher Moore, Iain Mossman (item 5.1), Lyn Newton, Danielle Newton, Dami Okeyoyin (VP Education), Paul Olomolaiye, Carinna Parraman, Jim Smith, Richard Strange, Thomas Wild, Neil Willey, Susan Yilmaz (items 4.4 & 4.5).

In attendance: Chris Gledhill, Nick Button (Officer), Amy Morgan (Officer).

Apologies: Jodie Anstee, Jason Briddon, Evan Botwood (SU President), Katie Jenkins, Ian MacKenzie (BoG observer), Candy McCabe, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Nicholas Ryder, Jeanette Sakel, Neil Sutherland, Sarah Ward, Emma Weitkamp.

Observers: None.

AB.22.02.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.22.02.1.1 Welcome to members

The Chair welcomed new members to the meeting:

- Nick Button, Academic Governance Manager.
- John Griffiths

The Chair welcomed two newly elected members:

- Hilary Drew – representative of L&T in FBL
- Wendy Colvin – representative of L&T in FET.

Apologies for absence

AB.22.02.1.2 The Chair noted all apologies, including the scheduled Board of Governors' observer, Iain MacKenzie, and the Secretary, Heather Moyes.

Declaration of interests

AB.22.02.1.3 No declarations of interest were notified.

AB.22.02.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.22.02.2.1 Previous Minutes

Paper AB.22.02.01 was received

Members confirmed the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting held on 8 December 2021.

AB.22.02.2.2 **Action Sheet and Matters Arising**
Paper AB.22.02.02 was received

The Chair confirmed that all outstanding actions had been completed. There were no matters arising.

AB.22.02.2.3 **Chair's Actions**
Papers AB.22.02.03/04/05/06 were received.

The Chair noted all the Chair's Actions that had been taken since the previous meeting, including that the Academic Calendar had been signed off incorporating feedback from the previous Academic Board meeting, the Admissions Policy and Procedure (section 10 disabled students), an amendment to the Complaints Procedure, and the appointment of Professor Mohammed Saad as an Emeritus Professor.

AB.22.02.3 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS
AB.22.02.3.1 Update from the Vice-Chancellor
Paper AB.22.02.07 was received.

- AB.22.02.3.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor presented the paper and updated members on the forthcoming Government response to the Post-18 Education and Funding Review, which was expected on Thursday 24 February. Members heard:
- i. The Government response would be divided into a set of policy announcements around immediate funding issues and a set of DfE consultations on more longer-term reform to funding.
 - ii. On the latter, the Government was considering the introduction of either minimum entry requirements for student loans and/or student number caps to limit the overall size of the sector. Minimum entry requirements, particularly in GCSE Maths attainment, would potentially affect access and participation in low participation neighbourhoods and have implications for the Levelling Up agenda.
 - iii. The second consultation would cover the Lifelong Loan Entitlement and how it should be funded, and what would need to be in place for an expected launch from 2025.
 - iv. University Alliance and other bodies would work together to form consensus around the response to these consultations.
 - v. The Government would also announce a reduction in the funding base for foundation degrees, although it was doubtful that it would go as far as Augar's initial recommendations that these should be delivered by FE only. That would have an impact on the University and its partnerships, including on its work in maintaining pathways into higher education.
 - vi. The freeze on the maximum undergraduate tuition fee would remain, continuing at £9,250 for the remainder of the Parliament.
 - vii. The repayment threshold would be lowered, and the period of repayment would be extended.
 - viii. There would be some positive news on further investment in STEM subjects and NHS-facing provision and some additional support to help disadvantaged students.

- ix. The Government would conclude its consultation into post-qualification admissions.
- x. The University would need to navigate the issues contained in the Government's response carefully. In a period of expected inflationary pressure and increased running costs, the flat value of tuition fee income would have financial implications. However, Strategy 2030 put the University in a strong position to respond to those issues and to take some of the opportunities that would arise, including partnerships with FE, work with schools on access, work with local employers, inclusivity, and international partnerships and new markets.
- xi. There was remaining uncertainty around the research position, particularly in relation to Horizon Europe and any domestic alternative. The sector would have to lobby the Government for equivalent funding in that instance.
- xii. A statement would be put out following the Government launching its response the day after Academic Board.

AB.22.02.3.1.2

In discussion, members noted:

- i. If the fee income available for foundation years was reduced then the University may have to reconsider its delivery model. The rationale for the Government's decision was about reducing costs and numbers, particularly on programmes where the progression, retention, and outcomes were poor.
- ii. It would be important to take stock of the policy contexts in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
- iii. There was a view that many subject areas where students created portfolio careers, e.g., in the creative industries and arts, were negatively affected by the Government's focus on graduate outcomes, although there were many other areas also under the spotlight. It was important for the University to be part of that narrative, highlighting the assets that existed in Bristol, to stress the importance of those industries, as well as making sure it was delivering good outcomes for students and seeking improvement where there was not happening. The work on subject readiness would help the University understand these issues better, and would inform where it invested, grew, and changed.
- iv. It was important to argue that the quality of graduate outcomes and salary were not entirely the same.

AB.22.02.3.2

Update from the Students' Union

Paper AB.22.02.08 was received

AB.22.02.3.2.1

The VP Education presented the Students' Union report and invited questions from members of Academic Board.

AB.22.02.3.2.2

In discussion, members noted:

- i. It was important to ensure that Student Voice was being effectively captured and communicated to Academic Board, and that feedback was being given in such a way that students could see the impact that their input was having.

- ii. The Students' Union was continuing to prioritise enhancement in its work around the National Student Survey (NSS)

AB.22.02.4 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB.22.02.4.1 Regulation of Quality and Standards

Paper AB.22.02.09 was received

AB.22.02.4.1.1 The Director of Student and Academic Services introduced the paper, which summarised the key themes of current OfS consultations on quality and standards. Members heard that the consultations were focused on B3 conditions and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and that colleagues in the University were in the process of compiling responses.

AB.22.02.4.1.2 Academic Board split into four groups to discuss the issues arising from the consultation, framed around a set of questions they were asked to consider (*see Appendix 1 for a summary of the group discussions*). It was noted that many of the discussions focused on how Academic Board could assure itself in a more agile and complete way, despite meeting only five times a year.

AB.22.02.4.2 Transforming Futures Strategy 2030 – Roadmap

Paper AB.22.02.10 was received

- AB.22.02.4.2.1 The Vice-Chancellor delivered a presentation on the Transforming Futures Strategy 2030 Roadmap. Members heard:
- i. The Strategy set out a clear vision for the University's ambition and objectives. Underneath that was a series of initiatives and actions, themes of work to progress, and an examination of co-dependencies and relationships between streams to work so that prioritisation was done correctly. There was a process of tracking progress and ensuring delivery of the different workstreams in line with the overall strategy.
 - ii. The Board of Governors had been provided with a high-level scorecard so that it could track delivery of the workstreams, which they used to hold the Directorate to account. This scorecard had been adapted and driven down to Faculty, Programme, and Module level so that staff could more clearly understand what it meant for them. Alongside that were personalisation wheels as a descriptor of the work the University did and a series of roadmaps for each workstream being delivered, which were being reported back to the Board of Governors.
 - iii. A series of high-level Gantt charts and data sheets helped the University understand whether it was on track for delivery. Broad RAG ratings or other mechanisms were used to signal areas of concern that could then be dealt with.
 - iv. There were three main themes of Purpose, People, and Place. Some of the workstreams were designed to develop platforms with which the University could understand the health of its academic programmes, its research performance, and issues around awarding gaps, assessment, and creativity in

transformation work. Alongside that was work looking at the structures that People were organised under and how best to develop and support them. There were further announcements to come around Colleges and Schools, and how the Operating Model would more effectively align the professional services in supporting the academic endeavour of the institution. There was learning from the success in Technical work that could be rolled out across the wider University.

- v. There were mechanisms with which the University could examine its interfaces and collaborations to tackle siloed working.
- vi. There was a Strategic Roadmap 2022-24 for each of the workstreams under Purpose, People, and Place. Academic Board had an important role in monitoring that work, seeking assurance, and asking students.

AB.22.02.4.2.2

In discussion, members noted:

- i. Consideration would be given to services that directly interfaced with students. The intention was to add values rather than simply adding more layers, and that any feedback given by students was then actioned and communicated to them so that they could see the impact.

AB.22.02.4.3

Speak Up progress update

Paper 22.02.11 was received.

AB.22.02.4.3.1

The Head of Equality Diversity and Inclusivity introduced a paper, which was in-year update on progress with the Speak Up project. Members heard:

- i. Changes were being made to the plan for a Senior Leadership Pledge so that it could be applicable to all staff, shaped to different communities of staff and allowing for personal interpretation.
- ii. The pledge would contain three parts and the process of creating it would include staff involvement to ensure authenticity.
- iii. Recruitment for EDI Champions among professional services staff had been very successful and work was ongoing with Faculties on how the role would work in their context. Champions were being trained and starting to communicate with their terms using centrally delivered materials.
- iv. Anti-racism training on offer was being highlighted and would be added to the starting block Speak Up material.

AB.22.02.4.3.2

In discussion, members noted:

- i. It was important that staff had the confidence to speak up about incidents at the time when it would have the most impact. There was work ongoing in building staff confidence in the processes and ensuring that dignity at work advisors, line managers, HR, the advice line, and the EDI team was correctly joined up.
- ii. The target was to have between 150 and 200 EDI Champions who could help embed cultural change, as well as being active listeners and deliverers of support within their teams.

- iii. It was important for students and staff to identify with the people they were seeking support from. In the first instance, as many staff as possible were being encouraged to sign up and then some demographic analysis would be done to see where there were gaps ahead of the second round to recruitment.
- iv. Effectively trained EDI Champions could provide feedback on low-level issues and help prevent them becoming formal problems.

AB.22.02.04.3.3 It was agreed that a further update would be brought to Academic Board at the start of the next academic year.
[Action: Secretary/Officer]

AB.22.02.4.4 Variant Regulations: TSI, Latvia
Paper 22.02.19 was received.

AB.22.02.4.4.1 The Head of Quality Enhancement introduced the paper. It was noted that due to legislative differences, variant regulations had been produced but which very much followed the University's existing regulations. There were differences in the awards system and the number of hours expected to earn credits.

AB.22.02.4.4.2 Academic Board **approved** the recommendations.

AB.22.02.4.5 Phenikaa University, Vietnam (PHU)
Paper 22.02.20 was received.

AB.22.02.4.5.1 The Head of Quality Enhancement introduced the paper, noting that the Vice Chancellor had approved the request to make Phenikaa University an affiliated institution and was seeking Academic Board endorsement of that decision.

AB.22.02.4.5.2 Academic Board **endorsed** the Vice-Chancellor's decision.

AB.22.02.5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

AB.22.02.5.1 Academic Regulations Update
Paper AB.22.02.12 was received.

AB.22.02.5.1.1 The Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement introduced the paper. Members heard:

- i. Four workstreams had been put in place to develop the Academic Regulations for the next academic year. There would be a substantive update to Academic Board in May.
- ii. It was anticipated that the new iteration of the regulations would be substantially shorter than the current ones, and work was ongoing with the Quality & Standards Committee, the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee, and the Academic Regulations working group to refine the proposals.

AB.22.02.5.1.2 Academic Board noted that most Departments would be undertaking Programme Reviews shortly after the end of the academic year and the feedback timeline should be adjusted to take account of this.
(Action: Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement).

AB.22.02.6 SUMMARY REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Papers AB.22.02.13/14/15/16/17/18/21 were received.

AB.22.02.6.1

Members noted summary reports from sub-committees as follows:

- LTSEC (2 February 2022)
- RKEC (19 January 2020)
- SAPG (7 December 2021 & 25 January 2022)
- FET Faculty Board (8 February 2022)
- FBL Faculty Board (26 January 2022)
- HAS Faculty Board (26 January 2022)
- ACE Faculty Board (14 February 2022).

AB.22.02.7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB.22.02.7.1

There was no other business identified.

AB.22.02.8 DATES OF 2021/22 MEETINGS

AB.21.12.8.1

Wednesday 18 May 2022

Wednesday 6 July 2022

AB.22.02.4.1(B) Appendix 1: Notes from Breakout groups (Item 4.1)

The key themes from the discussion of the four breakout groups were as follows:

- i. The question for Academic Board was whether it was getting the right information at the right time with the right sets of data to be assured in the academic quality and standards of the University. Most of its work in this area was delegated to other committees and individuals throughout the institution. There were issues to consider of more continuous monitoring and assurance, rather than relying on the set number of meetings every year.
- ii. It was important to look holistically and consider the overall impact on the student rather than individual KPIs.
- iii. The feedback on MyEngagement from academics and students had been mixed, with little consistency of use across the institution. Apprenticeships were a particular concern.
- iv. The forthcoming changes to condition B3 raised questions about whether the governance processes were fit for purpose. There was a disconnect between academic and professional service staff and no single point of contact to monitor this issue. Consideration should be given to having it as a standing item for future Academic Board meetings.
- v. There was no consistency in awareness about the current changes in quality and standards across the University.
- vi. Student representation and feedback to Academic Board was important, both to ensure qualitative feedback and to hear the success stories of students both while at the University and subsequently. Personalisation of services was key with issues flagged at an individual level.
- vii. Continuation rates were a particular challenge and more data on the risk points needed to be provided, the lead indicators that were used to flag that a student may not continue, and the profile of non-continuing students. Academics often did not know about students' socioeconomic background and/or mental health challenges, and data often came through too late.
- viii. Getting student recruitment right was crucial to ensuring good continuation and outcomes. Students through Clearing were less likely to stay so consideration should be given to that. It was not always solely about tariff and students were looking for different things from their university.
- ix. Part-time students often came from low participation neighbourhoods so focusing on those students would have significant impact.