



**MINUTES OF THE HE ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021 AT
9.15 AM HELD REMOTELY VIA SKYPE**

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MINUTES OF THE HE ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021 AT 9.15 AM HELD REMOTELY VIA SKYPE

Present: Phil Dover (Chair), Jane McNeil, Gabriel Van Ingen, Mandie Stravino

In attendance: Jenny Brandham, Kate Martin, Rose Matthews (Clerk)
Catherine Bland and Helen Leung – Open University (observers)

	Action	Date
<p>14/20-21 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and undertook introductions for the benefit of Catherine Bland and Helen Leung of the Open University who were attending the meeting in an observation capacity.</p>		
<p>15/20-21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Amy Alexander, Heather Simcox and Amanda Jogela.</p>		
<p>16/19-20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND QUORUM</p> <p>All members were eligible and the meeting was confirmed to be quorate. There were no declarations.</p>		
<p>17/20-21 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 were approved as a true and accurate record.</p>		
<p>18/20-21 MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>13/20-21 The Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy was approved by the Corporation at its meeting in December 2020.</p>		
<p>19/20-21 KEY STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</p> <p>The Director of Higher Education delivered a presentation on the key areas of strength, improvement and enhancement as a result of the self-evaluation process.</p> <p>It was noted the key areas for improvement and enhancement were reflected in the Higher Education Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The headline strengths included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the depth and breadth of student engagement • bi-annual course performance monitoring 		

	Action	Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective academic support for teachers and students • strong and productive institutional relationships, including the development of the peer observation process • support for teachers by HE Advanced Practitioner, via face to face and professional development secured in a timely transition • improving pass rates with a total pass rate of 92.9% in 2019-20 which was an increase on the prior year. The gap narrowing between genders with a 3% improvement <p>The headline improvements outlined were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring all students were aware of the opportunities to feedback on their course via internal surveys and other student voice mechanisms • external work placements would be centrally organised • the evaluation of student voice activities and the monitoring of the impact would be carried out centrally • more work was required to support the analysis to enable the targeting of specific areas for improvement • further development on teaching to focus on contextualisation • improvement in the gaps in retention <p>Jane McNeil said it was good to see a thorough analysis of what the priorities were and understood that some were harder to achieve than others, for example the Access and Participation Plan.</p> <p>Jane went on to acknowledge the detailed work around disadvantaged students and said she would be interested to look at that at a future meeting. The Director of HE explained there would be a KPI update around disadvantaged students.</p> <p>Jane questioned if students were not indicating they had an inclusion need. The Vice Principal explained staff were being encouraged to have those conversations with students and CPD was in place to raise lecturers self-awareness to have the confidence to have those conversations.</p>	JB	08/06
<p>20/20-21 LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION: STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREE SPEECH IN HIGHER EDUCATION</p> <p>The letter from the Secretary of State had been shared with Committee members.</p> <p>The Vice Principal explained this related to a wider government white paper.</p> <p>She explained the Group had a number of elements of FOS integrated into the safeguarding and prevent duty, HR policies and those of the Students' Union. The Group would respond with its own policy once fully reviewed.</p>		

Action	Date

Jane McNeil explained there was a FOS policy in her organisation which had been articulated.

The Vice Principal confirmed the organisation had prepared a draft policy, and would work closely with the Students' Union on this. She said it did not clash with the Group's values.

The Committee Chair said the policy should embed guidance for those students who do not feel able to articulate their views and making that explicit through any tutorial work and the NUS. He noted it could be a positive exercise.

The Vice Principal said it was essential and core to the organisation's values.

The CFO asked if the organisation had many guest speakers. It was noted they did. The Director of HE also explained that employers should be included in the policy.

21-20-21 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Higher Education shared the key headlines from the Academic Performance Report, which also focussed around the KPIs.

Applications were current at 144 compared to 173 the previous year. Possible reasons could be covid related, lots of the Group's students come through employers and there may be some hesitancy to commit. A focus area is internal promotion with Year 3's.

Overall attendance was positive at 94.2% with some areas achieving 98%.

The Director discussed the Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets. The APP had been submitted to the OFS for their initial review.

Overall, did well in POLAR 4 recruitment compared with the sector, but want to move more to Q1 and Q2.

The Committee Chair asked if, with regards to the deprivation index and POLAR 4 data if it related to higher students in 1 and 2 quintiles and was there any correlation. The Director of HE said there was no intersectionality in this area and no emerging trends.

Ethnicity currently sits with a 9% representation from students from a diverse background with a target to increase to 21% in line with the city demographic. There has been a lot of activity around this, but little progress.

Jane McNeil said it was great attendance had been sustained in such a challenging year.

Action	Date
<p>It was noted the work with the Widening Participation committee was growing and the Vice Principal confirmed widening participation was happening at different levels. The Marketing Officers were very hands on so quick changes could be made on the student offer.</p>	
<p>An overview of partner performance was shared and discussed.</p>	
<p>An update was provided on scholarship activity, with a working group introduced to address the barriers and work undertaken to introduce a new policy.</p>	
<p>Covid risks were shared with a need to move back to blended learning to target practical subjects- all in line with government guidance. Theory based subjects remain remote.</p>	
<p>Although recruitment was down, there had been an increase in students choosing to apply through UCAS.</p>	
<p>Digital and creative were areas flagged with low attendance. All were making improvements with all other areas showing positive attendance.</p>	
<p>There had been no safeguarding or prevent referrals to report.</p>	
<p>The second round of PCMs had taken place with feedback expected by the 10 June.</p>	
<p>The internal quality survey had been completed a few weeks ago and although outcomes were awaited, the survey response rate had improved.</p>	
<p>Although not able to attend this meeting, Amy Alexander, the Student Governor had met with the Director of HE to discuss student engagement activity as part of the APP.</p>	
<p>The Committee Chair said he was interested in the virtual learning walks and questioned how assurance is provided the quality of learning is being maintained as it would for classroom delivery. The Vice Principal responded that feedback from students and staff had been that it was productive. Some staff were capable of delivering very complex learning online and also supported their peers in developing different strategies. The Team Managers from HE had been carrying out most of the learning walks.</p>	
<p>The Committee Chair noted face to face and online delivery had been taking place and said it was credit to all of the curriculum teams for maintaining attendance during such difficult working conditions.</p>	
<p>Jane McNeil said she was interested to see the interrelationships with the disadvantaged and that some students were finding flexible access to learning helpful.</p>	

	Action	Date
<p>Catherine Bland advised there was a repository called Open Learn that holds short training sessions on adapting teaching sessions from face to face to online, which may be useful to look at.</p>		
<p>22/20-21 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</p>		
<p>The KPIs were discussed in detail in the previous agenda item.</p> <p>Some KPIs were not covered as end of year monitoring and will be available later in the cycle.</p>		
<p>23/20-21 ACADEMIC RISK REGISTER</p>		
<p>The HE Academic Risk Register was shared with Committee Members and 'high' priority risks identified as detailed in the report and discussed in the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted the register had been updated to cover the new and emerging risks around Covid-19.</p> <p>In addition, the OFS had a number of consultations either active, or in the pipeline which implied a level of change within the sector.</p> <p>Jane McNeil noted it was a challenge, particularly considering some of the TEF and quality and standards consultations which are about to go into technical consultations. She recommended keeping a close watch on those and monitor the direction of travel. Until then it would be difficult to see what mitigations to put in place.</p>		
<p>24/20-21 COMPLIANCE AGAINST CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION</p>		
<p>The Director of Higher Education shared a detailed report, which had been RAG rated.</p> <p>The APP had moved to red as it was a new submission.</p> <p>The ILR audit was taking place, which could flag as a condition of registration.</p> <p>Further details were contained within the report.</p>		
<p>25/20-21 EXTERNAL POLICY IMPACT</p>		
<p>The Director of HE provided an overview of the key policy drivers.</p> <p>She pointed out that so far the organisation had responded in line with the government's advice for HE providers during the third lockdown.</p> <p>A range of external policies/guidance were discussed, which included the OFS response to Augar, TEF, Quality and Standards, Academic and Free Speech etc.</p> <p>The QAA Annual Review had been published with a recommendation around good practice</p>		

Action	Date

The Director of Higher Education advised the OU had written to request the formal consideration of adoption of a No Detriment approach. This allowed to consider the impact of CV19 and the Group's interventions and the impact on student performance.

Jane McNeil questioned if other partners had a similar one. Suggesting that it could be difficult if students had a range of different approaches governing them. The Director explained that the organisation had to adopt a different approach depending on the HEI.

APPROVED: The Committee agreed to adopt the No Detriment approach.

26/20-21 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The CFO provided a verbal report.

The CFO advised Committee members the curriculum planning process was being revised for the forthcoming year. At the moment it was difficult to track the cost of HE provision as teaching staff tend to deliver both FE and HE. The CFO was working closely with the Vice Principal to look at staff utilisation and remission costs to more accurately define financial performance in HE.

He pointed out that the Group did offer certain courses were initial numbers were low, but were looking to build up over time.

The Group were not making as much margin as universities as they were not charging fees at the same level. However, they did not have the same overheads. Discussions were being held internally around growth with bigger group sizes and more efficiency. Yet also wanting to invest and provide more progression routes into HE.

The CFO explained remote delivery may provide an opportunity to deliver to smaller units, however there was a lot of competition.

The meeting finished at 11.15 pm

Signed: _____ Date: _____