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| **CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 FEBRUARY 2024** | | | | | | | | |
| **Present (via Teams):** | |  | | | | | | |
| Professor Julietta Patnick (Chair)  Professor Keith Ridgeway | | | Dr Claire Ketnor  Seun Seidu, Students’ Union BTE College Officer | | | | | |
| **Apologies:** | | | |  | | | | |
| Angela Foulkes | | | | | | | | |
| **In attendance:**  Professor Rory Duncan, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation  Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality & Standards  Dan Lally, Group Director Business Engagement, Skills, and Employability  Clair Marlow, Head of Legal Services and Deputy University Secretary  Sharon Smith, Director of Business Engagement, Skills and Employability  Tim Smith, Chair of the Board (designate)  Professor Helen Scott, Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching & Student Success  Professor David Shepherd, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)  Professor Mayur Ranchordas, Head of University Ethics  Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation (Secretary) | | | | | | | | **Agenda items**  To item 5.1  Items 5.1 & 6.1  Item 6.1  All  Item 6.1  All  All  All  Item 5.2  All |
| **Minute Ref** | **Item of Business** | | | |  | **Paper ref** | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/1 | **OPENING OF THE MEETING** | | | |  | Verbal | | |
| 1.1 | In opening the meeting, the Chair:   * Noted the apologies received. * Noted the resignation from the Board of Professor Jeff Bale and thanked him for his contribution and expertise in chairing this Committee. * Welcomed the Chair of the Board (designate) to observe the meeting. * Welcomed the Students’ Union representative to their first meeting. * Noted that comments on some items had been received from members not attending the meeting and that these would be addressed under the relevant items. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/2 | **DECLARATION OF INTEREST** | | | |  | Verbal | | |
| 2.1 | No declarations were received. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/3 | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | | | | | | AAC/2023-11-09/M | |
| 3.1 | The minutes of the meeting held on 09 November 2023 were **approved** as a correct record. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/4 | **MATTERS ARISING / ACTION TRACKER** | | | | | | Verbal | |
| 4.1 | The Committee noted that the University’s Access and Participation Plan (APP) had been approved and rolled forwards. A new Plan, revised in accordance with the Regulatory Advice and notices was being developed for submission in July 2024. The Committee would receive an update at the next meeting. | | | | | | | |
| 4.2 | The Committee received an update on regulatory activity.  A confidential minute was recorded. | | | | | | | |
| 4.3 | The Committee noted the action tracker item on the Awarding Gap and the Board member query received in advance of the meeting.  The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning, Teaching & Student Success (PVC TL&SS) reported that progress was being made and fed into the development of the APP. The University held a well-attended and positive event focusing on the institutional approach to reducing awarding gap and broader access and participation inequalities. The outputs of this event would be used to develop and enhance activities to enable greater consistency and improvement across the institution.  The Committee noted emergent research across the sector and the potential impact of pandemic restriction arrangements on benchmarks. | | | | | | | |
| 4.4 | The Committee noted an update from the PVC TL&SS on actions being implemented to address student concerns raised through the National Student Survey (NSS). | | | | | | | |
| 4.5 | **Action PVC LT&SS:** The Committee asked to receive updates on student experience and awarding gap research and activities at the next appropriate meeting. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/5 | **ANNUAL QUALITY REVIEW** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/5.1 | |
| 5.1 | The Head of Academic Quality and Standards presented the item, noting the Annual Quality Review aggregate trends and themes from the University’s approach to continuous enhancement through Course Development Plans (CDPs) and Departmental Annual Review and Action Plans.  The Review sought to give institutional leaders and governors a clear line of sight to the University’s quality and standards and provided assurance that the Quality Framework continued to operate efficiently to swiftly identify areas of risk and implement mitigating actions accordingly.  The report was recommended to the Committee by the Academic Board.  A confidential minute was recorded. | | | | | | | |
| 5.2 | The Committee welcomed the report, welcoming the assurances provided of the oversight of academic quality and standards and compliance with regulatory expectations.  The Committee **approved** the Annual Quality Report. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/6 | **UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REPORT** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/5.2 | |
| 6.1 | The Head of University Ethics introduced the annual report which was recommended to the Committee by the Academic Board.  The Committee noted that:   * A review of ethics across the whole portfolio of University activities had been concluded with revised and planned activities in place to streamline and improve procedures, communication and support for staff and students. * The highest standards of rigour and research integrity were being maintained and Policies and procedures were effective in providing a framework for the identification and investigation of alleged misconduct, with incidences remaining consistently low. * Academic Board had commented on the synergies between research ethics and other conduct policies and procedure and further work was being undertaken on this. * A key achievement had been to streamline ethics approvals with a major institutional partner. This model was being evaluated to be considered for other areas of partnership working. * Work was ongoing to strengthen links between ethics and researcher development priorities to enable PhD students and staff to enhance academic citizenship and provide mentoring and support opportunities. | | | | | | | |
| 6.2 | The Committee thanked the Head of University Ethics for the report and:   * Welcomed the streamlining and consistency of ethics approvals to enable partnership working. * Noted the continued development of information and support for staff and students across all streams of University activity.   The Committee **approved** the report for publication. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/7 | **OFSTED ASSURANCES** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/6 | |
| 7.1 | The Committee received the annual Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report,  which sets out key areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement related to the University’s apprenticeship provision. The Group Director for Business, Enterprise, Skills and Employability and Director for Skills and Partnerships informed members:   * The Self-Assessment Report was aligned to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and was intended to improve the experience and outcomes for students. * Areas for Improvement identified would be elevated into the Quality Improvement Plan, along with outstanding actions to be presented at the next meeting. * The self-assessment judgement was aligned with the ratings from the Ofsted inspection in February 2022. * Targeted action was being taken to address areas of student concern. * Once approved, the Self-Assessment Report would be submitted to Ofsted in line with good practice, although this was not a formal requirement. | | | | | | | |
| 7.2 | In discussion, the Committee noted:   * The University continued to benefit from external evaluation input to validate its self-assessment activities. * The process of OfS assessment of End Point Assessment was new and there was little existing expertise in the sector. Once the review has been conducted it was likely that the University would become an advisor to other institutions on this.   The Committee **approved** the Self Assessment Report. | | | | | | | |
| 7.3 | The Committee received the report from the Sheffield Institute of Education.  The Committee:   * Noted the high levels of preparedness for Ofsted inspection and support of senior managers. * Received assurance of the expertise within the team and robust validation of the self-assessment outcomes and plans. * Noted the complexity and size of the provision and welcomed the partnership approaches. * Commented on the high quality of the evidence provided and welcomed the ongoing focus on continuous improvement.   A confidential minute was recorded. | | | | | | | |
| 7.4 | The Committee confirmed that they were content with the assurances provided and the prior scrutiny of the Academic Board and the Teaching and Learning Committee.  The Committee recognised the national good standing and reputation of the provision and thanked all involved for all their dedication and hard work. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/8 | **EXCEPTIONAL REGULATION FOR AWARD AND PROGRESSION** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/7.1 | |
| 8.1 | The paper presented the use of this regulation to mitigate impacts of industrial action on student experience and progression.  The Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed:   * The regulation was applied in a small number of cases and overall the process was well managed. * Student outcomes and experience had been protected while also ensuring the integrity of the University’s academic quality and standards. * Mitigations had been implemented where other factors impacting on students’ performance were identified. * There were no known student complaints in relation to the application of the regulation. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/9 | **HONORARY AWARDS INTERIM REPORT** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/7.2 | |
| 9.1 | The Committee **received** the report | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/10 | **UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2024** | | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/7.3 | |
| 10 | The Committee **received** the unconfirmed minutes | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/11 | **ANNUAL BUSINESS CYCLE** | | | | | AAC/2024-02-29/8 | | |
| 11 | The forward schedule of business was **noted.** | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/12 | **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS** | | | | |  | | |
| 12 | No urgent business was raised. | | | | | | | |
| AAC/2024-02-29/13 | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** | | | | |  | | |
| 13 | Thursday 16 May 2024, 13:00 – 15:00 | | | | | | | |