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| **CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2024** | | | | | |
| PRESENT: | | | | | |
| Prof Liz Mossop (Chair)  Roger Bateman  Helen Best  Prof Neil Bricklebank  Dr Marjory Da Costa Abreu  Prof Rory Duncan  Jeremiah Abiola Fasipe  Dr Iain Garner | | Dr Samantha Giove  Dr Claire Ketnor  Dr Neil McKay  Martha Mitchell  Prof Conor Moss  Dr Christine O’Leary  David Rogerson | Dr Alan Ruddock  Prof Helen Scott  Prof Toni Schwarz  Seun Seidu  Prof David Shepherd  Prof David Smith  Prof Chris Wigginton | | |
| IN ATTENDANCE: | | | | AGENDA ITEM |
| Prof Doug Cleaver, Director of the Doctoral School  Nikki Davies, Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance  Leopold Green, Head of Academic Quality and Standards  Daniel Lally, Group Director of Business, Engagement, Skills and Employability  Ben Machin, Governance Senior Advisor (Secretary)  Prof Mayur Ranchordas, Head of University Ethics  Sue O’Brien, Head of Sheffield Institute of Education  Sharon Smith, Director of Skills and Partnerships  Jenny Stocks, Deputy Head of Sheffield Institute of Education  Ruth Thei, Head of Governance and Sector Regulation | | | | Item 4.1  All  All  Item 5.1  All  Item 4.2  Item 5.2  Item 5.1  Item 5.2  All |
| APOLOGIES: | | | | | |
| Dr Sadiq Bhanbhro, Prof Claire Craig, Olivia Collis, Dr James Fenwick, Dr Tina Harness, Dr Rebecca Peake, Dr Alison Purvis. | | | | | |
| Minute Ref | Item of Business | | | Paper Ref |
| AB/2024-01-31/1 | OPENING OF MEETING | | |  |
| 1.1 | In opening the meeting, the Chair:   * Noted the apologies received. * Congratulated the new Students’ Union Health Wellbeing and Life Sciences Officer on their appointment. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/2 | MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING | | | AB/2023-10-11/M |
| 2.1 | Academic Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 11 October 2023 as a correct record. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/3 | MATTERS ARISING/ACTION TRACKER | | | AB/2024-01-31/3 |
| 3.1 | The Vice-Chancellor informed Academic Board the Office for Students (OfS) had approved the rollover of the University’s 2020-21 Access and Participation Plan (general ongoing condition A1) for the 2024-25 academic year. The sector regulator expects the University to submit a new plan which covers a maximum of four academic years by 31 July 2024. | | | | |
| 3.2 | Academic Board **noted** updates on the action tracker. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/5 | ANNUAL QUALITY REVIEW | | | AB/2024-01-31/4.1 **Confidential** |
| 5.1 | The Annual Quality Review sets out how the University continues to exercise its responsibilities for the regulation, quality assurance, and enhancement of educational provision. It details that the University’s quality procedures for taught and research students are operating effectively to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision and meet all required regulatory expectations.  The Head of Academic Quality and Standards thanked all colleagues involved in the review’s production and highlighted the following:   * The University continues to comply with the OfS ‘B’, ‘C1’ and ‘C2’ conditions of registration. * The Quality Framework has been enhanced and has operated effectively over the past year, with further developments planned for 2024. * The key internal and external risks to academic delivery, and the mitigating actions being taken. * Portfolio Redevelopment continues to be implemented through the established curriculum structures schemes approved by Academic Board, with revalidation being delivered at significant pace and volume. * The implementation of Delivery Models (paper ref: AB/2023-06-14/9) will provide greater stability and consistency within timetabling, in response to student feedback on organisation and management. * Course Development Plans have been launched, with a clear focus on improving the student experience and outcomes. * A revised approach to Departmental Periodic Reviews is being developed which will also ensure continuing alignment to the OfS ‘B’ conditions of registration. * All departments are successfully streamlining the number of modules and assessment tasks which reconceptualise assessment design whilst satisfying accrediting bodies. * The University is collaborating with departmental community of practices to facilitate the sharing of best practice in assessment design and delivery. * The University Teaching Quality Committee has strengthened its oversight of new and renewed partnership arrangements, as well as the academic quality and standards of awards delivered through collaborative partnerships.   The Annual Quality Review is supported by several appendices, including the Annual Review of Research Degrees Activity. It presents key findings from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and an internal Annual Feedback and Monitoring Exercise, which also included a Directors of Study survey. The Director of the Doctoral School informed members:   * The review details overall and thematic areas of student satisfaction from the PRES in comparison with the sector, with overall satisfaction above sector average. * Good practice arising from the pandemic is being proactively captured, noting that bursary extensions were having a positive impact on completion and continuation. | | | | |
| 5.2 | Academic Board thanked all colleagues in compiling the review. In discussion, members:   * Received assurances there is a continued focus on addressing areas of student satisfaction and feedback, including within areas of diverse and employer-led provision. * Considered the technological enhancements being explored to support improvements in the student and staff experience. The overall programme of systems improvement is overseen by the Technology and Data Strategy Implementation Board. * Welcomed the outlined approach to the sharing and dissemination of good practice. * Reflected on upcoming internal changes and commented on the importance of maintaining a barometer of morale. * Reflected on the benefits of Portfolio Redevelopment, as more programmes progress through revalidation. * Recommended a review of reduced electives on academic practice, student experience and academic workload. * Received assurances the outlook for professional placement availability has improved following the pandemic impact, with the University retaining strong oversight through the recovery plan. * Commented on opportunities to align marketing and promotional activities across the taught portfolio to fully embed the apprenticeship provision. * Explored recruitment aspirations and enhancements to the experience of postgraduate researchers. * Commented on the positive impact of the Researcher and Innovator Development Academy ​​​​​​​​​​​​​​in providing support for early career researchers.   **Action: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning, Teaching, and Student Success)** | | | | |
| 5.3 | Academic Board **recommended** the review to the Academic Assurance Committee. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/6 | UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE: ANNUAL REPORT | | | AB/2024-01-31/4.2  **Confidential** |
| 6.1 | The paper provided Academic Board with an annual review and summary of the University’s Research Ethics Committee’s (UREC) activity for the 2022/23 academic year. The Head of University Research Ethics informed members:   * The highest standards of rigour and research integrity are being maintained. * The number of research projects reviewed for ethical approval has reduced from the previous cycle, with fluctuations in data collection reflective of changes associated with the pandemic. * Policies and procedures are effective in providing a framework for the identification and investigation of alleged misconduct, with incidences remaining consistently low. * A programme of training sessions and seminars on research ethics and integrity continue to be delivered across the University. | | | | |
| 6.2 | Academic Board thanked all colleagues involved with the production of a thorough report. Key points from the discussion were as follows:   * Members considered the risks to research integrity and the associated mitigating actions, including software solutions. * The research ethics committee will continue to adapt its constitution and membership in response to internal changes, ensuring the expertise support robust assessments. * Strategic plans to ensure high levels of research integrity were outlined, which focused on developing a culture and environment that promotes responsible research practices. * The low volume of research misconduct cases aligns with sector benchmarking. * Members considered the synergies between research ethics and wider academic conduct polices, particularly for taught students. Academic Board supported further understanding of the application of these procedures to ensure consistency and capture accurate information. * Further training will be delivered on category approvals to support efficiencies for taught programmes by providing module leaders with overarching ethical approval for similar or identical small-scale data collections. * The research ethics approval procedure was effectively mapped with the University’s strategic partner to produce efficiencies by enabling consistency of expectations across both institutes. This approach may be explored with other partners to streamline and facilitate research ethics approvals.   **Action: Head of University Research Ethics and Head of Student Policy, Casework and Compliance** | | | | |
| 6.3 | Academic Board **recommended** the report to the Academic Assurance Committee. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/7 | APPRENTICESHIPS: SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT | | | AB/2024-01-31/5.1 |
| 7.1 | The report presented Academic Board with the 2022/23 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 is aligned to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and is intended to improve the experience and outcomes for students. * Areas for Improvement identified will be elevated into the Quality Improvement Plan, along with outstanding actions. * The self-assessment judgement is aligned with the ratings from the Ofsted inspection in February 2022. * The implementation of Scheme D is essential to delivering greater consistency in course planning, design, and delivery. * Where National Student Survey outcomes fall below the University expectations, targeted action planning is being developed to deliver improvements in the student experience. * The number of apprenticeship coaches is at capacity, with all areas of the provision staffed appropriately. * Once approved, the Self-Assessment Report will be submitted to Ofsted in line with good practice, although this is not a formal requirement. | | | | |
| 7.2 | In the subsequent discussion, members:   * Considered the revalidation timeframe for the provision through curriculum structures scheme ‘D’ and supported interim modifications to drive improvements. * Received assurances that resource planning and appointment of Apprenticeship Coaches is being monitored to support timely onboarding and induction processes. * Noted that a balance in stakeholder focus within the tripartite relationship is achieved through tailored support by student and employer-focused teams. * Received examples on areas of delivery where employer engagement has enhanced the student experience and how the University supports students and employers within the workplace to deliver successful apprenticeship outcomes. * Considered the increasing volume of maturing apprenticeship programmes which are in-scope of the National Student Survey and recommended a closer integration with the institutional approaches to quality and improvement planning. * Received assurances that campus-based learning environments for apprenticeships are being reviewed in response to student feedback. * Noted the revised internal management arrangements and responsibilities for apprenticeship provision, whilst expressing confidence in the current levels of support and challenge.   **Action: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning, Teaching, and Student Success)** | | | | |
| 7.3 | Academic Board **approved** the SAR for submission to Ofsted. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/8 | SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION: SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS | | | AB/2024-01-31/5.2 |
| 8.1 | The report presented Academic Board with the 2022/23 Self-Assessment Report and 2023/24 Quality Improvement Plans for the initial teacher education provision within the Sheffield Institute of Education. The Head and Deputy Head of Department informed members:   * Ofsted inspections have recommenced, and the University is due to be inspected by June 2024. * As one of the largest providers of initial teacher training in the United Kingdom, the scale of inspection is large and complex, with four phases in scope: Early Years, Primary, Secondary, and Further Education. * The last inspection took place in 2017, with two phases rated as ‘good’, and two ‘outstanding’. * The Teaching and Learning Committee have received regular updates on inspection preparations. * Quality Improvement Plans are live documents and continue to be updated. * All phases have been self-assessed against the Ofsted criteria, and the underpinning evidence base was outlined. | | | | |
| 8.2 | In **considering** the submission, members commended the team on the production and collation of an impressive set of high quality, detailed documents which are representative of the provision. Key points from the discussion were as follows:   * Achieving ‘good’ across all four phases would represent a successful outcome. * Ofsted essential colleagues are prepared, and their wellbeing is being prioritised. * Suggestions of sharing transferable areas of good practice across the wider University was welcomed. * Reporting in future cycles will be informed by the inspection outcome. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/9 | ACADEMIC BOARD: REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES | | | AB/2024-01-31/6 |
| 9.1 | The paper provided Academic Board with an update on membership and proposed refinements to the appointment procedures. The Head of Governance and Sector Regulation and Committee Secretary informed members the terms of office for several members were due to conclude and the appointment procedures had been streamlined and recalibrated to improve clarity and optimise flexibility. | | | | |
| 9.2 | Academic Board **approved** the revised procedures. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/10 | HONORARY AWARDS COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT | | | AB/2024-01-31/7.1 **Confidential** |
| 10.1 | The paper, submitted to Academic Board from the Honorary Awards Committee, made recommendations for Honorary Nominations to be conferred at Graduation 2024, subject to further due diligence and engagement.  The Head of Student Policy, Casework, and Compliance provided assurance that the nominees had been recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee through the agreed procedures. Brief biographies would be circulated to members following the meeting. | | | | |
| 10.2 | Academic Board **approved:**   * the proposed nominations, subject to further diligence; and * delegated authority for the Vice-Chancellor to finalise awards on completion of due diligence and take decisions on exceptional awards, as appropriate. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/11 | SUB-COMMITTEE CHAIRS UPDATE | | | AB/2024-01-31/7.2 |
| 11.1 | The paper provided Academic Board with an overview of recent meetings of the Research and Innovation, Teaching and Learning, and Student Experience sub-committees, including the approvals actioned under delegated authorities and links to the minutes. In addition, sub-committee Chairs reported:   * Successful appointments from a targeted recruitment campaign to Transforming Lives Fellowships. * Since its establishment in October 2023 (min ref: AB/2023-10-11/15), the Student Experience Committee continues to calibrate its membership and business cycle. | | | | |
| 11.2 | In **noting** the scrutiny and decisions in the report, members received assurances the sub-committee membership includes Academic Board representation. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/12 | EXCEPTIONAL REGULATION FOR AWARD AND PROGRESSION: IMPACT AND OUTCOMES | | | AB/2024-01-31/8.1  **Confidential** |
| 12.1 | Academic Board **noted** the report. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/13 | ACADEMIC STANDING PANEL: ASSESSMENT SCALING AND EXCEPTIONS FOR THE 2022/23 ACADEMIC YEAR | | | AB/2024-01-31/8.2 |
| 13.1 | Academic Board **noted** the exceptions. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/14 | RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK INITIATIVES | | | AB/2024-01-31/9 **Confidential** |
| 14.1 | Academic Board **noted** the update on the interventions. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/15 | ADVANCEHE TALENT ANNUAL REPORT | | | AB/2024-01-31/10 |
| 15.1 | Academic Board **noted** the report. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/16 | STUDENTS’ UNION ELECTION OUTCOMES | | | AB/2024-01-31/11 |
| 16.1 | Academic Board **noted** the election outcomes. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/17 | ANNUAL BUSINESS CYCLE | | | AB/2024-01-31/12 |
| 17.1 | The forward schedule of business was **noted**. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/18 **Confidential** | OTHER URGENT BUSINESS | | | AB/2024-01-31/13 **Confidential** |
| 18.1 | A confidential minute was taken. | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/19 | DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING | | | AB/2024-01-31/14 |
| 19.1 | Wednesday 24 April 2024, 13:00 – 15:00 | | | | |
| AB/2024-01-31/20 | REVIEW OF MEETING | | | AB/2024-01-31/15 |
| 20.1 | The Chair thanked all staff and students present for their contributions. Members were invited to submit feedback to Governance Services. | | | | |