

## Confirmed Minutes

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Academic Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>28 July 2021</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>14.00 – 16.00</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	MS Teams

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
<b>John Fairhurst</b>	Managing Director and Academic Principal (Chair)
<b>Gwyneth Pitt*</b>	External Academic Advisor
<b>Colin Raban*</b>	External Academic Advisor
<b>Ian Brooks</b>	Academic Representative from UoN
<b>Maria Jackson</b>	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
<b>Anna Krajewska</b>	Director of CETL, and Head of School of Business and Accounting
<b>Dr Knowledge Mpofo</b>	Chair of Research Ethics Committee
<b>Dr Joe Stevens</b>	Course Leader LLB
<b>Mubashir Qurashi</b>	Course Leader AFM
<b>Arif Zaman</b>	Lecturer, Business
<b>Asare Amaning</b>	Lecturer, AFM
<b>Donna Leonard</b>	Academic Lead for Learning Enhancement
<b>Cordelia Gartside**</b>	Academic Lead for Employability and Lecturer, FY
<b>Ahmed Junaid</b>	Academic Registrar
<b>Amanda Jeram</b>	Head of Quality and Compliance
<b>Sarah Bailey</b>	Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success
<b>Charlayne Lewis-Thomas</b>	Admissions Manager
<b>Nasser Kazinda**</b>	President of the Student Guild
<b>Rajan Sandhu**</b>	Student Council Student Representative from 3-Year LLB Law
<b>Ana Maria Silochi</b>	Student Council Student Representative from 2-Year AFM
<b>Ionut Enache**</b>	Student Council Student Representative from 3-Year BABM
<b>Slawomir Grzybek</b>	Secretary
<b>In Attendance</b>	
<b>Carol Cook</b>	Non-executive Director and Chair of the BoD
<b>Leroy Bunbury</b>	Head of Governance and Legal Services (observer)
<b>Carina Popescu</b>	Quality and Compliance Executive (observer)

### No. Item

#### 1.0 Apologies

J Fairhurst welcomed everyone to the July Academic Committee meeting and noted apologies from G Pitt and C Raban.

#### 2.0 Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:

##### 2.1 Minutes from the previous meeting: 9 June 2021

The following amendments were requested to the minutes of 9 June 2021:

- Section 12 – clarify that the psychometric testing would be available to all **non-standard** applicants.
- Section 19.1 – reword to read “M Jackson explained that the Office for Students published new datasets in March, covering 2018-19 and 2019-20 and a report for SMLT was prepared based on the results. She said that our results were positive and show improvement with three areas where a significant gap had been identified in the context of continuation rates. The gaps related to gender and combined gender and socio-economic deprivation.”
- Section 20.1 – reword to read “M Jackson informed the committee that the deadlines for some actions were amended as reported in May SMLT and that all the actions were on track.”

The minutes of the June joint meeting of the Academic Committee/Board of Directors were approved as amended and were recommended for approval to the Board of Directors.

## 2.2 Matters Arising/Action Tracker

### 2.2.1 Minutes of 9 June 2021

#### 2.2.1.1 Item 17.0 refers

**Completed:** Amended document submitted to 14 July 2021 Board meeting.

#### 2.2.1.2 Item 21.0 refers

**Completed:** CVs shared 10 June 2021.

### 2.2.2 Minutes of 24 March 2021

#### 2.2.2.1 Item 4.2 refers

**Update:** In progress. Deferred to September AC.

### 2.2.3 Minutes of 16 September 2020

#### 2.2.3.1 Item 7.2 refers

**Completed:** Final total of 2020-21 DSA applications will be reported on in the annual Disability Office Report in September.

## 3.0 Chair's Actions

None taken.

## Part 1: Academic Regulatory, Policy and Procedural Documents for Recommended Approval, Approval and Information

### 4.0 For approval by AC

*No further approvals required*

#### 4.1 Research Strategy 2021-24

J Fairhurst informed the committee that the Research Strategy had been considered in various forums and it had been recommended that Research Goal 3 should be revisited because it lacked a purpose. It had therefore been decided to explicitly link Research Goal 3 to the next Research Excellence Framework and ensure that its implementation prepared us to make a submission.

The changes made were outlined in the summary of changes and were noted by the committee.

The Research Strategy 2021-24 was **approved** by the Academic Committee.

#### 4.2 Research Ethics: Code of Practice 2021-22

J Fairhurst explained that there were only minor changes to this document since it was last approved. He stated that the process of completing the research ethics approval form was currently being developed to enable electronic completion.

The Research Ethics: Code of Practice 2021-22 was **approved** by the Academic Committee.

#### 4.3 Withdrawal, Study Break, and Deferral Policy 2021-22

A Junaid presented the Withdrawal, Study Break, and Deferral Policy 2021-22 and outlined the changes made. J Fairhurst invited comments and M Jackson recommended minor textual changes to the document.

The Withdrawal, Study Break, and Deferral Policy 2021-22 was **approved** by the Academic Committee subject to minor textual amendments.

#### 4.4 Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures 2021-22

A Junaid informed the committee that the changes made to the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures 2021-22 were factual and textual in nature.

Minor textual amendments were offered by the committee.

The Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures 2021-22 was **approved** by the Academic Committee subject to minor textual amendments.

#### 4.5 Student Complaints Policy and Procedures 2021-22

A Junaid informed the committee that the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures 2021-22 was recommended for approval by the QAEC with a recommendation for a process flowchart to be included in the document.

The committee noted that the flowchart was incorporated and welcomed that addition. Further minor textual changes were offered by the committee.

The Student Complaints Policy and Procedures 2021-22 was **approved** by the Academic Committee subject to minor textual amendments.

#### 4.6 Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees 2021-22

A Junaid explained that the Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees 2021-22 had been considered by the Assessment Review Team, where changes were recommended, and by the QAEC that recommended the document for approval with amendments.

A Junaid asked for comments and the following was noted:

- J Fairhurst queried the progress on implementing anonymous marking. A Junaid informed the committee that several meetings were held on this matter and that a meeting with an external consultant was scheduled to discuss the IT implementation and platform integration. J Fairhurst recommended including an addendum to the procedures where the process for anonymous marking could be outlined.
- Minor textual amendments were offered by the committee.

The Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees 2021-22 were **approved** by the Academic Committee subject to minor amendments, and the incorporation of an addendum to the procedures where the process for anonymous marking is outlined.

**Action:** A Junaid to append the anonymous marking process to the Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees and make the minor textual amendments requested.

#### 4.7 Feedback Policy and Guidelines 2021-22

A Krajewska informed the committee that the Feedback Policy and Guidelines 2021-22 was previously submitted to QAEC where it was recommended for approval. The changes were minor and related to the tone of voice, and factual amendments.

A Krajewska explained that following a discussion in QAEC, where it was recommended to consider renaming the policy “Friendly Feedback”, students in the Student Focus Group welcomed this idea and it would be explored further with students next year.

C Cook queried whether the current format of the document is attractive to students and encourages their engagement with it. A Krajewska said that the document was intentionally split into two parts to better direct it to a targeted audience. She continued to say that some elements of guidance would also be included in the Student Handbook in an accessible format and that information on what constitutes feedback would be discussed within seminars and workshops.

C Cook noted that in a reflection on student responses to a question on feedback in one of our surveys, it was indicated that the lower satisfaction with feedback could result from students lacking awareness around it. She suggested producing more student-facing material that would explain the dimensions of feedback in a more accessible way (e.g. use of infographics). A Krajewska welcomed this recommendation and said she would be happy to work on such a resource.

A Krajewska remarked that this activity would tie in well with a broader initiative that the SMLT was working on, namely, to transfer our various documents to an “Articulate” presentation.

Minor textual amendments were offered by the committee.

The Feedback Policy and Guidelines 2021-22 were **approved** by the Academic Committee subject to minor amendments.

**Action:** A Krajewska to consider producing infographics to explain the many dimensions of student feedback.

## **Part 2: Non-academic Regulatory, Policy and Procedural Documents for Approval, Amendment and Information**

### **5.0 For discussion by AC**

*AC approval is not required*

#### 5.1 The Office for Students consultation on quality and standards

J Fairhurst informed the committee that the Office for Students opened the second round of consultation on quality and standard conditions.

J Fairhurst informed the committee that the current consultation excluded Condition B3 and that a separate consultation related to this condition of registration would be issued in October/November 2021.

He said that the IHE would be making representation on behalf of independent providers to both consultations.

J Fairhurst referred the committee for further reading on the consultation to the two WONKHE articles recently published concerning the latest approach proposed by the OfS.

#### 5.2 Personal Tutoring

A Krajewska reminded the committee that personal tutoring was captured in our OfS Compliance Register as one of the initiatives aimed at fulfilment of the Conditions of Registration. She informed the committee that consultation work has been done through a working group where it was decided that the format of personal tutoring would differ from what is traditionally practised in the sector.

The “Tea and Chat” format piloted by D Leonard during lockdown would be rolled out to small groups after the Foundation Year lectures on a rolling basis three times a year. A guidance document for staff and students would be produced and made available in September 2021.

J Fairhurst said that the personal tutoring was previously available and asked what steps were being taken to ensure it would be more successful this time. A Krajewska explained that part of the consultation was a reflection on the previous iteration and that resulted in a decision about the informal format and an emphasis on face-to-face interaction between students and the tutor to ignite a collaborative relationship.

The committee discussed and it was noted that the less formal approach coupled with attachment to lectures could result in a better buy-in from students.

### 5.3 National Student Survey 2021

A Junaid noted that the KPI set for the NSS was not met but considering the circumstances, the results were very satisfying. The overall satisfaction rate was recorded at 88.5% with 81% of eligible students responding to the survey.

A Junaid provided a brief comparison to the sector performance and explained that a full breakdown would be included in a report submitted to the September AC meeting. He also said that Bloomsbury Institute’s good performance in the NSS could be largely attributed to its robust response to the pandemic in addition to its usual good practices.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, C Cook took the opportunity to thank and congratulate staff members on the survey outcomes.

### 5.4 End-of-year Course Evaluation: Summary Report

A Jeram explained that the ECE results would be considered by the Semester 1 Course Committees in 2021-22 and included in the AMERs going forward.

She flagged the following from the report:

- 14% of eligible students completed the survey.
- 81.8% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their courses.
- Feedback was one of the high scoring areas.

J Fairhurst recommended for the report to be submitted to the Audit Committee as supporting evidence for the Value for Money Report.

**Action:** M Jackson to submit the End-of-year Course Evaluation: Summary Report to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

### 5.5 KPIs 8 and 9 pass rates on a module level

J Fairhurst reminded the committee that the Audit Committee considered pass rates from first sits and recommended the Board of Directors request a report from the Academic Committee. An initial report was drafted and considered in June. Comments from T Mortimer summarising the Audit Committee’s expectations from the final report were discussed in the June joint meeting of the Academic Committee and Board of Directors, and in QAEC where it was explained that the information requested would already be included in the MMRs and AMERs.

J Fairhurst recommended that the MMRs and AMERs in their draft versions be submitted to the Audit Committee where they could be considered in more detail. This approach would prevent duplication of information. J Fairhurst also pointed out that the Board of Directors’ members who sit on the Audit Committee could gain confidence that the measures taken are appropriate by engaging with the MMRs and AMERs. This is currently not possible because the Board only receives the Overview AMER.

A Junaid endorsed this recommendation and said that writing a report in parallel to our monitoring processes could have a negative effect on the process and therefore it would be more beneficial to rely on current mechanisms concerning the provision of information to the Audit Committee and the Board of Directors.

C Cook responded that the prime objective of the Audit Committee in this context would be to ascertain that the risk is being managed and action is being taken to address the issues identified. Following a discussion it was noted that the MMRs and AMERs could provide this assurance, however, C Cook suggested that engaging only with the AMERs would suffice for the Audit Committee's purpose and that the committee could ask for more details if they felt they needed it.

J Fairhurst continued to say that to address any issues arising from the performance indicators (KPIs) a critical review should take place and he informed the committee that work was being done focusing on the LLB programme, where it was concluded that a practice-based curriculum aligned with CILEx would be the best way to address the performance issues.

A Jeram added that the Audit Committee would receive a report concerning our specific conditions of registration with the OfS where a number of measures would be outlined evidencing our commitment to improving student continuation rates.

**To note:** The Audit Committee would receive draft AMERs in mid-October in response to (and in place of) their previous request for a final report on KPIs 8 and 9.

## **6.0 For information only**

*AC approval is not required*

### 6.1 Document circulation and collaborative working on Academic Committee AY 2021-22

J Fairhurst informed the committee that a pilot scheme of circulating and reviewing documents was run by the SMLT and that it would be rolled out to remaining committees in the new AY. He said that the externals serving on the committees would need to use Bloomsbury Institute email addresses to receive and collaborate on documents.

The circulation and collaboration would be facilitated via MS SharePoint. Documents for review would be commented on by the members ahead of the meeting and only the matters not resolved in the initial stage would be discussed in the meeting. This approach would allow more time to be spent on a high-level discussion of the documents that are relevant to the committee.

### 6.2 Overview Annual Course Evaluation Report 2020-21

The Overview Annual Course Evaluation Report 2020-21 was approved by QAEC in June 2021 and submitted to AC for information.

The Overview Annual Course Evaluation Report 2020-21 was received and noted by the committee.

### 6.3 Annual Teaching and Learning Conference and Bloomsbury Institute Awards

A Krajewska took the opportunity to thank T Ironmonger for organising the conference and congratulated him on delivering this successful event under the most challenging of circumstances.

She also informed the committee that the recording from the conference was divided into smaller segments and those would be available on our website by the end of July.

### 6.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report: July 2021

M Jackson highlighted from her report the Mental Health First Aider training organised by our Disability and Wellbeing Advisor and said that a scheme resulting from the training is currently in development. She also informed the committee about the work being undertaken in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct and said that the consultation via the working group part was concluded and the policy drafting stage is expected to commence soon.

In addition, A Zaman provided an outline of work completed by the Widening Participation Forum.

The July Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report was received and noted by the committee.

### 6.5 OfS Condition A1 Action Plan

M Jackson informed the committee that there were 5 deadlines changed since the last month but the changes would not have any negative implication. She confirmed that the implementation of the A1 Action Plan was on track.

The July update of the OfS Condition A1 Action Plan was received and noted by the committee.

It was noted that going forward only a short confirmation report would be received by the committee and that the Action Plan in its entirety would be available to the committee members on request.

## **Part 3: Standing Items**

### **7.0 KPIs**

The July update to KPIs was presented and KPIs 7, 8 and 9 were considered further to the discussion earlier in the meeting (see agenda items 5.3 and 5.5).

The committee discussed our current approach to measuring pass rates and recording them in the KPIs. It was suggested that separating pass rates for the first sit and presenting the percentage of non-submissions at this point would provide more accurate and operationally viable information. It was argued that the pass rates from engaging students have a direct correlation with teaching and learning approaches and the delivery of the module.

A Junaid noted that the common denominator for measuring KPIs 8 and 9 for new students would change from module to student which would be helpful from the perspective of continuation rates. He also said that records for engagement were available and this information could be included when presenting pass rates related to KPIs.

J Fairhurst noted that and said that the IT Department is currently working on the KPI Dashboard that would include this information going forward. The KPI Dashboard would be available later in the new AY.

A Junaid informed the committee that the data related to Graduate Outcomes was only released on 27 July and that a report would be submitted to the September AC.

### **8.0 TDAP**

J Fairhurst informed the committee that we expect the ACDAP to make a final decision with regards to its recommendation to the QAA Board at its meeting on 9 September.

If ACDAP makes a positive recommendation to the QAA Board, and if the QAA Board also make a positive recommendation, our application will be considered by the Privy Council for final decision.

### **9.0 Cambridge House and Great Portland Street**

Cambridge House (Birkbeck, University of London, 373-375 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR):

An open day was held on 17 July in Cambridge House. The current lack of signage (referring to the building as Cambridge House) was flagged as an issue that caused some prospective students to struggle with finding the site. The signage refers to "Birkbeck, University of London". This would be addressed by placing Bloomsbury Institute banners outside the building as well as by displaying our content on the screen in the reception area. We should also stop referring to the building as Cambridge House, and start to refer to it as Birkbeck, University of London, 373-375 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR.

305 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 5DD:

J Fairhurst informed the committee that a renegotiation of the lease took place because contrary to what we had been told by the landlord's agent, the landlord (TfL) had elected to charge VAT on the rent. Because we are VAT exempt, we cannot reclaim the VAT, resulting in the rent being 20% higher than we had anticipated. The amended lease is subject to the TfL Board approval.

Refurbishment can only start once the lease has been signed, and a delay in handover is now anticipated.

### **10.0 Student Recruitment and Admissions 2021-22**

J Fairhurst provided an update on recruitment and explained that two campaigns for direct recruitment were run and in addition we would work with a select group of domestic and international agents to hit the target.

Enhanced due diligence processes had been established for the appointment of new agents.

In addition, a partnership with Change Grow Live - a nationwide charity - is currently being considered together with a progression agreement with a FE college in London.

### **11.0 Staffing 2021-22**

J Fairhurst informed the committee that N Michail was successful in her application for the Disability and Wellbeing Manager post. The vacant post of Disability and Wellbeing Advisor was offered to one of the other applicants and the offer was accepted. The Disability Office would be based in the Cambridge House office from September 2021, but they would also have office space in the new SEWS office at 305 Great Portland Street.

Announcements on academic appointments would be circulated once the interviews for the posts were concluded.

### **12.0 COVID-19**

The Health and Safety Committee would meet on 28 July to consider the latest guidance for HE released by the government.

Our current plan is for the full return to face-to-face delivery in September 2021. However, a contingency plan is in place to allow for any possible change in advice.

### **13.0 Confirmed minutes from other forums or committees for information, consideration or action.**

#### **13.1 SMLT: 2 June 2021**

The minutes of the June SMLT meeting were received and noted by the committee. There were no actions referred to AC.

#### **13.2 QAEC: 16 June 2021**

The minutes of the June QAEC meeting were received and noted by the committee. There were no actions referred to AC.

#### **13.3 EDIC: 10 February 2021**

The minutes of the February EDIC meeting were received and noted by the committee. There were no actions referred to AC.

#### **13.4 Research Ethics Committee: 11 November 2020**

There were no actions referred to AC.



The minutes of the November 2020 REC meeting were received and noted by the committee. There were no actions referred to AC.

13.5 BoD: 10 March 2021

Action referred concerning the Interim Report on KPIs 8 and 9. This action was considered at the March AC meeting.

The minutes of the March BoD meeting were received and noted by the committee. The action referred to concerning the Interim Report on KPIs 8 and 9 was considered at the March AC meeting [But also note Agenda Item 5.5 above].

**14.0 Actions referred from other forums/committees where the minutes are unconfirmed/not yet available.**

14.1 SMLT: 7 July 2021

The SMLT recommended for the performance of the AFM and LLB pass rates deviating from the KPI target to be considered by QAEC on a modular level. [See Agenda Item 5.5 above.]

14.2 EDIC: 23 June 2021

There were no actions referred to AC.

14.2 Research Ethics Committee: 30 June 2021

There were no actions referred to AC.

14.3 BoD: 9 June 2021

There were no actions referred to AC.

**Part 4: Any Other Business and Date/Time of Next Meeting**

**15.0 Any Other Business**

Nothing for consideration.

**16.0 Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting:** 22 September @ 2.00pm – 4.00pm, TBC.