Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Academic Committee
Date:	24 March 2021
Time:	14.00 – 16.00
Venue:	MS Teams

Name	Designation
John Fairhurst	Managing Director and Academic Principal (Chair)
Gwyneth Pitt	External Academic Advisor
Colin Raban	External Academic Advisor
Ian Brooks	Academic Representative from UoN
Maria Jackson	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Ana Krajewska	Director of CETL, and Head of School of Business and Accounting
Dr Knowledge Mpofu*	Chair of Research Ethics Committee
Dr Joe Stevens	Course Leader LLB
Mubashir Qurashi	Course Leader AFM
Arif Zaman	Lecturer, Business
Asare Amaning**	Lecturer, AFM
Donna Leonard	Academic Lead for Learning Enhancement
Anne Okello*	Academic Lead for Employability and Lecturer, FY
Ahmed Junaid	Academic Registrar
Amanda Jeram	Head of Quality and Compliance
Sarah Bailey	Director of the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS)
Nasser Kazinda	President of the Student Guild
Rajan Sandhu*	Student Council Student Representative from 3-Year LLB Law
Ana Maria Silochi	Student Council Student Representative from 2-Year AFM
Ionut Enache	Student Council Student Representative from 3-Year BABM
In Attendance	
Carol Cook	Non-executive Director and Chair of the BoD
Mark Hunt	External observer

No.	Item

1.0   Apologies

* Denotes apologies.
** Not attended not having sent apologies.

2.0   Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:

2.1   *Minutes from the previous meeting:* 25 November 2020
       (BoD recommended for approval the minutes of the joint part of the meeting)

It was noted that changes were recommended by the Board of Directors to the section that relate to the joint part of the meeting. Namely, section 17 and 18 were recommended to be moved to the Academic Committee part of minutes.

The recommended change was noted and agreed by the committee. In addition, the following amendments were proposed:

- Section 6.9, second para - to read "A Jeram informed the committee that overall, the External Examiner Reports were positive with some very encouraging feedback related to assessments. There were two actions identified, both on the BM course. One related to reviewing assessment types, and this was already captured in last year's Overview AMER. The second action related to the academic misconduct process to ensure there was a consistent approach across the courses."

- Section16.1, 4 para, last sentence - to read "With regards to the pre-sessional English language course, J Fairhurst said that we had previously provided a pre-sessional English language course delivered over several weekends to those who marginally failed our English language test. He said that the continuation rate for those students who completed the course and subsequently enrolled was close to 100%."

- Section 18.1 - remove the last para.

The minutes of the November joint meeting of the Academic Committee and the Board of Directors were approved as amended.

2.2   *Matters Arising/Action Tracker*

2.2.1 Minutes of 25 November 2020

2.2.1.1 Item 4.1 refers

Completed: See agenda item 6.2.

2.2.2 Minutes of 16 September 2020

2.2.2.1 Item 7.2 refers

Completed: The ongoing promotion of the DSA resulted in 4 new applications. The Disability and Wellbeing Advisor continues to promote the DSA to all eligible students.

3.0   Academic Principal's Report

Nothing to report in addition to what is on the agenda.

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 *Annual Planning Cycle 2021-22*

J Fairhurst explained that the Annual Planning Cycle 2021-22 was reviewed by the Senior Management and Leadership Team and the review resulted in minor amendments outlined in the summary of changes document.

He reminded the committee that the Annual Planning Cycle is the starting point for the development and implementation of a new 3-year Strategic Framework 2021-24, and annual Divisional/Departmental actions for 2021-22. The Annual Planning Cycle also links into financial planning and the approval of the Corporate Budget 2021-22.

J Fairhurst invited comments from the committee and the following was noted:

- G Pitt suggested that an indicative calendar could be helpful to include in the document to better illustrate the timescale in which activities take place. J Fairhurst agreed to include a calendar of

activities in the APC. The Head of Quality and Compliance said that she had a discussion with the Head of Communications on developing such a calendar and it was noted that L Hesketh could design and provide a calendar for inclusion in the APC.

- J Stevens asked whether the pandemic would affect the APC and J Fairhurst explained that there is no direct impact on the APC but consideration was given to related activities like coming out of lock-down and re-entering lock-down.

The Academic Committee **approved** the Annual Planning Cycle 2021-22.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Jeram to liaise with L Hesketh to design and share a calendar of activities related to the Annual Planning Cycle.

4.2 *Admissions Policy 2021-22*

A Jeram presented the document and explained that quite a few changes were made as a result of consideration by the QAEC but also due to changes in the sector, including UKVI changes. She highlighted the inclusion of a psychometric testing pilot for the next intake of students. This pilot would be voluntary. Participants would complete the psychometric test after completing our assessments and prior to interview. The results would better inform the interview. The test will be fully BPC-compliant, and all users of the test will be fully trained.

A Jeram invited comments from the committee and the following was noted:

- J Fairhurst clarified that references to the 3-year, 2-year and 1-year Top-up degrees were retained in the Policy, but we do not intend to recruit to those in 2021-22.

- J Fairhurst informed the committee that the non-standard application route for the LLB course is subject to review.

- C Raban queried why the reference to PG courses was removed and J Fairhurst explained that we are not going to recruit for PG courses and that we have a PG progression agreement with Birkbeck College.

- M Jackson recommended including our partnership with Unlock in section 8 Criminal Convictions.

- M Jackson queried whether further information on how to obtain an editable Admissions Complaint Form could be included in section 12.2. A Jeram explained that a direct link to the form will be provided at the point when the policy is published online.

- J Fairhurst requested that an amendment be made to section 3.2 to reflect our current situation with recruitment agents.

- Section 5.1, second para – clarify that "Additional requirements for international applicants who require a student visa to study in the UK (i.e. for applicants who are not from the UK) are set out at Section 5.4 below."

Additional minor and textual amendments were offered by the committee.

The Admissions Policy 2021-22 was **approved** subject to amendments.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Jeram to amend the Admissions Policy as per the Committee's comments. The finalised version would be submitted to the Committee to evidence the changes made.

4.3 *In-Bloom Appeal Procedures 2020-21*

A Krajewska explained that the In-Bloom Appeal Procedures were recommended for approval by QAEC. She outlined the changes made and noted they were all minor and mostly related to change in our organisational structure.

A Krajewska invited comments from the committee and the following was noted:

- C Raban suggested that including a clear definition of an appeal and a distinction from a complaint could be beneficial for this document. He also noted that extenuating circumstances were not included. A Krajewska explained this would not be applicable as there is no formal deadline set for participants; they submit when they are ready to submit.

- C Raban noted that decisions in the appeal process would be made by an individual rather than a panel. He recommended reconsidering this part of the process. J Fairhurst agreed that it would be of benefit to explore this.

- C Raban queried how bias as a ground for appeal would be dealt with.

J Fairhurst recommended that the Appeal procedures should be considered further outside and brought back for approval to the June meeting.

Action: A Krajewska to amend the In-Bloom Appeal Procedures, to make clear the difference between an appeal and a complaint, and to consider whether an appeal should be determined by a Panel rather than an individual. The amended document will return to the Academic Committee's June meeting.

4.4 *Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures 2021-22*

J Fairhurst presented the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures 2021-22 and explained that the document was reviewed with only minor changes made. He informed the committee that following consideration by QAEC the procedures were recommended for approval by the AC.

He invited comments from the committee and the following was noted:

- A Jeram informed the committee that during consideration by QAEC the terminology we use in this document and across the Institute was discussed. A Junaid explained that terms such as progression, continuation, and achievement that we use in AMERs were not aligned with the definitions that the OfS uses.

    The committee discussed and concluded we should retain our current terminology.

The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures 2021-22 were **approved** by the committee.

4.5 *Curriculum Modification Procedures*

A Junaid presented the Curriculum Modification Procedures as recommended for approval by QAEC. He explained that the changes made were minor and mostly reflect changes in the organisational structure.

M Jackson offered minor changes and it was agreed to share those outside the meeting.

The Curriculum Modification Procedures were **approved** subject to minor amendments.

Action: M Jackson to share her minor amendments with A Junaid.

Action: A Junaid to incorporate the amendments before submitting the Curriculum Modification Procedures to Quality and Compliance.

4.6 *Engagement Policy*

A Junaid presented the Engagement Policy and explained that the changes made were minor and mostly relate to the language used and also incorporate how we measure engagement when courses are delivered online.

M Jackson offered minor changes and it was agreed to share those outside the meeting.

The Engagement Policy was **approved** subject to minor amendments.

<mark>Action</mark>: M Jackson to share her minor amendments with A Junaid.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Junaid to incorporate the amendments before submitting the Engagement Policy to Quality and Compliance.

4.7 *Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures*

A Junaid presented the Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures as recommended for approval by QAEC. He outlined the changes made and it was noted that on recommendation from QAEC the maximum period of course suspension and communication with the awarding body were included in the procedures.

M Jackson offered minor changes and it was agreed to share those outside the meeting.

The Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures were **approved** subject to minor amendments.

<mark>Action</mark>: M Jackson to share her minor amendments with A Junaid.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Junaid to incorporate the amendments before submitting the Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures to Quality and Compliance.

5.0   For information only

5.1 *Overview Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20*

Overview Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20 was received and noted by the committee.

I Brooks remarked that correction or clarification would be required as to how percentage figures were reported as currently, it could be misleading. A Jeram agreed and volunteered to include footnotes with clarification in the document.

5.2 *BM Annual Course Evaluation Report 2020-21*

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

5.3 *FY Annual Course Evaluation Report 2020-21*

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

5.4 *Degree Outcomes Statement*

The Degree Outcomes Statement was received and noted by the committee.

C Raban noted that the reference to the OfS Conditions is incorrect.

J Fairhurst noted that the requirement for publishing the Degree Outcomes Statement (DOS) as outlined in the document lies with the degree-awarding body but there are also references to providers and queries whether this would mean we are expected to produce and publish our own DOS. He requested A Junaid to clarify whether there is a requirement for us to produce our own DOS.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Junaid to correct the references to the OfS Conditions.

<mark>Action</mark>: A Junaid to confirm whether there is no need for Bloomsbury Institute to produce and publish its own DOS.

5.5 *Ethics Policy*

The Ethics Policy was received and noted by the committee.

5.6 *Student Protection Plan*

The Student Protection Plan was received and noted by the committee.

5.7 *AFM Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20*

The AFM Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20 was received and noted by the committee.

5.8 *LLB Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20*

The LLB Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2019-20 was received and noted by the committee.

J Fairhurst noted that in Section 4 it was stated that staff redundancies were made in May 2020 which is factually incorrect and requested for this to be changed to August 2020.

G Pitt noted the high level of flagged modules in Law and said this would warrant more detailed inquiry. J Fairhurst agreed and said that broader discussion related to flagged modules would be held under item 8.1.

J Stevens said that the performance on law modules is a complex issue and contributing factors should not be considered in isolation. He also informed the committee that internal research had been completed to determine possible reasons behind the performance. He said that this is coupled with the work being undertaken in collaboration with AdvanceHE on assessments.

==Action==: J Stevens to amend Section 4 of the LLB AMER 2019-20 to state that staff redundancies were made in August 2020 (rather than May 2020).

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

6.0 For discussion by AC
AC approval is not required

6.1 *Psychometric Tests*

A Krajewska explained that the idea of introducing psychometric testing for admissions was first introduced in one of the past AMERs. A small working group picked up this idea and with the use of our HR consultant developed it into a pilot. Presentations from BPC-approved test providers are being scheduled after Easter break.

A Krajewska informed the committee that research would be linked to this pilot and that it is intended to result in a research paper. A research proposal would be submitted to our Research Ethics Committee for consideration/approval.

A Jeram stated that the pilot would be delivered on an opt-in basis for non-standard applicants and the outcomes would be used to inform interviewer's questions (at the one-to-one academic interview) rather than informing the actual decision about whether or not to make an offer.

6.2 *Turnitin Originality pilot*

J Fairhurst informed the committee that following a discussion in QAEC and SALT it was agreed that a pilot would be run for Turnitin Originality on the LLB course [we will continue to use the standard Turnitin software across all courses, at the point of assessment submission] . An evaluation of the pilot will determine whether Turnitin Originality should be rolled-out across all courses.

7.0 For information only
AC approval is not required

7.1 *Corporate Risk Register*

J Fairhurst reminded the committee that the Risk Register was requested to be shared with the Academic Committee and is submitted for information only. He informed the committee that going forward the responsibility for the register would lie with the Head of Action Planning (who has been appointed and will start late June).

The Corporate Risk Register was received and noted by the committee.

7.2 *Bloomsbury Institute Internal and External Intelligence Report 2021*

J Fairhurst explained to the committee that the Internal and External Intelligence Report 2021 (IEIR) is a document that starts the Annual Planning Cycle and informs the development of the new Strategic Framework 2021-24 and the development of Annual Divisional/Departmental Actions 2021-22.

It was submitted to the committee for information following its approval by the SMLT.

C Raban welcomed the IEIR and said he found it very insightful. He noted that the analysis in the IEIR of 'threats' and 'weaknesses' is, in effect, an *empirical* identification and assessment of external and internal risks. If 'risk' is seen as positive as well as negative, the listing of 'opportunities' complements the IEIR's analysis of negative risks. Also, in analysing our 'strengths' the IEIR provides the basis for an assessment of our *resilience* in the face of external threats.

The IEIR could be considered to be an asset for the following two reasons:

- It provides the basis for a more sophisticated identification and assessment of risks than that offered by a conventional risk register; and

- It is integral to the close linkage that we have established between our Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports, Annual Course Evaluation Reports, strategic and annual action planning, and resource planning and budget approval.

This latter point is crucial because it acknowledges the way in which we can ensure that the risks identified and assessed by the IEIR report are *managed* effectively.

The IEIR could form the basis for an enhancement to our arrangements for academic risk management. This enhancement could entail the following:

- The inclusion in the IEIR of an analysis of the potential interactions between the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that it identifies. This analysis will pay particular attention to whether and how our constellation of strengths and weaknesses might render us more or less vulnerable to external threats, and more or less able to exploit the available opportunities.

- An assessment of our actual and potential *resilience* in the face of the risks and uncertainties we may encounter, and recommendations for the actions that should be taken to ensure we continue and succeed.

- Linking the IEIR with the Corporate Risk Register so that the latter is based on (and is updated in the light of) the former's empirical analysis of risks and the justifications that it might provide for the Risk Register's summary assessment of probabilities and impacts.

J Fairhurst stated that this was a project that could be led by our new Head of Action Planning.

Action: Head of Action Planning to consider how our current arrangements for academic risk management could be enhanced, taking into account the Academic Committee's discussion on the IEIR.

The EDI reports were received and noted by the committee.

<div style="background-color:orange">Part 3: Standing Items</div>

8.0   KPIs

8.1 _Action from the Board of Directors: Interim Report on KPIs 8 and 9_

For discussion and action

J Fairhurst reminded the committee that it receives the KPIs to monitor whether a risk has materialised or might materialise.

He informed the committee that the Board of Directors and Audit Committee met on 10 March 2021 and expressed concern at KPIs 8 and 9 relating to the pass rates for Level 5 and 6 modules.

The Board requested an interim report from Academic Committee on KPIs 8 and 9 (a response to the first sit data), and a full report after resubmissions/resits data is available.

A discussion took place at QAEC at its 17 March meeting, so that a draft report could be presented to this meeting of the Academic Committee. The aim of this draft report was to provide the following:

- commentary/critical review on pass rates at first sit [to include data on number of students enrolled on the module (broken down into those who were taking the module for the first time, and those who were retaking the module), number of students submitting (and therefore number of students not submitting) and grade breakdown].

- actions (both taken and planned) to maximise number of students resubmitting/resitting.

- actions (both taken and planned) to improve module pass rates at Levels 5 and 6 for students with resubmission/resit opportunities.

- predictions for final module pass rates at Levels 5 and 6.

- progress report on Bloomsbury Institute's engagement with the AdvanceHE project on LLB assessment.

- proposed actions to improve pass rates going forward (i.e. 2021-22 and beyond).

J Fairhurst invited comments on the draft report from the committee and the following was noted:

- Section 2.1.3 – J Fairhurst noted that a reference was made to repeating students where the performance of LSBM214 was presented. He recommended that there should be an explicit breakdown of data between student who were taking the module for the first take compared to those who were retaking the module, so that the explanation that it was students who were retaking the module that impacted negatively on pass rates could be evidenced.

- C Cook noted that in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 it was stated that it is likely that Semester 1 Level 5 AFM and BM modules will meet the 90% benchmark for overall pass rates, after resubmissions. She asked for an explanation to be included in the report of what actions could be tangibly connected to achieving the targets set in KPIs 8 and 9 and whether those could be introduced to LLB to improve its performance.

- I Brooks noted that the interim report was written in a defensive tone and recommended against it noting that there were examples of good work and positive actions that should be highlighted. He also recommended that the report should be shortened and there should be a focus on

identifying the issues and the actions being taken. He also stated that some of the commentary was irrelevant (e.g. references to NSS results).

- J Stevens explained that the NSS results were provided to respond to the Board's request for an update on the AdvanceHE project.

- C Raban recommended including a statement in the report that while actions were taken to achieve the KPIs 8 and 9, there would be no compromise to academic standards.

- M Jackson noted that there was some information missing from the report and said that it would be good to include a response in terms of how likely the results would look like.

J Fairhurst stated that the report would be finalised for submission to the June meeting of the Board of Directors and requested for any further comments for consideration and inclusion to be shared with A Jeram who would take responsibility for coordinating the writing of the final version.

9.0   OfS Updates (if relevant)

J Fairhurst informed the team that our response to the consultation on the future regulation of quality and standards in higher education was submitted to the OfS. He noted that a number of responses to the consultation had been published (e.g. IHE, UUK, Guild HE, QAA).

J Fairhurst informed the committee that HESA UKPIs (which included continuation rates for students who started in 2018-19) had been published. Our continuation rate for all first degrees was 75.1%. This was higher than the 70% continuation rate baseline that the OfS, in its individual consultation with the Institute, had set for 4-year degrees that include an FY.

10.0   TDAP

J Fairhurst reminded the committee that our TDAP application had been reactivated and we had received the draft report.

The report is expected to be considered by ACDAP on 1 April 2021.

11.0   COVID-19

J Fairhurst informed the committee that all staff continue to advised to work from home if possible. He said that if staff are finding it difficult to work from home, access to Bedford Square could be arranged through Estates and Facilities in line with published procedures.

He also explained that if the Government's roadmap is successfully implemented, it is likely a phased return to work will be applied in May or June 2021.

12.0   Confirmed minutes from other forums or committees for information, consideration or action.

12.1 *SMLT:* 4 November 2020

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of November 2020 SMLT. There were no actions referred to the committee.

Note: SMLT did not meet in December 2020.

12.2 *SMLT:* 6 January 2021

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of January 2021 SMLT. There were no actions referred to the committee.

12.3 *SMLT:* 3 February 2021

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of February 2021 SMLT. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.4 _QAEC:_ 18 November 2020

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of November 2020 QAEC. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.5 _QAEC:_ 16 December 2020

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of December 2020 QAEC. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.6 _QAEC:_ 20 January 2021

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of January 2021 QAEC. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.7 _QAEC:_ 17 February 2021

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of February 2021 QAEC. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.8 _EDIC:_ 11 November 2020

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of November 2020 EDIC. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.9 _BoD:_ 25 November 2020

The academic Committee received and noted the minutes of November 2020 Board of Directors. There were no actions referred to the committee.

       12.10 _AFM CC:_ 28 October 2020

The academic Committee received the minutes of October 2020 AFM Course Committee.

       12.11 _LLB CC:_ 28 October 2020

The academic Committee received the minutes of October 2020 LLB Course Committee.

       12.12 _BM CC:_ 28 October 2020

The academic Committee received the minutes of October 2020 BM Course Committee.

       12.13 _FY CC:_ 28 October 2020

The academic Committee received the minutes of October 2020 FY Course Committee.

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

       13.1 _SMLT:_ 3 March 2021

There were no actions referred to the Academic Committee.

       13.2 _QAEC:_ 17 March 2021

There were no actions referred to the Academic Committee.

13.3 _BoD:_ 10 March 2021

Actions referred to AC: See item 8.1

13.4 _EDIC:_ 10 February 2021

There were no actions referred to the Academic Committee.

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

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14.0   Any Other Business

- A Krajewska informed the committee that our annual Teaching and Learning Conference was scheduled for 9 July. The theme would be _Identity: Who Do We Want to Be_ and abstracts were currently being invited.

- A Jeram informed the committee that A Krajewska and T Ironmonger had submitted a successful application for the Learning Design Bootcamp 2021.

- N Kazinda informed the committee that the Student Guild celebrates its anniversary and the Battle of Disciplines Grand Finale would take place on 25 March (to be broadcast over Bloomsbury Radio).

15.0   Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting: 9 June @ 12.00pm – 2.00pm (2.00pm – 3.30pm joint with BoD), TBC.