

Academic Board

20th March 2019



Actions

Ref	Action	Lead	Due Date
18/44	Provide regular updates on the progress of the implementation to Academic Board during the academic year.	PJL	Ongoing
19/021	Present an update on the Internationalisation Strategy at the next meeting of the Board.	KB	5 June 2019
19/024	Discuss the tone of the email relating to the Voluntary Severance Scheme for academic staff with the Director of Human Resources.	DA	5 June 2019
19/029	The PGT Portfolio Review paper will be presented at the June meeting of the Board.	KN	5 June 2019
19/031	Set up a Project Board to take forward the implementation of making the lecture content accessible to students	PJL	Immediate
19/032	Revise the Fitness to Study Policy as set out in the minutes	RH	Immediate
19/037	Continue to liaise with the Runnymede Council about Council Tax liability for graduating students	RH	As soon as possible
19/053	Provide feedback to the Secretary on the proposal to start Academic Board meetings at 2pm with effect from the 2019-20 academic year.	PJL	5 June 2019

Action from current meeting

Action completed since last meeting

Academic Board

20 March 2019

M19/001- 054



Minutes

Present: Professor P Layzell (Chair), Prof K Normington, Prof K Badcock, Prof R Deem, Prof J Fiadeiro, Prof M Humphreys, Prof D Gilbert, Prof H Nicholson, Prof J Knowles, Prof Jurgen Adam, Prof S Ansari, Prof G Agyemang, Prof J Brown, Prof S Boogert, Prof A Chevalier, Prof K Cooper, Prof P Crang, Prof C Hanretty, Dr J Hughes (for Prof S Wright), Mr R Jago, Prof J John, Prof V Jansen, Prof J Parker-Starbuck, Prof B Rankov, Prof K Rastle, Prof R Schack, Prof E Scott, Prof C Bradley, Dr Yu Zheng, Dr J Murdoch, Dr H Rui, Dr S Wolthusen, Prof E Schafer, Prof B Fitzgerald, Mr A Alway, Mr C Jones, Mr J O'Neill, Ms H Hughes and Ms W Wong

Secretary: Mr R Hall

In attendance: Dr D Ashton, Mr D Brown, Ms M Ennis Dr M Beck (Assistant Secretary),

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from the following members: Prof M Eschrig, Prof S Wright, Prof M Gold, Dr M Gee, Prof C Rees and Prof C Townsend. 19/001

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2018 were AGREED as a correct record. 19/002

3. Matters arising

It was NOTED that action 18/44 is ongoing and would be reported on later in the meeting. 19/003

4. Actions taken by the Chair

4.1 The Chair APPROVED the request for students who have successfully completed the Graduate Certificate in Social Work to participate in the summer graduation ceremony in 2019. 19/004

4.2 The Chair APPROVED the appointment of Professor George Dickson as an Emeritus Professor of the College on his retirement in early 2019. 19/005

5. Amendment to Statutes

Paper AB/19/01a was RECEIVED from Council requesting the Board's support for an amendment to the statutes to facilitate the College's application for university title and setting out the timeline for this process. The Board indicated that it SUPPORTED the proposed amendment. 19/006

6. Unstaring of items

The Chair noted the request to UNSTAR the following papers: AB/19/16, AB/19/17 and AB/19/29. He noted that AB/19/16 and AB/19/17 had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be re-presented at the June meeting of the Board. 19/007

With respect to AB/19/29 the Deputy Principal (Academic) would respond to the queries raised under item 8. 19/008

7. **Principal's Report**
 Paper AB/19/01 was RECEIVED. The Director of Academic Services reported that Mr Christopher Cipkin had been appointed as the new Director of Library, Learning Support and Culture and would be taking up his new position at the start of June. Mr John Tuck has returned to the College as Interim Director of Library Services and will be in post until the end of May. 19/009
8. **Reports from the Senior Management Team**
- 8.1 The Deputy Principal (Academic) responded to the points by a member of the Board regarding consideration of equality and diversity issues in REF preparation. An impact assessment of the previous REF exercise 2014 has been carried out. Points of note were that 78.19% of male staff were submitted versus 76.29% of females, that there were slight differences in submission with respect to age and that more White than BAME staff were submitted. Steps have been taken to address this and to embed equality, diversity and inclusion practices across the College to ensure equality of opportunity for research staff. The Code of Practice for the 2020 REF submission is due to be circulated in the week commencing 26 March and, amongst others, sets out how staff and outputs will be selected for submission to REF. Staff will be invited to submit comments on the Code. 19/010
- The Deputy Principal (Academic) also briefly outlined the work she is leading on with respect to restructuring. She has been visiting Departments to discuss the restructuring with academic staff and has been working with the Heads designate to shape the schools and roles within them. After Easter the new School structures will be made available to staff. The Deputy Principal (Academic) has also been involved in the appointment of new Heads of Department. 19/011
- The Senior Vice-Principal (Academic Strategy, Resources and Partnerships) reported that academic planning was proceeding smoothly. Student numbers for 2019-20 appeared healthy with the College on target to increase overall numbers by 200, which should result in a small financial surplus. Departments will receive feedback on staffing and student recruitment plans in the first week of April and following this space and resources requirements will be prioritised. 19/012
- A refresh of the College strategy is underway. Following consideration by Council over the summer there will be opportunities for all College staff to be involved in contributing to the shaping of the strategy. 19/013
- 8.2 The Deputy Principal (Operations) reported that the Brexit Working Group was meeting on a fortnightly basis and was being informed by relevant UUK updates. The College has taken a decision to underwrite Erasmus+ to assure funding for students who study/ work in Europe as an integral part of their degree programme. The uncertainty around Brexit makes planning difficult; however, the Group has been monitoring the following areas in the College which would be impacted: College travel and health insurance, GDPR, Horizon 2020, the supply of resources for research laboratories. A plan is in place to communicate the implications of Brexit for EU students but until a decision is made on the way forward by the government, nothing can be communicated. 19/014

9. **Report from the Students' Union President**
- The President reported the results of the recent election. The current VP Education has been elected as President for 2019 -20 and the current VP Sports has been re-elected to his current post. The Chair congratulated them and the three other candidates elected to officer position on their election victories. 19/015
- The Students' Union held a successful academic representation conference in January. Topics covered included lecture capture, personal tutoring and commuting students. 19/016
- The VP Education hosted a session for students with the Deputy Principal (Operations) on the School restructuring project, which was well-received. 19/017
10. **Report from the Council**
- 10.1 Prof Fitzgerald provided an oral report on Council business. The topics highlighted were the following: the College's support of sustainability; the proposed College strategy refresh; the outcomes of the staff survey, particularly the difference in satisfaction between academic staff and professional services staff, which was cause for concern; the current building programme that the College is committed to within the context of current and future financial constraints, e.g. following outcomes of the Augar review; the value of the TEF; the review of the REF metrics; changes to the statutes to gain University title (see AB/19/01a) and the current change programme. 19/018
- He noted that the Vice-Chair of Council has been asked to provide oversight of the Academic Restructure programme for Council. 19/019
- 10.2 The minutes of the Council meetings held on 6 July and 22 November 2019 (AB/19/02) were RECEIVED and NOTED. 19/020
11. **Internationalisation Strategy**
- Paper AB/19/03 was RECEIVED. The Senior Vice-Principal (Academic Strategy, Resources and Partnerships) explained that given current financial challenges the College needed to explore other sources of income. One way of doing this was to expand international recruitment more generally but also to consider ways in which the College could promote inward student mobility from fee-paying students and at the same time build opportunities to expand the number of College students benefiting from a global experience, with an aspiration for 50% of the student body to spend some time studying abroad. 19/021
- There was a discussion on the need to have more articulation agreements and to improve the ranking of the College in the League Tables, which influenced the decisions of many overseas applicants. It was recognised that any increase in the number of overseas students would need to be matched by an expansion in relevant support services in the College.
- The Senior Vice-Principal (Academic Strategy, Resources and Partnerships) invited colleagues to provide further feedback to him before the end of April. An update on the shaping of the strategy will be presented to the June meeting of the Board.

12. **Academic restructuring**
- The Deputy Principal (Academic) reported on the progress of restructuring. As mentioned under item 10.1 above the Vice-Chair of Council has been asked to provide oversight of the Academic Restructure programme for Council. Any feedback for the Vice-Chair should be sent to the Deputy Principal (Academic) and/ or the Deputy Principal (Operations). 19/022
- The Deputy Principal (Operations) reported that the consultation period had come to an end. In the week of 25 March the Senior Management team would be considering the feedback received and agreeing on any mitigation that needed to be put in place. Planning and Resources Committee will sign off on the plan on 1 April, and after this it will be communicated to staff. The Deputy Principal (Operations) noted that some feedback had already been acted upon, e.g. the location of the School Office for Performing and Digital Arts. The appointment of staff to new School roles would start with School Managers. About 40% of current staff would then be mapped to existing roles, with the remainder being interviewed for the new roles. 19/023
- Concerns were raised about the Voluntary Severance Scheme, both with respect to the fact that 56 of eligible staff did not receive an email informing them of the scheme and also the tone of the email. The Deputy Principal (Operations) agreed that he would raise the issue of the tone of the email with the Director of Human Resources. 19/024
- Although some staff appeared unaware of the scheme prior to receiving the email from HR, the Principal pointed out that the scheme had been communicated to staff in the College's weekly newsletter and as this was the main vehicle of communication in the College, it was incumbent upon staff to read it.
13. **Preparations for REF**
- Paper AB/19/04 was RECEIVED. The Deputy Principal (Academic) indicated that she was grateful for the way in which staff were engaging with REF preparation. The College was ahead of many other HEIs in this regard. The focus at present is on updating outputs and impact case studies. The College is also considering how best to maximise the strength of its submissions, e.g. though changing the units of assessment into which disciplines are submitted. She also noted that Deloitte's are currently carrying out an audit of the College's REF preparation. 19/025
- (Secretary's note: The Head of the Department of Economics noted after the meeting that the list of the top performing departments in the College in paragraph 2 omitted Economics, which is ranked in the top 10 on all three criteria according to the Times Higher Education.)*
14. **Preparations for TEF**
- Paper AB/19/05 was RECEIVED. The Deputy Principal (Academic) outlined the current position with respect to institutional vs discipline-specific TEF. Dame Shirley Pierce is currently conducting an independent review of TEF and it is clear that there are different views across the sector about the usefulness of each type. It was unlikely that TEF would be discontinued and likely that discipline specific TEF would continue and therefore the preparations for both were being progressed. A TEF Steering Group has been set up to oversee the process and will be working on a draft institutional submission. Data packs are being prepared for departments/ disciplines and TEF leads are being asked to produce a draft 5 page discipline-specific submission by June. Geography and Earth Sciences will now form one unit of assessment as will History and Classics. 19/026

15. **Assessment Strategy** 19/027
- Paper AB/19/06 was RECEIVED. The Deputy Principal (Academic) explained that the development of the strategy emerged from discussions held previously on the shape of the academic year. One clear message from those discussions was that students were unhappy with the bunching of assessment deadlines. The proposed strategy sought to set out principles around the planning of assessment which it was hoped would lead to Departments conducting programmatic reviews of their assessment to ensure, amongst others, a diversity of assessment but also the spread of assessments across the academic year. The use of the new strategy would also be embedded in future programme (re-) validations.
- A key point in the strategy was that submission of assessment should primarily be online. 19/028
Where staff had difficulties assessing work, e.g. health issues, online submissions would need to be printed out by School administrative staff. It was acknowledged that some forms of assessment did not lend themselves to electronic submission
16. **PGT Portfolio Review** 19/029
- It was NOTED that Paper AB/19/07 had been WITHDRAWN. It will be presented at the June meeting of the Board.
17. **Lecture Content Accessibility** 19/030
- Paper AB/19/08 was RECEIVED. The Vice-Principal (Teaching Innovation) outlined the proposal in the paper which suggested a compromise position between what students would like and what academic staff might make available. Staff would be required to make their lecture content accessible to students, either by way of lecture capture or by some other electronic means such as a podcast. Lecture capture would be on an 'opt out' basis and would only be for lectures deemed to be 'content heavy', not seminars. IT had undertaken to address any issues in relation to the availability and functioning of Panopto in lecture theatres by January 2020.
- The Students' Union argued that there was strong support for lecture capture from the student body as evidenced in discussions at the Course Representative Conference and the outcome of a recent survey that they had run. Lecture capture was not only about support for certain categories of students but for enhancing the learning of all students, which needed to be reflected in the policy. Additionally many other HEIs in the sector are offering lecture capture and so students have come to expect the College to provide this. The College currently lags behind the sector in this regard. Finally they felt that 'content heavy' was open to interpretation by staff and that where staff were not minded to record they would deem a lecture to not be content heavy. It was suggested that Departments present their understanding of lectures that are 'content heavy' to the first Staff: Student Committee in 2019-20 for discussion.
- Members of the Board raised concerns about the impact of lecture capture on attendance at lectures, GDPR issues, IP issues, and the availability of appropriate IT resources. Both Board members and the Students' Union supported the policy with respect to clarifying that recorded lectures would not be used in the event of industrial action and the latter also supported not recording other teaching sessions like seminars

The Deputy Principal (Academic) reminded the Board that the Associate Deans (Education) in Science and Arts and Social Sciences had given a presentation to the Board last year about the benefits of lecture capture. They had found that this did not impact negatively on attendance and that students welcomed having the ability to go over the lectures when revising.

The Chair noted that, notwithstanding the concerns expressed, there was broad support amongst members of Academic Board for making lecture content accessible. He suggested setting up a Project Board to explore what IT issues needed to be resolved to move forward on this and for clear targets to be set for the adoption of lecture capture or other means of making lecture content accessible. 19/031

18. **Fitness to Study Policy**

The Fitness to Study Policy (Paper AB/19/09) was presented to the Board by the Director of Academic Services. The policy was APPROVED in principle subject to the following revisions/additions being made: provide flowcharts of the process to aid understanding; clarify communication channels open to students; revisit the tone of Appendix 2, which was perceived to be more disciplinary than supportive; amend paragraph 29, as appropriate, to reflect new School structures; insert the words in bold in paragraph 14 (undertake their academic studies **as required by their degree programme....**); include mention of fitness to undertake fieldwork where relevant; link the policy to the Attendance Monitoring Policy. 19/032

19. **Regulations changes for 2019-20**

19.1 The proposed changes to the Research Degree Regulations for 2019-20 (Paper AB/19/10) were APPROVED. 19/033

19.2 The proposed changes to other academic regulations for 2019-20 (Paper AB/19/11) were APPROVED. 19/034

20. **Extension Policy**

The revisions to the Extension Policy for 2019-20 (Paper AB/19/12) were APPROVED. In response to feedback received the Vice-Principal (Quality and Standards) requested approval from the Board to include in the policy a statement that work for which an extension had been granted might not be returned to students within 20 working days as per the College policy. A clear date for the return of such work would be communicated to students with approved extensions. The Board APPROVED this request. 19/035

21. **Honorary Awards**

Paper AB/19/13 was RECEIVED. It was noted that the University of London has given approval for the awards. The Board APPROVED the nominations, which will be passed on to Council to give final approval. 19/036

22. **Council Tax**

The Director of Academic Services gave an update on the position of the Council Tax liability of graduating students in Runnymede. He and the Students' Union Vice-President (Equality and Diversity) had been in contact with the Council who were not willing to offer exemptions beyond the end of the academic year. Work would continue with respect to this matter. 19/037

23. **Entry requirements for 2020-21**

	Paper AB/19/14 was RECEIVED.	19/038
24.	Student numbers for 2019-20 entry Paper AB/19/15 was RECEIVED.	19/039
25.	PDR Reports	
25.1	Paper AB/19/18 was RECEIVED.	19/040
25.2	Paper AB/19/19 was RECEIVED	19/041
25.3	Paper AB/19/21 was RECEIVED.	19/042
25.4	Paper AB/19/21 was RECEIVED.	19/043
26.	UG Annual Review	
26.1	Paper AB/19/22 was RECEIVED.	19/044
26.2	Paper AB/19/23 was RECEIVED.	19/045
27.	Faculty Board Paper AB/19/24 was RECEIVED.	19/046
28.	Academic Board Executive Paper AB/19/25 was RECEIVED.	19/047
29.	Academic Planning Committee Paper AB/19/26 was RECEIVED.	19/048
30.	Collaborative Provisions Committee Paper AB/19/27 was RECEIVED.	19/049
31.	Quality Assurance and Standards Committee Paper AB/19/28 was RECEIVED.	19/050
32.	Research and Impact Committee Paper AB/19/29 was RECEIVED.	19/051
33.	Financial Performance and Planning Group Paper AB/19/30 was RECEIVED.	19/052
34.	Any other business	

The Chair has received a request to amend the start time of Academic Board to 2 pm with effect from the 2019-20 academic year. Members of the Board were asked to email the Secretary with feedback on this proposal (AcademicBoard@Rhul.ac.uk). 19/053

35. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 5 June 2019 at 3pm in the Moore Annexe Lecture Theatre.

19/054