

## Academic Committee

### Minutes

18 November 2020

14.00 – 16.00

MS Teams

#### Present Members

Ex-Officio

Professor Geoff Smith  
Professor Niamh Downing  
Professor Castulus Kolo

Dr Stephen Ellis  
Amparo Lallana  
David Willey  
Professor Mark Allinson  
Dr Steven Quigley  
Jonathan Strauss  
Pascal Senn  
Anya Nikolaeva  
Charlotte Davis Goldenberg

#### Elected Representatives

Professor Olaf Jubin  
Tristan Tull  
Adrian Thornley  
Bhavini Desai  
Geraldine Bourgeon  
Liz Beavers  
Rachel Azzopardi

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)  
Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
President, Macromedia University & Non-executive Board member  
Dean of BaM (Acting)  
Institute Director (Acting)  
Chief Operating Officer  
Head of Academic and Educational Developments (HAED)  
Registrar  
Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions (MRA)  
President of the Student Union  
Vice-President of the Student Union – Academic Affairs  
Vice President of the Student Union – Student Experience

Academic Representative for HASS  
Academic Representative for HASS  
Academic Representative for BaM  
Interim Academic Representative for BaM  
Academic Representative for RILC  
Representative for Professional Services  
Representative for Professional Services

#### In Attendance

Richard Reger  
Paul Loftus  
Nazma Kurimbokus

Head of Governance (Secretary)  
Director of Enrolment Management  
Governance Advisor & Secretary to Committees (Minutes)

#### Opening Items

##### 1. Welcome from the Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Academic Committee in this academic year. Special welcome was given to Professor Castulus Kolo, a new member of the Committee and Paul Loftus – Director of Enrolment Management.

Professor Castulus Kolo, president of Macromedia University of Applied Sciences and member of the new Board of Directors, introduced himself and summarized his background and experience in the academic space.

The Chair thanked members whose posts were due for re-election for agreeing to the extension of their term of office in order to maintain continuity until the process of re-

	election could be initiated. He announced that the re-election process will begin in December 2020.
2.	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Darren Tysoe.</p>
3.	<p><b>Declarations of Interests</b></p> <p>No declarations of interest were made.</p>
4.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting (8 July 2020)</b></p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting on 8 July 2020.</p>
5.	<p><b>Actions and Matters arising from the previous meeting (8 July 2020)</b></p> <p>Committee actions were noted as completed where relevant or on the agenda. Additionally, the following update was made:</p> <p><b>Senate 19/20 – 4.1. The DVC and HAED to discuss how the functionality of access to all modules within Blackboard can be deployed.</b></p> <p>The HAED explained that it is possible to give any user administrative access to individual modules or general administrative access to Blackboard. Currently, Heads of Programmes are being given access to Blackboard on a 'needs' basis. Consideration will be given to grant full administrative access to the new Directors of Content.</p> <p><b>Action status: Closed.</b></p>
<b>Part A: Items for Discussion and / or Approval</b>	
6.	<p><b>Chair's Report and Chair's Actions</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Chair's Report (verbal)</b></p> <p>The Chair expressed his appreciation of the contribution of staff in securing the quality and standards of learning and teaching at Regent's over the past eight months and for their continuing endeavour in delivering on our promise to our students. He thanked the staff and the SU colleagues for their continued professionalism, resilience, inventiveness and engagement during the most challenging period ever experienced by the University under the forces of the pandemic, the need to secure our future through a change in ownership and the People Project. He added that the excellent results of the first student Pulse Survey is testimony of these efforts. The very useful qualitative feedback together with other sources, such as dialogues with the SU, will inform planning for the Spring term for continuous improvement.</p> <p><b>6.2 Chair's Actions (July 2020)</b></p> <p>With reference to the Academic Governance Structure document, the following points were raised:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistencies on Page 9 of the document and references to elements from the current structure in Appendix 3 were pointed out. It was acknowledged that the titles would be modified as the People Project crystallises and explanatory texts would also be reviewed accordingly.</li> <li>• A query of the nature of the interim period referred to on Page 12 with respect to Directorate responsibilities, the Provost &amp; DVC explained that with the disbandment of SPSP (Senate Portfolio Scrutiny Panel), responsibilities such as new course development and collaborative provision had sat with Directorate. To rectify the situation, a Collaborative Provision Committee has been set up to oversee the portfolio of partners and collaborative provision, but Directorate is still overseeing new course development until such time as a course development process is set up.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee noted the Chair's actions.</p> <p><b>6.3 Chair's Action (November 2020)</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the Chair's action.</p>
7.	<p><b>Student Matters (paper)</b></p> <p><b>7.1 SU Quarterly Report (paper)</b></p> <p>The SU President reported that the SU had undertaken a student voice survey and the main findings were presented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 260 responses were received, representing 13% of the student population.</li> <li>• Current location and travel plans – half of the respondents are in the UK and 80% of them felt comfortable to return to campus. The remaining 20% had reservation because of the London lockdown but would feel comfortable if vaccines were available. Those who are currently abroad felt that there was no reason for returning to campus if online learning prevails but a third of them would consider returning if there were a small number of classes on campus in the Spring.</li> <li>• Finance and tuition fees – The majority of respondents support a reduction in fees, following the decision to maintain learning online in the Spring term. Further exploration of this response revealed that some students thought that the reduction in fees would be seen as a 'gesture of good faith'; just under 75% thought that they were not getting their money's worth and a small percentage cited financial hardship. While resources such as COVID hardship fund is available, another potential means of assisting students in need of financial help [REDACTED]</li> <li>• Online learning – experience of increased workload was reported by half of the respondents coupled with the fact that half of them felt that they were not benefitting from this mode of learning which was compromising the quality of work that they could be producing. A small minority of students, thought to be from the creative areas, reported decreased workload and would like to be set more activities. A preference was indicated to extend the webinar time and to prioritise synchronous learning.</li> <li>• IT issues – the functioning of Blackboard Collaborate had posed many problems and a request for alternative and more intuitive tools such as MS teams was made.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student well-being – this was highlighted by some student testimonies, especially the effects of long computer screen time and issues of depression. In terms of mental health well-being, it was thought that improvement could be made in that space and could be informed by what other institutions are doing.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee noted the following responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HAED is working closely with the SU to address issues promptly as well as looking at the Pulse surveys and other data sources.</li> <li>• Webinar has been extended from 60 to 90 minutes with staff instructed to use the additional time more effectively within the existing content and to allow for informal breaks.</li> <li>• Generic workshops, face to face in small groups and online, are being set up in all support functions for study such as 'how to learn online', 'how to organise time', 'how to make the most of interactive communications in an online environment'.</li> <li>• A bank of resources presented in a consistent form is being built, making sure that the communication channels that include those support mechanisms are very clear.</li> <li>• While Collaborate has benefits such as breakout rooms and functionalities to interact with students on slides, they may not be enough to offset the drawbacks. We will need to reconsider alternative platforms for live sessions over the coming weeks and MS teams could be an option.</li> <li>• A number of staff have been trained as Mental Health first aiders and a list will be made available on a page of Blackboard that is more accessible and visible.</li> <li>• The University is very committed to online and to continuous improvement through dialogue with students, which come at a cost.</li> <li>• Given the impact of the pandemic on the University's finances, expenditure is being prioritised while bearing student experience in mind.</li> <li>• In light of the cost of delivering online and the shortfall in revenues, the University cannot consider a reduction in fees. However, students who started at Regent's pre-COVID and are not able to meet their fees will be given financial help to complete their studies. Resources could be expanded by working with ICET in terms of financial assistance.</li> <li>• The news of potential vaccines for COVID-19 means that a plan for a safe phased return to campus can be worked on.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>New Action:</u> AC 20/21 1.1 The HAED to consider MS Teams as an alternative platform to Collaborate for live sessions.</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked the SU representatives for the valuable insights and expressed his appreciation of the partnership working approach that had facilitated the collective attempts to balance the competing needs and demands that we faced.</p> <p>The Committee noted the papers.</p>
8.	<p><b>Update on Student Recruitment Autumn 2020 (paper)</b></p> <p>The Director of Enrolment Management gave an account of student recruitment through the autumn cycle. [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

[REDACTED]

He added that the overall prospects for 2021 are still strong under the following expectations:

- The announcement of two new vaccines against the virus;
- Potential to start planning for the opening of campus around Easter;
- Establishment of five new courses;
- Strengthening of recruitment from the US;
- New collaborative arrangements under Galileo.

The Committee noted the paper.

**9. Growth 2021 Plan (paper)**

The Provost & DVC presented the elements of a growth plan for 2021 which was developed together with the Galileo Corporate Team and a team of external analysts and programme manager. The plan is aimed at growing the top line to bring additional financial value into the business.

She outlined the methodology used and listed the priorities for 2021 which include [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Committee noted the paper.

<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>People Project – Update (verbal report)</b></p> <p>The Provost &amp; DVC summarised the delivery of Phase 1 of the People project which aimed at a flatter, integrated academic structure while developing educators to deliver great content in a new operating system and to work dynamically with Alliances of professional services and academic teams to build agility, simplification and consistency. This phase is under implementation and will be live in January 2021.</p> <p>She stated that Phase 2 looked at how Professional Services departments could integrate with the new academic structure to bring their collective expertise in delivering excellent student experience. Because of the income shock faced by the University as a result of the pandemic, Phase 2 was also designed to deliver additional cost savings as Phase 1, regrettably impacting some staff. Therefore, a structure of the right shape and size was developed to deliver great educational experience in a sustainable way in the short term and also into the future. She added that, following extensive feedback during the consultation period, the first proposed structure was reshaped albeit within the existing constraints and that communication on the final proposal would be made that afternoon. The Project Board is undertaking transition planning for January 2021 to ensure that we work effectively in the new organisational structure and can effect required business process changes over time. The new structure will support new ways of working to contribute to efficiency and to improve our offer.</p> <p>The Committee <b>noted</b> the update.</p>
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Academic Governance Structure 2021 (paper)</b></p> <p>The Head of Governance explained that the structure had been revised with simplification in mind as set out in the University’s Strategic Plan. The new proposed structure represents a significant reduction in the number of committees, resulting from some mergers, some removals and the introduction of a new committee. Nevertheless, we have ensured that academic quality, student voice and partnerships are still addressed.</p> <p>The Committee <b>approved</b> the paper.</p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Proposed Replacement for Programme Committee Meetings (paper)</b></p> <p>The HAED stated that with the dissolution of Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs), an alternative way of responding transparently and quickly to students was to establish new Student Voice Meetings hosted by the relevant Director of Content and will be open to any students. This approach was supported by the Student Union (SU).</p> <p>Members discussed the proposal and made the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To a query regarding the dynamics of flow of information at the new meetings, it was noted that the conversations will be dialogues focusing on student-led issues and feedback leading to required actions if appropriate as well as communicating news items. Guidance will be prepared on how these new meetings should be managed.</li> <li>• The proposal for a programme-based open-forum Padlet on its corresponding Blackboard Programme Hub page was raised as an issue as students do not necessarily access the Programme Hubs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The frequency of the meetings was questioned, and it was agreed that two meetings per term would be more amenable.</li> </ul> <p><b>New Action: AC 20/21 1.2</b> The HAED will prepare guidance on how the new Student Voice meetings should be managed.</p> <p>The Committee approved the paper.</p>
13.	<p><b>Draft Senate Annual Summary Report 2019/2020 (paper)</b></p> <p>The Committee approved the report.</p>
14.	<p><b>Review of the Risk Register for any academic or student experience related risk (paper)</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
<b>Part B: Items for Noting</b>	
15.	<p><b>Academic Promotions and Professorial &amp; readership Report (paper) (paper)</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
16.	<p><b>Review of Student Protection Plan (paper)</b></p> <p>The Registrar pointed out that the Plan should be updated to include a section on collaborative provision.</p> <p><b><u>New Action:</u> AC 20/21 1.3</b> The Provost &amp; DVC to include a section on collaborative provision in the Student Protection Plan.</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
17.	<p><b>Sub Committee Meeting Minutes and Annual Reports (papers)</b></p> <p>17.1 Admissions Panel – 13 July 2020  17.2. Senate Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement Committee – 7 October 2020  17.2.1. SQAEC Annual Summary Report 2019/2020  17.3. Senate Student Experience Committee – 14 October 2020  17.3.1. SSEC Annual Summary Report 2019/2020  17.4. Senate Learning &amp; Teaching Committee – 21 October 2020  17.4.1. SLTC Annual Summary Report 2019/2020  17.5. Senate Research Committee – 22 October 2020  17.5.1. SRC Annual Summary Report 2019/2020</p> <p>The Committee noted the papers.</p>
18.	<p><b>Institute Executive Report (paper)</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p>
19.	<p><b>Conferment Lists for Noting (papers)</b></p>

	<p>19.1 UG June 2020          19.2 PG June 2020          19.3 Combined UG/PG October 2020</p> <p>The Committee noted the reports.</p>				
<b>Closing Items</b>					
20.	<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p> <p>No items of confidentiality were noted.</p>				
21.	<p><b>Communication from the committee</b></p> <p>No communications from the committee were noted.</p>				
22.	<p><b>Risk Management Update</b></p> <p>No additional items of risk were noted.</p>				
23.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>No other items of business were noted.</p>				
24.	<p><b>Next meeting</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="284 1176 1082 1249"> <tr> <td><b>Meeting Date</b></td> <td><b>Deadline for Papers</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 February 2021</td> <td>13 January 2021</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Deadline for Papers</b>	3 February 2021	13 January 2021
<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Deadline for Papers</b>				
3 February 2021	13 January 2021				

Item	Action Required	Staff responsible	Due Date
<b>New Actions:</b>			
AC 20/21 – 1.1	The HAED to consider MS Teams as an alternative platform to Collaborate for live sessions.	HAED	December 2020
AC 20/21 – 1.2	The HAED will prepare guidance on how the new Student Voice meetings should be managed.	HAED	December 2020
AC 20/21 – 1.3	The Provost & DVC to include a section on collaborative provision in the Student Protection Plan	Provost & DVC	January 2021



<b>Closed Actions:</b>			
Senate 19/20 – 4.1.	The DVC and HAED to discuss how the functionality of access to all modules within Blackboard can be deployed.		
Senate 19/20 – 4.2	The DVC to amend the ToR of the Admissions Panel to include the fact that co-optees may include students.		
Senate 19/20 – 4.3	The Admissions Panel to develop an operational process to include a change process involving programme leadership and the Admissions team to take place at an appropriate stage in the admissions cycle.		
Senate 19/20 – 4.4	The DVC to present the new programme development process to Senate at its November meeting.		
Senate 19/20 – 4.5	Directorate to agree areas of access and participation to focus on within a strategic context.		