

Academic Committee Minutes

5 July 2023, 14:00 – 16:00, MS Teams

Members Present:

Ex Officio

Professor Geoff Smith
 Professor Fary Cachelin
 Professor Castulus Kolo
 Professor Maria Charalambous
 Samantha Grady
 Professor Lawrence Phillips
 Professor Gill Stark
 Steph Talliss-Foster
 Carl Teigh
 Valérie de Saegher
 Nevena Tomasevic
 Faye Urquhart
 Annie McNamara
 Stephanie Murphy
 Abigaëlle Perrault
 Tamar Hopkins
 Sophie Slater

Vice-Chancellor & CEO (Chair)
 Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor
 Non-Exec Board Director (President, Macromedia University)
 Director of Learning & Teaching
 Director of Student Experience
 Associate Provost
 Associate Provost
 Head of Registry
 Chief Finance Officer
 Director of Human Resources
 Chief Transformation Officer
 Head of Projects
 Director of Academic Services
 Head of Student Experience and Welfare
 Student Union President
 Student Union Vice-President – Community Development
 Student Union Vice-President – Councils and Representation

Elected

Amparo Lallana
 Oliver Sterland

Academic Representative - Director level
 Academic Representative - Ass Prof/Sen Lecturer level

Apologies:

Dan Lanigan
 Prof Zubin Sethna

Chief Commercial Officer
 Academic Representative - Director level

In Attendance

Jessica Vine

Head of Governance (minutes)

Opening Items

1. **Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest**
 - The Committee welcomed new Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Fary Cachelin, and the new Student Union Vice-Presidents, Sophie Slater and Tamar Hopkins.
 - Apologies for absence were noted, as set out above.
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023**
 - The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 were **approved** as a correct record.
 - There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Part A: Items for Discussion and / or Approval

3. **Chair's Report and Chair's Actions**
 - a) **Chair's Action**
 It was **noted** that Chair's action had been taken by the Vice-Chancellor & CEO to approve the validations set out within the Quality Committee report (item 5, paragraph 4). The VC & CEO thanked all those involved in the validation panels for their important work.

b) Verbal Update (Strategic Plan Refresh)

The VC & CEO provided an overview of the refreshed Strategic Plan which, once finalised, would be taken to the September meeting of the Board of Directors for approval. As outlined at the Staff Conference, the Plan set out priorities relating to Teaching Excellence, Cultural Change and Commercial Focus. Initiatives would be developed to advance each strategic priority. Committee members welcomed the clarity of approach. It was noted that, in order to grow student numbers, careful thought would be needed in space planning and in evolving teaching spaces, in particular.

The Committee **noted** the update.

4. Student Voice Updates

Update from the Student Union President

The Student Union President delivered a presentation on the new structure of the SU and the three core objectives: Communication, Collaboration and Community. Changes to the Constitution had been approved by students, which meant that a new model with 22 members was being put in place for the next academic year. This consisted of the full-time SU President (elected by students), four part-time Vice-Presidents, a number of (voluntary) officer roles, the council presidents (linked to each university programme/subject area), and the permanent roles of Administrator and Events Coordinator (full-time), and Policies Officer (part-time).

Plans for 2023-24 included supporting the University's Welcome Week; campaigns around sustainability and inclusivity; raising awareness of the role of student councils; and a number of 'Activate Art' events. The SU would also be supporting the University in its work to improve student attendance, continuation and completion. The SU President explained that there were also plans to bring more artwork onto campus.

Update from the Director of Student Experience

The Director of Student Experience reported on the module evaluation questionnaire (MEQ) process (noting that the detailed results had been reported to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee). The Director explained that a review of student voice mechanisms was taking place. The current rate of response for the MEQs was between 25-30% and that the emphasis was on increasing engagement in order to gain a more complete understanding of student sentiment and concerns. The latest results showed that 83% of respondents had provided positive feedback, and responses across content areas were broadly consistent. Both positive and negative comments were being reviewed in more detail at course level.

Course Panels had been re-launched this year. This system allowed student feedback comments to be shared with course representatives and taken to Panel meetings. More than 700 individual comments had been shared. These covered issues such as course structure and content, events and timetabling. The Committee discussed how student feedback was shared with academic staff. The Director confirmed that options were being considered for how to share student feedback with relevant staff, whilst also respecting the anonymity of those commenting. In addition, the team would be publishing 'you said – we did' information, to share what was being done in response to student feedback.

The Director reported that planning was underway for the Welcome Week and induction of new students in September. The Student Experience team would be supporting these arrangements. The Committee **noted** the updates and thanked the SU President and the Director of Student Experience.

Agreed Action: SU President to share links to SU website and podcast with Committee Members.

5. Report from the Quality Committee

The Head of Registry presented the report from the Quality Committee, which provided an overview of its work since the last Academic Committee meeting. The report covered the validation outcomes to date, including courses delivered by Istituto Marangoni, Regent's new collaborative partner.

The Committee had considered the Student Protection Plan and the Short-term Suspension Policy. It has also considered feedback from the OIA on a student case, which meant that the University would be reviewing its Student Disciplinary Policy. In addition, the Committee had reflected on External Examiner appointments and on exam boards and had noted the report from the HCPC on quality monitoring of the DPpsych programme. Other areas of consideration had included how to assess 'experiential study' and document decisions on this, and how to carry out the next Annual Monitoring Review process.

The Committee would be reviewing the academic regulations over the summer period, and any updates would be shared with the Academic Committee for approval, prior to the start of the new academic year.

In relation to the Student Suspensions (Short-term) policy (appended to the Quality Committee minutes), this was a new policy which had drafted in light of good practice in the sector, and the need to better codify the existing arrangements. The Quality Committee had queried the list of criminal convictions cited as automatic reasons for suspension. The Director of Academic Services suggested that it could be clarified that the list was illustrative, and was not meant to be exhaustive.

The Committee agreed:

- i) To **note** the update from the Quality Committee.
- ii) To **approve** the Student Suspensions (Short-term) Policy, subject to the amendment / clarification set out above.

6. Student Protection Plan

The Head of Registry outlined the amendments to the Student Protection Plan, which had been reviewed and endorsed by the Quality Committee. The document had been updated to make the language and formatting more accessible. It had also been reviewed in light of the fact that the previous version still made reference to COVID-19 working arrangements. The Quality Committee and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) had been asked to review the assessments of risks, mitigations, and risk impacts, alongside other colleagues who had provided feedback.

The Committee discussed the risk relating to UKVI sponsorship. It was noted that this risk was due to be reviewed by VCET and the Board of Directors in the coming weeks, and may be amended in future, but given that a loss of license would only occur in the most extreme circumstances, the likelihood should remain as 'low' at present.

In relation to the section on 'student placements' (section 3.4), a member suggested that this should be reduced from 'high likelihood' to 'medium likelihood', given that, whilst students were encouraged to find their own placements, the University would always be able to provide additional support or a quasi-placement if necessary.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the Student Protection Plan for publication, subject to the amendment at section 3.4, noted above.

7. Terms of Reference of the Academic Committee

The Head of Governance presented the Terms of Reference. Only minor amendments were suggested, as set out in the report. The Committee was asked to comment on and approve the document.

In terms of the membership list, the SU President commented that the SU's Vice-President, Student Experience, was now the VP, Community Development. The Committee also discussed whether the list of academic policies at section 2.9 was too narrow. It was suggested that the Student Protection Plan, in particular, should be referenced. In addition, it may not be necessary to review the policies on an annual basis: the wording could be amended to reflect that this review would take place 'regularly' (i.e. approximately every three years) or if there were a material change.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the updated Terms of Reference, subject to the additional changes set out above.

8. Review of the Terms of Reference of Sub-Committees

The Committee received the report from the Head of Governance which set out the proposed changes to the terms of reference for sub-committees. These had been considered and discussed at the sub-committee meetings.

In response to a question, it was explained that the suggestion of expanding the number of academic members for the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee would be brought to the next meeting of LTSEC in the autumn. The Head of Governance would work with the Provost & DVC over the summer to review committee membership and appointments, given there were some pre-existing vacancies.

The Committee **agreed**:

- a) To **approve** the amendments to the terms of reference for the Research Ethics Panel, Research Committee, Quality Committee, Admissions Panel and LTSEC, as set out within the report and annex.
- b) To **approve**, in principle, the proposal for the Collaborative Provision Committee to become a sub-committee of the QC, and for a more substantial review of the CPC's membership and terms of reference to be carried out, as set out in the report.
- c) To **approve** the suggestion that the standard term of office for 'appointed' committee members be extended from one year to three years, in order to provide continuity.
- d) To **note** that procedural guidance would be developed, to explain how the sub-committee appointments were determined (e.g. via expression of interest, or nomination, or via another means).

Part B: Items for Noting / Endorsement

9. Retention Strategy

The Vice-Chancellor & CEO and the Provost & DVC provided an overview of the work underway to create a new Retention Strategy, following on from the paper that was taken on this matter to the Academic Committee in November 2022. That report had identified the need to make more proactive use of the available data on student retention.

A steering group had been established to provide oversight of this work. The first stage was to map the risks and indicators that might lead to a student leaving their course. The group was developing workstreams to align with these risk areas. It was important to gain feedback from a range of colleagues: a staff workshop was planned for early August. The draft strategy would then be taken to the Board of Directors in September.

Committee members commented that data analytics would form an important part of this work, and that by reviewing 'lead indicators', such as student engagement with the Blackboard system,

	<p>the University would be able to gain a better picture of which students were more likely to withdraw from their course. It would then be important to make interventions quickly and sensitively. It was noted that further work would also be required on reassessments, and the framework around this process.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>The Open University & University of Wales - Annual Monitoring Reports, 2020-21 & 2021-22</p> <p>The Associate Provost (AP) presented the annual monitoring reports from the Open University for the last two years. He explained that the HCPC had also carried out a review during this period. The outcomes of these reviews had been very successful. He thanked the DPscyh team and the Registry team for their input into these reviews, particularly given that these were carried out during the pandemic period.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to note the outcomes of the reviews and to thank the Programme Director and her team for their work to achieve successful outcomes.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Indefinite Degree Awarding Powers</p> <p>a) Report received at Board Meeting – March 2023 b) Report for receipt at Board Meeting – July 2023</p> <p>The Committee received the interim findings from the external consultant, who was providing advice to the University on its upcoming application for Indefinite Degree Awarding Powers (IDAPs). The consultant had mapped the University's position against the criteria currently used to assess providers for the ability to award taught degrees. The third and final section of the review would be undertaken over the summer and then reported to the Board of Directors in the autumn.</p> <p>The next stage, following the receipt of this advice, was to collate any further relevant evidence, in preparation for the submission of a self-evaluation document to the OfS. Colleagues would be asked to contribute to the relevant sections.</p> <p>The Committee commented that it was helpful to gain this external advice, which provided a good indicator of the University's position and what further evidence might be required, prior to submission. It was noted that some of the work carried out for the recent TEF submission would also be useful for the IDAPs submission.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The Committee received the updated risk register and noted the recent amendments, as summarised in the report. These included a lowering of the enrolment risk, the addition of 'collaborative provision' as a new risk, and the separation of the IDAPs risk from the UKVI risk, in recognition that these were distinct areas of work. The 'continuation, completion and progression' risk remained high, but would be addressed by the retention work outlined above.</p> <p>The Committee noted the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Calendar of Meetings 2023-24</p> <p>The Committee received and approved the calendar of meetings for the Academic Committee and its sub-committees for the 2023-24 year.</p>

14.	<p>Draft Sub Committee Meeting Minutes</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the minutes of the following meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (Special Meeting) – 5 April 2023 • Research Ethics Panel – 23 May 2023 • Quality Committee – 14 June 2023 • Admissions Panel – 21 June 2023 <p>The minutes of the following meetings would be circulated via email:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee –7 June 2023 • Research Committee – 15 June 2023 • Collaborative Provision Committee – 28 June 2023
15.	<p>Research Integrity Report</p> <p>The Associate Provost (LP) presented the Annual Report on Research Integrity (2021-22) which had also been reviewed by the Research Committee. He explained that the report provided assurance about the frameworks in place for students and staff carrying out research. He added that in future the report would include more comprehensive data sets, as there was now an online portal for ethical applications, which would allow for data to be collated more efficiently.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
<u>Closing Items</u>	
16.	<p>Confidentiality</p> <p>No specific issues identified.</p>
17.	<p>Communication from the Committee</p> <p>No specific issues identified.</p>
18.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>
19.	<p>Next meeting:</p> <p>29 November 2023</p>