

Academic Committee Minutes

29 November 2023

14:15 – 15:30 via MS Teams

Members Present:

Ex-Officio

Professor Geoff Smith
 Professor Fary Cachelin
 Professor Castulus Kolo
 Professor Maria Charalambous
 Samantha Grady
 Professor Lawrence Phillips
 Steve Ward
 Steph Talliss-Foster
 Carl Teigh
 Dan Lanigan
 Valérie de Saegher
 Faye Urquhart
 Abigaëlle Perrault

Vice-Chancellor & CEO (Chair)
 Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor
 Non-Exec Board Director (President, Macromedia University)
 Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching
 Associate Provost, Student Experience
 Associate Provost, Business, Academic Development & Resources
 Associate Provost, Quality & Education
 Head of Registry
 Chief Finance Officer
 Chief Commercial Officer
 Director of Human Resources
 Head of Projects
 Student Union President

Elected

Amparo Lallana
 Professor Zubin Sethna
 Oliver Sterland
 Professor Simon Carrington
 Pernille Norregaard

Academic Representative - Director level
 Academic Representative - Director level
 Academic Representative - Ass Prof/Sen Lecturer level
 Academic Representative - Director level (*from item 3*)
 Professional Service Representative (*from item 3*)

Apologies:

Professor Gill Stark
 Nevena Tomasevic
 Stephanie Murphy
 Tamar Hopkins
 Sophie Slater

Associate Provost, Academic, Collaborative & Industry Partnerships
 Chief Transformation Officer
 Head of Student Experience & Welfare
 Student Union Vice-President – Community Development
 Student Union Vice-President – Councils and Representation

In Attendance:

Jessica Vine
 Aaron Porter

Head of Governance (minutes)
 Observing on behalf of Advance HE

Opening Items

1. **Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest**
 - The Committee welcomed new members Steve Ward (AP, Quality & Education), Simon Carrington (Director of Psychotherapy & Counselling) and Pernille Norregaard (Head of Communications)
 - The Committee also welcomed Aaron Porter, observing the meeting on behalf of Advance HE, who had been commissioned to carry out a governance review for the University.
 - Apologies for absence were noted, as set out above.

2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023</p> <p>a. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 were approved as a correct record.</p> <p>b. There were no outstanding matters arising.</p>
3.	<p>Elections and Appointments to Academic Committees</p> <p>The Head of Governance explained that there were two pre-existing vacancies for elected roles on the Academic Committee. These had been advertised on the intranet and, at the close of nominations, one candidate had applied per vacancy. The Vice-Chancellor & CEO and the Provost & Deputy VC (as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Academic Committee) had agreed that these candidates should be taken forward. The Committee was now asked to confirm these appointments.</p> <p>In addition, there were some vacancies on the academic sub-committees at present. These had been advertised and the nominations would be considered by the Provost and Deputy VC, as per the terms of reference of the sub-committees. In order to increase transparency about the elections and appointments processes, a new procedure document had been compiled for the Committee to consider and approve. It was noted that both the elected and the appointed roles would be subject to a three-year term of office as standard.</p> <p>The Committee agreed:</p> <p>i) To confirm the appointments of Simon Carrington, Director of Psychotherapy & Counselling (Academic Representative, Director level) and Pernille Norregaard, Head of Communications (Professional Service Representative) to the Academic Committee, each for a three-year term, commencing from 29 November 2023.</p> <p>ii) To approve the <i>Procedure for Staff Elections and Appointments to Academic Committee and its Sub Committees</i>, as set out within the report.</p>
Part A: Items for Discussion and / or Approval	
4.	<p>Chair's Report and Chair's Actions</p> <p>a. Chair's Action and decisions taken via email</p> <p>It was noted that, following sub-committee review, a number of updated regulations and policies had been approved by the Academic Committee via email in September 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and course regulations • Course and module amendment, suspension, withdrawal • General misconduct • Academic Misconduct • Exceptional circumstances • Interruption of studies, transfer and withdrawal • Readmission • Admissions Policy <p>b. Chair's Verbal Update</p> <p><u><i>Degree Awarding Powers</i></u></p> <p>The Chair reported that, following a meeting with the OfS, a submission date of 31 January 2024 had been agreed for the University's self-assessment in relation to the application for Indefinite Degree Awarding Powers (IDAPs).</p> <p><u><i>Retention and Enrolment</i></u></p> <p>The Chair updated the Committee on the project to improve the registration and enrolment process for new students and the actions being implemented in time for new starters in January. In terms of student retention, the Retention Strategy had been launched and a number of new measures had been put in place in 2023; it was encouraging to see that the retention rates were already improving. The Chair thanked those involved in these key projects.</p>

	<p>The Committee noted the updates.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Student Voice Updates <u>Student Union</u> The Student Union President provided an update on the work of the SU during the autumn term, including the contribution to the University's Welcome Week, a number of social and society events, wellbeing sessions and academic-focused events, such as the financial literacy seminar. The Union was also focusing on sustainability campaigns, including reducing waste and the use of disposable materials, and increasing the use of sustainable transport. The Chair commented that it had been very encouraging to see how well the SU had worked alongside the University teams to deliver events such as the Welcome Week.</p> <p><u>Update from the Associate Provost, Student Experience</u> The AP Student Experience thanked the SU for the events they had arranged to enhance the sense of community for students. She provided an overview of the work undertaken to improve student feedback mechanisms, as per a report which was considered by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee earlier this month. The proposals focused on making the module evaluation questionnaires shorter and more user-friendly, in order to increase participation rates. The new approach was now being rolled out for term one. There was also a project underway to provide better feedback to students on how their comments were taken on board and addressed (via a 'you said, we did...' publication). Other areas of focus included increasing the timeliness of assessment feedback and ensuring that library resources and course reading lists were better aligned, in response to student survey feedback. The Student Experience team was also working with other University teams to improve the registration process for new starters in January.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed and noted these updates.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>NSS and TEF results 2023 The Provost & Deputy VC provided an overview of the University's National Student Survey (NSS) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) results which had been announced in September. The University had gained a Silver TEF award and continued to receive positive feedback from students via the NSS.</p> <p>Five areas had been identified for increased focus in relation to the TEF, in order to work towards the Gold standard. These were: improve experience for business and management students; improve experience for BME students and those from areas of high deprivation; develop scholarship informed teaching; improve student continuation rates; and demonstrate effectiveness of recent changes and initiatives. Strategic initiatives had been established to address these development areas. It was noted that the TEF assessment reflected on the submission made in January 2023 and that work had already begun to improve these areas and to collate more data since submission. In general, the Silver result was very encouraging, especially given that some aspects of the University's performance were already classed as 'Gold' as part of the assessment.</p> <p>The NSS results and the TEF outcome were closely linked and touched on similar strengths and weaknesses. The University had received an overall positivity rating of 86.28% (across all NSS questions) which meant that it could be classed as the top performing university in London and within the top three in England. However, there were still areas for improvement, including how students interacted with learning resources, the timeliness of assessment feedback, and the extent to which students classed their studies as 'intellectually stimulating.' The new curriculum model and new initiatives being introduced during the 2023-24 year would address these points.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the outcomes and noted the update on areas for development.</p>

<p>7.</p>	<p>Student Recruitment Update</p> <p>The Chief Commercial Officer updated the Committee on the number of new students who had joined the University in September and the anticipated number of new starters for January 2024. In terms of international students, there had been a lower number of applications from some regions (India, in particular), but increased interest from other areas. Though the outturn represented a very healthy 10% increase in enrolments on last Autumn's intake, it fell c.45 students short of target. This was likely due to a combination of internal (capacity, operations) and external factors – including some negative market sentiment resulting from changes to dependent visas and health surcharges. In addition, there appeared to be a global decrease in interest in January study in the UK. The picture for Autumn 2024 recruitment, however, already looked more positive. The CCO explained the measures that the University had put in place to bolster the capacity of the Admissions Team and to create a more efficient process for following up on enquires. In addition, some programmes, such as MA Psychotherapy & Counselling, were in particularly high demand and more place student places had been created where there was capacity to do so.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Learning and Teaching Strategy</p> <p>The Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching introduced the updated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which had been endorsed by the LTSE Committee. She explained that the updates reflected the introduction of the new curriculum model. The Strategy was underpinned by three pillars: nurturing individual growth; re-imagined curricula and assessments; and excellent teaching and transformative learning. A key factor in delivering the Strategy would be the professional development of staff; therefore, the Directors of People would play an important role in delivering the Strategy, alongside the Directors of Content and other teams at the University. The AP Learning & Teaching explained how the results of the TEF and the NSS had also been taken on board when updating the Strategy.</p> <p>When reviewing the document, the LTSE Committee had commented on the need to create sub-strategies and a timeline which would act as a framework for the implementation of the LTA Strategy. Some aspects of the Strategy would be delivered via existing 'business as usual' structures, but other aspects may require more formal project management. Further details about the next steps would be reported to the LTSE Committee in spring 2024.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the clear alignment between the updated LTA Strategy and the new University Strategic Plan 2023-28. Committee Members commented that they supported the new LTA Strategy and that it was helpful to increase transparency about the University's academic ethos and goals via publication of the Strategy. In response to a question, the AP Learning & Teaching explained that, as well as measuring the success of the Strategy via the Annual Monitoring Review process and student surveys (internal and the NSS) a set of specific KPIs would be developed as part of the next steps. These could incorporate progression and retention rates.</p> <p>The Committee discussed how AI might impact on learning and teaching, both in positive and negative ways. The AP Learning & Teaching confirmed that a more detailed framework on the use of AI at Regent's would be developed as one of the sub-strategies of the LTA Strategy and that she was working with the Learning Experience Team to look at these issues. As part of this, further guidance for students would also be issued on the use of AI. In addition, it was important to consider what digital up-skilling staff may need in the coming months and years and how new digital tools could be used to benefit students. The Chair added that there was also a project underway to look at the 'Regent's Academic' and to identify the core expectations of academic staff, in order to deliver the best possible student experience and to meet the goals set out in the LTA Strategy.</p>

	The Committee welcomed and approved the updated LTA Strategy.
9.	<p>Reports from the Quality Committee</p> <p>The Committee received the Annual Report of the Quality Committee (2022-23) and a written update on term one. The Quality Committee Chair (the Head of Registry) explained how the focus of the November meeting had been a review of the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). Generally, staff had engaged very well with the review process. The Committee had identified feedback for some report authors and had discussed how the review process could be made more efficient in future years. A number of areas of good practice had also been identified. A summary report on AMRs would be considered by the Quality Committee in the spring, and this information would then form part of the Academic Assurance Report, to be considered by the Academic Committee in March.</p> <p>The Quality Committee Chair also drew attention to the other business considered by the Committee, including updates on external examiner appointments, the latest validation schedule, the positive outcome of the HCPC review, a new Learner Contract pilot, and an update on OIA cases and subscription costs. The Quality Committee had endorsed a proposal that the University appoint a Chief External Examiner, to provide additional oversight and continuity. The Academic Committee was now asked to consider this proposal.</p> <p>The annual update summarised what business had been carried out by the Quality Committee in 2022-23 and how it had fulfilled its terms of reference.</p> <p>The Committee agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) To note the annual update of the Quality Committee (2022-23) and the update on Term One (2023-24). ii) To approve the appointment of a Chief External Examiner.
10.	<p>Terms of Reference of Academic Sub-Committees (and the Academic Committee)</p> <p>The Head of Governance reminded the Committee that, following a full review of all sub-committee terms of reference in the summer term, it had been agreed that further consideration be given to updating the terms of reference of the Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) and the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC). These reviews had now taken place. In particular, it was proposed that the LTSEC membership be rebalanced to increase the proportion of academic staff. The revised CPC terms of reference now provided clearer distinction between the role of this committee (focusing on academic and quality matters) and the role of the Executive (focusing on commercial aspects of new partnerships). The CPC would continue to report directly to the Academic Committee, but would also provide written updates to the Quality Committee and LTSEC, as required. In addition to these changes, minor amendments were proposed for the terms of reference of Quality Committee and other sub-committees, as set out in the report.</p> <p>The Committee agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) To approve the amendments to the terms of reference for the Collaborative Provision Committee, the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, and the Quality Committee, as set out within the report. ii) To approve the following changes to the terms of reference for all academic sub-committees and for the Academic Committee's terms of reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating job titles to reflect new Associate Provost titles, as set out in the report. • Noting that the secretary role for each sub-committee may be carried out by any member of staff from a relevant support team or by a member of the Governance Office (to reflect current trial arrangements).

<p>11.</p>	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>The Committee considered the new and revised policies which had been reviewed by the relevant sub-committees. It was noted that the Safeguarding and Managing Student Risk Policy would bring together (and replace) three separate policies: the Under 18s Policy, the Cause for Concern Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. These documents had been streamlined so that the new policy would be more accessible for staff and students. The new policy also set out the process for identifying and making use of a 'wellbeing contact', in the case of concern about a student's welfare.</p> <p>In relation to the Attendance Monitoring Policy, the AP Student Experience explained that one further amendment would be made to this to reflect that the General Misconduct Policy had now replaced the Student Disciplinary Policy. The Head of Registry explained that the Proofreading Policy would also be updated (at Schedule A) to confirm whether the collaborative partners would be making use of this Regent's policy.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Academic Ethics Review Policy b) Safeguarding and Managing Student Risk Policy c) Policy for Communication with Students d) Attendance Monitoring Policy (subject to the amendment above) e) Student Code of Conduct f) Collection Development and Management Policy g) Proofreading Policy (subject to the amendment above).
<p>Part B: Items for Information</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Progression, Retention and Forced Interruption in Study</p> <p>The Committee noted the new proposal in relation to progression, retention and forced interruption in study, which had been approved by the LTSE Committee. The proposal was to enable students to follow a 'directed studies' option (such as one-to-one learning), rather than forcing students to take a break in studies and await the next occurrence of a module. This would provide a better educational experience for students and would encourage retention. Further details about this new process and its quality assurance were set out within the report.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed this approach and noted the update.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Course Design Process</p> <p>The AP Learning and Teaching explained that the new Course Design Process had been discussed by the LTSE Committee in the summer and that, following the Committee's comments and some final amendments, the process was being launched formally this term. The process reflected on the work that had been carried out to design the new curriculum and set out how different stakeholders (such as academic teams, the quality team, the learning experience team, and the learning and resources team) all played a role in designing and bringing to fruition new courses. The Chief Commercial Officer commented that this process also complemented the initial work carried out by the Executive and commercial teams to identify new areas of development.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the new Course Design Process and noted the update, thanking teams for their work to launch this.</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer provided a summary of the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register and highlighted how the University was addressing the higher-risk areas. He explained that 'retention' was likely to have an improved risk rating by the spring, due to the positive</p>

	<p>movement in recent figures. Recent work to further strengthen the collaborative provision framework and to recruit to posts in this area also meant this this risk was reduced.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update on the Strategic Risk Register.</p>
15.	<p>Conferment List The Committee noted the conferments since March 2023, as set out in the report.</p>
16.	<p>Draft Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes The Committee received and noted the following minutes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Research Committee – 18 October 2023 b. Collaborative Provision Committee – 25 October 2023 c. Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee – 15 November 2023 d. Research Ethics Panel – 20 November 2023
Closing Items	
17.	<p>Confidentiality To be reviewed prior to publication of minutes.</p>
18.	<p>Communication from the Committee No specific items were identified for communication.</p>
19.	<p>Any Other Business None</p>
20.	<p>Next meeting: - 20 March 2024</p>

*Draft Minutes – Subject to Approval by Academic Committee - March 2024
 (Approved by the Committee Chair – January 2024)*