

Academic Committee Minutes

20 March 2024

14:00 – 16:00, MS Teams

Members Present:

Ex-Officio Members

Professor Geoff Smith
 Professor Castulus Kolo
 Professor Maria Charalambous
 Samantha Grady
 Professor Gill Stark
 Steve Ward
 Steph Talliss-Foster
 Carl Teigh
 Dan Lanigan
 Valérie de Saegher
 Mark Parsonage
 Faye Urquhart
 Stephanie Murphy
 Abigaëlle Perrault
 Sophie Slater

Vice-Chancellor & CEO (Chair)
 Non-Exec Board Director (President, Macromedia University)
 Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching
 Associate Provost, Student Experience
 Associate Provost, Academic, Collaborative & Industry Partnerships
 Associate Provost, Quality & Education
 Head of Registry
 Chief Finance Officer
 Chief Commercial Officer
 Director of Human Resources
 Chief Transformation Officer
 Head of Projects
 Head of Student Experience & Wellbeing
 Student Union President
 Student Union Vice-President – Councils and Representation

Elected Members

Amparo Lallana
 Oliver Sterland
 Professor Simon Carrington

Academic Representative - Director level
 Academic Representative - Ass Prof/Sen Lecturer level (up to item 4)
 Academic Representative - Director level

Apologies:

Professor Fary Cachelin
 Professor Lawrence Phillips
 Professor Zubin Sethna
 Tamar Hopkins

Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor
 Associate Provost, Business, Academic Development & Resources
 Academic Representative - Director level
 Student Union Vice-President – Community Development

In Attendance:

Jessica Vine

Head of Governance (minutes)

Opening Items

1.	<p>Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New member, Mark Parsonage (Interim Chief Transformation Officer) was welcomed to the meeting. • Apologies for absence were noted, as set out above.
2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2024</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record. b. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
3.	<p>Chair's Update and Chair's Actions / Email Decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Committee's Email Decisions: It was noted that the following decisions had been taken via email since the last meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the updated Research and Scholarship Strategy (18 January 2024)

- Approval of the updated EDI Policy; the new Collaborative Provision and Partnerships Strategy; the updated Collaborative Provision Policy; and the updated Terms of Reference of the Admissions Panel (26 January 2024)

b. Update from the Chair

The Vice-Chancellor & CEO provided a general update, highlighting that:

- The University's application for Indefinite Degree Awarding Powers (IDAPs), in the form of a self-assessment document and supporting evidence, had been submitted to the OfS at the end of January. The OfS had since come back to Regent's to ask for all External Examiner Reports and Course Specification documents, rather than just a sample. These documents had now been sent back and no further questions had arisen to date. The next stage was for the OfS' assessment team to write up its draft report.
- In terms of student recruitment and enrolment, 337 new starters had commenced in January. This was below the revised target and a 14% drop since January 2023, but in the context of sector-wide recruitment challenges, the figure was seen as a positive result. In addition, the registration process for new starters had seen a significant improvement since September 2023.
- Recruitment indicators for September 2024 looked positive. Whilst the overall number of applications was lower than 2023, the quality of the applications was higher and the number of deposits also higher than at the same point in 2023.
- Following the introduction of the new Retention Strategy, the undergraduate continuation rate was improving and was 2% higher than the previous year, which meant that the University was ahead of its target for 2024.
- A small team led by the Chief Finance Officer was putting together an application for B Corp status. The initial stage was a self-assessment, due for submission this week.

The VC & CEO thanked all involved for their hard work in supporting improved student recruitment, enrolment and continuation. The Committee **noted** the updates.

Part A: Updates and Discussion Items

4. Student Voice Updates

A. Student Union

The Student Union President and the SU's Vice-President, Councils and Representation, presented an update on the work of the SU. It was noted that:

- The SU's Executive Team positions were now almost all filled and new team members had received training. A 'meet the team' social media campaign had been carried out and the SU had rebranded its social media pages to 'Regent's Uni SU' which was more searchable than the previous name (RUL). The media accounts were also making better use of photos (e.g. for International Women's Day) and there was seen to be a higher level of engagement from students in general.
- Since January the SU and its societies had held 23 events, including eight society events, ten social events, two wellbeing and EDI events, two academic events and one council event.
- There were thirteen active student societies. WhatsApp was now being used for the society events and announcements, which helped to build a sense of community. This was also being considered as a tool for councils and the student representatives. The SU was seeking feedback from the societies on whether it could provide increased support for them in future.

B. Update from the Associate Provost, Student Experience

The Associate Provost, Student Experience updated the Committee on the sector report:

Building Belonging in Higher Education, which had found that students who were friends with other students were likely to provide better feedback on student services and on their university

in general, i.e. by building a sense of community students felt more positive. This highlighted the importance of continuing to support student activities and networks at Regent's.

A Committee Member commented that it would be beneficial for study abroad students to be more involved in student activities whilst they were at Regent's. Another Committee Member thanked the Student Union for attending a course session to discuss what activities were available for all students: it appeared that many students had not been aware of the social and support activities which were already available; therefore, additional communication on this, particularly for first year students, could be helpful. The VC & CEO added that there was a shared responsibility for all staff at the University to make students feel welcome and to foster a sense of belonging.

The AP, Student Experience provided an overview of a report on student feedback at Regent's which had been taken to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee. It was noted that term one had initially seen some challenges, but overall, the feedback from students was very positive. A new starter survey had seen similarly good scores in September 2023 and January 2023, with both surveys seeing an increase in scoring in comparison with the September 2022 survey. Students were particularly positive about their first impressions of the campus; about the student community; and about academic staff.

Areas rated slightly lower in the surveys included registration and timetabling, catering, the speed of response of the ASK Centre, and library resources. These were known areas for improvement and the University was already taking additional measures to address them (such as bringing in temps for the ASK Centre and better aligning learning resources with reading lists as part of the module development process). In April the Library team would be holding focus groups to gain a better understanding of student priorities. Other areas of work included guidance and drop-in sessions for students seeking further academic support, and the provision of a new template for assessment feedback to ensure that all students received similar quality feedback. The term two and Module Evaluation Surveys would provide an indication of whether this work had had an impact on the student experience.

The Committee **noted** the updates.

5. NSS Response Rates

The Associate Provost, Student Experience explained that the current response rate for participation in the National Student Survey at Regent's was 53.3%. This was lower than at the same time in March 2023, which was most likely to be due to the fact that student voice champions had become involved at a slightly later point this year. It was expected that the overall response rate could be brought up to the same level as in 2023.

The Committee **noted** the update.

6. Update on 'The Regent's Academic'

The Vice-Chancellor & CEO explained that the 'Regent's Academic' project followed on from the 'Regent's Model' and the 'Regent's Way' and focused on how academic staff could support these new ways of working. The project was being led by the Director of HR and the Provost & DVC who were working with academic teams and the Directors of People in particular.

The Director of HR explained that a description of the values that embodied the Regent's Academic would soon be published on the staff intranet (on the 'academic hub') and would be used for job descriptions when recruitment was carried out. Part of the project also related to workforce planning, to ensure that new, permanent posts were provisionally budgeted for in advance, so that recruitment could start earlier (i.e. in April), rather than the University being overly reliant on Visiting Lecturers recruited at shorter notice. Posts would be advertised both internally and externally. There were also proposals to work more closely with the Associate

Provost, Learning & Teaching and her team, in order to provide a more bespoke academic induction to the University, in addition to the general all-staff induction.

Another strand of the Regent's Academic work was enhancing the performance management process, with oversight from the AP, Business, Academic Development & Resources and the Directors of People. This looked at how to apply consistent objectives and minimum standards for all academic staff. In addition, part of the project looked at career progression and how to reinstate a clearer system for academic promotion. The Provost & DVC was working on a proposal which would be shared with the academic representatives on the Joint Consultative Committee initially, and would then be brought back to the Academic Committee following a consultation period.

In response to a question on the involvement of academics in developing the vision for the 'Regent's Academic,' the VC & CEO explained that the starting point was the Regent's Model, the Regent's Way and the University's strategies which had been consulted on previously. Academic leaders such as the Associate Provosts and the Directors of People had also provided input. The project was about ensuring that excellent performance was recognised and that there was a consistent approach to teaching across the University, to ensure the best experience and outcomes for students. This tied in with the University's ambition to achieve a Gold TEF outcome in future. The AP, Learning & Teaching added that initiatives such as the assessment template (for student feedback) helped to provide a consistent approach. In addition, as part of the Regent's Academic project the University was seeking to define what key academic attributes were necessary for the 'Regent's Scholar.' An initial consultation had taken place on this with the academic community, and once it was defined more precisely, further feedback from academic staff would be sought.

In response to a question about professional staff, it was noted that some aspects of the project, such as the focus on performance management, were applicable for all staff. Other aspects, such as a career progression scheme, were focused on academic staff as there was currently seen to be less movement and progression for academic staff than for professional staff. It was also necessary to be mindful of the sector context and that specific progression routes, e.g. from lecturer up to professor, were common in the sector. However, it was important for all staff to have progression opportunities, so this would be kept under review in case the number of professional staff opportunities were seen to decrease.

The Committee **noted** the update on the Regent's Academic, and that a further update on the academic career paths would be received at the next meeting.

[Action – Head of Governance to add the above update to the July agenda.]

7. Learning and Teaching Update

The Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching, reported on the following points:

The Curriculum Model Project / General Update

- With the new curriculum model, the updated Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy in place, and the validation of new courses, there was a significant amount of work happening in the learning and teaching sphere at the moment. The Provost's Group was discussing which activities should be prioritised and how to move forwards with the target to achieve TEF Gold at the next assessment.
- As part of the implementation of the Regent's Curriculum Model, there was currently a focus on special electives (how this would work in practice for each student) and how level 7 courses could be aligned with the new model. An evaluation of the level 4 common module offerings was also taking place, to see whether these could be enhanced. The team was planning on carrying out facilitation training over the summer to support academics with larger classes.

- Four new undergraduate degrees were being developed. The Student Union Vice-President – Community Development was assisting with this as part of the student panel. Three new postgraduate courses had very recently been validated and the University was now moving towards validation of the new course in Luxury Hospitality Management.
- The team would next need to start planning for introducing new courses in 2025 and for a wide range of re-validations for existing courses, particularly a number of postgraduate courses.
- An application for Advance HE re-accreditation was being submitted which would allow staff to gain teaching fellowships. Learning support staff and Registry staff could also gain fellowships: it was noted that the Head of Registry was already a Principal Fellow.

Approach to AI at Regent's

The AP, Learning & Teaching explained that the use of AI for learning, teaching and assessments was a fast-moving issue and required discussion across the University. It was important to develop a unified, holistic approach. In the short-term there was a need to send clear messaging to students on the use of generative AI for assessments, given the very rapidly evolving technology. The AP, Learning & Teaching would bring back a more detailed report on this matter shortly.

The Committee **noted** the updates and agreed that it was important to develop a unified approach to AI.

[Action – Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching to keep the Committee updated on the approach to AI at Regent's.]

Part B: Reports Submitted via the Quality Committee for Approval / Discussion

8. Report from the Quality Committee

The Quality Committee Chair (the Associate Provost, Quality & Education) introduced this report which summarised the business considered by the Quality Committee at its meeting on 28 February 2024.

The QC Chair highlighted key issues considered by the Committee which included: an update on the work of the Collaborative Provision Committee; a review of the 2022-23 External Examiner Annual Reports and a mapping of Regent's practice against the UKSCQA External Examiner Principles. The Committee had also considered a number of reports which were now being referred to the Academic Committee for consideration (items 9-14 below).

The QC Chair thanked the Head of Registry for her work to review and respond to all External Examiner reports and thanked the Quality Manager for arranging a visit from the QAA in June 2024 in relation to the University's International Programme.

In relation to the introduction of new moderation forms for assessment submissions (as set out in the QC report), two Committee Members commented that it would be helpful to have further discussions on this approach. The Head of Registry explained that this approach had been put in place following recommendations from External Examiners and that the forms provided guidance to staff where moderation was required. However, there would certainly be an opportunity to further review and refine the approach taken in discussion with academic staff in future.

The Committee thanked the QC Chair and the Head of Registry for this update which was **noted**.

9. Institutional Report on Academic Quality and Standards 2022/23

The Committee considered the report on Academic Quality and Standards for the 2022/23 year (formerly known as the Academic Assurance Report). The report would be received by the Board of Directors at its next meeting.

The Head of Registry explained that the report drew together a number of quality-related issues and provided an overview of the University's current position and the health of its academic courses. For future years, the report would include more information about extenuating circumstances and academic appeals, once the data collection process had improved. Key successes highlighted in the report included the strong NSS results, positive External Examiner reports, and the achievement of TEF Silver.

The Committee welcomed this report and thanked the Head of Registry for providing a comprehensive analysis of institutional quality. A Committee Member commented that for the report next year it would be helpful to highlight which metrics were likely to be most relevant in working towards the TEF Gold standard. It was also noted that the continuation data at paragraph 2.7 may need a minor update to reflect the latest position, which had improved since the report was originally drafted (due to more data becoming available). In response to a question, the Head of Registry explained that the report looked at the quality and standards for any awards made in Regent's name, so collaborative provision arrangements would form part of the report.

The Committee thanked the Head of Registry for the report and agreed to **approve** it for submission to the Board of Directors, subject to the comments set out above.

[Action - Head of Registry to take forward the comments on the Institutional Report on Academic Quality and Standards, as set out above (updating continuation data for 2022-23; including more detail about TEF metrics and collaborative provision in the 2023-24 report).]

10. Continuous Improvement Planning

The Head of Registry explained that this report looked at the Annual Monitoring Report process and that the Quality Committee had agreed that it was more appropriate to rename this as 'Continuous Improvement Planning' to reflect an interactive learning-cycle approach. A new mid-year review stage would also be introduced, and the process would become more discursive. The VC & CEO agreed that this was a positive approach to take. The Associate Provost, Learning & Teaching explained how the University would seek to share good practice more widely. For example, in the next academic year an intranet page could be created to share positive stories identified via the Continuous Improvement process.

The Committee welcomed this approach and **approved** the new process, as set out in the report.

11. Academic Regulations and Policies 2024-25

The Head of Registry provided a brief overview of the amendments that had been made to academic regulations and policies for 2024-25. In addition to some updates made to reflect new practice, all policies had been reviewed with the aim of taking a 'plain English' approach and of making them more accessible to students. In relation to the Assessment and Course Regulations, it was noted that a further review of the condonement regulations may be carried out in the near future. The Head of Registry explained that there was an aim to bring the academic regulations for 2025-26 to the July 2024 Academic Committee meeting for approval. This would ensure that they could be published at a much earlier date and that students applying to study in 2025 could see what policies and regulations would be applicable to them.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the updates (as set out in the papers) to the following policies and regulations for 2024-25:

- a. Admissions complaints
- b. European credit transfer system
- c. Fitness to Study
- d. Handling sensitive and confidential documents
- e. Rescinding credit

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Student complaints g. Academic appeals h. External examiners i. Interruption of studies, transfer, and withdrawal j. Quality assurance monitoring and enhancement k. Assessment and course regulations l. Assessment Boards m. Admissions Policy
12.	<p>Assessment and Board Dates (2024-27)</p> <p>The Head of Registry explained that feedback from Regent's staff and External Examiners had highlighted that earlier communication of board dates and of term dates would be beneficial. The earlier agreement would also mean that the 'Chair's Action' process did not need to be used, except in unusual circumstances. The report included expected time periods for the final assessment submission dates and for providing feedback to students.</p> <p>A Committee member asked about implementing the changes during 2024 and how best to approach this transitional period. The Head of Registry explained that this would require either bringing the assessment submission dates forward this summer, or moving the board dates back, which would have an effect on the 2024-25 term. The VC & CEO agreed that this required further consideration.</p> <p>In response to a further question, the Head of Registry explained that the proposed deadlines in autumn and winter mean that the University would be in a better position for welcoming new and continuing students in January.</p> <p>Committee Members commented that the approach was helpful and that it was important to get Directors of Content to engage with the process and to provide feedback. A Member suggested that it would also be helpful to consider why the academic calendar was compressed and whether this was in relation to the existence of a summer term for foundation students.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to approve the dates in principle, subject to any final comments being received from the relevant course teams over the next two weeks.</p>
13.	<p>Validation Schedule</p> <p>The Committee considered the report and agreed to approve the validation schedule for 2024-25.</p>
14.	<p>Open University Monitoring Report</p> <p>The Committee considered the update on the Open University's monitoring of the DPpsych course and welcomed the positive outcome. The VC & CEO thanked all teams who had been involved in this process. It was noted that the course was being taught-out but the University was still currently required to undergo the same level of monitoring and the same fee, as the OU provided the doctoral level award.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report and thanked the Registry and DPpsych teams for their work to achieve a positive result.</p>
<p>Part C: Items for Information / Endorsement</p>	
15.	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer highlighted the changes to the Strategic Risk Register since the last meeting. There were currently three red/high risks, but two were expected to be reduced in the near future due to the mitigation work in place. The cyber security risk was likely to remain high due to the evolving nature of the risk and the potential implications of any cyber attack, if it were to be successful.</p>

	The Committee noted the update.
16.	<p>Draft Sub Committee Meeting Minutes</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the following minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collaborative Provision Committee – 31 January 2024 (The Chair of the CPC reported that he was intending to introduce a standing report from the CPC to the Quality Committee and to the Academic Committee in future.) b. Research Committee – 7 February 2024 c. Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee – 21 February 2024 d. Quality Committee – 28 February 2024
17.	<p>Updated Terms of Reference of the Research Committee</p> <p>The Head of Governance explained the minor updates to the Research Committee's Terms of Reference which related to membership details and the reporting of sub-committees. She thanked the current Committee Secretary who was soon to be leaving Regent's for another role.</p> <p>The Committee approved the amendments to the Research Committee's Terms of Reference, as set out in the report.</p>
18.	<p>Academic Committee Elections Timeframe</p> <p>The Head of Governance explained that four of the elected committee roles were due for renewal and that the current elected members were eligible to stand again, if desired.</p> <p>The Committee noted the upcoming committee vacancies and endorsed the proposed election timeframe, as set out in the report.</p>
Closing Items	
19.	<p>Confidentiality</p> <p>It was noted that some of the discussions (e.g. on the Regent's Academic) were currently confidential and that redaction may be required before publication of the minutes.</p>
20.	<p>Communication from the Committee</p> <p>None</p>
21.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None</p>
22.	<p>Next meeting:</p> <p>3 July 2024</p>