

Minutes

Title:	Academic Council
Date:	1 st December 2021
Time:	3:00pm
Place:	Room 1.01 / Microsoft Teams

Present:	Charles Hunt	Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
	Steve Vogel	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
	Graham Sharman	Dean of Academic Development
	Hilary Abbey	Head of Research
	Francesca Wiggins	Head of Clinical Practice
	Mark Waters	Chair of Foundation Portfolio Board
	Heather Batten	Head of Quality
	Sara Wazifdar	Student Support Manager
	Robert McCoy	Faculty Representative (Full-Time)
	Kevin McGhee	External Representative (AECC)
	Alex Bols	In Attendance
	Ian Sanderson	Registrar (Secretary)

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

1.1 Noted:	That apologies were received from:	
	Sharon Potter	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
	Soran David	Faculty Representative (Part-Time)

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 16th June 2021 (AC-21-01-02)

2.1 Agreed:	the minutes of the meeting held on 16 th June 2021.
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3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting (AC-21-01-03)

3.1 Noted:	
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Actions from the Academic Council meeting on 16th June 2021

Responsibility	Minute/s	Initial action/s	Outcome/s
Head of Quality	8.4	External Examiner Nominations (PGC ANI) Mentoring would be made available to the external examiner for the PGC Animal Osteopathy.	Completed
Head of Quality	7.4	Periodic Review Schedule 2021-2022 The PGC SPOP and UCO Education Conference dates would be reviewed for avoid possible clash in March 2022.	Completed – Education Conference deferred to 2023
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education)	12.1	Revised Committee Structure and Terms of Reference A paper, providing the wider context to the proposed change to the Committee structure following review, would be prepared for a future meeting.	On Agenda

4. Chair's Actions

a) SMUG

- 4.1 Noted That the partner conditions had been met and an external examiner for the PGC was approved following approval.
- 4.2 Noted The remaining items completed through Chairs action.

5. Vice-Chancellor's Report (AC-21-01-05)

- 5.1 Noted The Vice-Chancellor's report

6. Nominations for Honorary Degrees, Awards and Titles

- 6.1 Noted That there had been a reduction in applications for honorary titles and awards in recent years, but this scheme was important to promote. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) and Head of Research have been considering the scheme in the context of promoting research opportunities and think some aspects could be clarified and tightening up, for example in terms of timings.
- 6.2 Noted That the relevant sections of the Academic Quality Framework would need reviewing to ensure it was still aligned with any amendment to the scheme's regulations.
- 6.3 Agreed That the Honorary Awards scheme would be promoted in a future staff newsletter to make staff more aware of this.

7. Amendments to Committee Terms of Reference (AC 21-01-07)

a) Widening Participation Sub-Committee

- 7.1 Noted That the reporting line was being amended to feed directly into the Academic Council. Approved subject to student representative approval.

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7.2 Approved The amended terms of regulations provided no further comments were received from students.

b) Teaching Quality and Standards Sub-Committee

7.3 Noted That the proposed terms of reference reflected the changes to the Widening Participation Sub-Committee to feed directly into Academic Council as well as the Collaborative Partnership Sub-Committee. Take a student representative off that committee given students should be feeding into other committees.

7.4 Noted That the changes also proposed removing the need for a student representative to attend this Committee, as securing this had proved problematic in the past. This was partly because this replicated student participation on other Committees that fed into the Teaching Quality Sub-Committee, for example the Widening Participation Sub-Committee and the Staff Student Liaison Sub-Committee.

7.5 Approved The amended terms of regulations provided no further comments were received from students.

c) Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee

7.6 Noted The main change in respect of the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee was to assume primary responsibility for considering such items as partner annual reports, which currently was the responsibility of the Teaching Quality Sub-Committee. The Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee was also light in terms of academic representation so additional members were being added to bolster its capacity to take on this increased workload. Finally, the meetings frequency would be amended to once every two months rather than once per month.

7.7 Noted Whether the Committee would be as effective if the meeting was once every two months as this would double the paperwork being considered at each meeting. That difficulty would be lessened with additional academic representation on the Committee to help share the workload, but the main benefit would be to help with turnaround times for the Committee business, as currently this was very short. It was hoped that having additional academic representation would help provide staff with additional opportunities to learn about academic management.

7.8 Approved The amended terms of regulations provided no further comments were received from students.

d) Academic Council

7.9 Noted The main change was to remove the September meeting, as this was being held at a time when individuals were preparing for the new term, also there were holidays being taken as well as being out of term for many students who were required to attend.

7.10 Noted It would be important to ensure that key Academic Council business, such as modifications to programmes, should be completed and be ready for approval in time for the Academic Council in June if it was to be approved for the start of the next academic year. This was important in any case as amendments should not be being submitted for approval so close to the start of the next academic year.

7.11 Noted It was noted that there were currently separate provision for members for learning support (briefly the UCO Librarian) as well as student support and it was felt that the numbers would be rationalised so that only one member needed to attend the Committee as appropriate, reflecting the collaborative structure of these areas.

7.12 Approved The amended terms of regulations provided no further comments were received from students.

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e) Pre-Board of Examiners

7.13 Noted These were minor amendments to reflect existing reporting structures, for example to remove reference to Portfolio Boards and the University of Bedfordshire, which was no longer appropriate.

7.14 The amendments to the Pre-Board of Examiners terms of reference.

Approved

f) Research and Scholarship Strategy Committee

7.15 Noted The terms of reference had been amended to include responsibly for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), as well as innovation, research culture and research integrity in response to comments received from the external representative. External also suggested students. Identified a couple of doctoral students based at the UCO to add to membership. Taken out doctoral programme link to TQSC as this is in abeyance pending development of programme. HB suggested adding oversight of the research misconduct policy - agreed to add this as well.

7.16 Noted That reference to the doctoral training programme had been taken out as this was currently in abeyance pending development of a new programme. Previously the taught elements of the programme reported to TQSC with the research component coming through to the Research and Scholarship Strategy Committee.

7.17 Noted That the external representatives had also suggested having student representatives on the Committee, as the programme was in abeyance whilst the PhD was being developed. However, on reflection, there were one or two doctoral students physically based at the UCO who could serve on the Committee, and it was agreed that the membership should be expanded to include a student representative completing a doctoral degree, although this would not be at the UCO.

7.18 Noted That reference to the research misconduct policy should also be explicitly added to the terms of reference. It was felt that this came under research integrity although there were specific activities, such as annual reporting and reviews of the research misconduct policy, which meant that it should be explicitly stated.

7.19 Agreed Agreed subject to the additional of a student representative in the membership and the addition of oversight of the research misconduct policy

g) Research Ethics Committee

7.20 Noted That these were minor changes, with adjustments to the Committee membership and the removal of the appeal procedure through the University of Bedfordshire.

7.21 Agreed The amendments to the Research Ethics Committee terms of reference.

8. **PGCert Academic & Clinical Education External Examiner Extension of Duties (AC-21-01-08)**

8.1 Noted This programme would be running from January 2022 following a hiatus of one year. The course would be reviewed shortly so it seemed appropriate to retain the existing external examiner whilst this review was completed. As there had been a break the current external had completed one cycle less than normal.

9. **External Examiner Annual Report Synthesis 2020-2021 (AC-21-01-09)**

9.1 Noted That this report covered internal programmes only and not the partner programmes.

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- 9.2 Noted That the adaptations to consider the disruption caused by Covid-19 were commended. Unfortunately, the external examiners were not able to visit the UCO to sample practical and clinical examinations due to restrictions, but it was hoped this would happen this year. It was also hoped that the external examiners would also be able to meet with the students as well.
- 9.3 Noted That the report contained areas of duplication in the format of the report that would be addressed
- 9.4 Noted That it was noted that questions of assessment and feedback were highlighted as an area to be addressed. This was common to other institutions and at the AECC, training for staff in providing assessment and feedback was being put in place to ensure this was enhanced.
- 9.5 Noted That a response to the SPOP external examiner report had yet to be received but the external examiner report had been submitted.
- 9.6 Agreed That the report would be submitted as an appendix to the Board of Directors.

10. CWSH New Course Proposals (AC-21-01-10)

- 10.1 Noted That the UCO had previously validated sports leadership and management courses, but these had been put into abeyance due to Covid-19 and the College now see Esports as a more strategic fit. The UCO already validated one e-sports course, International Esports Business and were therefore proposing additional courses based around this. These were planned for September 2022
- 10.2 Noted The proposed courses align with company objects - underlying areas are of leadership, managements, business management, training, personal development, mentoring etc, which is part of healthcare management, which is part of the UCO mission. The UCO mission statement also refers to the highest quality education and research for all. This is referred to in the strategic plan which refers to education and broadening undergraduate provision. A lot of transferable skills within these courses. This niche would help with Access and Participation as it was intended that these programmes would reach non-traditional students.
- 10.3 Noted It was questioned whether the UCO had sufficient academic expertise to own and validate the full range of subject areas covered by these proposed programmes, as this was one of the requirements for validation. This would be one of the roles provided by external examiners. Furthermore, a number of these areas have underlying themes, such as business management, which members of Faculty do have. It was noted that the UCO currently validates Acupuncture courses but don't have explicit academic expertise in those areas although it seemed clear that Acupuncture is more a linked healthcare subject area, which seemed more tenuous to Esports.
- 10.4 Noted Business is something that is something that had been identified as an area the UCO need to development to ensure students were prepared for their professional life so it may be helpful to develop expertise to provide this for the M.Ost as well as provide an academic oversight,
- 10.5 Noted That Pearson provide a BTEC in Esports, which had no linked undergraduate programme, and CWSH was hoping to develop links to this, and it was suggested that an Access route could be an option, as the target audience is local young children and there is a large market for a qualification for those without formal qualifications.
- 10.6 Noted The possibility that students taking a digital degree being validated by the UCO as a healthcare education institution and might there be a concern that the degree would not be seen as worthwhile. This had been discussed and was not seen as a problem, as there were other examples of institutions widening their provision. It was also noted that the numbers would not impact on the UCO's student numbers or it's charitable status.
- 10.7 Agreed That this would be approved but TQSC and CPSC would look at strengthening academic oversight.

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11. Annual Summaries (AC-21-01-11)

a) Student Academic Appeals

11.1 Noted The number of cases is larger than previous years, possibly due to the current situation with Covid-19 as students were returning to more formal examinations after a year where some assessments could not take place, and as controls over special circumstances were reimposed. Some cases were still ongoing as late assessments were being completed so the numbers of cases were expected to increase.

a) Student Academic Discipline

11.2 Noted There was an increase in cases of Academic Discipline, mainly plagiarism as Turnitin was increasingly used. Some issues occurred as students were following work made available as examples of best practice on Bone, so greater clarity on students using these may be helpful in avoiding this.

a) Student DBS Cases

11.3 Noted The Student DBS annual report, which only featured minor cases that were cleared automatically. The UCO had also been recently audited by the DBS and an action plan had been agreed as a result.

a) Student Complaints

11.4 Noted The overall numbers were in line with previous years, with one theme being the number of complaints relating to their experience with clinical tutors. There were three cases, one of which was raised by a group of students.

a) Student Fitness to Practice

11.5 Noted The number and type of cases considered were similar to previous years.

a) Student Misconduct Cases

11.6 Noted That student misconduct cases were mainly linked to Covid-19 and breaches of regulations. Although the number of separate cases was relatively low, the number of students involved in each case meant overall the total number of students affected was higher.

12. Freedom of Speech Policy (AC-21-01-12)

12.1 Noted That this document did not seem fully updated in line with Office for Student and UCO requirements so would be brought back for consideration at a future meeting.

12.2 Noted The wording and definition of protected characteristics in section 2.1 needed further review to ensure this was comprehensive. This currently included a definition of harassment on the grounds of religion and sexual orientation but not other protected characteristics such as gender.

12.3 Agreed That the Freedom of Speech Policy would be brought back for approval at a future meeting.

13. M.Ost and MSc Programme Annual Reports (AC-21-01-13)

13.1 Noted The MSc and M.Ost annual reports, which have been fully considered and approved by TQSC

14. Revised Research Governance Integrity Policy (AC-21-01-14)

14.1 Noted This policy had been updated to align with the Research Integrity Concordat. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) had also mapped this to the UKRIO self-assessment exercise.

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14.2 Noted It was noted that some old policies titles needed updating e.g., plagiarism policy is now incorporated within the academic discipline policy and is not a separate policy. The quality framework checklist also needed completing.

14.3 The revised policy, subject to the slight amendments discussed in 14.2
Approved

15. Revised Research Misconduct Policy (AC-21-01-15)

15.1 Noted This policy had been revised through benchmarking to other similar policies.

15.2 Noted It was suggested that indicative guidance be given to the panel considering cases against members of staff. For example, the potential range of sanctions. This could be added as it was felt that panel members might struggle to make a decision.

15.3 Noted It was questioned whether the appeals stage should be limited to is five working days and whether this allowed sufficient time. It was noted that other policies considered had five days or although other policies had ten working days. It may help to have slightly longer to be consistent with other procedures in the UCO and may help in cases of external appeal.

15.4 Agreed That the policy would be approved pending the addition of guidelines on potential actions open to the panel as well as the increase in the appeal to ten days pending formal notification of the outcome to the individual concerned.

16. Update on REF (AC-21-01-16)

16.1 Noted The update on the REF. It was noted that the research team had received three audit queries on the REF in the past three days, which needed to be addressed.

17. Update on Doctoral Programme (AC-21-01-17)

17.1 Noted The written update on the doctoral training programme.

18. Update on REC (AC-21-01-18)

18.1 Noted The written update on the REC.

19. Research and Scholarship Biannual Report 2019-21 (AC-21-01-19)

19.1 Noted The Research and Scholarship Report, which was an excellent read. - to note and recommended to read.

19.2 Noted That the external member had provided feedback that the report was great but too long and would benefit from external dissemination through more infographics. The research team were working with the publication office to action these recommendations.

20. Any Other Business (AC-00-00-00)

a) GOSc Annual Report 2021

20.1 Noted The baseline report for the new review process was due on Friday 3rd December and would be circulated once completed.

21. Dates of the Next Meeting

24.1 Noted: 30th March 2022, 2.08 & Microsoft Teams

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15th June 2022, 1.01 & Microsoft Teams