



**Bournemouth
University**

CONFIRMED

ACADEMIC STANDARDS and EDUCATION COMMITTEE (ASEC)

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2019

Present

Prof Tim McIntyre-Bhatty (Chair)
Prof Michael Silk (Deputy Chair)
Adam Child (Secretary)
Mandi Barron
Dr Lois Farquharson
Lenrick Greaves
Georgia Hill
Prof Debbie Holley
Alan James
Elysia Jones

Kelly Lovelock

Jacky Mack
Prof Kevin McGhee
Prof Sam Porter
Dr Christa van Raalte
Dr Sara White

Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Deputy Dean - Research & Professional Practice (FM)
Head of Academic Quality (AS)
Head of Student Services (SS)
Deputy Dean – Education & Professional Practice (FM)
Vice-President (Education), Students' Union (SUBU)
Student Representative, Faculty of Management
Head of Centre for Excellence in Learning (CEL)
General Manager of the Students' Union (SUBU)
Senior Student Representative, Faculty of Media and
Communication
Senior Student Representative, Faculty of Health and Social
Sciences
Head of Academic Services (AS)
Deputy Dean (FST)
Head of Department, Social Sciences and Social Work
Deputy Dean - Education & Professional Practice (FMC)
Acting Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice and
Associate Dean Student Experience (FHSS)

Observers

Anna Burgess
Dr Rebecca Edwards
Judy Smith (Clerk)

Academic Quality Administrator (AS)
Head of Academic Operations (OVC)
Academic Quality Officer (AS)

Apologies

Ann Fernandez

Director of Marketing & Communications

18/106 APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as above.

18/107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18/108 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

18/109 Accuracy: ASEC 30 January 2019 (ASEC-18-069)

The minutes of the January meeting of ASEC were amended as follows:

18/059 Debate item: Developing the Student Voice (Page 3, first paragraph) to read: SUBU was 9th for question number 26 of the NSS and showed that perceptions of effective union representation were 10% above sector average.

18/067 Update on 6C Implementation (Page 7) to read: "In response to a question from the SUBU VP Education it was confirmed that the implementation group had liaised with the SUBU Representatives' team to support student awareness of the consultation exercise on social media."

18/110 Accuracy: e-ASEC 25 February - 1 March 2019 (ASEC-18-085)

The minutes of the e-ASEC meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

18/111 Matters Arising/Actions Log (ASEC-18-086)ESEC 17/035 - Attendance Monitoring/Student Engagement

It was noted that further work was being conducted in this area as part of the work on Information Management and learner analytics as well as the Fusion Based Learning Steering Group. The exploration and implementation of approaches to attendance monitoring had therefore been passed to executive structures to take forward and the action could be closed.

18/007 – ASEC Terms of Reference and Membership

The Head of Academic Services reported that the Senate Minutes from the February meeting were due to be distributed and the covering email would include an invitation for expressions of interest for joining ASEC.

18/060B Student Population Statistics

The scheduled dates for FASEC discussions were noted although the Chair expressed concern that this data had still not been discussed at some of the FASEC meetings. Faculties were aware of the expectation to discuss the outcomes and noted some time constraints in meetings that meant the items needed to be deferred in order to be considered fully.

18/093 (e-ASEC) – Arrivals and Induction Report

The Head of Student Services indicated that colleagues from IT Services were to attend the Arrivals and Induction working group in response to relevant agenda items.

18/094A (e-ASEC) – Peer Reflection on Education Practice: 2018/19

The Deputy Deans had considered the levels of engagement within Faculties and expressed their intention to revise the approach to PREP in order to generate an improved sense of ownership. PREP had evolved to a model where the theme was identified centrally. It was suggested that this be changed to an approach where departments and Faculties identified themes for PREP tied closely to the outcomes from AMER and outlined specifically in AMER action plans. The PREP policy could also be revised to ensure expectations on staff were clear.

The Committee was supportive of this approach although caution was noted to ensure that PREP was also able to build an institutional narrative around developing quality of teaching, rather than a means to managing diverse practices between subject areas. The Committee noted that PREP had facilitated collation of examples of good practice and innovation in themes such as technology-enhanced learning. The central mechanism to capture outputs from PREP was helpful in this context.

Under this action, the Deputy Deans were to continue to develop the proposals in collaboration with CEL and to outline timescales for the review of the PREP policy.

All other actions were still in progress or had been marked as complete as indicated in the Actions Log. It was requested that timescales should be allocated to all actions for future versions of the Actions Log.

18/112 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DEBATE**18/113 Debate item: Defining teaching quality and continuous development of teaching competencies**

The Chair facilitated a discussion on how to define teaching quality and continuous development of teaching competencies. This explored how teaching and the benchmarking of quality could be defined and the ideologies and frameworks underpinning teaching and learning. It was noted that although there were external reference points that helped guide practitioner understanding, ultimately it was the responsibility of institutions to improve teaching practices. Through TEF and other contextual changes there had been a shift in emphasis towards a focus on educational outcomes over and above the act of teaching itself. It was recognised that internal management and assurance processes primarily focused on factors other

than the act of teaching in and around the classroom. Importantly, it was noted that teaching can be consumed but the learning resulting from that interaction was a more active process involving the students themselves.

The external frameworks at the national and supranational levels offered a means through which to identify excellence but the Chair outlined that high-quality teaching also depended on the places, spaces and communities that created the broader university experience. The external frameworks provided an opportunity to reposition the importance of teaching in a similar fashion to that achieved for research activity through REF. It was anticipated that the University would continue to engage with a broad range of external reference points noting in particular the approach to institutional sampling being taken forward by the QAA on the OfS's behalf. The University executed its responsibilities through a variety of reporting and regulatory structures, such as the Academic Quality Annual Report. These mechanisms were very transparent but were noted as not necessarily focusing on the engagement between teachers and learners in the classroom environment.

It was noted that there were processes available that could explore the continuous improvement of teaching practice, such as the approaches to people management, annual monitoring and Focussed Enhancement Review. There was a clear role for peer review to consider the views of colleagues, stakeholders and students, complementing data sources from surveys and understanding of data from complaints and appeals. The emphasis had to be on maximising the quality of the day to day engagement in facilitating the learning of 20,000 students. Direct observation of teaching was a vital component and when done supportively could lead to innovation and other pedagogical enhancements.

The Committee discussed the role of the student voice in supplementing information about the quality of teaching and leading to a visible 'quality culture'. Common practices included regular departmental meetings with student involvement. There was a perceived gap at the departmental level, with touch points at Faculty and programme levels often more regular and consistent. It was expected that the formal Departmental Committees would offer an opportunity for discussion, although it was suggested other forums were needed as formal meetings were only scheduled to take place three times a year. There were also some issues with the level of engagement from students. These were themes for the ongoing Focussed Enhancement Review exploring the student voice.

It was noted that academic staff were active in inviting students in order to provide input. One suggestion was to involve students in the promotion of these feedback opportunities in order to outline the importance to the student community. The Vice-President (Education), Students' Union (SUBU) suggested that more could be done to understand the barriers to engagement and felt that at times academic staff wanted students in the room but were not necessarily as responsive to the input provided. Formal meetings also contained content not as directly relevant to students which could be a barrier to motivation for student representatives.

It was noted that the quality of classroom teaching was difficult to measure and where teacher observation occurred in the school sector the approach was very formulaic and could lead to restrictions on innovation. The Committee discussed some of the proxies for quality that could be used to establish the impact of changes made, such as feedback surveys and student outcomes. The Committee agreed that a key step was ensuring regular monitoring of the classroom experience occurred, providing a foundation for understanding the consequences of enhancements made.

In summing up the debate the Chair noted the steps being taken to enhance meaningful student voice and to monitor teaching practices at departmental level. The role of mentoring and peer review was also very important and the University's approach to peer review had to support these elements across all teaching staff.

18/114 **Debate item: New sector approaches to academic standards**

The Secretary facilitated a discussion regarding recent sector debates around grade inflation, which was raising some concerns with employers and the general public. This was within the context of the new regulatory environment and the Quality Code which expected that awards made would retain their value over time. Reports published in the last year had provided data on the rate of increase in the award of firsts and upper seconds. BU was in line with other similar institutions and had seen a small increase year on year as indicated through the University's own student population statistics.

As the sector data analyses had controlled for background characteristics, there were several hypotheses that potentially explained the upward movement across the sector, including the efforts made to improve

teaching practice, learning resources and facilities as well as the more focused activity to support widening participation and student success.

It was suggested that a potential reason for the upward movement in degree classifications was the generosity of academic staff who understood the demands on students who were studying as well as working to fund their studies. Academic colleagues were sure this was not the case with regards to standards, but was a factor when supporting students in other ways. This was also a consideration when applying the most stringent penalties in cases of academic offences, noting the debt students would carry should they be expelled from the institution.

The Secretary provided an overview of the steps proposed within the sector to reassure the public of the rigour of quality processes underpinning assessment. These were tied to a 'statement of intent' allowing for greater transparency around regulatory choice and academic governance. BU was confident that its regulations were rigorous and fair and that changes made were informed by understanding of sector practices. Institutions would need to have clarity on the rationale for specific choices made and be able to evidence the reasons for improved academic performance. As a final remark, the Secretary noted that the challenge of perceived grade inflation was not unique to the UK and that similar concerns had been raised in the USA and Germany. These higher education systems operated different models for classifying awards and more fundamental changes to the Honours Degree Classification system remained an option the sector could consider.

18/115 Update on OfS Access and Participation Guidance (ASEC-18-089)

The Head of Academic Services provided an overview of the OfS Access and Participation guidance which outlined the approach institutions were expected to take for developing Access and Participation Plans (APP) applicable from 2020/21 onwards. The APP would now be approved initially for one year, but would roll over automatically and could remain in place for up to five years, allowing the APP to be more strategic in focus. The 2020/21 plan was being written now under the auspices of AEIC with a lead working group and three sub groups developing the details on financial support, evaluation and targets and milestones. The working group was also collaborating with SUBU to ensure meaningful student representation in the shaping of the plan.

OfS would be asking for annual impact reports, reflecting its emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs, such as the levels of investment. Progress towards stated targets would also be considered, with OfS setting its own targets against which institutions would be expected to contribute. BU was in a good position due to the clear alignment between access and participation targets and the University's Key Performance Indicators which demonstrated institutional commitment.

The Committee noted that many members would be directly involved in the development of the APP through membership of AEIC or the AEIC Operations Group. ASEC was due to receive a draft APP at its meeting in May.

18/116 FOR APPROVAL AND ENDORSEMENT

18/117 Annual Report: Appeals and Complaints (ASEC-18-090)

The Secretary provided an overview of the Appeals and Complaints annual report and noted that subject to approval this report would be submitted to the University Board in line with the expectations of the CUC guidance on academic governance. Thanks were noted to Student Services for its contribution to the report and to Faculties for their support in refining the approaches to data collation.

The number of appeals had remained very similar between years both as an absolute number and as a proportion of the student population with some variation between Faculties. The number of upheld appeals had reduced between years and there was confidence in these outcomes as the OIA had not found against the University in the limited number of cases submitted to the adjudicator. There had been an increase in the number of complaints received by the University but this number remained small as a proportion of the population and fewer complaints had been upheld in 2018.

It was noted that there was no national dataset concerning appeals and complaints against which comparisons could be made. Review of institutional OIA statements revealed BU was broadly in line with institutions of a similar size. Direct comparison was made more difficult given the varied procedural approaches to appeals and complaints.

Support was noted for recommendation 9 which sought to explore the reasons for the high proportion of parking appeals that had been upheld.

The Committee noted the ongoing challenges with achieving outcomes within the targeted timescales and queried whether further action could be taken to address this. The Head of Student Services noted that where thresholds were likely to be exceeded communication was maintained with the students and that this was most likely during peak periods around assessment boards. Whilst noting the complexity of the cases that exceeded timescales and efforts made by Faculties, Academic Quality and Student Services to meet these, the Secretary agreed to review the recommendations in this area and amend the report as required.

Action 18/117A: Secretary

The Chair queried the issue raised within paragraph 5.10 regarding the complaints received for the MSc Forensic Toxicology and the subsequent suspension of the programme. The Deputy Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology explained that the suspension of the programme was not a direct result of the complaint but recognised a similar issue regarding the availability of staff with the requisite expertise to deliver the programme to additional cohorts. The report was to be amended to ensure the details of these outcomes were sufficiently clear.

Action 18/117B: Secretary/KMG

The Committee **approved** the Appeals and Complaints Annual Report for submission to the Board subject to the completion of the actions outlined above.

18/118 External Examiner Appointment Termination (ASEC-18-087)

The Deputy Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology introduced the proposal to terminate the appointment of the External Examiner for the BSc (Hons) Forensic Science; BSc (Hons) Forensic Investigation and BSc (Hons) Forensic Biology. The report from the Summer Assessment Board remained outstanding and efforts made to contact the External had not led to a response. The Faculty was in the process of identifying a potential successor.

The Committee **approved** the termination of appointment.

18/119 QAEG Nominations (ASEC-18-088)

The Committee **approved** the nominations.

18/120 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

18/121 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

18/122 Monday – Thursday, 15 – 18 April 2019: e-ASEC

Wednesday, 15 May 2019, 14:00 - 17:00, Boardroom