

Academic Standards and Education Committee (ASEC)

Wed 17 March 2021, 14:00 - Wed 17 March 2021, 17:00

MS Teams

Attendees

Board members

Prof. Tim McIntyre-Bhatty (Chair and Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Jules Forrest (Secretary and Head of Academic Quality), Mandi Barron (Director of Student Services), Chiko Bwalya (Vice-President (Education), Students' Union (SUBU)), Justin Cole (Director of Marketing and Communications), Lauren Francis (FMC Officer), Prof. Christos Gatzidis (Acting Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice (FST)), Samantha Leahy-Harland (Chief Executive, Students' Union (SUBU)), Jacky Mack (Academic Registrar), Callum Ovey (BUBS Officer), Dr Karl Rawstrone (Deputy Head of Department in Media Production, FMC), Dr Gelareh Roushan (Head of Fusion Learning Innovation and Excellence (FLIE)), Dr Shelley Thompson (Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice (BUBS)), Prof. Julie Turner-Cobb (Member of the Professoriate), Dr Sara White (Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice (FHSS))

Apologies

Dr Carol Clark (Member of Senate), Dr Christa van Raalte (Deputy Dean - Education and Professional Practice (FMC))

Observers

Judy Lou Smith (Academic Quality Officer and Clerk)

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

Information

Clerk

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Information

Chair

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings

3.1. Accuracy: ASEC 27 January 2021

The Minutes of the previous meeting were **approved** as an accurate record.

 ASEC Minutes 27.01.2021 - Unconfirmed.pdf

Decision

Chair

3.2. Accuracy: e-ASEC 5 – 12 February 2021

The Summary of the e-meeting was **approved** as an accurate record.

 e-ASEC Summary 5-12 February 2021 - Unconfirmed.pdf

Decision

Chair

3.3. Accuracy: e-ASEC 17 – 19 February 2021

The Summary of the e-meeting was **approved** as an accurate record.

 e-ASEC Summary 17- 19 February 2021 - Unconfirmed.pdf

Decision

Chair

3.4. Matters Arising/Actions Log

5.1.A - Annual Report: Equality and Diversity AY 2019/20 - Figure 1 had been sent to the Chair and would be circulated to the Committee.

5.1.B - Annual Report: Equality and Diversity AY 2019/20 - The report had been updated and would be circulated to the Committee. The Secretary and Clerk would follow this up with the report author.

14 - Academic Integrity Charter - A meeting had been held with Student Services, SUBU and M&C regarding the aggressive marketing messages advertising essay mills which some students in BUBS had received. A message had been drafted and would be sent out to students the following week.

26 - Any Other Business: To discuss allowing students early access to reading lists - Discussions were required regarding the practicalities involved in loading the reading lists onto the website and whether Faculties would be in a position to provide them on time. The Academic Registrar and the Director of M&C were added to the action and would take this forward in conjunction with the Head of FLIE and Director of Student Services.

All other Actions were closed and could be viewed on the Actions Log.

 ASEC Actions Log 2020-21.pdf

4. For Discussion

4.1. Student Services Annual Report

It was noted that this was a contextual report which helped to identify how the university had met Condition B2 of the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration requirement for student support. The statistical part of the report would be made available to the Clerk for circulation to the committee.

Action: Director of Student Services/Clerk

It was noted that neither the report nor the Executive Summary confirmed that the University was effectively meeting Condition B2 and did not explicitly provide evidence of assurance in terms of ongoing compliance. The report does demonstrate that the University provides ongoing effective support to students. The statistical report contained information about the number of students who had received support, the interventions which had been conducted in the Faculties and the demographic population of these students.

It was suggested that the report needed to explicitly address Condition B2 in the OfS Framework: "the provider must support all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education" and demonstrate how the condition was met on an annual basis. It was noted that there was flexibility in how HE providers demonstrate ongoing compliance with conditions of registration. As part of the process for annual reporting against conditions of registration it was helpful to include a judgement to indicate that the University had provided student support as per the conditions of registration and the statement should be made with confidence, which in turn would provide the assurance.

It was also noted that supporting activity related to inclusivity targets could be strengthened in this report, and it should be investigated how this could be included as part of the Digital Pedagogy Framework. In terms of staff supporting students from an inclusivity perspective, the question was what was considered to be reasonable. There were no benchmarks to compare against which made it difficult to determine whether the University was in line with practice across the sector.

The committee noted the report and advised that more consideration was given to points of assurance and to show that reflection had taken place, to provide assurance that the University could provide a statement of confidence regarding compliance with OfS conditions of registration.

The paper was **noted**.

 Student Services Annual Report 2019-20.pdf

Discussion

Ms M Barron

5. For Approval/Endorsement

5.1. Annual Report: Appeals and Complaints - 2020

2019/20 was not a standard year due to the pandemic from March onwards, which undoubtedly had an impact in the area of Appeals and Complaints. The number of academic appeals, which had been falling since 2018, had reduced again by about 20%. From this data it could be derived that students had been reassured with the implementation of the Emergency Assessment Regulations and changes to the exceptional circumstances policies.

Academic complaints had increased from 47 to 66 and the increase could be due to the pandemic; there was a correlation between the areas where complaints had emerged and where students had high expectations around access to resources and specialist resources on campus, which were part of the programmes' attraction within the market.

There had been an impact on the timescales within which appeals and complaints were dealt with at central stage, primarily by Academic Quality. This referred to the team's ability to deal with a case within published timescales. It was reported that the department had been carrying vacancies, staff were in attendance at assessment boards which limited to whom appeals could be allocated and having to prioritise other unforeseen but critical work during this period had influenced this. The issue of timescales needed to be addressed going forward and there were actions for the Academic Quality team to consider. It should be noted that the central stage appeals and complaints conducted by Student Services had achieved 100% response rate within the published timescales and they should be recognised for that achievement.

There was a new section in the report on financial outcomes as an indicator of risk. There were findings around the complaints process which aligned to the CMA review and audit as required by the OfS.

It was noted that the management of the informal stage of the complaint process was not always effective. Certain staff members had perhaps inadvertently steered students towards appealing and/or complaining as teaching staff had been sympathetic with students regarding their inability to access facilities and resources on campus. It was recognised that more training was needed for staff to emphasise the importance of early conversations with students and taking ownership of issues at an earlier stage to create resolutions, rather than resorting to the appeals and complaint process. The committee noted that there was an action identified through the CMA audit to consider the effectiveness of the informal resolution stage for complaints and how much guidance and support was provided to staff to enable them to do this.

In the Executive Summary, point 2.9, it was noted that 28% of admission appeals were upheld. It was questioned as to whether there were trends in these appeals. It was reported that many of these appeals were from students who had not been able to provide the correct information initially but were later able to do so, which resulted in their appeals being upheld. It was noted that there may be a less formal method of dealing with this type of 'appeal'.

It was noted that considering the challenges of the period reported and the difficulties faced in terms of education delivery and assessment, the fact that there had been fewer academic appeals was very positive and a good outcome.

The Chair noted the level of work which had gone into the report and said that it was well put together. It was noted that there were some actions from the previous year which had been carried over and these needed to be referenced and taken forward. The Chair would speak to the Secretary separately regarding a few minor amendments to the report.

The report was **approved** for onward consideration.

 Academic Appeals and Complaints Annual Report 2020.pdf

5.2. Admissions Policy Updates – 3A/3B/3C/3D/3E

In 2020 a review of the ARPPs relating to Admissions was undertaken to reduce duplication, streamline the number of Admissions ARPPs and improve signposting of information for applicants. The following summary reflects the changes which have been made and approved by the Admissions Group:

- The Admissions regulations for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes had been combined into a single policy document.
- The ARPPs in Section 2.5 had been combined into a single policy document.
- Separate regulations, policies and procedures for postgraduate research degrees were being retained.
- In line with the sector, a separate Admissions appeals and complaints policy and procedure was being retained as well as a separate policy for applicants with a criminal record.
- A new policy and procedure had been produced in collaboration with Legal Services for applicants with a disability, medical condition or other support need.

The paper was **approved** for onward circulation at Senate.

 Review of Admissions ARPPS.pdf

5.3. External Examiner Appointments and Examination Teams for Research Degrees

The paper was **approved**.

5.4. Programme Review Deferral Requests

5.4.1. Archaeology and Anthropology in FST

The request was for the review of all undergraduate Archaeology and Anthropology courses to be deferred for a year to Summer 2022. This had the support of Faculty Executive. The request was predominantly related to the disruption created by Covid, but also for other reasons, such as to coincide with the Life and Environmental Sciences (LES) department course review, as there were many common units and this would assist in exploring synergy between the programmes.

The deferral request was **approved**.

 Deferral Request - AAFS in FST.pdf

Decision
Prof C Gatzidis

6. For Note

6.1. Pending External Examiner Appointments

The contract extensions of External Examiners were being progressed and it was noted that these extensions would alleviate pressures on the Faculties as well as Academic Quality, by reducing the number of appointments needed.

The report was **noted**.

 External Examiner Appointments Pending.pdf

Information
Secretary

6.2. Outcomes from recent Evaluation Events and List of Completed Evaluation Events

The report was **noted**.

 Programme Approval and Review Outcomes.pdf

Information
Secretary

6.3. BUBS FASEC Minutes

A discussion had been held at the January FASEC meeting regarding student experience and engagement. The student representatives had been outstanding during the discussion and had addressed some challenging topics as well as the student experience of online learning in the Business School. The DDE wished to applaud the student representatives on their engagement during that meeting.

The Minutes were **noted**.

 BUBS FASEC Minutes.pdf

Information
Dr S Thompson

6.4. FHSS FASEC Minutes

The Minutes were **noted**.

 FHSS FASEC Minutes.pdf

Information
Dr S White

6.5. FMC FASEC Minutes

It was reported to the committee by the Deputy Head of Media Production in FMC, that the HoDs had expressed concern regarding the Student Outcomes Data and the AMER cycle at the March FASEC meeting. The Faculty felt that there was an AMER cycle and colleagues had been asked to do something additional within that process.

It was noted that the AMER is a continuous live plan and should be looked at on a regular basis. There were built in reference points where it was suggested that the plans be presented at FASECs and ASEC. The Student Outcomes data being discussed at FASECs first before being discussed at ASEC was new for this year and could be fully built into the cycle in future to ensure that there was clarity on the process.

The Chair commented that this was the reason that the Student Outcomes Data had been deferred to a later meeting to give Faculties more time to reflect on the data and to ensure that they were reporting on everything.

The Minutes were **noted**.

 FMC FASEC Minutes.pdf

Information
Dr K Rawstrone

6.6. FST FASEC Minutes

The Minutes were **noted**.

Information
Prof C Gatzidis

6.7. Joint Academic Board Minutes

The Minutes were **noted**.

 Joint Academic Board Minutes.pdf

Information
Secretary

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

8.1. Wednesday, 14 April 2021, 14:30 - 16:00, MS Teams

8.2. Wednesday, 19 May 2021, 14:00 - 17:00

