

# Academic Board

Date: 07 October 2022

## Minutes

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

#### 1.1 Present:

Scott Wildman (SW)	Acting Academic Dean (Chair)
Naomi Goulder (NG)	Dean for Academic Development and Innovation
Rebecca Harrison (RH)	Academic Registrar (Secretary)
Brian Ball (BB)	HoF for Philosophy and Head of Research
Catherine Brown (CB)	Head of Faculty and Senior Lecturer in English
Diana Bozhilova (DB)	Head of Faculty for Politics and IR
Marianna Koli (MK)	Dean of Education in Business and Economics
Saxony Anders (SA)	President NCHSU
Bex Morrison (BM)	Registrar
Kasim Randeree( KR)	Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs
Alison Statham (AS)	Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning
Lars Kjaer (LK)	HoF History and Art History
Sandy Morrissey (SM)	Executive Assistant Academic & Minute Secretary

#### 1.2 Apologies:

Sarah McAdam	External Board Member
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#### 1.3. Welcome,

The Chair (SW) opened the meeting and expressed thanks to SM and RH for all their help and support. SW confirmed that he had opened up Academic Board meetings to all faculty members for communication purposes to observe a common sense approach with transparency.

#### 1.4 Terms of Reference

SW brought to the Board's attention the contents of the TOR. Learning, Teaching, and Research are the main focus. The Chair wished to make strategic oversight a priority for the Board going forward. The Chair felt that the Board papers were not always clear as to where items for the Board had originated. He will work with SM & RH to improve clarity on the pathway of items to the Board's Agenda.

The Chair would like Academic promotions noted at the Board Meetings going forward, and "Research" needs to be elevated.

**ACTION: The Chair to revisit TOR to ensure Board's activities support the University's Strategic Plan.**

#### 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

2.1 The Minutes of the Last Meeting were **APPROVED**.

#### 3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Matters Arising were reviewed

#### 4. Chair's Report

SW introduced the Chair's Report and described the purpose of this section which is to update the Board on the work undertaken by the Chair outside of the meetings.

The Chair advised the Board that Collegium was scheduled for next week. He intends to use the Collegium to give a 'State of the Union' address, update faculty on academic developments, and research and discuss better ways of working. The Chair wished to bring everyone onto the same page and intends to share the presentation with HoFs.

##### 4.1 Project 23 Update

SW read the Project 23 update report prepared by NG

##### 4.1.1 Project 23 Degree programmes

The following UG domestic degree programmes are in the late stages of validation for 2023 entry. Final documentation will be presented at the next Board meeting:

- Single Honours
  - Business BSc
  - Data Science BSc
  - Economics BSc

- English BA
- History BA
- Law LLB
- Philosophy BA
- Politics & IR BSc
- Psychology BA
  
- Joint Honours
  - Computer Science & Business BSc
  - Philosophy & Computer Science BSc
  - Politics & Data Science BSc

All the programmes combine rigorous studies in the main discipline/s with opportunities for the student to broaden or deepen their studies through electives.

#### 4.1.2 Electives

All UG domestic degree and most mobility courses will be available as electives (subject to pre-/co-requisites, timetabling, and enrolment caps)

- Academic Advisors will play a key role in supporting students to chart their personal elective pathways.
- Certain combinations of electives will be recognised as making up:
  - Thematic pathways (e.g. Sustainability, AI Ethics / Experiential AI, ...)
  - (e.g. Art & Design, Business, Creative Writing, PPE, Psychology, ...)

It was recommended by BM that the University should act to confirm the pathways soon so that these are able to be up onto the website.

#### 4.1.3 Core curriculum

By the completion of their degree, all students will have passed courses with the following core attributes:

- *All of these:*
  - Writing across Audiences and Genres
    - Writing Intensive (WI) x 2
    - Communicating in Public and Professional Contexts (C)
  - Integrating Knowledge and Skills through Experience (EX)
  - Demonstrating Thought and Action in a Final Project (FP)
  
- *At least 4 of these 8:*
  - Engaging with the Natural and Designed World (ND)

- Exploring Creative Expression and Innovation (EI)
- Interpreting Culture (IC)
- Conducting Formal and Quantitative Reasoning (FQ)
- Understanding Societies and Institutions (SI)
- Analysing and Using Data (AD)
- Engaging Differences and Diversity (DD)
- Employing Ethical Reasoning (ER)

An Action Plan for experiential courses in London will come to a future Board meeting

A question was asked by BB regarding the core curriculum. He believed that some existing courses were not included. NG said that the priority was on developing experiential learning based on courses in the current Diploma. She said that there would be opportunities for the development of further courses.

BM recommended that priority be given to the development of the pathways as these should go onto the website as soon as possible since they are a USP for our programmes. There was general agreement on this point.

#### 4.1.4 Mobility

The programmes have been designed to enable an option to undertake the second semester of the second year at another global campus location.

#### 4.1.5 Double validation

The programmes have been designed to meet relevant corresponding Northeastern US degree requirements. In addition to completing all of the requirements for the domestic UK degree students can take additional US credits alongside or afterward; online or in Boston and can then receive a US degree certificate as well.

Northeastern Boston University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUGC) is set to recognise the domestic programme courses for US credits on 12th Oct. This will enable double validation.

The Chair wished to express appreciation to all London and cross-network colleagues who have worked together to enable the double validation.

#### 4.1.6 Next steps

There is still work to be completed before the new degrees are launched. The work includes the development of more experiential and interdisciplinary electives;

Once the initial programmes are launched consideration will be given to developing new UG degree disciplines and combinations and newly taught

PG programmes (incl. integrations).

Training and development opportunities, and innovation hours, are being built into plans and budgets

**ACTION: The chair will circulate Project 23 update to all.**

#### 4.2 Chair's Actions

SW provided a summary of the Chair's actions taken since the previous meeting.

##### 4.2.1 Course approvals

The Chair approved four mobility courses to be delivered in Michaelmas 2022. These were General Chemistry I; General Chemistry I with Lab; General Biology I; Cornerstones of Engineering I.

There were no questions or comments from the membership.

##### 4.2.2 Nominations External Examiners

The Chair confirmed the appointment of external examiners for courses to be taught in Michaelmas 2022. These were Business Mobility Courses External Examiner; Mathematics Mobility Courses External Examiner; Mobility Courses External Examiner

There were no questions or comments from the membership.

#### 5. Academic Year and Timetable

##### 5.1 Graduation Dates 2023

Proposed graduation dates of 24 March 2023 for Postgraduates and 1 September 2023 for Undergraduates were presented by BM.

SA provided feedback from a student survey regarding graduation dates. Some students had responded that holding the undergraduate graduation in September may be too late. Students replying to the survey preferred a July or August graduation date.

BM advised that resit examination dates were in July and students resitting or with deferrals would not have their marks in time to be able to attend graduation. This was likely to impact a significant number of graduating students. For the academic year 2021-22, 43% of the students would have missed a July graduation.

DB suggested a December date to the Board, but SA felt that we would have a low turnout as students would have gone home by then.

The Chair proposed that the 24 March graduation date for postgraduate students be approved. The Board agreed and the date was **APPROVED**.

The Chair proposed that the 1 September graduation date for undergraduate students be approved but that this decision was held for 1 week to permit further discussions with the third-year cohort. The Board agreed with this proposal. It was agreed that the Chair would offer a meeting with final-year students to discuss the date within the next week. Unless significant issues were raised, in which case the Chair would refer back to the Board. If no serious issues are raised in the meeting with the final-year students the proposed date would be accepted. After a one-week hold for objections, the date will be **APPROVED**.

**ACTION SM to schedule a time in the next week for the Chair and BM to meet with SA and third-year students to discuss the graduation date.**

BM proposed to the Board that it may wish to consider combining prizegiving with graduation. A number of questions were raised about how this might work, particularly in regards to first and second-year students who would not normally attend graduation. It was agreed that if this idea were to be taken forward a formal proposal would need to be presented to the Board for consideration.

## 6. Academic Governance

6.1 Breach in Academic Policy Investigation (Moved to Reserved Business at end of agenda)

### 6.2 Recycling Assessment Questions

The Paper was presented by RH. She explained that this paper came out of Scrutiny panels. There were concerns about the re-use of questions for assessments and clear direction was needed from the Board..

NG was not concerned about exams but agreed that this issue will need to be reviewed going forward.

CB said that it was the practice at the University to make available to students the previous three years of exam scripts to aid revision.

LK felt that things are different in regards to coursework.

SW proposed the AS prepare guidance for faculty on the recycling of assessment questions. It would be important to liaise with faculty to ensure that disciplinary and course differences were accommodated and the guidance was benchmarked to sector good practice.

**ACTION - AS to prepare guidance on recycling assessment questions consulting with HoF to ensure disciplinary differences were accommodated.**

6.3 Amendments to Terms of Reference Mobility Student Association.

RH reported that the Mobility Student Association ToR had been updated to reflect changes in titles, There were no questions from the Board. The revised ToR was **APPROVED**

#### 6.4 Multiverse Annual Report -

The Multiverse Annual Report was brought to the attention of the Board. The Board noted the report.

BM advised the Board that she has commissioned an academic standards review of Multiverse in order to ensure that its provision was of the necessary quality for the University to act as a validator.

6.5 Art History Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.6 Data Science Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.7 Economics Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.8 English Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.9 History Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.10 Law Subject External Examiner Annual Report Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.11 UG Philosophy Subject External Examiner Annual Report were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.12 Politics & IR Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.13 Psychology Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.14 PG Artificial Intelligence Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.15 PG Philosophy Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**

6.16 PG Politics & IR Subject External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**.

6.17 Digital Tech Solutions External Examiner Annual Report and Response Letter were received by the Board and **NOTED**.

The Chair asked if it would be possible for the presentation of these reports to the Board could be changed so that the Board received a summary report which highlighted anything extraordinary to the Board.

BM replied that the reports are reviewed by the Quality Assurance team.

RH suggested that a panel could review these reports and then only one single report comes to the Board with any extraordinary points highlighted.

DB advised that the External Examiner reports should normally be tabled at faculty meetings so that they can take any learning, and then the report is shared with students.

SW said that the Board needs to be high-level and look at strategy & overview. The Board should not look at individual program reports. BB Agreed and said that he feels the reports should go to the Faculty meetings.

BM confirmed that reports should be shared with faculty and published so students can see them.

**ACTION - AS to look to develop a mechanism to consider the reports collectively and to flag institutional issues for consideration by the Board.**

## 7. Policies, Procedures, and Strategies:

### 7.1 Complaints Procedure for Students

BM explained that she had reviewed the process within the current policy and identified that there was no mechanism whereby a complaint could be rejected at the first stage. A small change to the policy was made to provide the option for a complaint to be rejected. The revised policy was **APPROVED**.

### 7.2 Statement on Value for Money for Students

The statement was **NOTED**.

### 7.3 Student Protection Plan

The plan was **NOTED**

DB raised that there were still references to the College in this Plan and the previous statement. BM responded that there was still ongoing work to update all documents in line with our University title. The Chair advised the Board that the Executive Committee has asked for a plan for rebranding to ensure all needed changes are made across all documentation.

### 7.4 Retirement of Policy: Divisions of Responsibilities within NCH

The Retirement of the Policy was **NOTED**

## 8. Programme/Course Approvals and Modifications:

### 8.1 Programme Modifications

#### 8.1.1 Digital and Technology Solutions Professional (Integrated Degree) -

The modification was **NOTED**



8.1.2 MSc AI and the Human Face

The modification was **NOTED**

8.1.3 MSc Digital Politics and Sustainable Development

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2 Course Modifications

8.2.1 NCHNUEC471M Business Statistics

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.2 NCHNULW448M Criminology

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.3 NCHNULW452M Crime, Media and Politics

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.4 NCHNUEN439M Cultures of London

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.5 NCHNUEC441M Principles of Microeconomics

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.6 NCHNUEC442M International Business and Social Responsibility

The modification was **NOTED**

8.2.7 Removal of Participation Programme and Course Modification Request for Category 2

NG explained that participation was removed from mobility courses due to issues with its implementation with a view to reintroducing it when the issues were resolved. SW asked NG where we were with participation. NG replied that she has been looking at the work done by Chiara some of which was guidance on assessment and reassessment. There were plans to have participation as an assessment for Project 23.

The Change to the following courses was **NOTED**

NCHNUAH433M Design Process and Systems;

NCHNUEC467M Statistics (Mobility);

NCHNUEC468M Principles of Macroeconomics;

NCHNUCW458M Introduction to Creative Writing;

NCHNUEN437M First-Year Writing Studio;

NCHNUEN438M British Drama and London Studio;

NCHNUEN460M Global and Intercultural Communications

NCHDS552 AI and Data Ethics

NCHNUDS434M Discrete Structures

NCHNUDS453M Intermediate Programming with Data

NCNUDS469M Programming with Data  
NCHNUDS501M Experimental Data Science Project  
NCHNUPH436M Introduction to Technology and Human Values  
NCHPIR775 Green Political Thought  
NCHPIR776 Green Politics in the Digital Age  
NCHNUPIR445M International Relations Theory and Practice  
NCHNUPIR447M Introduction to International Relations  
NCHNUPIR450M People and Cultures  
NCHNUPIR451M Global Markets and Local Cultures  
NCHNUPIR454M Introduction to Sociology  
NCHNUPIR457M Current Issues in Cities and Suburbs

### 8.3 External Examiner

#### 8.3.1 Biology External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**

#### 8.3.2 Chemistry External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**

#### 8.3.3 Communications External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**

#### 8.3.4 Computer Science External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**. The Chair noted that this nominee would require a mentor.

#### 8.3.5 Engineering External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**

#### 8.3.6 Physics External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**. The Chair noted that this nominee would require a mentor.

#### 8.3.7 Spanish External Examiner Nomination

This nomination was **Approved**

### 8.4 External Panel Members

#### 8.4.1 Data Science External Panel Member Nomination

This nomination was **Noted**

#### 8.4.2 Economics External Panel Member Nomination

This nomination was **Noted**

#### 8.4.3 English External Panel Member Nomination

This nomination was **Noted**

#### 8.4.4 Philosophy External Panel Member Nomination

This nomination was **Noted**

#### 8.4.5 Politics External Panel Member Nominations

This nomination was **Noted**

AS wished to express thanks to the External Panel Members who had been supporting Project 23 programme reviews. DB concurred and wished to thank the External Panel Member who was very helpful.

### 9. Research

#### 9.0 Update from Research Services with Committee Minutes

BB has been working with Carolyn Barker, Head of Research Services on the Research Committee

SW said that they were starting to bring in metrics. This is very helpful to give a clear view of the activities. BB said he was working with faculty to ensure this continued to develop. Metrics data coming in is important going forward.

BM asked about the research strategy. SW said that strategy was also being worked on. BB was preparing a strategy paper with SW and Carolyn Barker

#### 9.1 Terms of Reference Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

The Chair reported that Carolyn Barker had supported the work on the terms of reference. They were updated to reflect the University's new strategy for RDAP and Ref Submissions. This group will need to monitor the RDAP application.

BB said that the representation was very important and there was cross-cutting membership, and a good step forward.

BM flagged a format error.

The Chair said he was pleased with TOR

The Terms of Reference were **Approved**.

**ACTION: SM to correct format error before the publication of ToR.**

### 10. Update on NSS

#### National Student Satisfaction Report 2021-22

The Chair said that he would like the NSS report to be more prominent and has asked AS to produce an NSS Action Plan at institutional and faculty level.

The chair brought the attention of the Board to 4 alarm bells in the NSS data.

1. Opportunity to apply learning
2. IT Resources
3. Library Resources
4. Course Specific Resources.

SA said that while students liked online resources, there were concerns about access to physical library space. CB, DD, and BB echoed that they were aware of student concerns about library access. This included travel to Senate house, the limitations of the City of London library collections, and the availability of books at Devon House.

The Chair acknowledge this as a concern and said that it would need to be looked at and responded to as part of the NSS work.

BM shared that a working group was formed following the 2020 NSS and was intended to respond to the issues raised. The proposals from the working group were not accepted by the Faculties. She said that it was important to get student engagement with the NSS

The Chair acknowledged that good work has been done around the NSS and going forward it will be important to work in partnership with students.

AS has reviewed the NSS report and the University's placement regarding the national benchmarks. In many cases, the University is unable to have reported against the benchmarks due to not having enough students submitted to enable reporting. It is therefore important to maximise participation. The Chair agreed that it was important to engage students on the NSS. It was suggested that one mechanism for student engagement was to reinstate student briefing sessions to review the NSS questions.

**ACTION: AS will produce an NSS Action Plan ready for the next Board meeting at the Faculty level.**

## 11. Any Other Business

### 11.1 Wording of Learning Outcomes for Technical Proficiency in English

SW brought forward a proposal to change some of the wording for the learning outcomes for technical proficiency in English that were already approved at a previous meeting. It was felt that the wording previously agreed upon was not correct and the English and Philosophy Faculties have proposed revised wording.

The Chair said that it needed to be acknowledged that making this proposed change would entail a huge bit of work.

RH advised that the Quality did not have the capacity to go back and change all programme and course descriptors.

The proposed new wording was **APPROVED** with the understanding that the new wording would be used for all new descriptors but that the change would not be made retrospectively.

BM raised a concern about the requirement for faculty to mark for technical proficiency in English when English is not their first language. It was felt that some faculty may not feel confident in marking for technical English.

## **Action KR to look at how to support faculty to acquire the skills necessary to mark for technical proficiency in English**

### 11.2 Admissions Interviews for Undergraduates

The Chair wished to bring forward to the Board a proposal to remove interviews for undergraduate admissions.

The Chair said that colleagues in Boston had raised that under the US system of admissions it was critically important to be able to make decisions as quickly as possible. If the University wished to retain interviews it could lose good students. There were also concerns about the scale of interviews that would be needed to meet admission targets for 23/24. It was projected that in order to achieve 2023 admissions targets 2000 applicants were needed. The Chair expressed concern that it would not be practical to interview that number of applicants.

BB suggested that we have 2 tracks and still interview.

NG said that the university needed to find other ways to enable prospective students to interact with faculty (e.g. virtual and on-ground open days / drop-in sessions?)

CB said that she felt that the admissions process needs to remain with admission tutors.

LK wanted the university to embrace change. He did not feel that interviews necessarily added any value. He suggested that something similar to the clearing system could be adopted for all admissions with those students clearly meeting all entry requirements automatically approved while borderline students were referred to the admissions tutors for consideration.

NG suggested that the Board needed to look at the bigger picture and the importance of making decisions quickly. However, she did still feel it was important for faculty to have input on borderline applicants.

The Chair recommended that the Board agree to the removal of interviews as a requirement for undergraduate admissions for 2023/24 and this be reviewed again after that admissions cycle. Faculty must have the opportunity to input on the admission of students with borderline grades. The Chair admissions approval but with a review in a year.

The proposal was **APPROVED** and is to be reviewed in one year.

### 11.3 Students Union

SA advised the Board that the SU elections will be held at the end of October, All of the Officer and Representative roles were up for election.

## **12. Meeting dates for 2022/23 Academic Year**

- Friday, 25 November 2022, 10:00-13:00
- Friday, 24 February 2023, 13:00-16:00
- Friday, 28 April 2023, 10:00-13:00

- Friday, 7 July 2023, 13:00-16:00  
These dates were **NOTED**.

The Chair thanked the Board and closed the meeting.

