

# Academic Board

21st July 2023

## Minutes

### 1 Welcome and Apologies

#### 1.1 Present

Scott Wildman (SW)	Dean (Chair)
Rebecca Harrison (RH)	Academic Registrar (Secretary)
Naomi Goulder (NG)	Dean for Academic Development and Innovation
Brian Ball (BB)	Head of Faculty of Philosophy and Head of Research
Diana Bozhilova (DB)	Head of Faculty of Politics and IR
Edmund Neill (EN)	Head of Faculty of History
Peter Maber (PM)	Head of Faculty of English
Bex Morrison (BM)	Associate Vice President for Academic Services and Student Engagement, Registrar.
Kasim Randeree (KR)	Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs
Alison Statham (AS)	Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning
Sarah McAdam (SMA)	External Board Member
James Heard (JH)	Students' Union President

#### 1.2 Apologies

Marianna Koli (MK)	Head of Faculty of Economics
Carolyn Barker (CBa) Exchange	Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge
Stephen Dnes (SD)	Head of Faculty of Law
Sandy Morrissey (SM)	Executive Assistant Academic (Minute Secretary)

### 1.3 In Attendance

Chiara Alfano (CA)	Director of Undergraduate Studies
Michele Longhurst (ML)	Head of Quality Assurance

### 1.4 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the members.

## 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting of 7 July 2023 were not yet ready due to the short-time since the previous meeting. The Minutes from the previous meeting will go to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

## 3. Matter Arising

Due to the extraordinary nature of this meeting only the matters arising from the previous meeting were reviewed. It was noted that two items were not due for completion until October 23 and the one due at this meeting was completed.

## 4. Chairs Actions

Since the last meeting the Chair had been requested to take Chair's action on nominations for two EE's. He had not actioned these nominations but rather will table these as any other business later in this meeting for consideration by the Board..

## 5. Academic Governance

### 5.1 AQF 2 Overview of Teaching and Learning

BM reminded the Board that AQF 2 had been reviewed at the last meeting and there were a number of comments. DB had a number of points she suggested be amended. The document had therefore been returned by the Board for further work at the last meeting. A revised version is now being presented for approval.

DB said that in her view the document tabled had not addressed her concerns and did not capture the flavour of the current institution.

AS advised that she had made a number of changes to the document after the last meeting but said that these did not appear to be reflected in the version of the document tabled at the meeting.

BM shared her screen and showed the Board the document version from the previous meeting with AS' suggested changes. These changes were not transferred to the version tabled at this meeting.

BB and EN made further suggestions for amendments to the document.

SW advised the Board that the AQFs needed to be finalised to enable publication before the start of the academic year. He recommended that BM work with DB and AS to update AQF 2 in the next two weeks. SW could then review and approve by Chair's action.

**ACTION:** BM, DB and AS to revise the AQF 2 with the comments from the Board. SW can then review and approve by Chair's action.

## 5.2 AQF 5 Annual Monitoring and Reporting

BM said that after the last meeting AQF 5 was updated to include monitoring of mobility programmes and to account for the review of courses which are shared across programmes.

SW provided the Board a few moments to review AQF 5.

KR advised that paragraph 43 needed an amendment to reflect the research excellence framework.

The document was **Approved** with amendment to paragraph 43.

## 5.3 AQF 7 Part C Assessment Regulations

BM said that the AQF had been revised based on the discussions from the last Board meeting.

BM highlighted that there was now provision to permit a change to mode/format of second sitting assessments but required that the assessment must still ensure the students meet the same learning outcomes as the first sitting. This has been done to better enable the arrangements of second sittings for mobility students. The Board agreed with this change

BM also drew the Board's attention to the change in the AQF wording that made it explicit that students must attempt all elements of assessment in order to pass a course. The Board agreed.

PM raised concerns about paragraph 78. He asked if the Course Leader was the best person to make the decision about whether assessment elements should be compulsory pass. He felt that this type of decision required a broader perspective of the requirements of the entire programme of study. He suggested that someone more removed should take part in the decision making. BM suggested that the Head of Discipline should be required to approve. The Board agreed with the suggestion that this paragraph be amended to require Head of Discipline's approval for assessment elements to be made compulsory pass.

BB questioned why paragraph 79 did not mention dissertations only the viva. His view was that dissertations and viva should both be a compulsory pass at postgraduate level. The Board agreed with this suggestion.

BM then asked CA to speak to the Board about the guidance that had been added to the document regarding multi-part assessments.

CA drew the Board's attention to paragraphs 190.1-190.3 which provided three options for the structure of submission, feedback and marking for multi-part assessments. It was felt that setting out detailed options would provide clarity and structure while also permitting flexibility to meet the pedagogical needs of the different disciplines. These changes also allowed for closer alignment with the structure of Boston courses. CA advised that there would be no deferral opportunities for sub-elements of the assessments.

NG asked why there were differences in whether or not feedback was provided for individual elements. CA explained that in some cases feedback was appropriate to enable student learning and skill building while in other cases the feedback would be more appropriate provided at the end of the full assessment.

BB asked why in paragraph 190.2 only a proportion of the submitted elements were marked? He was concerned that students might be confused and complain that only a selection of submissions were marked.

CA responded that students would be required to submit all elements of the assessment. While it might be that a student gambled and did not submit an element in the hope that it would not be one of those marked, this risk was their choice and might not work in their favour.

PM said that in his view the staggered deadlines possible in the multi-part assessments were helpful to both faculty and students in managing workload.

SW commented that it will be very important to ensure that instructions in assessment briefs were clear and that the requirements for the multi-part assessments were fully explained to students. SW asked if the Board was comfortable with this section of the AQF and there was general agreement.

BM then highlighted to the Board that the regulations had added a requirement for students to have successfully completed all 120 credits at Level 4 before being permitted to progress to Level 6. The Board was supportive of this addition.

BM advised that the document now contained an explicit requirement for visiting lecturers and external assessors to have a formal induction. This had not been explicit in the previous version. The Board was supportive of this change.

BM brought to the Boards attention that the document had been changed to provide clearer guidance on how compensation could be awarded.

BM brought to the Boards attention that the penalties for late submission had been changed to accept late submissions for up to 48 hours but that these would be capped at the pass mark. BM explained that the previously students submitting up to 24 hours late were given a 5% marking penalty and those 24-48 hours late were capped at a pass. This meant that a student submitting up to 24 hours late and achieving a close pass mark would fail once the penalty was applied, whereas if they had submitted slightly later and received a capped mark they would pass. It was felt that having a capped mark as the only penalty for late assessments would be clearer and fairer.

SW asked if the Board was now happy with the AQF 7 Part C. The Board agreed. SW clarified that these were the regulations for the 23/24 academic year.

AQF 7 Part C (23/24 version) was **APPROVED** with the amendments to paragraphs 78 and 79.

BM asked the Board to consider if any of the changes to AQF 7 Part C should be applied to the 22/23 version. BM reminded the Board that the 22/23 version of AQF 7 Part C would remain in place to govern the conduct of the current undergraduate degrees which were being taught out. The 23/24 version would be used for the new double degrees and PGT programmes.

It was suggested that the revisions made to the 23/24 version to clarify the awarding of compensation, and the change to late penalties be added to the 22/23 version.

SW said that in his view it was important to have parity between the two cohorts of students and he was supportive of this proposal.

JH agreed that consistency of treatment was important and that this would also help prevent possible confusion if two different provisions were in place. He said it would be very important for returning students to be made aware of the changes at the beginning of the year.

BM agreed that it would be important to inform students. She suggested that the SU could support the University in encouraging returning students to attend refresher events at the start of the year where the changes would be explained.

The proposed changes to the 22/23 version of AQF 7 Part C were **APPROVED**.

### 5.3.1 Recognition of US credits towards NU London Degrees

NG reminded the Board that this paper had been discussed at the last meeting and that there had been concerns about how US credits could be transferred into Level 6. NG reported that she had investigated practices at other universities. There were a range of practices, but those reviewed did permit the transfer of some credit into Level 6 but there was variety as to how much.

NG recommended to the Board that students be permitted to transfer up to 30 credits into Level 6 and that for the purposes of classification all NU London credits should be counted. This would mean that the credits used for classification for students could vary between 90-120 credits.

BM questioned whether it might disadvantage some students if all of their Level 6 course credits counted towards classification but for others did not.

AS felt that the difference in credits would ensure parity as all courses at the University would be counted for the classification.

SMA asked about the dissertation and whether credits for this could be transferred. NG said that students would be required to complete their dissertation at NU London, they could not transfer in credit for this.

BB felt that a good argument could be made to either permit or restrict transfer into Level 6. However the University needed to recognise that with the new degree structure students will have different experiences.

SW suggested that it felt that there was a need for further discussion about the transfer of credit to Level 6.

NG asked if the Board was happy to expand the parameters for the transfer of up to 60 credits at Level 5 so that it was not exclusive to the semester in Boston.

The Board **APPROVED** the change to allow the transfer of up to 60 credits at Level 5 from Northeastern for any study there.

#### 5.4 A QF 10 Student Voice

BM said that at the previous Board meeting she was asked to investigate participation in PTES and UCAS surveys. BM has started the arrangements for participation in PTES and MARV have confirmed the University participates in the UCAS survey.

DB raised concerns about the level of representation of mobility students.

ML responded that there had needed to be a practical approach about how often students were asked for feedback. Mobility students already receive a high number of surveys from Boston GEO.

Several members raised concerns that the results from the GEO surveys were not shared with the University. BM was asked to confirm with GEO that survey results will be shared.

**ACTION:** BM to confirm with GEO that survey results will be shared.

PM flagged that there was a problem with the wording of paragraph 48.4. It required some revision to be grammatically correct.

The document was **APPROVED** with the correction of paragraph 48.4.

#### 5.5 AQF 11 External Examining and End Point Assessment

BM advised that this AQF had been revised to keep the award external examiner, as a member of the PAB. Originally it had been proposed to remove them.

The document was **APPROVED**.

#### 5.6 AQF 12 Assessment Boards

BM presented the paper. She advised that the award external examiner had been returned to the document, there had been some updates of the terminology.

She highlighted the inclusion of consideration of student level average. This has not been calculated or considered in the past.

SW asked the Board if they were happy with the document as presented.

The document was **APPROVED**.

##### 5.6.1 Progression and Award Board Terms of Reference

BM spoke to the ToR for the PAB. The membership had been updated to reflect the faculty restructure. It has been amended to ensure consistency across documents. BM wished to bring to the Board's attention that the proposed TORs included full members and associate members. This would allow for flexibility to ensure that the right staff were present at meetings.

BB asked why the Assistant Dean of Teaching and Learning was not a member of the PAB. He also asked how cross faculty programmes would be managed?

BM advised that the Heads of Disciplines would be at the PABs and would monitor the programmes they oversee.



AS suggested that the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning could serve as Deputy Chair. This would allow for the Dean and Associate Dean to share the chairing responsibilities. The Board voiced support for this idea.

The document was **APPROVED** with the addition of the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning as Deputy Chair.

#### 5.7 AQF 13 Staff Recruitment and Development

BM said that this AQF chapter had been updated to include guidance on research leave,

BM said that KR has reviewed the information on research grants. Questions were raised about the use of these grants for professional body membership. SW explained that there were tax implications for using the funds in this way as it could be considered a benefit. KR was asked to review the wording again to make clear the guidance on professional body membership.

**ACTION:** KR to review the wording on professional body membership to ensure that it was clear where grant funds could and could not be used for this purpose and to make any needed revisions.

PM asked about role descriptions for academic roles. KR responded that there were some key guidance documents on People HR but that it was recognised that further work on this was required. SW said that this was going to be looked at and would form part of the work already underway to improve ways of working in the faculty.

The document was **APPROVED** with amendment to be provided by KR.

#### 5.8 Academic Board Terms of Reference

SW asked the Board to consider the proposed new ToR for the Board and he wished to hear their comments.

PM said that he understood the logic for the changes but that he had some concern that it might mute the representation of the disciplines. He asked how the voice of the disciplines would be captured?

SW advised that he would want the Directors of Faculties to consult and bring the views of the disciplines within their faculty to the Board.

SMA reflected that there was wide representation on the Senate at her University but that this body did not have the same decision making powers that NU London's Academic Board.

SW said that he expected that TLEC would act to enable wider discussion. Key documents and proposals should go to TLEC first before coming to Academic Board.

KR pointed out that the titles should be "of", there was an error in a few where this was "for".

BM advised that the revision of committee Terms of Reference had needed to start with Academic Board. Once this was approved work could be done to update the ToR for the reporting committees.

The Terms of Reference were **APPROVED**.

#### 5.9 Work Related Learning Management Board Overview

NG advised that this overview was for the information of the Board to provide it with a view of apprenticeships.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

#### 5.10 Class Reading Materials Embedded in Initial Assessment Pilot

AS explained that this paper was the work of Jed Keenan, VLE and Learning Resource Manager and Bagiisa Ahmed in Law. They wished to conduct a pilot using the system capabilities of CANVAS to improve student engagement with pre-class reading.

The Board expressed concerns that there was not sufficient information in the paper as to the workload implications of the proposed pilot for both faculty and students.

PM expressed concerns about the pedagogical basis of the rationale used to underpin the proposal.

SW said that he felt from the discussions that the Board's view was that the proposal needed further consideration, particularly in terms of its rationale and possible implications for workload if adopted. He recommended that the authors be asked to consider the Board's comments to further develop the proposal and

that it then be submitted to TLEC for discussion prior to it potentially returning to the Board.

#### 5.11 Graduate Outcomes Survey Results 2023

NG spoke to this paper. She reminded the Board that this report considered the graduates from 2020/21.

SW asked if this report reflected the official results reported to the University. BM said that this report brought together the data provided to the University from the formal Graduate Outcome Survey along with information held internally by the Careers Service. This was done to provide the Board with the fullest data possible.

SMA commented that the data was impressive.

AS commented that the data was strong. The 20/21 cohort had graduated at a difficult time with the pandemic but were nevertheless doing well.

SW wished to acknowledge that this success not only reflected the hard work of the students but also the efforts of the faculty, the Careers Service and other staff who supported them.

## 6. Policies, Procedures and Strategies

### 6.1 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

RH presented the policy. She advised that the proposed changes included: the removal of self-certification of ECs; capping deferrals to one and extensions to two per assessed element. The revisions have been made explicit at what point EC applications can no longer be considered.

SW asked if there were any comments or questions, but there were not any.

The policy was **APPROVED**

### 6.2 Marking, Moderation and Feedback Policy

BM presented the paper to the Board.

BM advised the board that she had confirmation that there was space to permit a small amount of annotation on scripts. She highlighted the marking and moderation timeline.

PM asked if the annotation on scripts might prevent double blind marking of dissertations.

BM confirmed that for double marking of dissertations, each marker received a clean version.

The policy was **APPROVED**.

### 6.3 AI Strategy

AS wished to thank CA who had led the working group to explore good practice in relation to use and regulation of AI.

CA said that the proposed strategy is for one year only, this is due to the rapid development of AI and the sector's evolving responses.

CA said that the focus of the strategy was on the responsible use of AI. There were times when it could be supportive of learning. It was important to define what constituted misuse of AI.

Part of the proposed strategy was a recommended revision of the Academic Misconduct Policy to explicitly set out when AI may or may not be used. The main concern in the case of misconduct was where AI is used to replace the student's learning.

BB noted that there is an AI group in the faculty which has been looking at developing training. He recommended that the AI Strategy Group should link with the faculty group.

ML said that it would be important for assessment briefs to clearly state whether AI could be used or not, and if so in what capacity. NG concurred that every assessment brief should have this information.

The strategy was **APPROVED**.

AS then asked the Board to consider the proposal to implement the use of AI detection software as part of the marking process for student work.

AS highlighted that the AI detection software was relatively new and there was some indications that it sometimes could flag work of students with neuro-differences.

SW said that it would be critical, as with other detection software, that it be used only as a tool to help inform faculty decision making. Faculty must properly investigate any possible cases of misconduct.

The use of AI detection software was **APPROVED**.

AS asked the Board if it would be supportive of the use of contract cheating detection software.

The use of contract cheating software was **APPROVED**.

## 7. Any Other Business

### 7.1 Zoom Delivery

AS presented a revised proposal for zoom delivery. She has amended the proposal tabled at a previous meeting regarding when faculty may deliver teaching for in person delivered programmes remotely over zoom. The proposal is that faculty may only deliver over zoom in the case where strike action has made it impossible for them to travel to campus. This could only happen where all other options have been explored and the faculty member has obtained permission in advance from their manager. This must be agreed in good time to inform students of the change and to arrange another member of faculty to supervise the classroom for the session.

DB said that she was not convinced that it was sensible to remove the provision to allow staff who were sick to teach remotely. She said that a staff member with a broken leg might not be able to travel to campus, but that they would be fully able to teach over zoom.

AS and SW advised that the removal of the provision for staff to teach while sick had been on the advice of HR. EN concurred with the removal as he felt that it would be unfair to place the responsibility onto managers to try and assess when someone was well enough to teach. He supported the removal of the provision.

The Zoom Delivery guidance was **APPROVED**.

### 7.2 Nominations of EEs

SW advised the Board that in advance of the meeting he had been asked to take Chair's action on the appointment of two external examiners. He preferred not to take Chair's action and asked for the Board to consider the two nominations. He shared the name and qualifications of the proposed nominees.

The EE for mobility Public Health courses was **APPROVED**.

The EE for mobility Biosciences (Anatomy and Physiology) courses was **APPROVED**.

### 7.3 Staff Prizes

SW said that with the development of the graduation ceremony as a celebratory event he would like for it to include recognition of faculty for excellence in teaching and research.

SW proposed that he would request nominations from Heads of Faculty and that nominations then be considered by the Academic Leadership Team to agree final awards.

BB expressed support for this initiative.

The Board **APPROVED** the creation of faculty prizes.

The Chair advised that this was the end of the business for the Board. He wished to thank the members of the Board for their contribution this year. In particular he wished to thank and recognise the contribution of those members who would be leaving the Board under the newly approved ToR.

The meeting of the Board was closed.