

Academic Board

24 February 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
Catherine Brown (CBR)	Head of Faculty of English
Diana Bozhilova (DB)	Head of Faculty of Politics and IR
Marianna Koli	Head of Faculty of Economics
Edmund Neill (EN)	Head of Faculty of History
Stephen Dnes (SD)	Head of Faculty of Law
Bex Morrison (BM)	Associate Vice President for Academic Services and Student Engagement, Registrar.
Kasim Randeree (KR)	Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs
Sarah McAdam (SMA)	External Board Member
Alison Statham (AS)	Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning
Emma Kelly (EK)	Interim Head of Apprenticeships
Carolyn Barker (CBA)	Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange
James Heard (JH)	Student Union President
Sandy Morrissey (SM)	Executive Assistant Academic (Minute Secretary)

1.2 Apologies

Diana Bozhilova Head of Faculty of Politics

1.3 Welcome

The Chair acknowledged the hard work put in by RH (Academic Registrar) and SM (Minute Secretary) in preparing the agenda and papers for this Board meeting.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Chair asked if everyone had access to the minutes and if there were any comments.

EN commented that his name was spelt incorrectly. Other spelling errors were pointed out for correction.

The Minutes of the Last Meeting was **APPROVED with amendments**

3. Matter Arising

The matters arising were reviewed and all actions were updated.

25 November meeting item 4 regarding student access to past exam papers on Canvas. This Board felt that this issue needed to be looked at as a matter of urgency.

CBR said that students are very anxious, and 3 years' past papers would help them prepare for exams. Concerns were raised that there may be a few courses where no past exam paper was available. NG asked the Board to bear in mind that the University has a new assessment strategy with many adapted and evolving courses so sample papers would be more useful than past papers in some cases. RH advised that the regulation says 1-year past papers, but the sector standard is 3 years. She also asked that where faculty were aware of courses where no past paper was available to please alert the Registry Assessment Team. The Chair asked if this issue can be discussed at the next

HoF meeting. The Chair set a deadline of 2 weeks for AS to get a solution circulated by email to Academic Board.

ACTION: AS to prepare a proposed solution to the issue of how many past papers to make available and to email the Board for approval.

4. Chairs Actions

The Chair has approved a number of Policy and Procedure documents where minimal changes have been made, such as the change from NCH to NU London.

The documents approved by the Chair's action since the last meeting are as follows:

- Declaration of Criminal Convictions and Risk Assessment Procedure
- Undergraduate Attendance Policy
- Disciplinary Procedures for Students
- Complaints Procedure for Students
- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Student Disability Policy
- Support to Study Policy
- RPL and Credit Transfer Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy for Students.
- AQF4.

5. Research

The Chair has moved item number 12 up the Agenda due to the fact that CBA is feeling unwell and will be leaving the meeting early.

CBA provided an update on the research. She reported that research leads have been appointed for the research clusters. The research cluster will be launched in a few weeks. There have been 4 Network Science permanent staff members signed and they will be starting at the University soon. There are 2 PostDoc researchers starting next week.

CBA advised that the University recently launched the research and training series. The first session was on Research Ethics and was well received. The second session on International Working will be on Tuesday 28th February hosted by a colleague from Northeastern Research and Enterprise Services who will be on campus next week.

CBA was pleased to advise that Ekaterina Cooper from Philosophy was awarded a grant of £10,000, with UCL consulting on a project called a Tech Product Quality Characteristics Review. CBA also reported that the University had today submitted a large Research England bid with the University of Kent to grow the University's research capacity. CBA thanked BB for helping push that bid through. The bid is for a five-year capacity-building grant.

CBA also reported that the University had today put in a bid with the University of Kent for a Doctoral Training Center with UKRI for Artificial Intelligence in the Creative Industries. If successful the University will be providing match funding for 10 PhD studentships.

Regarding PhDs, CBA advised that the University has now signed the memorandum of agreement with the University of Kent and has sent out offer letters to the first two PhD students. The University is recruiting for six more PhDs and over 100 high-quality applications for these have been received for these places.

CBA reported that the University's new research output repository is up and ready to go. Resources are needed to onboard everyone. The Research team is working on this and training for everyone will be available soon.

Regarding New Roles, CBA reported that the University will be hiring a Director of Research Services, a new Research & Costing Finance Manager, and a new Director of the Graduate and Research School. Applications for these roles will close at the end of this week. The advert for the new Director of Research Ethics will be out soon.

CBA wished to thank Helen Dawe who has written a complete series of new research ethics forms which are reflective of UK Law. These new forms will be presented to Academic Board for approval after the Research Committee and Research Ethics Committee have reviewed them.

Regarding Policies, CBA advised that the Research Integrity Policy, the Research Misconduct Policy and the Research Export Control Policy were reviewed at last week's Research Committee meeting, and they were supported,

apart from small changes to wording. They will now go to the next Academic Board.

There were some questions from the Board about the progress of the new Intellectual Property Policy (IPP). CBA advised that the IPP is being revised and will be taken back to the Research Committee. The Chair informed the Board that comments on the Intellectual Property Policy will also be coming in from JNCC members shortly.

The Chair raised concerns about the student section of the IPP and was advised by CBA that the student section would be taken out and a completely new policy written to cover that. CBA said that she will be seeking help and advice from the UK Research Integrity Office when developing the Student IPP.

Action: BM, CBA and NG to discuss the rewriting of the Student Intellectual Property Policy to ensure it is fit for purpose.

6. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

6.1 NSS Action Plan

AS presented the NSS Enhancement Plan. It is based on the results of last year's National Student Survey (NSS). AS will update the document with this year's progress. The Chair said that he would like to see a quality improvement plan with a timeline.

AS reported that NSS for this year is currently live but figures show a low response rate from students currently. There will be another event held for the final-year students to encourage them to complete the survey. AS thanked colleagues for their contribution to the TEF submission document. The Chair thanked AS, NG, and CA and also BM and RH's Academic Services teams for all their work on the TEF submission.

AS has created a list of data the University will need to monitor for the next TEF submission in 4 years' time, and thanked Chloe Ward, Head of Registry, for her help with collating the data needed.

ACTION: AS to create an NSS-informed quality improvement plan with a timeline.

6.2 Student Voice Cafe Proposal

AS wished to share with the Board a proposal for a Student Voice Cafe. The intention is that via engagement in these cafes, students will develop a stronger stake in the daily operations of the University, and feel part of the NU London community.

SMA encourages these types of forums and getting feedback from students.

EN said that this seems like a good idea, and asked how the University will respond to students to show that they are heard. AS said that her plan was to respond directly to students via a newsletter.

The Chair would like to see more detail and a diagram of all the avenues we have when communicating with students.

ACTION: AS to prepare a diagram of the communication avenues with students and more detail of the proposed Student Voice Cafe.

7 Project 23

7.1 Shape of Semester.

NG presented a proposal outlining the shape of the main teaching semesters. NG reminded the Board that the semester and holiday dates were already agreed upon for 23-24. She has now undertaken further consultation across Academic SMT and Heads of Faculty, Programme Leads, and Registry, Quality, and Timetabling about the structure within the semesters, with a view to adopting a standard approach to teaching delivery across Autumn and Spring in 2023-24.

NG proposed that the opening week of each semester is devoted to welcome and programme-level activities (e.g. programme orientation, academic advising, mid-year review). The following week of each semester kicks off course-level activities, with a course-level introduction in the first session of each course.

The Midterm / Final assessment weeks are purely for office hours and summative exams, presentations, coursework deadlines, etc. Exams are mainly in these weeks - though with exceptions as appropriate, and confirmed through university assessment planner processes. Autumn Break (1 week including Thanksgiving) / Spring Break (2 weeks including Easter) are proper breaks within each semester (no office hours; no summative). Other weeks follow a regular teaching timetable, with each course leader building appropriate opportunities for practice, feedback, reflection, and revision into their teaching plan (e.g. in many courses, sessions in the weeks preceding Midterms or Finals would be purely used for revision activities, writing workshops, or similar). Once faculty have an

overview of the total scheduled assessment lengths for each course, they will ensure any necessary tweaks to asynchronous teaching elements (e.g. scheduled live online discussion boards) to achieve the correct number of scheduled hours.

The paper was **APPROVED**.

7.2 Semester Midterm and Exam Week Format

RH presented this paper to the Board which proposes changes to previous customs and practices in relation to examinations. This proposal is necessary to enable the accommodation of all required examinations within midterm and/or exam weeks. This paper proposes that the University no longer seeks to guarantee that students have only one examination per day or that there will be a day or more space between their exams. Students will be advised that they may have more than one exam per day and that they may have exams across sequential days.

Further, it is proposed that the University extend the time period for examinations within each day so that they can run between 09:00 and 20:00 during midterm and exam weeks. Where faculty, for an exceptional reason, would wish for an examination to be held outside of the scheduled midterm or final exam week a special exemption must be sought from the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning by 1 June 2023.

SMA commented that at her University they do not have more than 1 exam a day for their students. BM clarified that although the proposal enables the University to run up to 3 sessions of exams a day, it was not the intention to have students sitting three exams in a day. Several members of the Board expressed concerns that students should never be required to sit more than a maximum of two exams in a day. They asked that this be explicitly prohibited.

The Chair said that this is a critical issue around scheduling and that the University could build in examinations on a Saturday if needed. The Board was generally not in favour of Saturday exams but it was agreed that this could be considered if the extended day did not prove to be sufficient.

This paper was **APPROVED** with the addition of a requirement to ensure that students do not have more than 2 exams a day.

8 Project 24

BM presented the papers. The papers are to propose changes in two key areas for 2024 entry, Test-Optional and Undeclared majors.

8.1 Change to Admissions Criteria for US Students

In regards to Test-Optional BM said that there has been a request from Boston for the University to consider removing the requirement for SAT/ACTs, and the current AP credit requirement and to include Dual Enrollment credits = 20 dual enrollment credits with an average of B+ or 3.0 GPA.

The Board was not particularly concerned about the removal of the requirement for SAT/ACTs. There were however concerns about accepting students from the US without some AP credit. The view was that A-Level students were at a higher level than students with a US High School Diploma.

SMA asked if there was a process where the University could work with High School students to support them in reaching the entry requirements, maybe get them to do a workshop or sit an exam.

BM responded that such activities placed a requirement on the student, so they might as well be doing the AP.

The Chair summarised that there were concerns that we offer a fair admissions process to all and therefore while there was support to remove the SAT/ACT requirement there was no support to remove the requirement for AP

The Board **APPROVED** the removal of SAT/ACTs from the admission requirements. However, the Board **DID NOT APPROVE** the AP requirement to be removed. The Board wished for the AP requirement to remain in place to ensure parity of admissions requirements across all entry funnels.

8.2 Undeclared Major Programme.

BM said that the Explore Programme at Northeastern enables the student to start at Northeastern and take a variety of subjects, without having a specific major subject. Students declare their major at a later point, usually the end of year 1, once they have explored courses in their areas of interest. This was a popular option for students and it was felt that interest in the double degree may be hampered by students having to decide on a programme of study at entry. BM asked if Academic Board would be happy for her to start to explore whether there was a mechanism whereby this type of open programme could be offered within the restrictions of UK degree and visa requirements.

The Board was supportive of further consideration of the viability of developing an Explore-type programme in London.

The Board **APPROVED** for BM to move forward and further explore the possibility of developing a programme whereby students could be admitted to study without a major. BM will come back to the Board with a programme proposal if she is able to identify a programme structure that would meet visa and degree requirements.

9 Academic Governance

9.1 Programme Start and End dates

BM presented to the Board a proposal for the University to adopt three registration periods: September, January, and April. All programmes, except Bootcamps, will enrol at the start of one of the listed registration periods, with start and end dates clearly documented. This change will help to ensure that there is clarity and consistency with the beginning and end of programmes, enable better administration and aid in regulatory reporting.

This paper was **APPROVED**

9.2 Change to Assessment Scrutiny Process

RH presented this paper to the Board. The paper proposes that the responsibility for leading assessment scrutiny is moved from professional services to the faculty. The paper included a timeline for the scrutiny process which would enable the publication of all assessment briefs and confirmation of all examination scripts prior to the start of teaching in the Autumn semester.

SMA shared that the proposed new timeline matched that of her university.

This paper was **APPROVED**.

9.3 Prize Giving 2023

BM spoke to the paper proposing that prize giving be changed to be included within the graduation ceremony rather than being a stand-alone event. It was suggested that the prize winners be announced at the end of Trinity using CruNCH and the large screens around campus. The prize winners can then receive an official invitation to the graduation ceremony, including those who are graduands, and after the degrees have been presented to the graduands, the prizes can be awarded.

This Proposal was **APPROVED** to be implemented in this academic year.

9.4 AQF7 Part A, Awards and Programmes

BM reminded the Board that AQF7 Part A was concerned with Credits Awarded and Progression specific to undergraduate programmes. The regulation had been changed to reflect the structure of the double degree. The main change she wished to highlight to the Board was that, if an undergraduate student is studying 60 credits or less in an academic year, they are classed as part-time. BM highlighted that this was not intended to indicate part-time study as an option for undergraduate students, but rather to provide

clarity on the status of students resitting or repeating a small number of courses in a year. This definition is required for the University's statutory data returns.

These changes to AQF7 Part A were **APPROVED**

9.5 AQF7 Part B Admissions and Registration

BM reported that AQF7 Part B is for Taught Awards and Degree Apprenticeships. The requirements for both have been merged together into one document and updated with the University title. Other additions she wished to highlight to the Board were the Addition of PGR/PhD admissions and registration requirements and the addition of a direct entry into Year 3 of the undergraduate programme

The changes to AQF7 Part B were **APPROVED**

9.6 AQF7 Part D Conferment.

BM highlighted the minor changes to the rules for the conferment of an Honorary Award.

BM also highlighted that this Chapter included information about the recognition and reporting of pathways for double-degree students

There were general concerns from the Board about the recognition and reporting of pathways. It was felt that it was not clear at what point a student was recognised for completing a pathway, should it be in the PAB held after the pathway is completed or the PAB at which completion of the degree is confirmed? There were also questions about whether it was reasonable to expect students to apply for recognition of all pathways completed or whether it should be the role of the Registry or Academic Advisers to identify the completion of a pathway. The question was also raised about why pathways would be reported by separate letters rather than included as part of the student's transcript.

The Board agreed that further work was required on AQF7 Part D before it could be approved. The Board was happy for the amended AQF7 Part D to be approved by Chair's action once the issues raised in the discussion were resolved.

ACTION: BM and NG with review AQF7 Part D in regard to pathways to ensure the mechanisms for recognition and reporting are clear and administratively workable. Once amended it will be provided to the Chair for approval by Chair's action.

9.7 External Examiner Appointment BSc Business and Mobility Business Courses

RH brought to the Board the nomination from Dr Marianna Koli which has been endorsed by the Head of Quality Assurance and the Academic Registrar.

AS advised the Board that she knows Mr David Gordon very well and wanted the Board to know for transparency.

The nomination was **APPROVED**

10. Policies, Procedures and Strategies

10.1 Timetabling Policy

The Chair noted that the Timetabling Policy was withdrawn from Agenda and would be resubmitted to the Board for review at a later time.

10.2 Student Route Visa and International Students Admissions Policy

BM spoke to this paper and highlighted the small changes in the point systems.

This policy was **APPROVED**

11. Programme and Course Modifications

11.1 Britain and the World

Proposed a modification to the assessment strategy for the course.

This was **APPROVED**

11.2 BSc (Hons) Applied Digital and Technology Solutions

This program was originally designed as an apprenticeship. It is now to be offered as an online degree and needs a few minor changes.

This was **APPROVED**

12. Faculty Promotions

KR advised the Board that this report was for the panels that sat in August and December last year. Michael Peplar, Chiara Alfano, Christoph Schuringa and Edmund Neill were promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor.

KR reported that the University will hold two further panels this year, the next will be the week commencing 6 March 2023, which will cover the current applications which have been received. If there are further applications, another panel will sit in May.

KR will be presenting a paper at a future Academic Board proposing that the University have a fixed deadline for applications for promotion and align this with the faculty annual review.

The Chair congratulated Michael, Christoph, Edmund and Chiara on a well-deserved promotion and the Chair hopes to see more promotions reported to the Board in the future.

The Chair noted that Claire Griffith has been appointed to the QAA advisory group for the creative writing benchmark statement, which is excellent news, and external recognition of her expertise.

13. Any other business.

13.1 Law Senior Status Programme.

The Chair reported that there has been a discussion with the senior leadership team in Boston, and the University is going to pause the Law Senior Status programme for 12 months. The Senior Status program has traditionally recruited quite poorly and has had a huge administrative burden aligned with it. The pause will permit a review of the programme.

13.2 Master's Programme Requirements

The Chair advised the Board that for an overseas student to apply and be granted a visa the University must ensure that the program would be delivered on-site face to-face for a minimum of 6 to 10 hours per week. This requirement will need to be considered for the structure and delivery of all Master's programmes.

13.3 Experiential Learning

The Chair reported that there has been a proposal for an all-faculty away day to work on a guide to experiential learning. This would include the development of a glossary with defined terms to ensure a common understanding and approach.

13.4 Proposal to adopt the Turnitin Anti-Contract Cheating Originality Tool

AS tabled a proposal from Jed Keehan to implement a new anti-Contract cheating tool for Turnitin. The tool can be used on all submissions made through the Turnitin platform.

Turnitin is also developing an additional tool that would identify AI-generated content.

BM advised that the additional cost of £1,255 would be covered by the central IT budget. BM raised concerns that Jed's proposal was to implement it straight away, but she did not feel it was appropriate to bring in a new detection tool halfway through the academic year. AS Agreed that its implementation could be delayed and it should be brought in for 23/24.

SMA shared that her University used Turnitin too and had found that it raised the quality of students' work, as they can submit as many times as they like, and check it first, which has been useful. She said that her University had its first two AI submissions, but Turnitin did not pick them up. She felt that this new tool would be useful to support detection.

This proposal to adopt the Turnitin Originality tool was **APPROVED**

13.5 Semester Abroad and Degree Classification.

BM tabled a paper that proposed that double degree students undertaking the optional second-year semester abroad to Boston or Oakland have the courses studied recorded as pass/fail. This proposal comes after much work was undertaken to try and find a fair mechanism to translate US grades to UK grades. This proved to be very difficult and continued to cause issues of potential grade inflation. The proposal would mean that students undertaking the semester abroad would achieve 60 credits in London for which they would have marks and then 60 credits while abroad which would be recorded as pass/fail. Therefore it was also proposed that the degree classification algorithm be amended to include the best 60 credits from the second year.

MK raised concerns that this change might result in students needing/wishing to take particular courses in the first semester and this will have a knock-on effect on staffing.

The Board expressed concerns about how this would work in practice and whether it would be possible to ensure that students had access to courses they might want in the first semester to ensure that they were not disadvantaged if they chose to undertake the semester abroad.

ACTION: NG to look at the course offer for the second-year double degrees and recommend changes/approaches to address the Board's concerns.

13.6 NPP1 New Course Proposals

The Chair reported that there had been two NPP1 Programme Proposals that have recently gone through the first stages of approval. The first is an MA in Creative Writing, which is proposed to be an online course. The other is for an MSc. Global Investment Banking, This programme would be delivered through a partnership brought through EDGE and would be in connection with an organization called FE Training.

The Chair closed the meeting.