

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Minutes of the 159th meeting of the

ACADEMIC BOARD

Held on Wednesday 9th November 2016

Present:

DG Llewellyn	C D Cowap
AM Hind	F Hammond
P Mills	A Meyrick
AC Jones	D Miles
CE Baxter	H Fromant
RG Wilkinson	V Blakeman
M Ormerod	T Fletcher (item 4180)
R Early	M Simpson (item 4181)
N J Hunter	L Arnold (item 4183)
K E Walley	L Harper (items 4187, 4188)

4176 Welcome, apologies for absence and membership
Apologies were received from Dr Behnke, Mr Barnett, Mr Higginson and Mr Chima.

The Chair of Academic Board welcomed the new student representatives, Fred Hammond, Abigail Meyrick, Daisy Miles and Harry Fromant, the latter two of whom are sharing the position.

4177 To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 28th June 2016
The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th June were agreed as an accurate record, other than a minor point of format.

4178 Matters arising from the minutes
4075 Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework for Handing Complaints and Appeals

Noted: That Dr Hind and Mr Hammond are due to liaise with the SU Commercial Manager to ensure the SU has a complaints procedure in line with SU sector good practice.

AMH
and FH

4136 Minutes of the Academic Standards Committee
Noted: The Chair of the Academic Standards Committee will be asked to report on progress with revising the external examiner reporting forms for the next meeting.

RGW
via VM

4142 QAR briefing note on revised arrangements for academic quality review
Noted: Dr Baxter confirmed that the Board of Governors was advised fully of the revised arrangements at the September Governors' Planning Day.

4144 Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Survey – Performance Indicators
Noted: That this item was covered under agenda item 4182.

- 4145 Research & Knowledge Transfer Strategy 2015-20
 Noted: (i) Reports from the Knowledge Exchange Coordinator have been discussed with Dr Randall who will be producing an annual report for the March 2017 meeting.
 Noted: (ii) That a more in depth report on strategy would be provided by way of an oral update under agenda item 4191.
- 4163 Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Academic Quality Assurance Manual and codification of revised Master of Research arrangements:
 Noted: In Mr Barnett's absence, Dr Hind reported that this work was nearing completion.
- 4165 Admissions Policy: to review revisions for approval
 Noted: Dr Hind confirmed that the work on the key information pages was complete.
 Noted: Mrs Harper's proposed revisions to the Admissions Policy was covered under agenda item 4187.
- 4166 Tier 4 visa sponsorship arrangements: outline revisions for approval
 Noted: That this item was covered under agenda item 4188.
- 4167 Student Complaints Procedure: to review revisions for approval
 Noted: Dr Hind confirmed that the wording changes had been completed.
- 4168 Compliance with Competition and Markets Authority Guidance on Consumer Regulations: to review and endorse
 Noted: Dr Hind confirmed that the Legal Advisor had reviewed and concluded the legal questions raised and that the Community Charter now made reference to the key information page.
- 4170 Update on risk analysis: to note progress
 Noted: That this item was covered under agenda item 4190.
- 4174 Oral update on strategic matters of relevance to Academic Board's terms of reference
 Noted: That the creation of a Brexit Action Plan was covered under agenda item 4192.

NR via
PRM

4179 Annual report on key student indicators: to consider, endorse action in hand and identify further action

Received: A paper drawing on the key indicators relating to student recruitment, progression, overall student numbers and curriculum and achievement along with a summary of student feedback on the quality of the student experience at Harper Adams as well as data on the employability of our graduates.

Noted: That there are different learning and teaching challenges to be met by increased recruitment of students with vocational qualifications. There is a need for all tutors to ensure that they follow the inclusive practice guidance and provide formative assessment opportunities for both coursework and examination formats.

Noted: In an increasingly competitive sector, the work experience requirements for some course suites may be seen as an obstacle especially where a potential student does not have personal connections within a specific employment area. The extent to which work experience requirements are a deterrent to otherwise well qualified applicants is under investigation.

AMH/
TF

Noted: The second phase of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF2) is introducing "split metrics" which will differentiate between students with

different characteristics. This highlights the need for the University to monitor performance by these characteristics at course level, as well as institutionally.

Noted: That the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey results were less positive than those from undergraduates and were disappointing for most part time students, other than for the REALM course area. The Postgraduate Programmes Manager and Subject Co-ordinators have been provided with course-level data and are expected to draw up action plans

Endorsed: The proposal that Dr Crook should collate a report for the next meeting in which both cross-programme and course-level actions to address identified problems are summarised. It is noted that TEF 4 will also include postgraduate data as part of the metric set and on which institutions will be judged.

MJC
via
AMH

Noted: That, despite, the higher fees policy in place since 2012, recruitment has not become increasingly local.

Noted: Improved Undergraduate student satisfaction, whilst noting the continuing need for sustained efforts to improve assessment and feedback.

Noted: That 2015/16 was a generally positive year in relation to the key student indicators.

4180 Review of student outcomes: access, success and progression by student characteristics: to consider and identify action to promote equality of opportunity

Received: A paper which reviewed student outcomes in relation to access, success and progression by student characteristics taking into account the increasing scrutiny of a wider range of performance indicators from a variety of stakeholders.

Noted: That the external environment and associated performance indicators in use have changed. In particular, there is an increased focus on characteristics of under-representation and disadvantage, which means that it is essential that these aspects are, in the future, considered at course suite level, so that appropriate action can be taken where needed.

Noted: That whilst OFFA and HEFCE recognise that our national, rural catchment is not properly recognised in the POLAR categorisation method, we must make efforts to increase access of those from low participation neighbourhoods and ensure that those students progress and succeed at a similar rate to others, including post-graduation.

Noted: That we are addressing some of the issues arising from consideration of the data, including by working within a regional National Collaborative Outreach Programme with local schools, and the launch of a "fees-free" Scholarship Scheme.

Noted: That, in addition to recruitment considerations, this paper also considers retention and success levels and trends by student characteristic.

Noted: The implication for teaching staff is that we need to pay attention to students that come from a vocational qualification background when designing assessments, feedback and support in order to maximise successful outcomes for all students, irrespective of whether they are more familiar with examination or coursework styles of assessment.

Endorsed: Mr Jones' team's plans to support a number of learning technology development projects.

AJ

Noted and endorsed:	The need for the Guide to Inclusive Learning and Teaching to be universally implemented.	SB
Noted:	As A levels change, the University needs to offer balanced assessment methods so that divergent student qualification backgrounds are equally supported.	
Endorsed:	That the modules which are assessed by examination should offer students the opportunity to practise and get feedback on their examination performance.	SB
Thanked:	Mr Fletcher for his paper.	
4181	Employability of students and Careers Service Review: to consider progress against performance indicators and extended service plans	
Received:	A paper detailing the employability of students and a review of the Careers Service covering the key findings and conclusions from the Leavers' survey 2014/15 submitted to HESA for inclusion in the national data set.	
Noted:	The results were exceptionally good.	
Noted:	That the destination of leavers from Countryside Management and Animals was excellent. This cohort was focused whereas the destinations for Agriculture students were more variable.	
Noted:	That "NewDLHE" will require robust data and a more elaborate range of information on graduate outcomes, including the incorporation of data linked with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs salary data, The census may move towards a centralised survey 12-18 months after graduation, with a different set of questions which attempt to quantify whether individual's aspirations of higher education were met.	
Noted:	The Careers and Placement Fair has grown significantly this year. Over 130 Employers are attending the Fair on 22 nd November. The Land Management Fair has 36 bookings. There are two events for Animal/Vet Nursing and Environmental/Countryside students currently being promoted across the University.	
Noted:	The Chair of the Academic Board noted the fantastic performance of students this year and acknowledged the achievement of students and the support they had received from the Careers Service staff and other departments.	
Thanked:	Mrs Simpson and Mrs Toogood for their report and the associated work of the Careers Service.	
4182	Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy: to consider progress against performance indicators and approval of extended performance indicator metrics	
Received:	A paper detailing data on performance indicators over the year, including the E-learning team's Performance Monitoring metrics regarding the use of Learning Technology during the 2015/16 academic year.	
Noted:	That this paper represents data over a full cycle so provides a benchmark for future progression and attainment. It also highlights areas which require attention.	
Agreed:	That the objective should continue to be to aim for improvement each year on each area of activity.	

Agreed: That it may be useful to add some metrics at academic departmental level to highlight where attention needs to be focused, particularly with reference to inclusive practice within the VLE. LA via AJ

Noted: That the indicators are primarily facilitating objectives, rather than outcomes based.

Agreed: That it would be useful to link outcome metrics to the activities set out in the Strategy. AJ

Noted: The University has supported several applications for the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme which have been unsuccessful to date. Keele University has had six successful applications over the last 10 years and can offer a copy of a recent successful submission for information, which Prof Ormerod agreed to organise. MO to AJ

Thanked: Dr Arnold for the work involved in collating the performance indicators.

4183 Proposal on governance of the Virtual Learning Environment: to consider and approve

Received: A paper outlining some of the development challenges around the VLE and to request that there should be a more formalised governance mechanism to ensure that future development work is undertaken rigorously, transparently and with accountability.

Agreed: To initiate a Task and Finish group with staff and student representatives to discuss priorities and investigate resources to make proposals to Academic Board, having previously consulted the University Executive. LA via AJ

Agreed: That the group should also consider wider learning technology development needs but that the VLE should initially take precedence. LA via AJ

4184 Action plan updates arising from 2014/15 annual course monitoring reports

Noted: The action plan updates arising from 2014/15 annual course monitoring reports, which appeared to provide comprehensive responses to the items identified for action in November 2015.

4185 Annual Course Monitoring headline data 2015/16

Received: A paper which reviewed key data for course monitoring purposes indicating key admissions, progression, achievement, career destination and student feedback data, along with recommendations for further investigation and action by course teams, through 15 distinct data sets at course suite level.

Noted: The report identifies issues of concern for specific course teams to address in 2016/17 as part of the annual monitoring of their arrangements that were in place over the 2015/16 academic year.

Noted: That recurring themes include:

- Increased student enrolments from a vocational qualification background.
- A demographic downturn in the population of the 18-19 year old age group entering University, which is more pronounced in rural communities. This will require the University to diversify its natural catchment.

- That despite significant improvement in many areas, there is still a need to focus on assessment and feedback.
- That in certain course areas, there are extremely high levels of employment but not necessarily in graduate employment, using the HESA classification system. Veterinary Nursing, in particular, is not classed as a professional or managerial role.
- The survey feedback from part time, UK based taught postgraduate data, is of concern. In particular, students raised issues of communication from tutors.

Noted: That there is a high response rate to student satisfaction surveys from a relatively small cohort on several of the taught postgraduate courses.

Agreed: The recommended actions would be considered by course teams for incorporating into course action plans and reviewed by the Academic Standards Committee and Academic Board, in due course.

SB

4186 Update on work completed and pending in relation to Competition and Markets Authority guidance to the HE sector

Noted: The good progress with the programme of work, across diverse operating units of the University.

Agreed: That the Programmes Approval Committee should agree a deadline for major course changes, to align with general sector practice and to assist with workload planning.

PRM/
SB

Thanked: Dr Hind and the many other colleagues for the considerable work involved in reviewing and changing practice.

4187 Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship Status Report

Received: The Tier 4 Sponsor Status report.

Noted: That there were slightly more sponsored students in 2015/16 due to a new cohort of students from Huazhong Agricultural University.

Noted: The application for the University's Tier 4 sponsorship licence was successfully renewed in August 2016.

Noted: The University now requires students to pay deposits due to a visa refusal rate of 5.88% in 2014/15, representing just four applicants. There is a maximum limit of 10% before a licence is reviewed by the UK Visa and Immigration Service (UKVI), with a view to its immediate suspension or withdrawal. In 2015/16, only one visa application was refused, for reasons beyond our control.

Noted: That there had been concern that the UKVI would reduce the maximum visa refusal rate from 10% to 5%. UKVI is now looking at exit data for each institution as an alternative measure in its attempts to limit overstaying students.

Noted: That whilst overseas students add much to University life and are to be welcomed for this, there is considerable effort on the part of staff and students to operate within the Tier 4 licence obligations.

4188	Proposed revisions to the Tier 4 Policy and Procedures for Managing Overseas Visa Sponsored Students	
Received:	A paper detailing revisions to the Tier 4 Policy and Procedures for Managing Overseas Visa Sponsored Students, to help ensure that the University maintains its licence to sponsor overseas students.	
Noted:	The previously approved policy has been rewritten to be more suitable for both a staff and student audience, and to form part of the publicly available key information on the website.	
Noted:	Following receipt of feedback in advance of the meeting, the proposed policy required a few changes, to include additional reference to: the attendance monitoring of postgraduates; clarification around deposit retention; review of the academic visitor section (albeit that these visitors do not come under the auspices of Tier 4) and re ordering of some sections.	LH
Noted:	That there is a policy concerning responsibility for overseas academic visitors, to help prevent visa refusal, chiefly addressed at research visitors.	
Agreed:	That Mr Jones would present the policy to the Board's January meeting.	AJ
Approved:	The Tier 4 policy, including the minor revisions to be made.	LH
Thanked:	Mrs Harper for her work in this important area.	
4189	Annual review of the register of collaborative partners: to note and endorse	
Received:	A copy of the Register of Collaborative Provision for 2016-17.	
Noted:	That Mr Cowap would inform Mr Barnett that MDS has moved their offices.	CDC
Noted:	That there is a large number of educational partnerships and it was important to ensure that they were contributing to the University's work and long-term strategy	
Thanked:	Mr Barnett and Mrs Barnett for maintaining the register.	
4190	Update to note progress on risk analysis and action plan (RAAP):	
Received:	A paper detailing the Risk Analysis and Action Plan for 2016/17 highlighting the risks assigned to Academic Board and the actions intended to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of such risks.	
Approved:	The proposed revision that the level of Risk 15, the management of international students, be reduced from Medium/High to Medium.	
4191	Review of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy: to consider progress against the strategy (oral update)	
Received:	An oral report from Prof Mills to update Academic Board on the strategy for knowledge exchange.	
Noted:	That Prof Mills has drafted an extended set of activities for research and knowledge exchange, based upon the strategic plan for 2015-2020. The objectives have been extended under four key headings of education, research, engagement and influence (four out of five of the Corporate objectives), with 15 new component objectives.	
Agreed:	An annual report is to be considered by the next Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for appropriate revisions to be made in readiness for approval by the subsequent Academic Board meeting.	PRM

4192 **Update on the creation of a 'Brexit Action Programme'**

Received: A paper to consider how the Harper Adams University (HAU) community engages with Brexit with a particular focus on the implications for farming and the rural community, to give a voice to the HAU community and to provide advocacy for the University's stakeholder interests.

Noted: That it is important to promote high level debate between future graduates and to ensure that the Harper Adams student voice is heard by policy and decision makers.

Noted: In relation to the Brexit programme of activities available to staff and students:

- Jeremy Moody has made a presentation on Brexit including the position of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers.
- Tom Tynan from the EU Commission is on campus on 11 November 2016.
- Guy Smith from the NFU has agreed to meet students to discuss what Brexit means for the domestic agricultural policy.
- Meurig Raymond (NFU President) has agreed to speak at a plenary presentation during the Spring term.
- The Chair of the Academic Board will be getting in touch with Sir Lockwood Smith, High Commissioner of New Zealand to the UK. He would be able to give an interesting perspective on international trade as he has previously been the International Trade Minister and Agricultural Minister for New Zealand.
- That we have a tentative date for the Secretary of State for Defra to visit during the Spring term.

Noted: That staff and students should have the opportunity to evaluate the impact of Brexit, from a variety of perspectives, with the planned programme of activities.

Noted: That the Chair of the Academic Board has written to George Eustice MP, Defra, to highlight concern that there is a reported lack of personnel within Government with the ability to deal with international trade matters and to offer assistance from the University.

Noted: At the NFU conference, the Chair of the Academic Board gave a presentation about education and research in a post Brexit world.

Agreed: That anyone who is aware of further ideas or opportunities, on the impact of Brexit, should pass these on to Mr Cowap for consideration. The University wants to take a proactive approach to the management of Brexit. It is also important to illustrate to students that the University is looking at this issue. The Chair of the Academic Board urged student representatives to inform their peers of this.

FH et al

Endorsed: The position that staff are free to express their own views on Brexit.

Noted: That the University wants to work with Government to make Brexit happen effectively, whilst representing the UK's agricultural and food sector.

Noted: That the University has concerns over issues in connection with student and staff immigration policy and that the Chair of the Academic Board has written to ministers accordingly.

Endorsed: The work being undertaken by Mr Cowap, including that to investigate how to make Brexit-related information available on the Portal.

Endorsed:	The suggestion of termly blog pieces on the news section of the website, which Mr Hammond advised he would be happy to link to from the SU website.	CDC and FH
Thanked:	Mr Cowap for promoting discussion on Brexit.	
Agreed:	The proposed Brexit Action Programme, incorporating the Board's discussion.	CDC
4193	New course recommendations arising from decisions of the Programme Approvals Committee	
Received:	A report summarising outcomes from the last two Programme Approvals Committee meetings.	
Noted and Agreed:	The following courses were granted full Development Approval, for the following programmes with proposed delivery from October 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEng Mechanical Engineering • MEng Automotive Engineering (Off-Highway) • MEng Agricultural Engineering • BEng/BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering • BEng/BEng (Hons) Automotive Engineering (Off-Highway) • BEng/BEng (Hons) Agricultural Engineering • BSc/BSc (Hons) Product Support Engineering (and top-up) 	
Noted and Agreed:	The following course was granted Full Development Approval for the proposed re-validation of the following programme, for delivery from February 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Diplomas Land and Utilities Management 	
Noted and Agreed:	The following courses were granted Full Development Approval for the proposed revalidation of the following suite of AMTRA modules, for delivery from January 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMTRA SQP Base • AMTRA SQP Farm Animal • AMTRA SQP Equine • AMTRA SQP Companion Animal • AMTRA SQP Avian • AMTRA Veterinary Nurse: Base • AMTRA Veterinary Nurse: Companion Animal 	
4194	Review of course portfolio and recommendations for suspension or termination of courses in relation to student enrolments and resource base	
Received	An oral report from Prof Mills, following discussion between Dr Hind, Mr Jones, Dr Crook and between Prof Mills and relevant Programme Managers/Heads of Department.	
Noted:	The proposed action that taught postgraduate awards in: Farm Agri Business Management; Precision Farming and Dairy Business Management will be suspended for a year. A decision on Pig Production is pending and should be known at Christmas following receipt of more detailed market intelligence.	PRM
Noted:	That a number of crops-based awards had been rationalised.	
Noted:	Proposals to suspend or withdraw courses are often not welcomed by those who teach on them.	
Noted:	The Proposals will be ratified at the next Programme Approvals Committee.	PRM

4195

Oral Report on Strategic matters of relevance to Academic Board's terms of reference, including review of progress with Strategic Plan and proposed review of academic committee structure, to take account of the white paper "Success as a Knowledge Economy"

Received: An oral report by the Vice-Chancellor, covering strategic matters of relevance to the Academic Board.

Noted: That the **Governing body** is strengthening its link with the work of Academic Board and its sub committees. Prof Ormerod is our external link between Academic Board and the Governing Body. There are also other joint members or Board attendees.

Noted: That the Government is focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning quality and academic standards across the country. With reference to the **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, the University has been provided with metrics related to student continuation, employment and satisfaction. These will help determine an institution's TEF rating, alongside a narrative submission. Institutions will be awarded a bronze, silver or gold "badge" as a purported measure of the quality of their teaching. Dr Hind is one of the TEF assessors which will provide the University with additional insight into the assessment process.

Noted: The **Higher Education and Research Bill** is going through Parliament. Members of the House of Lords are expected to challenge some of the contents. As the Government wants to increase competition in this sector, one of the implications of this new Act will be the creation of the Office for Students, as primarily a regulator, rather than a funder, of universities.

Noted: The University's strategy is to "get quality right" in teaching and learning. This means the University must build on its **recent successes** such as the Sunday Times' Modern University of the Year award and those of individual students such as Nicola Blowey's Agricultural Student of the Year award, and awards made to our alumni. The University has also been shortlisted in the Times Higher Education Awards for its work with Dairy Crest in the University/Business Collaboration category.

Noted: That part of our strategic plan is to be visible in the farming press, through student competitions, sponsorship and work in knowledge exchange in the agri-tech sector. The media coverage of the "Hands Free Hectare" project and the contributions of Prof Blackmore to the House of Lords' Science and Technology Committee inquiry on autonomous vehicles are illustrations of this visibility and associated **influence on policy**.

Noted: The University **monitors progress with strategic plans** through the annual corporate planning statement. This summarises short term measures against the overall objectives of that plan. The Board of Governors approves the statement but Dr Baxter will be asked to give Academic Board sight of same for this January 2016 meeting.

CEB

Noted: Following successes in securing HEFCE institution-specific funding, (ISF), the University is making **strategic investments** with a new Chair in Precision Farming/Agri-Tech Economics. This Chair is jointly funded by the Elizabeth Creak Foundation. The University has also planned a jointly funded Chair in Beef Production, part-funded by ABP. Additionally, we are working with AGCO to fund a lectureship in Sub-Saharan African Agriculture in Zambia.

Noted: The University needs to be in a position to secure HEFCE ISF funding again in 2019. The investments are intended to assist with this objective.

Noted: That in view of the many external changes, the Chair of Academic Board will discuss with Dr Hind how to **review the subcommittee structures of the Academic Board**, with a view to consider its effectiveness in relation to the increasingly competitive market and the sharp focus on teaching excellence, whilst taking account of the new quality assessment method.

Noted: There is also a need for a **cultural shift** in order to adopt the digital learning environment more effectively whilst recognising the need to encourage traditional skills such as in-class note taking.

4196 Minutes of the Programme Approvals Committee

Noted: The minutes of the Programme Approvals Committee meetings held on the 15th April, 26th July and 22nd September 2016.

4197 Minutes of the Academic Standards Committee

Noted: The minutes of the Academic Standards Committee meetings held on the 2nd June, 14th July 2015 and 19th September

4198 Minutes of the Collaborative Programmes Management Committee

Noted: The minutes of the Collaborative Programmes Management Committee meeting held on the 6th May 2016.

4199 Minutes of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

Noted: The minutes of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee meeting held on the 5th October 2016.

4200 Any Other Business

Noted: In response to the Chair's invitation to the student representatives to ask questions, Mr Hammond's request for information on the processes associated with designing and marking assessment.

Endorsed: The comprehensive response provided and the invitation for Mr Hammond to seek further information via Dr Hind if required.

FH

Endorsed: The Chair's invitation to student representatives to propose items that they feel Academic Board should be considering from their point of view.

Noted: Student representatives may propose items for the agenda via Dr Hind.

FH, AM,
DH/HF

Noted: That Mr Blakeman's term of office ends this month, and that an election will be organised.

AMH/VM

Noted: That as Dr Walley is no longer eligible to represent the Food Science and Agri-food Supply Chain department, Mr Early will encourage departmental members to stand for election as a representative of the department, when elections are organised.

RE

Endorsed: The Chair of the Academic Board's thanks to Mr Blakeman and Dr Walley for their respective contributions to Academic Board.

4201 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Academic Board will be held on **Wednesday 25th January 2017**.

Please note that all paperwork for consideration by the Committee should be forwarded to
Veronica Miller, Academic Services Officer
by no later than noon on Monday 16th January 2017.