

# HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

## Board of Governors

### Summary Report on the Business of Academic Board

This report provides a summary of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 20th March 2017. The Board of Governors is asked to note this report.

1. The Board welcomed [REDACTED], representing [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who attended as an observer.
2. The Board noted under Matters Arising: That a small Task and Finish group had been set up to explore means by which postgraduate students could receive more targeted emails, and that the new timetabling arrangements for 2017/18 should enable the University to put in place a more automated attendance monitoring system for 2018/19.
3. The Board received a paper providing a summary of progress made towards achieving the objectives in the Corporate Planning Statement 2016/17.

The Board noted that most of the targets had been completed. There is some work that is on-going but satisfactory. The only item, where work is on-going but progress has been significantly delayed, is the [REDACTED].

The Board received a paper setting out the draft Corporate Planning Statement for 2017/18 and endorsed that it be considered by the Board of Governors.

4. The Board received a paper proposing the creation of a Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, with consequent modest revisions to established committees' Terms of Reference.

The Board noted that the proposal had been considered by various committees, working and informal groups and feedback had been incorporated into the proposal which also detailed potential changes to ownership of operational matters, alongside strategic matters. The Board also noted that change is needed in light of the changing external environment and the need to achieve a sufficiently strategic but 'front-line informed' approach in the pursuit of excellence in teaching, assessment and learning.

The Board approved the changes to the terms of reference of Academic Board, the creation of a Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee and consequent minor changes to the terms of reference for other sub-committees.

5. The Board received a paper outlining the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) metrics and outcomes.

The Board noted that, notwithstanding overall excellent performance, the University had dipped slightly below its benchmark, for the first time, in connection with student retention in TEF2 Year 3 (the 2013/14 entry cohort) and also in relation to BME and mature students over the aggregated three year period. A Student Success and Retention Task Force has been formed to create an action plan.

The Board also noted that the Student Success and Retention Task Force must take action at subject and module level to achieve improved and consistent performance across the University. Furthermore, the Task Force should routinely report on progress with its action plan to the University Executive in the short term as well as provide the Academic Board with an update at its meeting in November 2017.

6. The Board received a paper commissioned to evaluate the impact of the Academic Guidance team and to propose recommendations.

The Board noted that the Academic Guidance tutoring team has been in place for several years and senior tutors have increased their demands on the team, to support specific first year student groups and individual students, in each subsequent year. The report and recommendations will be reviewed and consequent work will form part of the Success and Retention Plan.

7. The Board received a report to measure the University's success in delivering its Internationalisation Strategy.

The Board noted that the current situation is relatively positive but there are signs that it will be more challenging to meet the University's strategic objectives in the future in light of: Brexit; the fall in EU applications to UK institutions by 10%; the Chinese government's direction to support shorter overseas stays for Chinese students; and possible changes to UK Visa and Immigration Tier 4 student visa sponsorship requirements.

The Board also noted that the University does not intend to renew the contract with [REDACTED] but will invest in alternative promotional activities in the USA, in tandem with the University's Marketing Department, in order to identify potential partner universities in the USA.

8. The Board received and approved the University Admissions Policy which is reviewed and revised annually.
9. The Board received a paper to provide an update on the work undertaken to satisfy Consumer Contract and Protection legislation.

The Board noted that with the challenge of a new undergraduate curriculum and the launch of a new website, colleagues are working hard towards fulfilling its obligations under Consumer Contract and Protection legislation, as guided by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and the latest HEFCE guidance on the provision of course information.

10. The Board received a paper to propose revisions to the Complaints Policy and Procedure and to highlight the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Annual Statement for 2016.

The Board approved the proposed revisions for implementation in 2017/18.

The Board noted that the OIA had recently issued guidance on "Working with Others". It is clear that a complaint concerning academic provision of a partner within a validation arrangement will, in future, need to be reviewed by the University. A process needs to be developed to manage this requirement in readiness for the 2018/19 academic session. Any Completion of Procedures letter will have to be issued by the University and any referrals to the OIA will need to come under the University's subscription.

The Board further noted that the Director of Academic Services and Academic Registrar had convened a meeting to discuss oversight of the University's partners' complaint processes, in readiness for 2018/19.

The Board also noted the very small numbers of complaints referred by our students to the OIA.

11. The Board received the revised Access Agreement 2018/19 submission noting feedback from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) following initial submission in April 2017

The Board noted that the University had responded to several queries from OFFA and we are currently waiting for further advice in connection with:

- The justification of the University's spend on outreach;
- The contribution of the Fee-Free Tuition Scholarships to widening participation;
- The University's reasons for not committing to sponsoring an educational provider and the alternative plans in relation to supporting attainment raising within schools.

The Board endorsed the responses to OFFA and consequent modest revisions to the 2018/19 Agreement.

12. The Board received a paper proposing four general revisions to update Section 4 of the Academic Quality Assurance Manual and approved the general revisions.

The Board noted that the English language entry requirement IELTS scores in section 4.5 will be amended to show that the University accepts level 6, rather than 6.5, for international students.

The Board also noted that course teams will be asked to confirm that the principles of course design detailed in section 4.6.2, namely the broad based sequence of 'Practice-Principles-Application' applies universally across the 2017 curriculum.

The Board further noted that the University should aim for a wholly taught Master's level qualification but with appropriate differentiation in award title and outcomes when compared with the Master of Science Degree award. The title is to be further investigated, along with confirmation from the SLC that students on the programme will be entitled to apply for Postgraduate loan funding.

13. The Board received a paper summarising new course development recommendations from the Programme Approvals Committee (PAC) meetings held on 18th January 2017 and 1st March 2017.

The Board endorsed the recommendations of the PAC to grant Full Development Approval for work to continue on the development of the following suite of [REDACTED] programmes (in conjunction with [REDACTED]):

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

The Board endorsed the recommendations of the PAC to grant Development Approval as part of the proposed review and re-validation of the following programmes, jointly delivered by Harper Adams University and [REDACTED], for delivery from September 2018:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

The Board endorsed the recommendation of the PAC to grant Development Approval as part of the proposed review and re-validation of the following programme, in conjunction with [REDACTED], for delivery from September 2018:

- [REDACTED]

14. The Board received a paper to note progress on the Brexit Action Programme.

The Board noted that there are student-focused sessions to inform and collect views on Brexit activity and a dedicated Landteach webpage. The potential impact of Brexit, and associated opportunities and threats, will continue to be discussed within the University.

15. The Board received an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor, covering strategic matters of relevance to the Academic Board. These matters included: The need to engage with the new Government; the current progress of the Agri-EPI Centre; the prominence of 'Agri-tech'; the TEF awards and their prominence in higher education applicant decision-making; the Student Information Advisory Group (SIAG); pressure on farmland; positive feedback from the HEFCE Catalyst Fund Panel on the two major projects it had part-funded to date; and exploration of a potential [REDACTED].

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the year had been very busy and thanked everyone for their efforts.

16. The Board received and noted a paper to provide an update on work associated with key risk areas identified in the University's Risk Analysis and Action Plan 2016/17 for monitoring and review by Academic Board.

Dr Abigail Hind  
Director of Academic Services  
June 2017