

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 14th November 2019. The Board of Governors is asked to note the report.

1. The Board noted under Matters Arising: that the [REDACTED] complaints procedure had been finalised; that the pulling together of sustainability case studies for the website was ongoing; that the University was still awaiting further sector guidance on Student Protection Plan requirements from the Office for Students (OfS), and that, whilst this had been expected in October 2019, it had not yet materialised.
2. The Board received an annual report on key student indicators. The Board noted that action to address the issues raised within fourteen key items was in hand. It was noted that the action plan to improve continuation rates for the Extended Degree Programmes was in development. The Postgraduate Review would also need to consider the disparity between the satisfaction rates of full and part-time taught postgraduate students, as seen in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2019 (and earlier) results.
3. The Board discussed the review of student outcomes by student characteristics, noting the modest upwards trajectory in those elements aligning with the targets outlined in the University's 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan. It was highlighted that males (compared to females) and those students entering with vocational qualifications (compared to academic qualifications) under-performed versus their counterparts, and that the respective gaps tended to widen from enrolment to graduation. The male achievement gap was a sector-wide issue, the reasons for which were to be explored in further detail through a 'MASTER Plan'. The Board endorsed the need for action to be taken so that students are better prepared, within module teaching schemes, for examinations, where that mode of assessment is selected by tutors.
4. The Board approved the Research Degrees Committee annual report and noted the exceptionally strong performance in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
5. The Board noted the Careers Service Review report and approved the proposed actions. The Careers and Placement teams were congratulated for their efforts in arranging successful employer events this academic year, which will welcome over 200 employers to campus in October and November 2019. The Board expressed concern that the University's Graduate Outcomes current response rate of approximately 65% was well below that previously attained for the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, when it was managed internally and achieved response rates consistently in excess of 90%. It was noted that, whilst Harper Adams had surpassed the HESA response rate target of 60%, most institutions were not anticipated to do so. The consequences of missing the response rate target were not clear at this stage, but questions could be raised as to the validity of including sector data as benchmarks within the subject-level Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), as intended.
6. The Board received the headline Annual Course Monitoring data for 2018/19 and endorsed the recommendations arising from an extensive series of course monitoring meetings. It was noted that action arising from the National Student Survey (NSS) results had been addressed several months earlier than usual so that action plans were in place for the start of the 2019/20 academic session and that the 'You Said, We Did' promotional campaign was due to be launched imminently.
7. The Board received the fourth draft Strategic Plan for 2020-25. The Board noted that minor amendments suggested to the Chair would be actioned in advance of the next meeting of the Board of Governors.
8. The Board received an update on the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy. It was noted that most elements were now 'green' with some still 'amber'. Student representatives were to be engaged in the development of a new strategy, due to be written once the University Strategy had been finalised.
9. The Board received and approved the revised Internationalisation Strategy. The document had been written to align with the new University Strategy, and made the assumption that the UK would depart from the European Union, in spite of the current political instability. The strategy would be amended to mention the resource requirements for any revised Tier 4 visa licence compliance obligations, including managing an extended population to include EU nationals.
10. The Board noted an update on Access and Participation Planning. The Board noted that some negotiation with the OfS had taken place over the summer, and that the ensuing amendments to the Plan were noted in

the paper. The University remained under 'enhanced monitoring', with a need for more extensive reporting at the end of 2019/20; however, recent internal reporting suggested that most metrics were shifting in the right direction. The Board approved some minor revisions to its terms of reference to update terminology and to ensure the committee maintained oversight of Plan outcomes, whilst delegating aspects of the Plan's operations to its sub-committees or the University Executive.

11. The Board received and endorsed the Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship Status Report and approved minor update changes to the University's Tier 4 Policy. Significant overhaul of the Tier 4 policy was expected to be necessary once the details of the UK's withdrawal from the EU had been agreed.
12. The Board received an annual review of the register of collaborative partners, and noted that the OfS required the University to give notification of any changes to collaborative provision, given that new and ending partnerships were deemed to be 'reportable events'.
13. The Board noted the update on the Risk Analysis and Action Plan (RAAP). The Board agreed that the rating for the risk which incorporates Access and Participation Planning should remain 'medium'.
14. The Board received and endorsed a paper outlining the new course developments and suspensions as approved by the Programme Approvals Committee and University Executive. The Board noted the full portfolio of validated courses.
15. The Board received an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor, covering strategic matters of relevance to the Academic Board. The Vice-Chancellor noted that:
 - External policy development was currently on hold, due to the recent announcement of a General Election in December, meaning there would be no movement on initiatives such as subject-level TEF and the Augar Review for the time being. The outcome of the election would determine sector priorities moving forward, including an expected consultation on Institution Specific Funding.
 - GuildHE was to commission an exercise to map the work of the OfS against the Regulators' Code (2014).
 - Harper Adams would be represented within the new Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education Leaders, which aims to establish a climate action plan for the sector.
 - The University had been shortlisted for three 2019 Times Higher Education Awards, as follows: Outreach Initiative (Field to Fork); Outstanding Estates Strategy (work on renewable technologies); and University of the Year, the winners of which would be announced at the end of November.

Dr Abigail Hind
Director of Academic Services
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