

the Academic Council

Minutes of the second meeting of the Academic Council in the 2023-2024 academic session, held on 24 January 2024 at 3 pm in Room 139, Queen Anne Court, Greenwich campus and via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Jane Harrington, Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Peter Garrod, University Secretary
(Executive Secretary)

- Rachel Ashton, Executive Director, Student and Academic Services
- Karen Brickman, GBS Member
- Andy Frost, Director, GRE
- Peter Griffiths, PVC Engineering & Science
- Dave Hockham, FLAS Member
- Aminul Islam, GSU Officer
- Sodiq Lawal, GSU Officer
- Jennifer Marie, PVC Education
- Derek Moore, PVC FEHHS
- Zoe Pettit, Deputy Dean, FLAS
- Peter Taylor, Chief Operating Officer
- Andrew Westby, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)
- Anuj Baral, Elected Student Member
- Paul Butler, Executive Director & Chief Information Officer
- Leigh Doster, PVC Business
- Myrtle Emmanuel, Associate Professor in HRM & Organisation, GBS/EDI Adviser
- Sheryl Hendriks, Director of NRI
- Petros Ieromonachou, Associate Dean (R&KE), GBS
- Heidi King, Executive Director, Marketing & External Relations
- Vanessa Lemm, PVC FLAS
- Mary-Clare Martin, FEHHS Member
- Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, Associate Dean (Student Success), FLAS
- Sofia Stathi, Chair, UREB
- Laziz Tokhirov, GSU Officer

In attendance:

Trudy Brighton, Governance Support Manager (minutes)

Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning (item 23/30)

Anna McMenamin, Interim Associate Director of Employability & Apprenticeships (Item 23/35)

Hayriye Mehmet, Interim Associate Director of SAS (Registry)

Sara Ragab, Associate Director of SAS (Student Services) (Item 23/31)

Apologies:

Jane Roscoe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost

AC 23/22 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Hayriye Mehmet, Interim Associate Director of SAS (Registry) to her first meeting.

The Chair reported that, as Mohammad Sakikhailes had left the University, the process to recruit a replacement academic representative of the Faculty of Engineering & Science would commence.

AC 23/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

AC 23/24 ITEM FROM THE CHAIR

24.1 Agenda Papers

The Chair commented that some papers in the pack were too lengthy and poorly structured. This was not indicative of good practice and, for future meetings, a new protocol would be introduced. Papers would need to be provided at least a week in advance of the meeting and she would review papers with the University Secretary to decide whether they would be included in the main set of papers or in a supplementary pack or not at all. In this way, it was anticipated that the Council would be able to focus on key issues.

AC 23/25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS LIST (AC 23/P19)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

The actions tracker was received. Some items were on the agenda and others were scheduled for upcoming meetings. The Governance Support Manager would check action 23/05 relating to improving progression to postgraduate study assigned to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost and Executive Director, Student & Academic Services.

AC 23/26 REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (AC 23/P20)

The Vice-Chancellor reported on recent developments and highlighted the following:

- **Teaching Excellence Framework 2023 Results:** the University had achieved Gold overall in the 2023 TEF, comprising Gold in Student Experience and Silver in Student Outcomes. The University had been one of six University Alliance universities to receive a Gold rating and one of only three London universities. The Council formally noted this outstanding achievement and thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Education and all involved in compiling the submission for their collective efforts.
- **Expanding Excellence in England (E30 Bid):** The University had been awarded a grant over £9 million from Research England to develop the Multi-Scale, Multi-Disciplinary, Modelling Platform. The Council congratulated the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (RKE) and his team for their successful bid.
- [REDACTED]
- **National Student Survey:** The next National Student Satisfaction survey was being launched on 6 February 2024. The NSS Task Force meetings were taking place and an impressive amount of work had already been demonstrated.
- **Senior Staffing Update:** Professor Jane Roscoe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost, would be leaving the University on 9 February to take up the role of Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts. The Council acknowledged the contribution she had made to shaping the Student Success sub-strategy and driving the work forward. Recruitment for her replacement was underway. The appointment of a new Director of EDI was nearing completion. Professor Chris Pallant, new Head of the School of Design within FLAS, had taken up his role at the start of February.
- **REF:** Research England had announced that the next REF was being

delayed by a year. The results of REF2029 would be published in December 2029.

AC 23/27 GREENWICH STUDENTS' UNION REPORT (AC 23/P21)

The President of Greenwich Students' Union presented an update on strategic activities:

- The Retention Calling Project had continued throughout Term One and over 3,100 students had been spoken to about engaging with their studies. Targeted support had also been given to POLAR Q1 first year students and students from Palestine and Israel. 95% of students contacted had continued into the second term.

The Executive Director of Student & Academic Services noted the success of the Retention Calling Project to date and reported that discussions were starting on the best model for enhancing retention going forward.

- An overall coverage of 42% of academic representatives across the programmes had been achieved against a target of 50%. Feedback given to representatives to date had indicated a mix of positive experiences and concerns about teaching, module structures and timetabling. It was agreed that the representatives should inform relevant professional services of feedback relevant to their areas. A recent Town Hall forum with the Vice-Chancellor had been well received and it was suggested that other senior managers could participate in similar events.
- Following the work carried out by Inclusivity Consultants on the BAME awarding gap, GSU was currently conducting focus groups to gather students' lived experiences to feed back to the Academic Learning Enhancement team and module leaders. 160 modules would be reviewed across the year. The initial feedback highlighted challenges for International students such as essay-heavy assessments.

It was agreed that a coordinated approach was needed on the work being undertaken by GSU and other relevant work being undertaken elsewhere across the University, such as decolonisation of the curriculum and race action planning and development of the Access & Participation Plan. Some common themes should be brought to a future meeting for a broader discussion. The PVC Education would discuss the work on personal tutoring with the GSU outside the meeting.

AC 23/28 FACULTY REPORTS (AC 23/P22)

The PVCs and Executive Deans presented key highlights from their Faculty reports:

28.1 Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences

Professor Derek Moore drew the Council's attention to the following highlights:

- [REDACTED]
- **Student Success:** The Faculty had been pleased to win best large programme (Mental Health Nursing) and best School of the year (School of Health Sciences) at the University's NSS celebrations in December.
- **Midwifery Launch:** The launch of the BSc Hons Midwifery at Medway on 16 January 2024 had been attended by the Chief Midwifery Officer and had led

to some positive spin outs.

28.2 Faculty of Engineering & Science

Professor Peter Griffiths drew the Council's attention to the following:

- **PTES 2023:** The School of Science had been awarded Outstanding School in the 2023 PTES.
- **Research & Knowledge Exchange:** Professor Kevin Lam had been awarded a Leverhulme grant of nearly £300,000 for research and now held two concurrent Leverhulme awards.
- As part of the Universities at Medway partnership, the Faculty was working to embed its work more deeply into the Medway region. The programme of Medway Talks, recruitment events, outreach work and involvement with the Children's University was being well received.

28.3 Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Professor Vanessa Lemm drew the Council's attention to the following:

- **Staff and Culture Update:** A new Head for the School of Law and Criminology was due to start on 1 April. The Staff Survey action plan had been finalised with an emphasis on collaboration and communication.
- **RKE:** The formal launch of the Institute of Inclusive Communities and Environments (ICE) was being held on 29 January 2024.

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28.4 Greenwich Business School

Professor Leigh Doster drew the Council's attention to the following:

- **Staff and Culture Update:** A new Director of Executive Business Centre had been appointed and was due to start in April 2024.
- **Student Success Update:** The second phase of the programme portfolio review was in progress. About 10 new programmes had been launched in 2024 with a further 15 planned for September 2025. The Faculty had performed particularly well in the PTES 2023 with an overall satisfaction score of 89%. The Bloomberg Global Trading Floor which opened in September was proving successful. The School's undergraduate students had been ranked in the top 15% in the world.

AC 22/29

TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (TEF) 2023 (AC 23/P23)

The Council considered a detailed report on the University's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) results. As reported earlier in the meeting, the University had received an overall Gold rating, with Gold for student experience and Silver for student outcomes. Five of the seven categories under student experience had received a Gold rating and two of the six in student outcomes had received a Gold rating. The University had performed well compared to the sector and University Alliance (only 22% of the sector and six University Alliance universities had received Gold).

The PVC: Education reported that the summary feedback from the Panel provided guidance on how the University could work towards achieving a triple Gold rating in the next exercise. Key messages included:

- careful consideration needed to be given to content. Whilst all the University's undergraduate provision had been within the scope of the exercise, the University's work on apprenticeships, TNE and validated only provision had been excluded.
- Metrics were vitally important and consistency and a positive trajectory in continuation and student outcomes were essential if triple Gold was to be achieved.

- Attention needed to be paid to the weighting of students in the submission.
- Data evidenced impact was crucial and data gathering on interventions needed to happen as work progressed. The new Evaluation Centre would be beneficial to this.

The Council noted that the Panel had accepted the University's assertion, in relation to progression rates, that students from London who studied in London and remained in work there faced difficulties obtaining graduate level of employment, as credible historical context. The challenge in the future would be how to ensure Greenwich students secured graduate level positions.

AC 23/30 POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES) 2023 (AC 23/P24)

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning presented the highlights of the 2023 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). The headline results were that:

- Overall satisfaction rates had remained stable at 86%.
- The response rates had fallen from 38% to 34% although 155 additional student responses had been received;
- There had been improvement in all nine of the questionnaire's sections.
- The highest performing area was the Resources section which had improved from 90% to 92%
- The lowest performing area was the Community section (new this year) which scored 78%.
- The Schools of Humanities & Social Science, Business, Operations & Strategy, the Executive Business Centre and the School of Science all achieved overall satisfaction rates of 90% or greater.

The Council also received benchmarking data for the University prepared by AdvanceHE which showed that the overall satisfaction of 86%, based on 2751 responses, was 1 percentage point below the University Alliance group and placed Greenwich in the second quarter. Across the different aspects measured by PTES, Greenwich was mostly in the highest quartile.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the results indicated that postgraduate taught students were predominantly satisfied with their experience but there were obvious areas for improvement. The PVCs were asked to include a brief paragraph on the actions being taken in Faculties to improve satisfaction in their next report.

The Council noted the usefulness of the narrative comments and were reassured that the comments and free text responses would be circulated to relevant areas. The PVC Education reported that 16 programmes were below average satisfaction levels and would be required to produce credible action plans. She would ensure that a breakdown of programme level results was shared with programme leaders.

AC 23/31 SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION STRATEGY (AC 23/P25)

The Associate Director of SAS (Student Services) presented the draft University Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Strategy for approval. The strategy had been prepared using good practice in the sector and through consultation with relevant areas of the University. The strategy took account of the 'Suicide Safer Universities' guidance published by Universities UK and Papyrus (a charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide) which advocated that universities should have a separate strategy with clear ownership

and objectives created in partnership with stakeholders and students. In this respect, the University had benefited from its links with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The associated work on the Mental Health Charter and bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct was significant in this space and the strategy pulled together all these strands. The draft strategy had been considered by the Health & Wellbeing Committee, the Health, Safety, Sustainability and Wellbeing Board and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive.

The Council noted that further work was still to be done and the University's Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Steering Group would be producing a related framework and strategy documents and associated communication planning.

The Council agreed that the work was vitally important. It was agreed that it should make clearer that the strategy applied to all staff included out-sourced staff. There was no indication of timeframe for much of the ensuing work and the Vice-Chancellor asked for a proposed action plan with timelines to be submitted to the June meeting of the Council. Subject to the minor amendment agreed, the Council **approved** the draft University Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Strategy.

AC 23/32 ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS (AC 23/P26)

The Council considered the 2022/23 annual report on academic quality and standards which had been prepared for the purpose of providing the Governing Body with assurance that the University was meeting the quality and standards conditions for its registration as a Higher Education provider in England.

The report included an overview of work undertaken in 2022/23 to assure academic quality and the standards of the University's awards and to improve the student academic experience and outcomes. Significant progress had been made in improving the effectiveness of the operation of Progression & Award Boards and ensuring students had an end-of-year progression decision. This work had been of real impact to students as there had been no missing marks at the end of 2022/23. There was confidence that the University's academic standards and quality of programmes were comparable or higher than other universities, with largely positive feedback from external examiners. Implementation of the Continuous Improvement Tool had facilitated easier review of the performance of programmes as well as enabling the strengthening of quality processes.

The Council agreed that the overall paper was a good starting point but would need to be revised through the lens of Governors to ensure that it provided the necessary level of assurance on quality and standards. The next iteration should be shorter and avoiding HE jargon with the appendices removed. More detail on the work undertaken during the year including additional context around the improvement on marking should be included.

The Council **agreed** that the amended report for the Governing Body would be approved via Chair's Action.

AC 23/33 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23
(AC 23/P27)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange) introduced the annual report on research and knowledge exchange activities in 2022/23. This year's report had been revamped to include case studies to provide some context to the R&KE work and its impact.

As well as summarising progress with the R&KE Sub-Strategy, the report set out progress in key performance areas of academic outputs, funding and postgraduate research. The key messages were:

- The impact of the University's work was recognised as improving and the University had climbed in the Times Higher Impact Rankings to 86 globally.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- An encouraging year-on-year upward trend in the number and quality of outputs published in journals in the top quartile (used as a proxy for 3* and 4* outputs in the REF).
- A continuing decline in the number of enrolled postgraduate research students.
- An increase in the University's capacity and capability in knowledge exchange. The results of the University's KEF3 submission would be included in the updated report for the Governing Body.

Subject to review of the report to ensure that its contents were user-friendly for Governors and inclusion of the KEF3 results, the Council **approved** the report on Research and Enterprise Knowledge activities for recommendation to the Governing Body.

AC 23/34 DOCTORAL COLLEGE (AC 23/P28)

The Council considered the preliminary scoping of a Doctoral College.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (RKE) outlined the justification for a Doctoral College. The student satisfaction in PRES 2023 had been below target at 71% and it was recognised that the student experience was variable across the piece. The University was behind its competitors in terms of postgraduate doctorates and the experience needed to be developed in a more efficient, consistent and effective way.

Preparatory work had been undertaken during the course of the last year to understand what the future postgraduate research provision should be. In parallel with consultation on sector experience and with relevant staff and postgraduate research students, a One University Project had run three workshops consulting on 60 potential process improvements to the student journey. This work had led to proposals which would be used to prepare a formal business case for a future Doctoral College:

It was being proposed that a case would be made for a single Doctoral College (potentially called the Doctoral Training College) to coordinate the student journey, provide training for postgraduate research students and develop research and knowledge exchange skills for academic staff. Activities and services would be coordinated across Directorates and Faculties with no relocation of staff into a central Doctoral College. The costs of managing the Doctoral College were being worked through.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Feedback from PGR students indicated some discontent with the time spent on administration and there was agreement that processes needed to be improved and streamlined.
- There was general support for the proposed review of Faculty Research

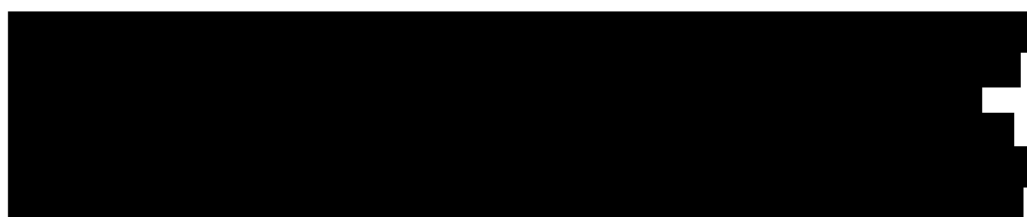
- Degree Committees and the documentation associated with their operation which students and staff found over onerous.
- There was agreement that a priority task for the Doctoral College leadership should be around growing the sense of belonging of PGR students. GSU had recently launched a dedicated space for PGR students in Dreadnought as a social space to help build a cohesive community.
- The involvement of PGR students with the Research Centres was essential as a means of enhancing their student experience.

The DVC (RKE) would consider the comments made and bring back the formal business case to a future meeting of the Council for approval.

AC 23/35 DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS (AC 23/P29)

The Interim Associate Director for Employability & Apprenticeships presented an update on developments in the University's degree apprenticeships provision during the last 12 months. Throughout this period there had been a focus on improving compliance including:

- implementation of all actions from an internal audit of degree apprenticeships undertaken in January 2023
- a review/rewriting of all statutory apprenticeship documentation to ensure that it was compliant with Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules.
- achieving all green flags against the eight criteria in the DfE's Apprenticeships Accountability Framework.



The report would be going to the Governing Body in February and, besides some clarification of language and acronyms, it was suggested that a reference to performance compared to aspirations in terms of the portfolio should be added to the report. The Vice-Chancellor commended the Employability & Apprenticeships team on the improved position of the apprenticeships provision.

AC 23/36 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

36.1 International Students

The GSU Officer drew attention to the impact of the current economic conditions on international students who were experiencing financial hardship and made a request for consideration to be given to the provision of structured payment plans. The Vice-Chancellor thanked the GSU Officer for raising the matter and reported that the Chief Operating Officer was looking into the concept of payment plans but visa requirements would need to be considered at the same time. The Chief Operating Officer with relevant senior colleagues would make contact outside the meeting to discuss short-term interventions and return to the next meeting with some suggestions for medium-term interventions for alleviating financial hardship.

AC 23/37 MODULE REVIEW (AC 23/P30)

The Council received an information report on the outcome of the review of small modules (defined as having fewer than eight students for the past two years on undergraduate modules and fewer than five students for the past two years on postgraduate modules). The Student Success Board had approved a number of modules not to run in 2024/25 and agreed follow-up actions to improve the efficiency of small optional modules which were continuing to run.

AC 23/38 FACULTY RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE: TERMS OF REFERENCE (AC 23/P31)

The Council **approved** the amended Terms of Reference for the Faculty Research Degree Committees on the recommendation of the Research & Knowledge Exchange Board on 4 October 2023.

AC 23/39 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH AWARDS (AC 23/P32)

The Council **received and noted** the updated Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Research Awards which had been approved by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Board by Chair's Action on 22 December 2023.

AC 23/40 SUMMARY REPORTS FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 23/P33)

The Council **received** summary reports from the following Academic Council's committees:

- Partnerships Board, 10 November 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 4 October 2023, 13 December 2023
- Student Success Board, 21 September 2023, 19 October 2023, 23 November 2023, 4 December 2023
- University Research Ethics Board, 19 October 2023, 5 December 2023.

AC 23/41 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 23/P34)

The Council **received** minutes from the following Academic Council's committee meetings:

- Partnerships Board, 10 November 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 4 July 2023, 4 October 2023, 13 December 2023
- Student Success Board, 21 September 2023, 19 October 2023, 23 November 2023 and 4 December 2023
- University Research Ethics Board, 19 October 2023, 5 December 2023.

AC 23/42 ACADEMIC COUNCIL CYCLE OF BUSINESS 2023/24 (AC 23/P35)

The Council **received** an updated cycle of business for 2023/24.

AC 23/43 VISITING PROFESSOR APPLICATION (AC 23/P36)

The Council **approved** the appointment of Professor Sam Foster as a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences for a term of three years.

AC 23/44 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held at 15:00 on 20 March 2024.

Meeting closed at 4.40 pm.

T.A.Brighton
21 February 2024