

## ***the Academic Council***

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Academic Council in the 2022-2023 academic session, held on 14 June 2023 at 3 pm in Room 006, Stephen Lawrence Building, 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
- Leigh Doster, PVC Business
- Peter Griffiths, PVC Engineering & Science
- Krishmi Karki, Elected Student Member (GSU President)
- Jennifer Marie, PVC Education
- Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, Associate Dean (Student Success), FLAS
- Jane Roscoe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost
- Peter Taylor, Chief Operating Officer
- Anuj Baral, Elected Student Member
- Paul Butler, Executive Director and Chief Information Officer, ILS
- Sheryl Hendriks, Director of NRI
- Dave Hockham, FLAS representative
- Heidi King, Executive Director, Marketing & External Relations
- Vanessa Lemm, PVC FLAS
- Mary-Clare Martin, FEHHS representative
- Zoe Pettit, Deputy Dean, FLAS
- Mohammed Sakikhales, FES representative
- Andrew Westby, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)

### **In attendance:**

Trudy Brighton, Governance Support Manager (minutes)

Brian Boag, Deputy Dean (FEHHS)

Karen Brough, Associate Director (Registry), Student & Academic Services (item 22/66)

Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning (items 22/67-68)

Sara Ragab, Associate Director (Student Services), Student & Academic Services (item 22/64)

### **Apologies:**

Abdul Ahad, Elected Student Member

Andy Frost, Interim Director, GRE

Petros Ieromonachou, Associate Dean (R&KE), GBS

Derek Moore, PVC FEHHS

Sofia Stathi, Chair, UREB

AC 22/56

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Dave Hockham, Faculty academic staff member for FLAS, to his first meeting. Interviews of candidates for a Faculty member from GBS had been held and a decision would be communicated shortly.

The Chair thanked Krishmi Karki (GSU President) and Abdul Ahad, outgoing Sabbatical officers, for their service and congratulated Anuj Baral on his election as GSU President for 2023/24.

The Chair noted that Zoe Pettit (Deputy Dean), Louise Owusu-Kwarteng (Associate Dean, Student Success) and Petros Ieromonachou (Associate Dean, R&KE) were on one-year terms of office served in rotation with others in the same role in Faculties and were consequently attending their last meeting. Appointments for their replacements would be made before the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

AC 22/57      DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

AC 22/58      MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS LIST (AC 22/P51)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 April 2023 were agreed as an accurate record subject to adding Sheryl Hendriks, Vanessa Lemm, Mary Clare Martin and Mohammed Sakikhales to the attendance list and slight amendment of the appendix.

The actions list was received. It was noted that all actions were ongoing or completed or addressed on the meeting agenda.

AC 22/59      MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE

There were no matters arising.

AC 22/60      REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (AC 22/P52)

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

- **National Student Survey (NSS):** In light of the changes made by the OfS to the NSS, the strategic KPI on student satisfaction would need to be updated in discussion with the Governing Body.
- **Graduate Outcomes Result:** The latest Graduate Outcomes results released by the HESA indicated an improvement of 4 percentage points for 2020/21 graduates in highly skilled employment but a fall in those undertaking further study of 2 percentage points. Internal modelling suggested that the results reversed the recent worsening trajectory which should be reflected in league tables.
- **Artificial Intelligence Guidance (AI):** Guidance on the University's position on acceptable use of AI by students had now been published and attention had now turned to producing guidance on how staff could use AI to enhance student learning.
- **Senior Appointment:** Rachel Ashton had been appointed as the permanent Executive Director of Student and Academic Services and would be working to ensure an outstanding experience for each student.
- **Complete University Guide League Table Results:** The University had fallen 27 places in the Complete University Guide from 83<sup>rd</sup> to 110<sup>th</sup>. This was a disappointing outcome. Initial analysis of the data suggested some drops in individual metrics combined with an unfortunate timing of data releases. All metrics had worsened relatively against the sector with the exceptions of research and the improvement in NSS results. Further analysis would be undertaken. The immediate focus would be to determine next steps, but the expectation was that next year's results would be more indicative of the planned direction of travel.
- **University's Achievements:** In the recently published Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023, the University had moved into the Top 100

global institutions and was placed 86<sup>th</sup>, the highest across the University Alliance.

- **Ministerial Statement on International Students:** Following the ministerial statement on measures impacting international students on 23 May, the University was lobbying with the rest of the sector against the changes and also considering how to mitigate against its impact on Greenwich students.
- **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act:** The HE (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 had come into effect on 14 May 2023. Professor Arif Ahmed had been appointed by the OfS as the first Director of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. There would be a new OfS condition of registration related to the need for HE providers to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom and extend the duty to directly cover students' unions.

## AC 22/61 GREENWICH STUDENTS' UNION REPORT (AC 22/P53)

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

- Following a total of 421 nominations, the annual Student Led Teaching Awards held on 12 May 2023 had presented awards across 15 different award categories to staff members and student representatives. It was agreed that the list of nominations would be circulated to Faculties.
- The 2023/24 GSU Leadership team had been elected following a record-breaking turnout of students voting equating to a 96% increase from the previous year.
- Since October 2023, 5,884 students had been contacted as part of the Wellbeing and Retention Project to improve student continuation. The project was continuing into term 3.

The Chair thanked the President for her report.

## AC 22/62 FACULTY REPORTS (AC 22/P59)

The Executive Dean & PVCs and Deputy Dean, FEHHS presented highlights from their Faculty reports:

### 62.1 Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences

Professor Brian Boag (on behalf of the PVC, Professor Derek Moore) drew the Council's attention to the following:

- [REDACTED]
- **Student Success:** The Faculty had been very successful in the recent Student Led Teaching Awards. [REDACTED]
- **International Update:** In order to diversify the student base, partnerships in Cyprus, Nepal, USA, Malaysia and Hong Kong were being explored.
- **Events:** A mass casualty simulated event was being organised by the Paramedic Science academic team in mid-June.
- **Ofsted:** Ofsted was currently reviewing the education provision. The outcome which was expected the next day was looking positive. The Council thanked all the staff involved in the Ofsted visit for their efforts.

- [REDACTED]

## 62.2 Faculty of Engineering & Science

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

- [REDACTED]
- **Staff and Culture:** A portfolio review of the science and engineering programmes was starting over the summer.
- **International Update:** The new agreement with MSA had been signed. A recent hybrid research conference had led to c.200 proposals for future research collaborations.
- [REDACTED]
- **Accreditations:** The forensic suite of programmes in Science had received a number of commendations as part of their reaccreditation process. Accreditation work for Engineering programmes was continuing.

## 62.3 Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

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

- [REDACTED]
- **Staff and Culture:** A number of Faculty staff had been successful in the recent Student-Led Teaching Awards. A Faculty Forum was scheduled for 21 June which would celebrate the year's work and look ahead to key priorities for the coming year.
- **Student Success:** A best practice day on the BAME Awarding Gap was being held on 15 June. Interviews were underway to assist with the Student Stories Project led by Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, which was developing into a much larger piece of work than originally anticipated.
- **Research & KE:** Staff had been successful in being awarded funding grants for research from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the European Cooperation in Science and Technology.
- **Events:** The Hopeful Futures Exhibition, which had recently been launched, encouraged schoolchildren to participate in art and was a project co-hosted by the Institute for Inclusive Communities and Environments and the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre, De Montfort University. The School of Design Degree Show and the Greenwich Achievement in Film and Television Awards (GRAFTAS) were scheduled for 15 and 16 June respectively.

## 62.4 Greenwich Business School

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

- [REDACTED]
- **Staff and Culture:** A new staff network started the previous month was a welcome initiative for bringing new staff together. The Schools' Neighbourhood Pilot Project was to be implemented over the summer. A New Bloomberg Trading Floor and Digital Marketing Lab were to be installed over the summer.
- **Student Success:** The student induction programme for 2023/24 had been revamped to emphasise the learning community, student support and skills development. A summer school in Italy on business/entrepreneurship had been arranged.
- **Research & KE:** A new GBS early career researcher network was to be



launched on 19 June. A workshop to promote support for staff undertaking PhDs had been held.

- **International:** New partnerships in Nepal and Sri Lanka had been approved.  
[REDACTED]
- **Events:** 98 students had taken part in the University's Enterprise Challenge Final with £12,000 being awarded to six winning businesses.

AC 22/63

#### RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE UPDATE (AC 22/P55)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange) presented an overview of research and knowledge exchange activities aligned to the Research and Knowledge Exchange sub-strategy which had been presented to the Governing Body's meeting on 16 May 2023.

The picture overall looked positive and the Council was informed that:

- [REDACTED]
- Research Power (Strategic KPI#8) currently stood at 1107 against a 2030 target of 2000. To move things forward, Professor Javier Bonet would be carrying out some training;
- [REDACTED]
- The impact of the University's research in the REF2021 had been particularly strong and two of the Law case studies, both scored as world leading, had been entered for a 2023 Queen's Anniversary Prize;
- [REDACTED]
- The numbers and quality of outputs remained strong benchmarked against the University Alliance (4<sup>th</sup> place), indicating that work was moving in the right direction;
- With regard to the Knowledge Exchange Framework activities, good progress was being made in four of the seven perspectives. However, there needed to be improvement in the skills and commercialisation space;
- In general, work was progressing against the main projects of the sub-strategy including structures and culture, decolonisation and PGR student development. The new Centres were developing theories of change to track impact case studies for REF2028 and assess the impact of outputs relative to global outputs.

The Chair thanked the DVC (Research & Knowledge Exchange) for the helpful update.

AC 22/64

#### SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION (AC 22/P58)

The Associate Director SAS, Student Services gave an update on the development of the University's suicide prevention, intervention and postvention strategy. In accordance with the 2018 UUK guidance ("Suicide-Safer Universities"), a separate strategy was being formulated which was distinct from the overarching strategy on health and wellbeing. Development of the strategy involved consultation across the institution and the sector and with local stakeholders such as the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and the Greenwich Students' Union. As suicide was a sensitive and difficult matter to talk about, GSU had advised on how to work with students to develop the strategy.

The Council noted that the draft strategy set out the key principles around prevention, intervention and postvention and aimed to be an education piece on how to talk about suicide. The work was in its final stages and action points underlying

the strategy were being formulated. Once finalised, the strategy would be considered by relevant forums before submission to Academic Council in the autumn for approval.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of the strategy in the context of the University's duty of care and the need for clear articulation on the activities and actions in this area. The strategy was welcomed particularly in light of the recent announcement by the Metropolitan Police that they would only attend mental health emergencies where there was an immediate threat to life.

The Council **confirmed** its commitment to ensuring that students and staff were as suicide safe as possible and its support to the proposed approach outlined in the report.

#### AC 22/65 DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT (AC 22/P59)

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) presented the draft Degree Outcomes Statement for 2021/22. The statement set out the University's commitment to maintaining academic standards and meeting the OfS conditions of registration (B4 and B5) relating to protecting the value of qualifications.

The headline data for 2021/22, which was similar to that of 2020/21, included:

- a slight drop in 'Good Honours Degrees' from 71% to 67%
- an improvement in 'Good Honours Degrees' at overseas institutions
- higher numbers of 'Good Honours' awards for part-time students compared to full-time, for young students compared to mature, for female compared to male and for those declaring a disability compared to no disability
- a slight widening of the BAME awarding gap.

The Council **approved** the 2021/22 Degree Outcome Statement for recommendation to the Governing Body on condition that consideration be given to shortening it prior to publication.

#### AC 22/66 STUDENT COMPLAINTS: 2022 OIA ANNUAL LETTER (AC 22/P69)

The Council **received** the 2022 Annual Statement from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

The Associate Director, SAS (Student Registry) reported that, for the 2022 calendar year, the OIA had reported a total of 2,850 complaints across the sector which was the highest ever number. During this time the University had issued 289 Completion of Procedures (CoPs) letters. This figure represented an increase of 252 above 2021 and was significantly above the sector average of 112.5.

It was reported that the increase in academic appeals in 2021/22 had necessarily resulted in the issuing of more CoP letters. On a more positive note, none of the 34 cases referred to the OIA had been upheld or partly upheld.

The Council noted that, unlike some institutions, the University routinely issued CoP letters for all outcomes for the benefit of the student. This meant that the sector data was not completely comparable.

The Council welcomed the proposed interventions to reduce the number of academic appeals and complaints in future through improved understanding of the procedures, including promotion of the extenuating circumstances process. A pilot project with FLAS to centralise the process to improve consistency of decision making was being run. Implementation of Phase 2 of the Student Lifecycle Management system should also be advantageous to the work to reduce casework.

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning presented the results of the 2023 Greenwich Student Survey (GSS).

He reported that the survey mirrored the NSS and accordingly had been redesigned to reflect changes made to the 2023 NSS. Some questions had shifted from a five-point to four-point scale response. The GSS covered undergraduate students who were not part of the NSS sample and the results could be a useful predictor of forthcoming NSS results.

The principal results were reported to be:

- a response rate of 25% (26% in 2022)
- a fall in overall satisfaction by 1% to 75%
- steady satisfaction rates in three Faculties but a fall of 3% to 69% for Engineering & Science
- static results for learning community (69%), careers/employability and skills (69%) and healthcare/NHS practice placements (80%)
- mixed results to the two new questions on 'mental wellbeing services' and 'freedom of expression'.

It was reported that the results were similar to the previous year's but would need further analysis. It was suspected that some results might be attributable to the legacies of the Covid pandemic.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the results highlighted the evidence of good practice but more consistency was needed. There had been some strong movement in some areas but this needed to be sustained across the piece. The results in general dictated future areas of focus to ensure improved results in the NSS. PVCs were asked to provide an update on actions in the next round of Faculty reports for the autumn meeting.

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning presented an update on two of the four Student Success strategic KPIS on Continuation and the BAME Awarding Gap.

In relation to **student continuation**, the University's performance had worsened by 3.4% to 86.7%. This decline was comparable to the sector's performance, with universities with high proportions of student from deprived areas seeing the most deterioration.

In relation to the **BAME Awarding Gap**, the University's performance had worsened by 0.8% to 13.1%. which was comparable to the gap of the University's group of comparator institutions. There had been a larger drop in 2020/21 reflecting the relationship between good honours awards and grade inflation.

It was noted that the OfS had made methodological changes to the calculation of both these metrics and revised annual milestones and targets would be provided to the October meeting of the Governing Body.

The Council recognised that these results fell short of the anticipated performance in these areas and discussed the work in hand to bring about improvement:

- **Student continuation** There needed to be a better understanding of the student community and the barriers to learning such as financial and time poverty. The SAS Student Engagement & Success Team was developing a

theory of change on student continuation to improve retention. The launch of the Student Lifecycle Management tool, development of a revised Personal Tutoring framework and the work of the planned B3 taskforce would all help to provide support to students and identify interventions to ensure further improvement.

- **BAME Awarding Gap**, there was a realisation that not all of the current work was having an impact and it was important to evaluate and focus on what was working. The Awarding Gap steering group, chaired by the PVC of GBS would help to direct work in this area. A theory of change around intersectionality was being used to drive changes to culture and behaviour such as the language used in teaching and messaging students. Developing student confidence and aspirations should be an important component of this work.

The Council **agreed** to have a more in-depth conversation on both student continuation and the BAME Awarding Gap at its autumn meeting. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor was asked to coordinate relevant data and information on the projects under way to provide an update on the measures being taken to address the issues underlying the KPI performance.

AC 22/69 RESEARCH CENTRES (AC 22/P61)

The Council **received** an update on the approval of Research Centres by the University Research and Exchange Knowledge Exchange Board. To date 23 research centres had been created and proposals on further centres (Language Culture and History (FLAS), Human Rights, Governance, environment and Criminal Justice and Safety (FLAS), Disaster Resilience and Physical Security FES) would be considered by the Board at its July 2023 meeting.

AC 22/70 STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN (AC 22/P62)

Following annual review, the Council **approved** the updated Student Protection Plan 2023/24 for recommendation to the Governing Body. The changes were noted to be minor in nature. The Council noted that infectious disease had been retained as a 'moderate' risk due to the risk of new variants of Covid-19 and other epidemic diseases emerging.

AC 22/71 REVIEW OF ACADEMIC APPEALS AND REGULATIONS (AC 22/P63)

The Council **received** a report on the review of academic appeals and regulations undertaken following the significant increase in appeals in the previous and current years. The review had confirmed that the academic appeals procedure remained fit for purpose and fully aligned with the OIA Good Practice Framework principles. Review of the academic regulations themselves had resulted in:

- (i) a series of recommended amendments in relation to:
  - progression with intermediate standing
  - best grade standing
  - compensation
  - use of standardised resit offerings
- (ii) development of a plan to improve awareness of the Extenuating Circumstances process.

The Council **approved** the recommended regulatory changes for subsequent review at the LQRC.



AC 22/72 PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEES (AC 22/P64)

On the recommendation of the Partnerships Board, the Council **approved** revised terms of references for the following Partnerships committees:

- Partnerships Board (previously called the Strategic Business Partnerships Board)
- Programmes and Partnerships Management Committee
- Faculty Programmes and Partnerships Management Committees

which reflected recent experience and were intended to clarify responsibilities for partnerships and programmes.

AC 22/73 SUMMARY REPORTS FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 22/P65)

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

- Partnerships Board, 25 April 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 5 April 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 17 May 2023
- Student Success Board, 25 May 2023
- University Research Ethics Board, 16 May 2023

AC 22/74 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 22/P66)

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

- Partnerships Board, 25 April 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 5 April 2023
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 17 May 2023
- Student Success Board, 25 May 2023
- University Research Ethics Board, 16 May 2023

AC 22/75 ACADEMIC COUNCIL CYCLE OF BUSINESS 2022/23 AND DRAFT CYCLE OF BUSINESS 2023/24 (AC 22/P67)

The Council **received** its updated cycle of business for 2022/23 and **approved** the cycle of business for 2023/24.

AC 22/76 APPLICATION FOR EMERITA PROFESSOR STATUS – PROFESSOR PAT HARVEY, FES (AC 22/P68)

The Council noted that the Vice-Chancellor had approved Emerita Professor status for Professor Pat Harvey to enable her to continue her collaboration with researchers within the School of Science and NRI.

AC 22/77 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held at 15:00 on 27 September 2023.

Meeting closed at 16:50.

T.A.Brighton / Peter Garrod  
18 August 2023