

## **Academic Board 01 November 2017**

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### **Summary of Proceedings**

*The one hundred and thirty fifth meeting of the Academic Board took place at 2pm on Wednesday 01 November 2017. Papers for the meeting are available on the Academic Board website: <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/partners/academic-board.htm>. Academic Board's proceedings are summarized below. Full minutes will be published on the website once they have been approved by Academic Board at the next meeting on 07 February 2018.*

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#### Report from the Vice Chancellor

- 1 The Vice Chancellor provided the Board with an update on the current political situation in relation to higher education in the UK in particular the debate concerning tuition fees and the proposals being discussed concerning the potential for a graduate tax to replace them. The Vice Chancellor also noted: the current consultation on the new regulatory framework for the Office for Students; the ongoing debate in the sector concerning the value for money that students were getting from their degrees; debates around perceived grade inflation by universities; and some initial information concerning the proposals for a Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF).

#### Report from the Students' Union (SU)

- 2 The SU provided an overview of its current and future work, and work undertaken since the last report to the Academic Board. The report provided an outline of the Sabbatical Officer objects for 2017/18; a detailed overview of the SU's work concerning the future of academic representation at the University; an overview of the proposals to introduce a 'subject level' student representative; and details of plans to improve the operation of the Student Forums.

#### Enrolment Update October 2017

- 3 A report was received from the Deputy Vice Chancellor Corporate Communications providing an overview of all enrolments as at 16 October 2017. The report included a comparison of the University's performance at each level of study against the previous year; performance by School, including new enrolments and continuing numbers; and the financial forecasts on the basis of these data.
- 4 During 2017/18 the focus would continue to be on recruiting students, as well as retaining the students already with the University. Understanding why certain areas had underperformed would be key in ensuring the right interventions were put in place to address under recruitment and/or poor retention.

### Conferral of Emeritus Professor

- 5 The Board noted the approval of the conferral of the title of Emeritus Professor for Professor Alan White and Professor Steve Robinson both of which took effect from 01 September 2017.

### Recommendations for conferment of Honorary Awards

- 6 The Academic Board approved the conferral of honorary awards upon the four individuals proposed by the Honorary Awards Committee. All approved nominees would be invited to receive their awards at the 2018 ceremonies along with nominee carried over from 2017, that had already been approved by the Academic Board. It was confirmed that there would be fewer honorary graduands receiving awards in 2018 as the temporary re-location of the ceremonies to a smaller venue in the city, due to the building work at the Headingley campus, meant that it would be logistically too difficult to present an honorary award at each ceremony.

### Academic Assurance Report

- 7 The Board received the Academic Assurance Report (October 2017) which provided an annual summary of evidence and data for outcomes relating to the University's taught higher education provision in 2016/17. The report provided a summary of the evidence previously received and endorsed by Academic Board during last year's reporting cycle together with the inclusion of the most recent evidence relating undergraduate external examiner reports, academic misconduct and student satisfaction outcomes for 2016/17 academic year. An update was also received concerning the AQSC continuous action plan showing completion from 2016/17 and proposed actions for 2017/18 endorsed by AQSC in October 2017. The report also confirmed the University's continuing compliance with UK quality expectations and European Standards and Guidelines.
- 8 *The Academic Board agreed to recommend to the Board of Governors that:*
  - (a) *our university's quality assurance framework and processes are effective and the management of academic quality and standards for taught provision is sound;*
  - (b) *our university is responding to any issues or concerns arising from the outcomes of our processes or from the analysis of associated data;*
  - (c) *the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate;*
  - (d) *action plans are in place for the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes; and*

### Strategic Plan KPI Update

- 9 The Vice Chancellor provided Academic Board with an update on the latest progress in achieving the key performance indicators (KPIs) set out in the Universities Strategic Plan. It was reported that overall progress was generally in line with expectations with the

University progressing ahead of expectations for the research, service excellence, and financial sustainability. It was noted that the KPI concerning 'a community of great people' (KPI 3.1) had fallen behind its forecast score and this was attributed to the results of the negative impact of the recent staff survey which had reflected staff concerns following the recent and significant changes to the structure of the University. This impact had not been unexpected and the scale of change had impacted on staff morale, and their feelings of security, value and belonging.

- 10 The Vice Chancellor outlined some of the areas the University had achieved success in that were not reflected in the KPIs and these included: the securing of a Silver Award in the recent TEF exercise; the securing of a number of significant research grants; reaching the finals of the global teaching excellence awards; and working with a growing number of national and internationally recognised organisations. The growing national and international recognition that colleagues in the University had received in their fields was leading to colleagues having a growing sense of esteem in our University.

#### Policy for Academic Assurance and Enhancement

- 11 Academic Board agreed in July 2017 that the University should review its statement of approach to quality assurance to establish a formal University Policy for Academic Assurance and Enhancement and formalise the Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework. The Board was duly presented with a University Policy for the Academic Assurance and Enhancement of our University's Higher Education provision and the University's Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework which provided a concise summary of our University's approach which could be made publicly available alongside our present Academic Regulations and Academic Governance public information. *The Academic Board approved the Policy for Academic Assurance & Enhancement.*

#### Annual Director's Report from Research & Enterprise Services

- 12 The annual report from the Director of Research & Enterprise provided an overview of the activities of the Research & Enterprise Service during 2016/17. The report covered the three themes that underpin our Service Strategy: Smart Support; Excellent Environment; and External Engagement.
- 13 It was noted that progress has been made against all of the three themes with some key points including:
  - (a) During the last year the Research Office and the Enterprise Office had transitioned from two separate teams to a fully coordinated service following a service review completed on 01 October 2017.
  - (b) In October 2017, we will have our first student intake into the Graduate School, with a full launch of the School at our February intake.
  - (c) The University recorded its largest ever research income in 2016/17 of £3.3 million.
  - (d) The number of student completions has dropped but the actual completion rates are an improving picture.

- (e) During 2016/2017 there were a higher number of external funding applications submitted than in the previous two years.
- (f) The number of enrolled research students has increased from last year from 592 to 633 along with the number of applications to the University.
- (g) Completion rate times for full time doctoral students had fallen to 4 years and 3 months and was approaching the target of 4 years or under.

#### Reports from Committees

- 14 The Academic Board received reports of the October 2017 meetings of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee, the Research & Enterprise Committee and the Honorary Awards Committee.