

the
Academic Council

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Academic Council in the 2023-2024 academic session, held on 12 June, 2024 at 2.30 pm in Room 110, 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
- Leigh Doster, PVC Business
- Andy Frost, Director, GRI
- Dave Hockham, FLAS Member
- Sodiq Lawal, GSU Officer
- Jennifer Marie, PVC Education
- Mary-Clare Martin, FEHHS Member
- Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, Associate Dean (Student Success), FLAS
- Catherine Tonry, FES Member
- Karen Brickman, GBS Member
- Myrtle Emmanuel, Associate Professor in HRM & Organisation, GBS/EDI Adviser
- Peter Griffiths, PVC Engineering & Science
- Heidi King, Executive Director, Marketing & External Relations
- Vanessa Lemm, Deputy VC & Provost
- Derek Moore, PVC FEHHS
- Zoe Pettit, Deputy Dean, FLAS
- Peter Taylor, Chief Operating Officer
- Andrew Westby, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)

In attendance:

Trudy Brighton, Governance Support Manager (minutes)

Dave Puplett, Associate Director, Libraries & Academic Enhancement

Claire Matthews, Director, UK Access and Recruitment (item 23/73)

Hayriye Mehmet, Associate Director of Student Registry

Sara Ragab, Associate Director of Student Services (item 23/76)

Debbie Shepherd, Assistant Head of Quality Assurance (P&A) (item 23/84)

Apologies:

Anuj Baral, Elected Student Member

Paul Butler, Executive Director & Chief Information Officer

Sheryl Hendriks, Director of NRI

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

Aminul Islam, GSU Officer

Sofia Stathi, Chair, UREB

Laziz Tokhirov, GSU Officer

AC 23/66 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Catherine Tonry as the new FES academic staff member.

On behalf of Academic Council, the Chair thanked Anuj Baral and Laziz Tokhirov, who were stepping down as GSU Officers at the end of the academic session, for their contributions.

The Chair thanked Zoe Pettit, Petros Ieromonachou and Louise Owusu-Kwarteng who had served for two years as Deputy Dean and Associate Dean members respectively for their contributions. These memberships were rotated

and the new members joining the Council from September would be Noel-Ann Bradshaw, Gary Brown and Tracey Reynolds.

AC 23/67 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

AC 23/68 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS (ARC 23/P53)

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 were agreed as an accurate record. The actions tracker was received. All actions were either completed or in progress.

AC 23/69 MATTERS ARISING

69.1 Progression to Postgraduate Study

The Executive Director of Marketing & External Relations updated the Council on measures to improve progression to postgraduate study. There had been a good response to the new bursary for home students for postgraduate study. 249 applications had been received representing an overall increase from the previous year. 69 scholarships had been awarded for the Masters Degrees in AI and Data Science.

69.2 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

The University Secretary reported that OfS's new registration condition E6 on harassment and sexual misconduct had been put on hold pending the upcoming General Election. Work to put the mandatory training for students in place for September was progressing. Comms would be worked on in July and it was planned that roll out would coincide with online registration.

69.3 Student Data

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning updated the Council on measures to improve the student data underpinning student success KPIs. Considerable work on scoping the indicators and data points for the KPIs, which included student engagement, had been completed. A workshop was planned for July to pull together the work. A longer-term project to put together a data strategy and business case for transforming the data landscape across the University was planned.

AC 23/70 REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (AC 23/P38)

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

- **Student Recruitment:** [REDACTED]
- **Athena Swan Bronze Award:** The University had received a Bronze Athena Swan Charter Award from Advance HE. The Council agreed this was a significant achievement and thanked Professor Andrew Westby

- and Gail Brindley for leading the work on the University's submission.
- **Complete Universities Guide League Table Results:** The University had improved in the League Table by three places from 110th to 107th ranking. The small improvement was disappointing but the metrics used by the league table were largely based on last year's data.
- **University's Achievements:** In partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the University had won a Mayor of London Cultural Impact Award. Greenwich had been shortlisted for four awards in the London Higher Awards and had attained second place for Outstanding contribution to Sustainability Leadership and Healthcare Partnership of the Year.
- **Migration Advisory Committee Review:** The Migration Advisory Committee had published its report on the review of the Graduate route visa and had recommended that it remained in place in its current form. The report's recommendations were currently on hold due to the forthcoming General Election.

AC 23/71 GREENWICH STUDENTS' UNION REPORT (AC 23/P39)

The Council received the update on the Greenwich Students' Union's strategic activities and noted that:

- Student programme representatives played a valuable role in feeding back student views on academic issues. 40% of the student programme representative roles for 2023/24 had been filled. In order to increase engagement, all programme representative roles for 2024/25 would be filled by application rather than election.
- The annual Student-Led Teaching Awards had been held on 16 May 2024. 31 awards had been given out including a new award recognising work to enhance sustainability. A record number of 600 nominations had been received. All winners had received a tree planted in their name.
- The recent focus of the Retention Calling Project had been on students who had begun their course in January, PGRs and students on courses with high awarding gaps. A total of 2,152 check ins had been completed and 8,218 students had been called. 95% of the contacted students had continued with their studies and 97% felt the call was useful. The next tranche of calls would concentrate on students who had completed their dissertations, interrupting students and completing resits. The Council recorded its appreciation for the work conducted by the GSU in this area.

AC 23/72 GREENWICH TUTORING FRAMEWORK (AC 23/P57)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost presented a report on the review of personal tutoring. Consultation with staff and students had taken place over a period of 12 months on current practices and key challenges around personal tutoring. This work had identified divergence in practice across the Faculties, uncertainty around the role of a Personal Tutor and lack of confidence in managing the range of issues presented by students and a varying experience for students.

The proposed Greenwich Tutoring Framework had been developed to address these issues. Some key aspects of the Framework included:

- A shift from personal tutoring to academic tutoring with the renaming of Personal Tutors to Academic Tutors.
- A clear definition of the role and responsibilities for Academic Tutors including a job description for an Academic Tutor.
- The requirement for all academic staff involved in teaching to be involved in academic tutoring (c 20-50 tutees each).
- A move to a hybrid method of tutoring including group and individual

- tutoring with specific support at key points in the academic year.
- Academic tutor training provided by ALE.
- The introduction of Student Support Advisors to act as the first point of contact for students with responsibility for signposting to relevant services as appropriate (c1000-2000 students per Adviser).

In discussing the proposed Framework, the Council expressed support for the general thrust of the proposals and welcomed their clarity. There was particular endorsement for the new role of Student Support Advisors who would be working in tandem with the academic tutors to provide students with consistent and high-quality support. Some concern was raised that the proposals would have implications for the AWP model and lead to a reduction in time allocated for staff to spend with students. The point was made that students in different programmes would require different types of contact. The Council was assured that the need for students to build a relationship of trust with Academic Tutors was understood and the varying needs of students would be monitored.

The Council recognised that the new arrangements would make a positive difference. However, they would involve a real culture change and were too significant to implement in one go. It was reported that a phased implementation of the Framework was planned. Tailored implementation plans were being developed and a timeframe of 12 to 18 months was being discussed with Faculties. In this way, there would be scope for the Framework to evolve and for adjustments to be made along the way. A business case for the additional resource for the Student Support Advisors would need to be put to VCE for approval.

With the exception of one member who had raised concerns, Council Members **approved** the Greenwich Tutoring Framework and the introduction of Student Support Advisor roles on condition that implementation would be phased and would take place once the Student Support Advisors were in place. The Council would receive a progress update in January 2025.

AC 23/73 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2025/26-2028/29 (AC 23/P56)

Professor Derek Moore, PVC: FEHHS and Claire Matthews, UK Director of Access and Recruitment, attended for this item.

The Council received a presentation on the draft Access and Participation Plan 2025/6-2028/9. The Plan had been developed in response to a requirement from the OfS for a new plan to be submitted in summer 2024 as the current Plan was coming to an end. The draft Plan set out:

- the University's risks to equality of opportunity that had been identified via assessment of institutional and OfS data
- intervention strategies developed to challenge risks to equality of opportunity and the outcomes expected
- the approach to evaluating the impact of this work
- investment in access and participation work.

The Council noted that the Plan included six improvement targets for particular sub-groups of students in the areas of Access, Attainment and Progression. The key projects being committed to and the annual milestones, which had been set for each of these, would be monitored each year. Specific commitments in terms of staffing and project outcomes and costs to staff time were also articulated.

The Council noted that a separate submission by Greenwich Students' Union was currently under development and would complement the priorities set out in

the draft Plan. There was some challenge on the proposed target to reduce the attainment gap between black and white students to 7.5% by 2028/29. This target appeared to be less ambitious than the strategic aim to reduce the gap to zero by 2030 but the Vice-Chancellor provided assurance that the APP target would move progress in the right direction. It was noted that internal comms around the Plan together with user friendly summaries would be produced for specific audiences.

The Council thanked the team led by Professor Moore for their work in preparing the draft Plan. The Council **approved** the University's draft Access and Participation Plan for 2025/26-2028/29 for recommendation to the Governing Body. The OfS required the Plan to be submitted by 31 July 2024 and its feedback was expected towards the end of 2024.

AC 23/74 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES REVIEW (AC 23/P58)

The Executive Director of Student & Academic Services reported on the outcome of a review of Extenuating Circumstances. Extensive consultation and benchmarking had taken place in order to align the University's procedures with current practice and identify process improvements for the benefit of students.

As a result of the consultation and benchmarking, the following changes to the Policy and Procedure were being proposed:

- the introduction of self-certification for claims to reduce the burden of providing evidence
- the introduction of grace periods for students to submit work two calendar days late during the main cycle
- the bringing forward of the deadlines for submission of extenuating circumstances claims by two calendar days.

The Council discussed the rationale for the proposed change to the deadline for submissions which seemed to have the potential to disadvantage students. It was **agreed** that:

- (i) the proposed changes relating to self-certification and the introduction of grace periods (which would necessitate amendments to the Academic Regulations for Taught Awards) would be approved
- (ii) the proposed change on claim deadlines would be revisited and re-submitted for approval via Chair's Action.

AC 23/75 FREEDOM OF SPEECH CODE OF PRACTICE (AC 23/P59)

The University Secretary reported that the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice had been revised to reflect the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and the expectations of the Office for Students. Most of the provisions would come into effect on 1 August 2024 with the remainder due to take effect in a year's time. The final version of the OfS's regulatory guidance on Freedom of Speech would not be issued until some time after the General Election, but the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice would enable the University to have a Code in place reflecting the 2023 Act in time for implementation on 1 August 2024. The revisions included a change in terminology from Freedom of Expression to Freedom of Speech, a section on the University's values relating to freedom of speech, and a section on complaint procedures. The University would be supporting the GSU in reviewing their External Speaker Policy in light of the new legislation.

The Council **approved** the revised Freedom of Speech Code of Practice for recommendation to the Governing Body.

AC 23/76 SUICIDE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND POSTVENTION STRATEGY:
ACTION PLAN (AC 23/P60)

Sara Ragab, Associate Director, Student and Academic Services (Student Services) presented a proposed action plan and timeline aligned to the Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Strategy which had been approved by Academic Council at its January 2024 meeting.

The Council noted good progress with implementation of the action plan with the majority of actions rag-rated green. The plan was a working document and progress would be monitored by the Prevention and Intervention Strategy Group and reported to the Health, Safety, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Board.

AC 23/77 DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT (AC 23/P61)

Hayriye Mehmet, Interim Director of Student & Academic Services (Registry) presented the draft Degree Outcomes Statement for the 2022/23 academic year.

The report reviewed trends over the past five years and outlined the actions and progress made during the last year and actions for the coming year. The headline results were noted to be:

- A 0.5% increase in 'Good Honours Degrees' (first class and upper second combined) moving from 71% in 2021/22 to 71.5% in 2022/23.
- A 2% increase in the awarding rate for POLAR Q1 students (ie the most disadvantaged students) from 70.6% to 72.6%
- No change in the disability awarding gap.
- An increase in the gap between young and mature students from 71.9% to 72.6%.
- A slight widening of the on-campus gaps between White and BAME and Young and Mature students.
- Female 'Good Honour' rates continuing to be above male rates.

It was noted that a new degree algorithm for undergraduate programmes had been introduced during 2022/23 and students had been entitled to receive the better outcome of the old and new degree algorithms.

The Council **approved** the 2022/23 Degree Outcome Statement for recommendation to the Governing Body subject to one minor amendment. The Vice-Chancellor queried the level of detail within the report and the Executive Director, Student & Academic Services, would review other published statements to check on their level of detail before it was submitted to the Governing Body.

AC 23/78 GREAT 2023 (AC 23/P62)

The Council considered an update on GREAT2023. The assessment was the first checkpoint on progress in preparing for REF2029 since REF2021. 825 outputs had been submitted for GREAT for assessment. Of these 73% (623) had been completed and 27% (230) were incomplete (ie only one assessment completed with 55 having had no reviews). Analysis of the results indicated that the University was broadly on track to produce sufficient 3*/4* publications to support the staff required to achieve a Research Power score of 2000 (which was the strategic 2030 KPI).

The Council noted the planned next steps including pursuing outstanding assessments, providing feedback to staff on their outputs and drawing up a governance process around the selection of Staff Responsible for Research.

The Council was reminded of the importance of ensuring that staff submitted their outputs to GALA so that they could be assessed as part of GREAT2024. Some challenges existed to achieve a Research Power of 2000, such as ensuring that staff with Significant Responsibility for Research had sufficient time to undertake their research. The Council agreed it was a positive report.

AC 23/79 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES)
(AC 23/P63)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (RKE) presented an update on the Faculty level analysis of PRES 2023 following the initial report on the PRES2023 results to the Council six months' earlier. The results indicated that significant improvement was required to improve student experience from the current rate of 71% to the target of 90% by 2030. The data indicated a range of experience across Faculties with scores from 62% to 77%. There were some common areas of strength such as supervision, research skills and progression and assessment but other important areas required attention. The work to address many of these was now the responsibility of the Greenwich Doctoral College. In addition, R&KE Centres would be drawing up work plans to address specific issues related to the culture and research environment for PGR students.

In discussing the results, the Council was advised that future work would include attention on getting PGR students career ready and into the workplace. The scoring for "Communities", which was a new section, was noted to be particularly low. The responses would be analysed as a starting point for identifying activities to create a sense of community. The new PGR spaces created by the GSU in the last year was a helpful development in this space. The need to improve PGR students' research skills was also noted.

The Council noted the update and asked for an update on progress to be provided to a future meeting.

AC 23/80 FACULTY REPORTS (AC 23/P64)

The Council received reports from the DVC and PVCs and Executive Deans on their Faculties. They presented the following key highlight from the reports:

80.1 Greenwich Business School

Professor Leigh Doster highlighted the School's pleasing achievements in the GREAT2023 exercise where 72% of its 70 submissions had been judged as 3* or 4* quality.

80.2 Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences

Professor Derek Moore reported on the positive developments with local Trusts around the expansion of Adult Nursing programmes at Medway.

80.3 Faculty of Engineering and Science

Professor Peter Griffiths reported that a Technology Enhanced Learning working group had been established to examine how to use technology to innovate and share good practice in order to modernise the Faculty's programmes.

80.4 Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Professor Vanessa Lemm highlighted the upcoming 2024 School of Design Degree being held on 14 June 2024.

AC 23/81 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

AC 23/82 STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN (AC 23/P65)

The Council **approved** minor amendments to the University's Student Protection Plan for 2024/25 for recommendation to the Governing Body.

AC 23/83 OfS FREEDOM OF SPEECH GUIDANCE CONSULTATION (AC 23/P66)

The Council **received** a copy of the University's response to the OfS consultation on proposed regulatory advice and other matters relating to freedom of speech.

AC 23/84 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR TAUGHT AWARDS (AC 23/P67)

Debbie Shepherd, Deputy Head of Quality Assurance, attended for this item.

The Council received amended Academic Regulations for Taught Awards approved by the Student Success Board on 23 May 2024. The agenda item had been unstarred at the request of one member who had requested discussion on the wording of Section 5.11 about 'compensation' in the light of concerns around disadvantaging students and additional staff workload.

The Deputy Head of Quality Assurance gave an explanation of the provisions of Section 5.1 and, following some discussion, it was agreed that the matter should be progressed outside the meeting and a proposed decision submitted for approval via Chair's action.

AC 23/85 TERMS OF REFERENCE (AC 23/P68)

The Academic Council **approved** the following changes to the student success and partnerships and programmes governance and Terms of Reference effective from September 2024:

- An enlarged scope, membership and duties of Student Success Board and discontinuation of the following sub-committees:
 - - Learning Quality and Regulations Committee
 - - Widening Participation Committee
 - - Employability Committee
 - - Learning Technologies Committee.
- The merger of Faculty Student Success and Faculty Programmes and Partnerships Management Committees into a new Faculty Student Success Committee.
- A reduction in the membership of the Programmes and Partnerships Management Committee and minor changes to the Terms of Reference and reporting lines.

The Council noted that its Delegation Framework would be updated to reflect the approved changes in governance.

AC 23/86
23/P69)

SUMMARY REPORTS FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (ARC

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

- Student Success Board, 21 March and 23 May 2024
- Partnerships Board, 18 April and 31 May 2024
- Research, Knowledge & Exchange Board, 10 April and 14 May 2024
- University Research Ethics Board, 14 May 2024

AC 23/87
23/P70)

MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC

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

- Partnerships Board, 18 April and 21 May 2024
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 10 April and 14 May 2024
- Student Success Board, 21 March and 23 May 2024
- University Research Ethics Board, 14 May 2024

AC 23/88

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CYCLES OF BUSINESS (AC 23/P71)

The Council **received** an updated cycle of business for 2023/24 and the cycle of business for 2024/25.

AC 23/89

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held at 15:00 on 9 October 2024. [Post-meeting note: moved to 15.00 on 2 October 2024]

Meeting closed at 5.00 pm.

T.A.Brighton
24 July 2024