The Learning and Teaching Board

Minutes Wednesday 2 March 2016

Present: Professor J W Sawkins (Chair)

Ms P J Calabrese  Professor J M Ritchie
Professor T M Chrisp  Dr M Sargeant
Ms H Frances  Mr P Travill
Professor J Hansen  Dr M King (Clerk)

In attendance  Ms E J Bailey  Ms E Clerihew (for Minute 20)
Dr A J Bell  Ms A J Wilson (for Minute 20)

Apologies: Professor S J Dewar  Professor K J McCullough
Professor L Galloway  Dr M A Storey
Ms D McCaig  Dr S Thomas

16 Welcome and Apologies

16.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting: Ms P J Calabrese, who had returned to her previous post as Quality Enhancement Officer and Clerk to the Student Learning Experience Committee; Dr A J Bell, as deputy for Professor K J McCullough, School of Engineering and Physical Sciences; Ms E Bailey, Planning Manager, who was attending particularly for the item on NSS Action Plans (Minute 24); Ms A J Wilson and Ms E Clerihew, Campus Services, who were attending for the item on Learning Spaces Developments (Minute 20).

16.2 Apologies for absence were as recorded above.

17 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board approved the Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2016.

18 Matters Arising Not Otherwise on the Agenda

18.1 The Board noted the report on matters arising from the meeting on 20 January 2016.

18.2 Alternative Progression Routes on Undergraduate Programmes at Overseas Campuses (Minute 66)

The Board noted that the proposal for a general Honours degree for overseas campuses was still in its early stages of development.

18.2 Inter-School Transfers (Minute 114.2)

The Board noted that the comments from the Studies Committees on the proposed revisions to the Inter-School Transfer policies and procedures would be forwarded in due course to the Clerk of Student Learning Experience Committee.

18.4 Report from the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching)

The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) provided the following report:

- the Project Board for the Senate Effectiveness Review had met for the first time on 24 February 2016 to consider the first draft of proposals emerging from the review; a revised set of proposals was currently being produced;
- the Deputy Principal (External Relations) would be undertaking a strategic development review of postgraduate taught provision across the institution.
Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Board noted the following updates regarding the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

19.1 Updating Learning and Teaching Strategies and Enhancement Plans (Schools and Services)

The Board noted that Schools were currently submitting their updated Learning and Teaching Strategies and Enhancement Plans as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review documentation; updates were likewise being submitted by Directors of relevant Professional Services prior to Learning and Teaching Strategy meetings in spring 2016.

19.2 Committees and Groups

19.2.1 The Board noted the updates from the various groups involved in supporting the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which included:

- VLE Management Group: the Board approved the Group’s revised Terms of Reference, subject to the following amendments: the Chair of the Group was no longer the Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Management and Languages; the reference to “good practice” in paragraph 2.3 should be extended to include “sharing good practice”;
- Learning and Teaching Administrators Forum: a meeting would be held on 3 March 2016, for which the agenda items had been identified only by Academic Registry; a proposal for the future operation of the Forum would be presented to the Board for consideration in due course.

19.2.2 Learning Environment Committee and Learning Spaces Management Group

The Board considered, and approved, a proposal from the Chair of the Learning Environment Committee and Chair/Acting Chair of the Learning Spaces Management Group that both groups should be discontinued with immediate effect. It was agreed that the functions of both groups would be better served by being incorporated into those of the Student Learning Experience Committee, which included all the Directors of Learning and Teaching as members. It was further agreed that the Terms of Reference of the Student Learning Experience Committee should be revised to incorporate the relevant aspects of the remits of both groups.

19.3 Graduate Attributes: Curriculum Working Group

19.3.1 The Board considered the report from the Curriculum Working Group, which had held its second meeting on 19 January 2016, with the focus of the meeting being on identifying and discussing mechanisms for helping Schools to develop their plans for implementing the HWU Graduate Attributes.

19.3.2 The Chair of the Curriculum Working Group highlighted the following proposals:

- Use of a tab on VISION for lecturers to specify the Graduate Attributes relevant to their course;
- Incorporation of Graduate Attributes into induction for all year groups;
- Inclusion of questions on the Graduate Attributes in the Course Feedback Survey;
- Development of an app for students to record and reflect on their progress towards the Graduate Attributes (the Schools of Management and Languages and Mathematical and Computer Sciences agreed to discuss potential collaborations in this area);
- The importance of the Graduate Attributes should be made clear not only to academic staff, but also to Heads of School: Schools would need to be ready to start implementing the Graduate Attributes from 2016/17; the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) should provide presentations to all relevant committees, particularly the Senate and the University Executive.

19.4 Graduate Attributes: Learning and Teaching Colloquium

19.4.1 At its meeting on 20 January 2016, the Board agreed that the 2016 Learning and Teaching Colloquium should focus on helping Schools to embed the HWU Graduate Attributes in their curricula; the event had also been deferred until 28 April 2016.
19.4.2 The Board noted that the format for the 2016 Learning and Teaching Colloquium on Graduate Attributes was currently being scoped out: the session would focus on launching the Graduate Attributes to staff (all staff would be invited; parallel launch events would need to be provided for other campus locations) and on getting Schools started; an external speaker from the University of Glasgow had been identified. It was further noted that all the points raised by the Board at its meeting on 20 January 2016 had been incorporated into the draft scope for the Colloquium.

19.4.3 The Board noted that a finalised proposal for the Learning and Teaching Colloquium would be presented to the Board for consideration and approval at its meeting on 6 April 2016.

19.5 Graduate Attributes: Awareness and Promotions

19.5.1 The Board noted that, following comments from the Board at its meeting on 20 January 2016, Media Services had produced a revised design for the Graduate Attributes diagram. It was noted that the main purpose of the design was to raise awareness of the Graduate Attributes, amongst members of staff and senior managers, and it was recognised that there would be different types of promotion materials for different audiences. The Board endorsed the revised design.

M.King

19.5.2 The Board noted that the Chair of the Curriculum Working Group and the Head of Academic Quality had met with the PR Officer (Internal Communications) to produce a communications brief and plan for the Graduate Attributes, which would include publicity for the revised diagram. It was also noted that one of the aims of the plans would be to link the Graduate Attributes into the recent institutional brand launch and to ensure that they were embedded in all forthcoming recruitment initiatives and materials.

M.King

19.6 Learning and Teaching Academy

The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) provided a verbal report on the proposed Learning and Teaching Academy: the University Executive had received, at its meeting on 22 February 2016, a presentation relating to the Learning and Teaching Academy; a further proposal would be presented to the University Executive at its meeting on 21 March 2016.

J.Sawkins

20 Learning Spaces Developments: Update

20.1 The Board received a presentation on Capital Projects: Learning, Teaching and Study Space from Ms A J Wilson, Strategic Co-ordinator for Capital Projects, and Ms E Clerihew, Project Manager. The purpose of the presentation was to give an overview of:

- the 5-year Capital Plan Projects;
- the approved spend for 2015/16, with a focus on learning and teaching;
- projects in the pipeline;
- stakeholder engagement;
- projects in progress.

20.2 Presentation on Capital Projects: Learning, Teaching and Study Space

The key areas covered in the presentation were as follows:

- background and processes undertaken;
- 5-year Capital Plan: approvals; plan for delivery; phasing, the bigger picture, the sliding puzzle;
- current projects: study space; learning and teaching space;
- 5-year Capital Plan: this included three categories of projects: approvals to progress with detailed design and procurement; approvals to progress layout design and cost report; approvals to progress with options appraisal;
- The plan for delivery included further stakeholder engagement and a series of 9 project teams, which would include learning and teaching space;
- The most imminent projects would include: 2016 learning and teaching upgrades (full refurbishment and audio-visual upgrades); Learning Commons; Teaching Hub.
20.3 Discussion on Capital Projects: Learning, Teaching and Study Space

The Board raised or noted the following points in its discussion of the presentation:

- The imminent refurbishment plans could alleviate the problem of double-teaching in some Schools, but cause it in others;
- The redesign of some teaching rooms into tiered seating was not reflective of the way in which several disciplines were moving towards more problem- and project-based learning;
- The projects were trying to deal with short-term learning and teaching space problems, but the plans also included redesigning space to align more closely with developing approaches in learning and teaching.

21 Retention Strategy: Draft Operational Plan

21.1 The Board noted that, at its meeting on 9 December 2015, it approved a University Retention Strategy 2016, which had been developed around a series of Four Key Principles and had been shaped around the concepts of a “framework for student engagement” and “retention as everyone’s responsibility”.

21.2 The Board noted, at its meeting on 20 January 2016, members had developed, in small groups, a draft Operational Plan based on the strategy. An Operational Plan, which collated the recommendations of the small group discussions, had been produced and was being presented for the Board’s consideration and approval. It was noted that the actions were presented as “Areas for Consideration”, rather than agreed actions, in accordance with the Board’s recommendations. It was also noted that, in due course, proposals for actions, timescales and indicators would put forward to the Learning and Teaching Board for consideration by the various groups/committees responsible for taking forward each activity; as such, the Plan would be subject to ongoing revision.

21.3 The Board agreed that the proposed initiatives in the Plan should not be progressed in a piecemeal way; there was a need to adopt a more cohesive, planned and evidence-based approach to retention actions. It was noted that the Retention Strategy, rather than the Plan, and the preparatory work undertaken for the Retention Strategy, would be used as an integrating framework.

21.4 The Board raised or noted the following additional points in its discussion:

- The narrative behind students’ reasons for leaving was critical in taking an informed approach to actions;
- A formal system of contacting students who have left (including those for whom the decision had been made by an Exam Board) would provide key evidence, particularly if conducted by individuals independent of the Schools;
- It was essential to ensure that students who were thinking of leaving received the correct advice at the correct time.

21.5 The Board considered and approved the Retention Strategy Operation Plan, and agreed that the Retention Strategy and accompanying Operational Plan should be provided to the Senate and the University Executive for information. It was noted that the Strategy and Plan would be formally launched in March 2016.

22 Discussion Item: Teaching Excellence

22.1 The Board noted that, the present discussion item – Teaching Excellence – had been prompted by a variety of factors, including: UK Government Green Paper (see Minute 12); the Principal’s proposals for a Learning and Teaching Academy (see Minute 19.6); and Discussion Topics identified by the Board at its meeting on 9 December 2015 (suggestions included “teaching excellence and its recognition”). It was further noted that there were current discussions across the UK sector regarding “teaching excellence”, and Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee had established a working group to scope out a possible draft statement for the Scottish HE Sector. Therefore, it was noted that it was timely for the Board to discuss Teaching Excellence: What is it? How do we recognise it?
22.2 The Board recognised that reaching a definition of “Teaching Excellence” was particularly challenging, but, given the current HE UK policy environment and its impact on the Scottish sector, it was important for the Board to begin discussions in this area. The Board raised or noted the following points in its discussion:

- Teaching excellence implied:
  - Delivering professional relevant learning
  - Being innovative
  - Undertaking pedagogical research to enhance practice
  - Encouraging enquiring minds
  - Challenging students intellectually
  - Demonstrating research-teaching linkages
  - Helping students to “see the world, and change it” (the University’s new brand for undergraduate recruitment)

- A facilitated workshop would be a useful mechanism for exploring “teaching excellence” further in the Heriot-Watt context;
- In the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework, “teaching excellence” would be measured and outcomes would be related to the capacity to increase tuition fees (for HWU, this would particularly relevant in terms of RUK students);
- The statements and comments made by students as part of the Learning and Teaching Oscars could provide a useful insight into “teaching excellence” from the student perspective: the Student Union would consider providing a summary on this;
- Recognition and reward were fundamental: career progression and promotion routes needed to encourage and reward “teaching excellence”; it should be clear that HWU valued “teaching excellence”

22.3 The Board agreed that it should continue to be provided with regular updates on the work of Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee on “teaching excellence” and on developments related to the Teaching Excellence Framework.

23 National Student Survey (NSS) 2015: Updated Action Plans

23.1 The Board noted that, at its meeting on 16 September 2015, it had approved a process for Schools, relevant Professional Services, the Student Union and West London College to respond to NSS-related issues. As part of this process, it had been agreed that each area should provide NSS Action Plans for consideration and approval by the Board at its meeting on 11 November 2015. It had also been agreed that each area would provide an updated NSS2015 Action Plan for consideration by the Board at its meeting on 2 March 2016.

23.2 The Board considered the updated NSS 2015 Action Plans as follows:

Discipline areas within the Schools of:
- Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society
- Engineering and Physical Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Management and Languages
- Mathematical and Computer Sciences
- Textiles and Design

- Information Services
- Campus Services: Estates; Hospitality Services
- Registry Services: Careers Service
- Student Union: NSS actions were embedded within the new Strategic Plan
- West London College: monitored by the Management Oversight Committee

23.3 The Board noted that the common issues, which had been summarised at the meeting on 11 November 2015 (Minute 129.3), remained unchanged following review of the updated Plans. It was further noted that the issues, which the Board had endorsed as topics to be progressed by the Board, had been incorporated into the plan of work for the Board.

23.4 Approval of Action Plans

The Board approved all updated NSS2015 Action Plans, and agreed that a short update on progress by the Student Union towards its Strategic Plan should be provided for consideration at the meeting on 11 May 2016.
National Student Survey (NSS) 2016: Update on Participation Rates

The Board received, as a tabled paper, NSS2016 Promotion and Participation.

24.1 Ms E J Bailey, Planning Manager, provided the Board with an update on current NSS2016 participation rates: as at 2 March, the rate was 56.7%, which was down on 69% and 67% at the same period in the preceding two years. Although it was noted that, to date, the sector average participation rates had declined (albeit not as much as HWU) from 54% last year to the current 43%. It was noted that if 50% participation rates were not reached, then the sector average would be used for the relevant HWU discipline areas in national league tables: this could potentially have a significant negative impact.

24.2 The Board discussed a range of possible contributing factors for the decline, ranging from scepticism and apathy on the part of students regarding the purpose of NSS and the impact, in general, of their feedback given in other surveys to staff not receiving the helpful tips provided for promoting the NSS.

24.3 The Board noted the proposed, and highlighted additional, potential short-term and longer-term measures, including:

- inviting students to lead the promotion activities (eg on the bridge link; in-School focus groups);
- the Student Union would be able to become more actively involved once elections had concluded;
- the Student Survey Management Group should consider issues such as: timing; scheduling with the new Annual Survey (all students would be able to fill in a survey (either NSS or Annual Survey) in high traffic areas); planning; increased promotion; higher profile re-launch, particularly with NSS itself changing for 2017; major profile/promotions campaign every 2 or 3 years.

Thematic Review: Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching

25.1 The Board noted that, at its meetings on 11 November 2015 and 20 January 2016, it had approved the framework and team for the first Thematic Review on Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching, which would be held on 12 and 13 May 2016. As per the agreed Thematic Review process, it was noted that a first draft of a Scoping Document had been produced for consideration and approval by the Board.

25.2 The Board approved the Scoping Document, and noted that the changed review dates could impact on the availability of proposed team members, with alternative nominees having to be sought instead.

Strategy Away Day: Final Agenda

26.1 The Board noted that its annual strategy away day would take place on Tuesday 8 March 2016. One of the main items would be a continuation of the Board’s discussion on an Integrated Approach to Student Learning Skills and Staff Academic Development, which had been framed as Student Learning Skills and Staff Academic Development: Visibility, Accessibility and Global Vision and would use the Academic Management Structures and Graduate Attributes as key topics for focusing the discussion. It was noted that a number of key individuals from the Professional Services had been invited to participate in the first session.

26.2 As agreed by the Board, it was noted that the second session would focus on Technology-Enhanced Learning, which would feature contributions from Ms C Dobson, VLE Manager, and Mr M Fowler, Director of IT, EBS. It was noted that the Student Union had selected the following topic for its session: ALP and IDL Student Representation; it was proposed that the President of the Student Union should contact Dr I J Glen, who had undertaken some research related to ALP and IDL student representation in response to issues highlighted in the University’s QAA ELIR Report.

26.3 The Board approved the revised agenda for the Away Day.
27 Report from the Student Learning Experience Committee

27.1 The Board noted that, as per its Standing Agenda Items, the Minutes of the Student Learning Experience Committee on 20 January 2016 had been provided for consideration.

27.2 The Board noted that, as part of the Go Global initiative, one School was considering the potential for PGT students to undertake part of their programme at another campus. It was noted that the policy and procedures had recently been revised to focus, at the outset, only on undergraduate students. It was agreed that further discussions were required to scope out proposals for PGT campus transfers.

Action P.Travill

Directors
LearnTeach

28 Report from the Learning Environment Committee

28.1 The Board noted that, as per its Standing Agenda Items, the Minutes of the Learning Environment Committee on 2 February 2016 had been provided for consideration. In addition, two specific items had been highlighted:

- Terms of Reference 2015/16
- Membership 2015/16

28.2 The Board noted that it had approved the discontinuation of the Learning Environment Committee (Minute 19.2.2).

29 Report from the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development: Learning and Teaching

The Board considered, as part of its Standing Agenda Items, the recent update report from the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development in relation to learning and teaching developments. It was noted that the report covered the following topics: PG CAP; LEADS; International Support Developments; Enhancement Developments; Publicity, Promotion and Engagement; ALD Committee Work; Learning and Teaching Publicity and Resources. The Board agreed to suggest to ALD that the PG CAP Alumni Event could be opened out to staff in Schools, as sharing the practices introduced by staff who have undertaken PG CAP could be beneficial to the wider staff body.

M.King

30 Papers for Information

The Board noted the following paper, which had been provided for information:

- Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee: Update, December 2015/ January 2016.

The Board agreed that such sector-wide updates were particularly useful. It was noted that the introduction of PGT loans for English-domiciled students would be extended to such students who wished to undertake Masters programmes at Scottish HEI's.

31 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching Board will be held on Wednesday 6 April 2016, 1.15 pm, Court Room, Lord Balerno Building. The meeting will be followed by a meeting of the Student Learning Experience Committee at 3.15 pm.

All members