The Learning and Teaching Board

Minutes                   Wednesday 11 May 2016

Present:                  Professor J W Sawkins (Chair)
                         Ms P J Calabrese          Ms D McCaig
                         Professor T M Chrisp     Dr M Sargeant
                         Ms H Frances             Mr P Travill
                         Professor J Hansen      Dr G B Thomson
                         Mr L J Miles             Dr M King (Clerk)

Apologies                 Professor S J Dewar          Professor J M Ritchie
                         Professor L Galloway     Dr M A Storey

45 Welcome and Apologies

45.1 The Chair welcomed to the meeting: Mr L J Miles, who was attending his first meeting of the Board as Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Textiles and Design.

45.2 Apologies for absence were as recorded above.

46 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Board approved the Minutes of the meeting of 6 April 2016.

47 Matters Arising Not Otherwise on the Agenda

47.1 The Board noted the report on matters arising from the meeting on 6 April 2016.

47.2 NSS 2016 (Minute 34.5)

The Board noted that NSS2016 closed with a response rate of 80%; HWU’s NSS results would be listed publically for all main NSS subject areas. The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) thanked all Board members who had been involved in encouraging further participation.

47.2 Framework for ALP Tutor Development (Minute 38)

The Board noted that framework for ALP Tutor Development, as agreed by the Board at its meeting on 6 April 2016, had been incorporated into the ALP Agreement template and was approved by the Quality and Standards Committee at its meeting on 9 May 2016. As a next step, relevant Schools would be invited to complete the framework document, which would be added to the existing ALP agreement as an annex.

48 Learning and Teaching Strategy

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

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

The Board noted that meetings were now taking place with Schools and relevant Professional Services regarding their updated Learning and Teaching Strategies and Enhancement Plans. At this stage, AMR/LTS meetings had been held with all Schools and all Professional Services, with the exception of two in each case. It was noted that a
summary report would be provided to the Board for consideration at its meeting on 15 June 2016.

48.2 Committees and Groups

48.2.1 The Board noted the updates from the various groups involved in supporting the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which included the recent meeting of the Inter-Campus Communications Group. The Board commended the group on its invaluable report and the range of topics and issues which it had identified and discussed. The Board welcomed the proposal for a more focused approach for the Group, and agreed the following:

- One topic per semester would enable the group to focus on key issues;
- The first such topic should be Boards of Examiners: this should be aligned with SARP-related developments, e.g. the Group’s discussions could inform the SARP strand on Boards of Examiners, and likewise, the SARP team could identify areas on which they would welcome the Group’s views;
- Other relevant topics could include those related to the student experience, such as: opportunities for/barriers to cross-campus student communications; inter-campus student projects; cross-School student communications;
- The needs analysis conducted by the Group should be circulated to the Board, as this could provide a useful document in identifying areas progressed and issues still to be resolved.

48.2.2 The Board considered a proposal, from the Academic Registrar as Chair, for the future operation of the Learning and Teaching Administrators Forum. The Board endorsed the proposed approach of discontinuing LTAF and replacing it with a number of more focused fora (e.g. Assessment Administrators Forum), which would enable Schools staff to join groups specific to their remit; in addition, the specialist fora would be timed to coincide with the timeframes for key University business.

48.2.3 As per the recommendation from the Student Survey Management Group, the Board agreed that Directors of Learning and Teaching promote PTES, which would be launched on 16 May 2016.

48.3 Graduate Attributes

48.3.1 The Board noted various developments with regard to the HWU Graduate Attributes:

- An Internal Communications Plan on Graduate Attributes aimed at students will be developed once the President Elect of the Student Union takes up office and will be launched prior to session 2016/17;
- Posters and mousemats with the Graduate Attributes visual were being disseminated across all campuses;
- A Learning and Teaching Quick Guide for Staff on Graduate Attributes had been produced (see Minute 62), and had been disseminated at the Learning and Teaching Colloquium on 28 April 2016 (see Minute 52);
- The editable version of the Graduate Attributes visual had been distributed following the Learning and Teaching Colloquium (see Minute 52) so that discipline teams could adapt the text around the four attributes to suit their own subject areas; this could be done as a cross-campus teaching team activity.

48.3.2 The Board considered the next stages for staff engagement in the Graduate Attributes and agreed the following:

- Directors of Learning and Teaching should ensure that their Schools (across all locations) were engaging in taking forward and embedding the Graduate Attributes;
- Directors of Learning and Teaching should provide a report to the Board at its meeting on 14 September 2016 on the implementation of the Graduate Attributes within their School.

48.4 Learning and Teaching Academy

The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) provided a verbal report on the proposed
Learning and Teaching Academy: the proposal was continuing to develop in response to recommendations from the University Executive and regular reports would be provided to the Board.

49 Retention and Progression

49.1 At the meeting on 6 April 2016, the Board noted that the following actions had been agreed with regard to retention:

- There should be quarterly reports on retention, including from the Schools and on the Operational Plan, at the Learning and Teaching Board;
- The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching), the Academic Registrar and the Head of Academic Quality should develop a School retention report template for consideration by the Board at its next meeting;
- The Academic Registrar should provide, at the next meeting, a report on how the Registry Services Directorate could most effectively support the implementation of the Retention Strategy and Operational Plan;

The Board also noted that, at its meeting on 4 April 2016, the University Executive agreed that the “indicators” column should be completed for each of the activities in the Operational Plan to provide a means of tracking.

49.2 Updated Retention Strategy Operational Plan

The Board considered and approved a revised version of the Retention Strategy Operational Plan, which now incorporated, as recommended by the University Executive, a completed “indicators” column for each of the activities in the Plan and also highlighted the role of the Student Union. It was agreed that the Retention Strategy and Operational Plan should now be formally launched.

49.3 Quarterly Reports on Retention; School Retention Report Template

49.3.1 With regard to the recommendation that there should be quarterly reports on retention, including from Schools, and on the Operational Plan, at the Learning and Teaching Board, the Board considered a draft School Retention Report template. The Board identified a series of modifications to the template, including scope for more specific reporting relating to the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses.

49.3.2 The Board agreed that a revised version of the template should be produced, together with guidance notes, and should be circulated to Schools for completion and consideration by the Board at its meeting on 19 October 2016.

49.4 Support from Registry Services Directorate

The Academic Registrar informed the Board that an external colleague would be conducting a review of how the Registry Services Directorate could support the implementation of the University’s agreed more managed, integrated approach to retention. It was noted that a report would be provided to the Board at one of its early meetings in 2016/17. It was agreed that the Academic Registrar should inform the Board of any initial findings which might be of benefit to Schools in addressing retention.

49.5 Discussion

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

- Retention data, reasons for withdrawal and actions should be considered for each campus, rather than reviewing all campuses as a whole; in this way, the particular circumstances of each location could be evaluated;
- The Learning and Teaching Board should likewise consider each of the campus locations in turn with regard to retention data and subsequent actions;
- At present, there were gaps in student data on SAS-Banner, eg entry qualifications for students at the Dubai Campus; this would be resolved with a new admission system, which would incorporate online applications to the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses.
The Board considered the QAA ELIR Follow Up Report, which was due to be submitted to QAA Scotland by 8 July 2016 as a formal part of the ELIR process. It was noted that the section on PGR student induction and training had now been submitted. It was further noted that, as per QAA processes, the report would be submitted to the Court for endorsement at its meeting on 27 June 2016.

Discussion Item: Recognising Excellence in Learning and Teaching

The Board noted that the present discussion item – Recognising Excellence in Learning and Teaching – followed on from previous discussions by the Board on “teaching excellence” (9 December 2015; 2 March 2016) in the wider context of national and internal discussions on “teaching excellence”.

The Board noted that, at the University Executive Away Day on 10 May 2016, the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) provided a presentation and led a discussion on Recognising Excellence in Learning and Teaching, which had been informed by HE Academy publication on “Promoting Teaching: Making Evidence Count”.

The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) highlighted the following points from his presentation and the subsequent discussion at the University Executive:

• within the current academic promotion process, there was a lack of clarity regarding criteria and evidence related to learning and teaching which needed to be addressed (this was a sector-wide problem);
• the HE Academy had set out a useful framework relating to teaching evidence for promotion, including types of evidence and how the balance shifted in terms of leadership and impact as academic staff progressed through more senior grades;
• the framework had been well-received by the University Executive.

Discussion

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

• the open discussion by the University Executive of the learning and teaching criteria and evidence for academic staff promotion was welcomed;
• if adapted for Heriot-Watt, the framework should recognise scholarship in learning and teaching, acknowledging that educational/pedagogical research would not be a pre-requisite for academic staff promotion;
• there should be support and recognition for academic staff who wanted to experiment in learning and teaching, and for evaluating such experiments and innovations in such a way as to enable them to be mainstreamed;
• Heriot-Watt staff were not proactive enough in promoting externally their good and innovative practices in learning and teaching; staff should be encouraged to do this, both internally and externally;
• Learning and teaching-related roles, such as that of the Personal Tutor, needed to be valued and recognised as evidence for promotion;
• A review of promotion practices at the University of Wollongong (part of the HEA’s core project team) should be undertaken to ascertain whether their promotion system applied to all their global campus locations.

Summary and Next Steps

The Board agreed the following:

• the HE Academy framework for promotion could provide a useful model for Heriot-Watt University;
• an adapted version, which recognised Heriot-Watt as a global institution, should be provided to the Board for consideration in due course; thereafter, the framework would be forwarded to the Director of Human Resource Development and potentially on to the University Executive for further consideration;
• the proposed Heriot-Watt version should be applicable to promotion routes for all
academic staff (including those who were research active) and should not be targeted specifically at Teaching Fellows.

52 Initial Report on Learning and Teaching Colloquium

52.1 The Board noted that the second Learning and Teaching Colloquium had taken place on 28 April 2016, focusing on the HWU Graduate Attributes, specifically on launching the Graduate Attributes to staff and on getting Schools started. It was noted that a report on the Colloquium had been produced by Quality and External Partnerships; a further report on the outcomes of the group discussions and participant feedback would be provided in due course by the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development.

52.2 The Board was pleased to note that large numbers of staff had participated and that the presentation by the University of Glasgow had been particularly informative. The Board was, however, concerned that the event had been significantly compromised by technological failures and difficulties, which were unacceptable for a global institution such as Heriot-Watt. It was noted that these issues had been raised with the University’s Senior Officers.

53 Key Principles: Graduate Attributes and Academic Management Structures

53.1 The Board noted that, at its meeting on 6 April 2016, it had considered and approved the report from the Away Day on 8 March 2016, noting that a revised version of the Key Principles for Graduate Attributes and for Academic Management Structures would be provided for consideration at the meeting on 11 May 2016.

53.2 The Board considered and approved the Key Principles for Graduate Attributes and for Academic Management Structures. It was agreed that an e-version should be circulated to Board members.

54 Student Union: Annual Report on Learning and Teaching

54.1 The Board noted that, as part of its Standing Agenda Items, the Student Union provided, each May, an annual report on its activities related to learning and teaching for consideration: the 2015/16 report had been produced by the President of the Student Union. It was further noted that, at the meeting on 2 March 2016, it had been agreed (Minute 23.5) that the Student Union should provide an update on the implementation of its current Strategic Plan at the Board’s meeting on 11 May 2016.

54.2 The President of the Student Union highlighted a range of initiatives and developments outlined in the Annual Report, including PG student demonstrator pay and in particular the positive working relationship with the University during 2015/16.

54.3 The Board noted that, with regard to the Strategic Plan, an analysis of milestones had been undertaken: the milestones included the Student Union being on target for achieving 30% turnout in elections, having achieved, this year, the highest turnout in Scotland for student elections. It was noted that the analysis would be sent to Board members.

55 University Risk Register: Learning and Teaching

55.1 The Board noted that, as per its Standing Agenda Items, it conducted a twice-yearly (May and November) review of the Learning and Teaching Risks within the University’s Risk Register.

55.2 The Board approved the current Learning and Teaching Risks as accurate and agreed that this should be notified to the Head of Risk and Audit Management.
56 Review of Remit of Learning and Teaching Board

56.1 The Board noted that, in accordance with all Boards of the University Executive (and Committees of the Senate), the Board was required to review its Terms of Reference on an annual basis (to be conducted each May, as per the Board's Standing Agenda Items). It was also noted that, in May 2015, the Board had conducted its own effectiveness review, so, for May 2016, the focus was on the Terms of Reference. It was further noted that, while the Senate Effectiveness Review was still in progress, the Board was still required to conduct its annual review of its Terms of Reference.

56.2 The Board endorsed the 2016/17 version of the Terms of Reference, noting that most substantive amendments related to the changes in the Board’s own learning and teaching reporting/committee structure (e.g. dissolution of Learning Environment Committee). The Board agreed to recommend approval of the updated Terms of Reference to the University Executive, subject to addressing factual errors with regard to membership.

57 Student Learning Experience Committee: Minutes and Terms of Reference

57.1 The Board noted that, as part of its Standing Agenda Items, the minutes of the recent meeting of the Student Learning Experience Committee on 6 April 2016 had been provided for consideration, as had a revised set of Terms of Reference, which had been amended to take account of the changes to the learning and teaching committee/reporting structure (e.g. dissolution of the Learning Environment Committee).

57.2 The Board approved the revised Terms of Reference of the Student Learning Experience Committee.

58 Update on Matters related to Learning and Teaching

58.1 The Board noted that an update had been provided on matters related to learning and teaching, which might be of interest to the Board:

- the improved accessibility of learning and teaching information via the re-vamped Quality and External Partnerships website: http://www.hw.ac.uk/services/academic-registry/quality-external-partnerships.htm
- the re-development of the “Learning and Teaching Matters” website for students (http://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/learning-teaching.htm), and plans for a staff version.

58.2 The Board noted that the Learning and Teaching Oscars would be held on Wednesday 11 May 2016 from 5 pm.

59 Joint Meeting with the International Strategy Board

The Board noted that the annual joint meeting with the International Strategy Board would be held on Wednesday 29 June 2016, 9.15 am, Court Room, LBB. It was noted that the agenda has as yet to be determined; potential topics could include: support and infrastructure for international students; more dynamic systems, processes and regulations to facilitate the operation of largescale global masters.

60 President of the Student Union

The Board noted that Ms H Frances was attending her final meeting of the Board in her capacity as Student President. The Board thanked Ms Frances for her contributions to the work of the Board and to the wider University during 2015/16, and wished her well in her future career.
The Board noted that the term of office of Dr S Thomas as Director of Learning and Teaching, School of Textiles and Design, had ended on 30 April 2016. The Board thanked Dr Thomas for her contribution to the work of the Board.

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

- Information Leaflet on Quality and External Partnerships;
- Learning and Teaching Quick Guides for Staff: Embedding Graduate Attributes.

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching Board will be held on Wednesday 15 June 2016, 1.15 pm, Anderson Room, Library. The meeting will be followed by a meeting of the Student Learning Experience Committee at 3.15 pm.