

Academic Board

20 October 2021



Actions

Ref	Action	Lead	Due Date
21/163	Amend Minute no. 21/43 in the minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 29 June to read "He noted that this was a consultation with the Board and they would not be asked to vote on the proposal."	CM	ASAP
21/103	Circulate information re-consultation on changes to the RHBNC Act 1985.	JHE/CM	November 2021
21/218	Contact Development Manager to update nominee statement before nominations are circulated to Council.	PJL/CM	ASAP
21/221	Correct name of School in paper AB/21/48 to read "School of Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences" before paper is circulated to Council.	CM	ASAP
21/226	Amend Minute no. 21/46 in Academic Board Executive Minutes of meeting held on 8 November to reflect that the paper number received was ABE/21/06 and not AB/21/06.	CM	ASAP
21/93 and 21/94	Circulate the reports from the Academic Societies Review and Joint Honours Insight with the October 2021 meeting papers	JHE/CM	October 2021
21/112	Ensure Extensions Policy is approved by Chair's action over the summer and circulate the agreed policy with the October 2021 meeting papers	JHE/CM	October 2021
21/121	Circulate meeting invitations for additional Academic Board meeting on 29 June	CM	June 2021
21/130	Add agenda item on progress with implementation plan from Process Fix review of non-academic misconduct and complaints	JHE/CM	October 2021

Action from current meeting

Academic Board

20 October 2021

2pm on MS Teams



Min. 21/158-21/230

Minutes

Present:	Prof P Layzell (Chair); Prof J Knowles,, Prof T Bhamra, Dr D Whistler, Prof G Agyemang, Prof J Parker-Starbuck, Prof G Pieri, Dr C Matos, Prof T Pincus, Prof R Alston, Dr R Hemus, Prof R Livesey, Dr D Beer, Dr M Berry, Prof B Langford, Dr E Cox, Prof D Anderberg, Mr R Jago, Dr S Wagner, Prof G Symon, Dr J Nuri, Prof A Jashapara, Dr J McEvoy, D K Clemitshaw, Prof P Dalton, Prof D Schreve, Prof A Palombi,	Prof D Howard, Prof R Schack, Dr S West, Prof M Wahlstrom, Prof K Martin (for Prof C Mitchell), Prof M Humphreys, Prof R Fitzgerald, Dr D Brown, Dr T Berry, Prof V Boisvert, Dr S Collignon, Dr V Desai, Dr S Kuenzel, Prof S Murphy, Dr E Xhetani, Prof H Zagefka, Mr S Kendrick, Ms H Warwick, Ms A Goode, Mr A Parry.
Secretary:	Dr J Howden-Evans	
In attendance:	Dr D Ashton, Ms M Ennis, Mrs A Wallis	Miss C Munton (Assistant Secretary)
Apologies	Prof K Badcock, Prof C Mitchell and Dr E Xhetani	
Not present	Prof O Heath, Prof A Bradshaw, Mr L Kaounides	
Observers:	Mr A Alway	

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Principal welcomed members to the meeting, noting that there were several new Heads of Department, a new Head of School and new Students' Union sabbatical officers. Dr Daniel Whistler was attending Academic Board meetings in 2021-22 to represent the Head of the School of Law as Professor Matthew Humphreys would attend the Board in his role as Vice Principal (Quality and Standards). 21/158

Apologies were received from Professor Ken Badcock and Professor Chris Mitchell. Professor Keith Martin was attending in place of Prof. Mitchell. 21/159

2. **Terms of Reference and Standing Orders**

- 2.1 Paper AB/21/34, Terms of Reference and Standing Orders was RECEIVED and APPROVED. 21/160
- 2.2 Paper AB/21/35, Academic Board membership 2021-22 was RECEIVED. The Chair asked members to encourage their colleagues to nominate themselves for the vacancy in the elected members' category. 21/161

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 June 2021 were APPROVED. 21/162

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 June 2021 were APPROVED, subject to the following amendment to minute number 21/143, which should read "He noted that this was a consultation with the Board and they would **not** be asked to vote on the proposals." 21/163

4. **Matters arising**

The following actions had been completed since the last meeting: 21/164

21/93 and 21/94	Circulate the reports from the Academic Societies Review and Joint Honours Insight with the October 2021 meeting papers	JHE/CM	October 2021
21/112	Ensure Extensions Policy is approved by Chair's action over the summer and circulate the agreed policy with the October 2021 meeting papers	JHE/CM	October 2021
21/121	Circulate meeting invitations for the additional Academic Board meeting on 29 June	CM	June 2021

The Secretary reported that minute 21/130, add agenda item on progress with implementation plan from Process Fix review of non-academic misconduct and complaints to an autumn term Academic Board agenda, was covered in paper AB/21/49 in agenda item 19. A review of RH BeHeard would be presented to an AB meeting later in the academic year. 21/165

5. **Actions taken by the Chair**

The Chair NOTED that, as per the agenda, he had APPROVED the following since the last meeting: 21/166

- 5.1 Paper AB/21/36, Admissions Policy 2022-23 21/167
- 5.2 Paper AB/21/37, Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances Policies 21/168

6. **Unstarring of items**

The Secretary had received a request to unstar item 23, paper AB/21/53, minutes of the meeting of the Quality Assurance and Standards Committee held on 12 August 2021.

7. **Principals Report**

Paper AB/21/38, Principal's Report was RECEIVED. 21/170

The Chair reported on the following aspects of his report: 21/171

- It was hoped to invite the recipients of honorary awards presented during low key, Covid secure ceremonies over the summer to attend a graduation ceremony either Easter or summer 2022. 21/172

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congratulations to colleagues on the impressive number of grant awards. • He noted that the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review would be published on 27 October, and it was anticipated this would provide a response to the recommendations from the Augur Report. 	21/173 21/174
	An elected member reported that UCU has called a ballot over the proposed changes to pensions and that UCU had presented proposals that were less drastic in terms of reducing the pension income than those offered by UUK. The Chair advised it was also important to note that the UCU proposals had not been costed.	21/175
8.	Reports from the Senior Management Team There was nothing to report, not covered elsewhere on the agenda.	21/176
9.	Report from Students' Union President Paper AB/21/39, Report from the Students' Union President was RECEIVED.	21/177
10.	Report from Council Papers AB/21/40a, b and c, minutes from the Council meetings held on 6 May 2021, 1 July 2021, and 16 September 2021 were RECEIVED.	21/178
11.	Reports from Schools There were no reports from Schools at this meeting, following the decision to delay a presentation from the Head of the London Graduate School to the spring term.	21/179
12.	Strategy Discussion College Strategy	
12.1	Proposed merger with St Georges, University of London Paper AB/21/41 was RECEIVED.	21/180
	The Deputy Principal (Operations) PROVIDED a presentation, as circulated in paper AB/21/43, updating the Board on the latest discussions regarding the proposed merger with St Georges. He apologised for the late circulation of the slide deck, noting the situation is not static and he wanted to share the latest developments with Academic Board.	21/181
	The key points from the presentation were	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions about a possible merger were reopened in summer 2021, and Academic Board were now being invited to express their views • Royal Holloway is not in a position of needing to merge and this is genuinely an academic led opportunity • The institutions share similar ambitions, for example to deliver a dual agenda in education and research excellence, to grow student numbers, to provide an outstanding student experience and to attract high calibre academic and professional services staff; • Opportunities offered by a merger included 	21/182 21/183 21/184 21/185

- creating a strong, dual excellence institution with ambition for world class research
 - drawing on the complementary subject mix to offer new trans-disciplinary research led teaching
 - leveraging the institution as a university for life approach i.e providing opportunities for all graduates through an early career development programme, aligning with the Government plan's for lifelong learning
 - creating a research intensive university with regional anchorage in South west London to strengthen our position with government, funding councils and employers.
- The objectives of the merger can be grouped broadly into six areas, student recruitment, student experience, professional services, staff, region and dynamic. 21/186
 - The merger is aligned with, and strengthens the implementation of, Royal Holloway's strategic 3 year plan 21/187
 - An analysis of the current combined educational offering shows 21/188
 - The subject mix offered at the two institutions is complementary, with only one overlapping course in Biomedical Sciences
 - The TEF and Graduate outcomes data for the institutions mirror each other, creating a good combination and an opportunity to develop an ambitious strategy to leverage this
 - Both institutions are committed to widening access and participation
 - a combined institution would need ambitious strategies for enhancing metrics mapping to student satisfaction and student outcomes
 - There are a number of possible growth areas, for example in healthcare subjects and by combining existing subjects from each of the institutions, for example Law at Royal Holloway and Medicine at St Georges 21/189
 - A merged institution supports current research ambitions at both institutions and permits, for example, collaboration between medical and non-medical subjects to address local, national and global challenges in topics such as inequality in literacy and health. 21/190
 - Royal Holloway and St Georges share similar financial challenges that a merger may enable them to address 21/191
 - The two governing bodies consider it is essential that a merged institution is able to demonstrate long term financial sustainability. The College Council at Royal Holloway has instructed PwC to lead on the independent financial due diligence 21/192
 - There are opportunities to address cost and resilience challenges in Professional Services, and a combined service would accelerate the College's ambition to reduce professional services costs to 30% of expenditure 21/193
 - With regards to estates, there would be a call to develop on campus facilities to accommodate the merger, which will need substantial capital expenditure. However, the capital receipt from the Rusham Park project, for example, provides an injection of cash that could be used 21/194
 - Working groups have been established to create a full business case for consideration at both Councils before the end of the calendar year 21/195
 - Council will make a decision on the case for merging at their meeting on 14 December 2021 21/196

- Academic Board will be invited to consider the case ahead of the Council meeting in December. School Boards are also being asked for their views, for consideration as part of the business case. 21/197

Members were invited to give their views on the merger plans. An elected member reported that the merger presents an exciting proposal for the College, but also expressed concern about the impact of more uncertainty on professional services staff who were already pressurised with workload in key areas. The Deputy Principal (Operations) advised that professional services would be kept updated as the business case develops. He thought that the 30% target should become more achievable and ultimately reduce pressure on professional services if the merger goes ahead. 21/198

In response to queries from the Head of the Department of Digital Innovation, the Deputy Principal (Operations) advised that the merger was about growth and seeking economies of scale, rather than an opportunity to make staff cuts. The merged institution would still be smaller than the majority of Russell Group institutions but it would give additional capacity to deliver on Royal Holloways' current Key Performance Indicators and objectives. It would not necessarily lead to joining the Russell Group and again, was not a reason for pursuing the merger. The Principal confirmed that as well as Royal Holloway's interest in acquiring a medical school, St Georges were equally as interested in the College's range of disciplines, for example how the Arts and Humanities contribute to Wellbeing. 21/199

The Head of the School of Life Sciences and the Environment was excited about the proposal, noting that a merger would give access to patients in clinical settings, and therefore enable access to a wider range of funding, equipment and expertise. 21/200

An elected member asked about the legal basis of the proposed institution. In response, the Deputy Principal (Operations) advised that Royal Holloway are taking advice from the OfS and others as to the right format. There are two main options, that one institution merges into the other or that both are dissolved and a new institution is created. The Chair reported that both options would require an Act of Parliament and it would be the summer of 2023 at the earliest before a new institution would come into being. 21/201

The Chair confirmed that Council have explicitly asked for views from Academic Board on the merger proposals. Members would be informed if an additional meeting was required ahead of 8 December. Members should contact the Deputy Principal (Operations) with any questions that arise between meetings. 21/202

The Chair PROVIDED an update on proposals to allow the Colleges of the University of London to hold university title in their own right. Membership of the University of London would be retained, it was simply that the Colleges would be permitted to call themselves Universities. He reminded the Board that in order to for Royal Holloway to be permitted to refer to itself as a university, the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Act 1985 needs to be amended to broaden the current definition of "the College" listed in the Act. The changes to the Act were being pursued via a Parliamentary Scheme, and the College would soon enter a period of consultation with stakeholders, including Academic Board. Academic Board members would receive information on how to input into the consultation via circulation in November. Executive Board had discussed whether to pause pursuing the changes to the Act, pending a decision on the merger with St Georges. They concluded it would be advantageous to proceed in case the merger did not go ahead and they did not want Royal Holloway to be the only member institution in the University of London to remain a College. Other member institutions did not have the same legal impediment to resolve. 21/203

12.2 Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Paper AB/21/42, Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-24 was RECEIVED. 21/204

The Principal and Deputy Principal (Operations) offered their thanks to the contributors. The Deputy Principal (Operations) REPORTED that this strategy presents the College's ambitions on environmental sustainability, across four broad themes centred on College values. It includes development of clear governance and reporting structures to prevent slippage from the milestones for the ambitions outlined in the strategy. Council reviewed the strategy at their meeting earlier in October, and whilst supportive of the strategy, had also asked for a working group to consider the questions they collectively still have. Dr Ashton hoped to release the finalised strategy prior to the Christmas break. 21/205

The Head of the Department of English asked about sponsorship and investment opportunities in the College. The Chair advised College is one of the leaders in the field on an ethical approach to investing its money and that the Donations Policy covers the acceptance of gifts. The Deputy Principal (Operations) advised he would consider whether reference to this ought to also be included in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. 21/206

The Head of the Department of Strategy, International Business and Entrepreneurship was concerned about the significant reputational risk if there were to be a long delay in approving this strategy. 21/207

In response to concerns from Academic Board members about Council's delay in approving the strategy, an elected member advised that Council have asked College to revisit the strategy to ensure it is ambitious enough and that they were aware of the importance of agreeing the document without undue delay. The Chair added that Council did not raise substantial concerns about the substance of the document, however, they were seeking revisions to the presentation style and implications of the policies as well as confirming College was being as ambitious as it could be in all areas. 21/208

12.3 Update on staffing exercise

Paper AB/21/43, update on staffing exercise was RECEIVED. The Senior Vice Principal (Education) REPORTED that the paper summarises the investment stage of the academic realignment process, following the staffing changes made in stage 1. He advised that the College plans to keep Student Staff Ratios' within subject specific 2nd and 3rd quartiles in future years and that investment and resources are being aligned to support growth areas. The appendices provided updates on the implementation of the repositioning plans in the six departments identified in the original paper in June. All plans were progressing well. 21/209

13. End of Year: Review of Provision in 2020-21 and Preparations for 2021-22

Paper AB/21/44 End of Year Review of provision and outcomes in 2020-21, and preparations for 2021-22 was RECEIVED. 21/210

The Senior Vice Principal (Education) REPORTED that planning for education and a gradual return to face to face teaching in 2021-22 had taken place in the context of the continued uncertainty presented by the pandemic. Blended delivery would continue in 2021-22, however, face to face teaching had resumed in most departments using an 80%:20% or 70%/30% split, depending on the subject specific requirements. A significant amount of work had taken place over the summer to revise or renew policies put in place as an emergency response to the pandemic, particularly on attendance and engagement, transition and extensions and extenuating circumstances. There would be a new approach to the Access and Participation Plan in 2021-22 to better support the College's work in reducing significant awarding gaps, overseen by an Inclusive Education Board and supported by a revised committee structure. New projects 21/211

for 2021-22 included Assessment Futures, which would explore learning from the pandemic and review assessment processes and policy. There would be a review of Curriculum Development and validation processes to align with the 3 Year Strategic Plan. The quality of teaching in 2020-21 had been excellent and highlighted in the College Teaching Prize entries and winners.

The Vice Principal (Quality and Standards) REPORTED that classification outcomes in 2020-21 are under review. He emphasised that the College plans to revert to the standard regulations from 2021-22 and away from the emergency policies implemented in 2019-20 and 2020-21. Discussions were taking place on the roles of the examination boards and the progression regulations on permitted numbers of condonable fails, however any changes would be made through amending the regulations and not by introducing a special variation to standard policy. Annual Review of undergraduate provision in 2020-21 was taking place, and was focussed on actions to improve bottom quartile NSS scores. Professor Humphreys would work closely with School Directors of Education in 2021-22 as part of the Assessment Futures project to tidy up the terminology used to describe assessment types and methods, ensuring course learning outcomes are mapped in assessment and to develop assessment strategies. 21/212

14. **OfS Consultation on Quality and Standards**

Paper AB/21/45, College's response to the OfS consultation on was RECEIVED. 21/213

The Chair REPORTED that the OfS are taking a more focussed approach to outcomes data including publication of the Proceed Metric, and have moved away from the mandated approach to quality assurance processes used by HEFCE. He noted this gives the College scope for reviewing its current quality assurance processes. The OfS plans to hold consultations in several areas in the coming months, including the Teaching Excellence Framework, NSS, and a reboot of the Access and Participation Plans. 21/214

15. **University of London Worldwide Update**

The Senior Vice Principal (Student and Staff Experience) PROVIDED a presentation on College courses delivered through the University of London Worldwide. She summarised the current offering, including the new courses launched in 2021-22. A number of new courses were being explored for 2022 and 2023 entry and departments interested in offering a course with University of London Worldwide were asked to contact Professor Bhamra. It was noted there are 13 University of London Recognised Teaching Centres involved in delivering the Royal Holloway BSc Business Administration degree. The Teaching Centres enable in person interaction with students instead of relying solely on the distance learning portal through University of London Worldwide, providing opportunities for promoting Royal Holloway more widely. Articulation agreements have been developed to enable this group of students to study on campus for set periods of time. In response to a query from the Head of English, Professor Bhamra confirmed departments should contact her in the first instance with any expressions of interest in developing a new course. She advised that the University of London can support departments with market research to establish demand. 21/215

16. **Honorary Degrees**

Paper AB/21/46, nominations for Honorary Degrees was RECEIVED. 21/216

The Board AGREED to RECOMMEND the names listed for the award of Honorary Degrees of the University of London, to be conferred in 2022. 21/217

The Board asked that the description for one of the nominees be amended to remove references to the nominee's husband before the paper is considered at Council. They noted that she is being nominated for her own work and the substantive point is that she is a co-founder of the non-governmental organisation referenced. 21/218

17. **Annual Report of Academic Board**
 Paper AB/21/47, Annual Report of the business of Academic Board in 2020-21 was RECEIVED and APPROVED. 21/219

Items for formal approval

18. ***Academic Units**
 Paper AB/21/48, Academic Units was APPROVED. 21/220
 The reference to the School of Engineering and Physical Science was corrected to read School of Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences in response to a query from an elected member, and before the paper was presented to Council for final approval. 21/221

Items for report

19. ***Wellbeing**
 Paper AB/21/49, update on Wellbeing support and BeHeard was RECEIVED. 21/222
20. ***Committees in 2021-22**
 Paper AB/21/50, committee structures for the 2021-22 academic year was RECEIVED. 21/223
21. ***Academic Promotions**
 Paper AB/21/51, Academic Promotions approved in 2020-21 was RECEIVED. Following the meeting, an elected member contacted the Secretary to query the process for approving the promotions set out in the paper following a College decision earlier in the cycle to suspend the formal mechanisms for promotion applications in 2020-21. The Deputy Director of Human Resources (Operations) advised that consideration was given to a few cases due to specific retention circumstances. These cases were considered in accordance with the expected approval routes i.e. Academic Staffing Titles Committee and the retention policy. 21/224
22. ***Academic Board Executive**
 Paper AB/21/52, minutes of the Academic Board Executive meeting held on 20 September was RECEIVED. 21/225
 The minutes were not unstarred for discussion, however, an elected member raised a point of clarification with the Secretary before the meeting. Minute number 21/46 would be corrected to reflect the paper received was numbered ABE/21/06 and not AB/21/06. 21/226
23. ***Quality Assurance and Standards Committee**
 Paper AB/21/53, minutes of the Quality Assurance and Standards meeting held on 12 August was RECEIVED. 21/227
 This paper was unstarred following a request from an elected member. The member asked for clarification of a sentence in the minutes stating that the UCU industrial action in 2019-20 may have been contributory factor to the poor NSS scores for Academic Support in the School of Humanities. The Vice Principal (Quality and Standards) responded that the minutes reflect an open discussion at the meeting. The comment about the impact of the strike was made by a 21/228

senior member of the School, who considered this to have had an effect on NSS scores, especially in the Department of English. Professor Humphreys noted industrial action was not the only issue raised by the School in relation to their performance in the NSS and that he hoped to explore the other points raised around size of cohort and relationship with the administration as part of the NSS action planning to see how these could be resolved. The Head of English advised that she did not highlight the UCU strike in her interpretation of the issues raised in the NSS but agreed it could be a fair interpretation of the data her colleagues had reviewed.

Other Matters

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| 24. | Any other business
None. | 21/229 |
| 25. | Date of the next meeting
Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 2pm. Venue to be confirmed. | 21/230 |