Faculty of Engineering & Design Board of Studies

Wednesday, 15th November 2023 2:15 pm

via TEAMS | Faculty of Engineering & Design Board of Studies

Attendees

Attended

Ricardo Codinhoto

Charles Courtney

Jos Darling

Mirella Di Lorenzo

Jeffrey Gavin

Nathanail Georgiou

Sabina Gheduzzi

Jonathan Graham-Harper-Cater

Caitlin Grainger-Spivey

Marion Harney

Andrew Heath

Carmelo Herdes Moreno

Tim Ibell

Tristan Kershaw

Davide Mattia

Benjamin Metcalfe

Emma Emanuelsson Patterson

David Stacey

Apologies

Florin Bisset

Chris Bowen

Kirill Cherednichenko

John Chew

Nigel Johnston

Andrew Plummer

Jannis Wenk

Partial Attendance

Vaggelis Giannikas

2313 Welcome and Quorum

The Chair welcomed members, noted apologies and confirmed quorum. Dr Fan Laughton, Ms. Kate Dunster and colleagues from the Academic Standards team attended the meeting in order to brief the Board on the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations (UGAR). The Academic Standards Working Group (on which the Faculty had been represented by Professor Heath and Dr Gheduzzi) had been tasked with bringing forward a new assessment framework which would act as a bridge between the old undergraduate course structures and credit framework and the CT courses which are rolling out across the University. The Working Group had reviewed, simplified (e.g. through the removal of 'Parts', integration of IMC rules) and condensed the core features of NFAAR_UG into the UGAR framework, expressing the rules more clearly and concisely. Designated Essential Units as defined in NFAAR_UG have been re-classified as Must Pass Units (MPU) and six core conditions (rules) established. UGAR has wholly replaced NFAAR_UG from the current academic year for all undergraduate courses.

The Board supported the approach taken by the Working Group and welcomed the simplification of assessment regulations contained in UGAR. Members of the Board commented that they would have liked to have seen the removal of condonement and the 'secondary criteria' for determining final degree classifications from the new regulations. It was noted that all CT courses in the Faculty have been designated as consisting of 100% Must Pass Units (MPUs) which would not be eligible for condonement (students on non CT courses will however still be eligible for condonement). Dr Laughton explained that UGAR had been devised to accommodate the pedagogical differences and varying accreditation requirements of Professional Statutory Regulator Bodies (PSRBs) across the University's undergraduate course provision. The Board noted that Departments were in the process of identifying units designated as Must Pass Units (MPUs) which might be considered eligible for trailing into the next stage of the course i.e. that failure in the unit would not prevent progression, to be considered by FLTQC with a view to submitting a request for exemptions from UGAR.

The Board noted that the Academic Standards team had launched a new landing page https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/assessment-regulations/ and were embarking on a programme of staff briefings.

The Chair thanked Dr Laughton and colleagues for their work in devising UGAR.

Dr Laughton, Ms. Dunster, Ms. Lewis and Ms. Hodgson left the meeting.

2314 Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked for any declarations of interest which were not going to be declared during subsequent discussions. There were none.

2315 Minutes of the Previous meeting - ED2023-24/041

The unreserved minutes of the meeting of the Board of Studies held on 18 October 2023 (ED2023-24/041) were approved as a correct record of the proceedings.

2316 Actions and Matters Arising

The Board noted that Professor Stephen Emmitt and Dr Eleni Sikou had been confirmed as members of the Faculty's Academic Appeals/ Board of Inquiry Hearings Panel (minute 2295).
The following action was outstanding,

Minute 2297 Action: An audit to be completed of all units for which GTA input to assessment has been approved by the Board of Studies. (Secretary)

2317 Chairs Business

The Chair reported that the University Planning process was underway and that the new approach to the process (a single Institutional planning document rather than individual Faculty submissions) was working well and was a marked improvement compared to the former methodology. In line with the rest of the HE sector the University is facing a difficult, challenging financial outlook and efficiency savings are likely to be a necessity. One of the biggest challenges is pressure on the University's physical infrastructure (teaching and research spaces) and all Faculties / the School are operating on the assumption that there will be no 'new' additional teaching buildings/ estate projects over the next 5 to 7 years (although additional student accommodation may be created). The Chair noted that Faculty Executive had agreed plans to repurpose the space occupied by MSA and professional services staff in the Faculty through the creation of functional hubs (e.g. department support, employability, education, research support etc.). The Dean and Deputy Dean will be co-locating into a shared office space in the New Year as pressure on academic staff office space has reached critical levels. The Board agreed that private meeting spaces where confidential conversations can take place will be essential if more staff move into shared offices.

The Chair congratulated colleagues in the Faculty on the quarter one research income results which were outstanding - the Faculty is on target to exceed the 2022-23 income of £21 million with £10 million of income already secured. (Secretary's note: the Quarter One Research Report will be provided to the next meeting of the Board).

2318 Consultation on updates to University Rule 2 - ED2023-24/042

The Board considered the Update for 2023/24 to University Rule 2: Conduct of Examinations (ED2023-24/042) and made the following comments to be fed back to the Head of Registry Services;
• A final decision on whether the University will engage proctors for online exams has not yet been reached so the Board felt that there should be some flex within Rule 2 to accommodate this (if this way forward is agreed by Senate). The draft provided stated categorically (Appendix 1, para 6) that Remote exams may only be open-book and are not invigilated. The Board suggested that rather than potentially having to amend Rule 2 again the reference to being not invigilated could be removed.
• Removal of procedural instructions etc. from the main part of Rule 2 was welcomed. Some members of the Board suggested that if Rule 2 was less prescriptive it would not require amendment on an annual basis.

Action : Board's comments to be passed to the Head of Registry Services (Secretary)

2319 Learning Spaces - ED2023-24/043

Professor Harney introduced paper ED2023-24/043 on Learning Spaces which was looking for input and feedback on the future approach to the linking of Pedagogy, Space & Technology at the University specifically in terms of physical learning spaces (GTA). The paper provided a summary of the backdrop to the current condition of teaching space and the Board noted with concern that there had not been any major refurbishment or rebuilding of any GTA learning spaces since 2018. Additionally, the University's teaching spaces have not kept pace with changing technical or technological demands so cannot meet the requirement for more assistive technologies, power sockets, etc.

The Board discussed the paper and made the following comments

• A holistic, integrated strategy which takes account of both teaching & learning and research space should be developed.
• Computing facilities and access to digital tools are a rising demand and for large student cohorts this often means having to use tiered lecture theatre which are not suitable. How many 400 seat lecture theatres do we actually need moving forward?
• Understanding future space needs to support teaching is challenging - for example how flexible is the physical estate in being able to adapt to changing demands.
• Student reps commented that laboratory space is a real problem especially for larger cohorts and accessing study space is very difficult - often the library spaces are fully occupied.
The Board agreed that all University space (teaching, research & office) was under intense pressure and that it was at crisis point. Prof Harney invited colleagues to feedback any further comments to her and noted that the paper was due to be considered by the next meeting of FLTQC.

2320 Boards of Examiners 2023-24 - ED2023-24/044

The Board approved the Unit and Programme Boards of Examiners membership for 2023/24 as detailed in Paper ED2023-24/044 and listed below,.

i. Dept. of Architecture & Civil Engineering
ii. Dept. of Chemical Engineering
iii. Dept. of Electronic & Electrical Engineering
iv. Dept. of Mechanical Engineering
v. Dept of Mechanical Engineering / Learning Partnerships office (for the online MSc EBM).

2321 Staff Student Liaison Committee 2023-24 - ED2023-24/045

The Board of Studies approved the membership and Terms of references for the following Staff-Student Liaison Committee in 2023/24.
a) Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
b) Department of Chemical Engineering
c) Department of Mechanical Engineering
d) LPO/ Department of Mechanical Engineering (for the online MSc EBM)
QA48 provides guidance on SSLC membership and reflects the minimum requirements as detailed in Ordinance 26. The Board noted that the membership of the Dept. of Electronic & Electrical Engineering SSLC had not yet been confirmed as there were still a number of vacancies for student members, although a first meeting had been held earlier that week. Members of the Board commented that all Depts had experienced difficulties in electing students reps to fill all positions on SSLCs.
Student reps commented that the organisation of SSLCs could be improved and asked whether SSLC business could be conducted via Decision Time. Dr Metcalfe commented that the EE Director of Teaching had been working closely with Jo Hatt (Assistant Registrar) and Grace Cappy (Education Manager) to review the effectiveness of SSLC processes in the Dept. and were piloting a more 'open' meeting format. The outcomes of the review would be shared with Depts. Student reps agreed that ways to improve communication channels between SSLC reps and their year groups and in turn between SSLC reps and Faculty reps would very much be welcomed. The Secretary suggested meeting with the Faculty reps to discuss ideas for improvement, also involving the Education Manager.

The Board received and noted the minutes of SSLC meetings as detailed;
a) Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering - separate Architecture & Civil UG SSLCS meetings held on 1 November 2023
b) Department of Chemical Engineering - meeting held on 31 October 2023

c) Department of Mechanical Engineering - meeting held on 31 October 2023

2322 Reports from Ex Officio members & academic leads - ED2023-24/046

The Board received the update reports from ex officio and academic leadership members of the Board as detailed in paper ED2023-24/046.

Members of the Board commented on the difficulty of recruiting to internal leadership roles e.g. DoS, DoT. The Chair agreed and advised that Heads of Dept. were acutely aware of the challenges in filling these roles. Efforts have been made to try and address these difficulties including a recruitment campaign and website videos with current post-holders about their experience in the roles. The Faculty is working hard to try and shift the traditional view of these roles by highlighting the positive opportunities that these roles can provide e.g. for career development.

Members of the Board requested that the update reports provide more commentary / details rather than bullet point lists without context.

2323 Report from Student representatives and/or Students' Union Officer

Student reps drew the Board's attention to the Students' Union Top Ten for 2023/24 in particular the following priorities,
1) Increase the range of inclusive study spaces to meet the needs of all students. The Board noted that student access to suitable study space is a priority concern for the University.
2) Ensure that all students can easily access recordings of all their lectures throughout the year. Student reps commented that ideally all lecture notes should be provided as e-notes before the lecture or failing that students be told at the start of a unit which notes will be provided and in what format (hard copy or e-notes).
3) Ensure that students receive constructive assessment feedback that helps them improve. Student reps commented that students want a) much quicker feedback on coursework so that they can use the feedback in future assessments and b) more personalised exam feedback. The Board discussed feedback on assessment and members commented that academic staff time is finite and finding the right balance of how that time is best spent is challenging. A solution might be smarter use of technology to deliver and provide feedback (trials of new digital tools are ongoing). The Chair commented that exam solutions should be made available online but that exams are summative assessments and that as such the routine provision of personalised feedback would not be appropriate. Students are nevertheless able to request to see their exam paper.

2324 Library Matters

Mr. Stacey reported on the following library matters,
1) There has been a reorganisation of level 3 of the Library in an attempt to maximize student study space with an additional 8 spaces provided. The Library team are monitoring space usage as increasing study space is a priority.
2) NSS/PTES - feedback on the library from student surveys was generally very positive although difficulties accessing study space and resources are recurring themes. Feedback from PGR surveys drew attention to disability access issues which are being followed up.

2325 Committee Minutes (DBoS, FDSC) - ED2023-24/47 - 48

The Board received the minutes of the following Committee meetings

1) Doctoral Board of Studies - 18 January 23, 22 February 23, 29 March 23, 26 April 23, 24 May 23, 28 June 23, 26 July 23 ED2023-24/047
2) Faculty Doctoral Studies Committee - 6 September 23, 4 October 23 ED2023-24/048

2326 Any Other Business

The Board noted,
1) MSc AI for Engineering - Dr Codinhoto advised that a meeting of the course development team was scheduled for the 16 November with a view to presenting the full course curricula to DLTQC meetings in early December for stage 2 full approval. The DoS role for the course to be advertised internally.
2) Exams - FLTQC will be looking at how the prevent or mitigate against the unauthorised use of AI tools in online exams