

APPROVED

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

**SENATE: ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENTS**

7 MAY 2025

Present: Professor April McMahon (Chair), Professor Andrew Brass, Dr Francisco Eissa-Barroso, Nahid Farzalizadeh, Professor Gabrielle Finn, Professor Rob Ford, Professor Jenn Hallam, Dr Jen McBride, Dr Andrew Mawdsley, Dr Simon Merrywest (to minute 9), Dr Katie Moore, Professor David Schultz (from minute 5), and Professor Fiona Smyth (from minute 7).

In Attendance for all items: Craig Best (Director of Student and Academic Services), Dr John Marsh (Senior Governance Manager), and Jane Holland (Governance Manager) (minutes).

1 Welcome and Apologies

Noted: Apologies were received from Professor Danielle George and Professor Peter Green.

2 Declarations of Interest

Noted: that there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Agreed: to approve the minutes of 12 March 2025.

4 Matters Arising

Noted:

- a) the Matters Arising update;
- b) the Student Voice Strategy had been circulated as an appendix to the Matters Arising.

5 Forward Agenda: Schedule of Committee Business for 2024-25

Noted:

- a) the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Teaching, Learning and Students) Forward Agenda;
- b) the Chair asked members to provide suggestions for agenda items for the June meeting, and for the 2025-26 Forward Agenda. **Action: All members**

6 Chair's Update

Noted:

- a) participants were thanked for their valuable contributions to the Manchester 2035 Ideas Lab. There had been a high level of interaction, both online and in person. Further opportunities would arise for colleagues to contribute to the strategy development;
- b) a number of celebratory events:

- i. the Student Volunteering Awards had been held on 6 May. The Chair praised the actions of students in supporting each other, and for supporting local communities, and local and global charities. Further information was available online;
- ii. the Making a Difference Awards event for social responsibility was scheduled for 8 May;
- c) the Chair suggested that alternate meetings for AQSC TLS could include the student report items at the beginning of the agenda, to allow sufficient time for discussion. **Action: Governance Manager**

7 Assessment for the Future Progress Report

Received: The Assessment for the Future (AFF) Progress Report.

Noted:

- a) the AFF had been discussed at the Teaching and Learning Strategy Group (TLSG), where members had asked for progress to be presented to AQSC TLS for interest and information;
- b) there were seven projects as part of AFF, some having reached completion. The report provided an update on the scope, projected outputs and next steps for the ongoing projects. Communications included a theory of change workshop, and the presentation of Cadmus at the ITL conference in June;
- c) thanks were noted to the members of the project groups, including the Students' Union and partner interns for their contributions to the work on Rubrics and inclusive language;
- d) the Group Work Working Group had identified areas of good practice within the University and externally, in order to develop a useful resource for colleagues. Enhancing assessment was identified as a key area for sharing practice, in terms of reducing workload without impacting on the quality of the student experience. A recent report on this subject could be shared with colleagues; **Action: Dr Jen McBride**
- e) specific requests relating to the Cadmus roll out briefing and training could be referred to the Associate Vice-President for Teaching, Learning and Students for direct follow-up with Cadmus. Work was already being progressed as part of the Operational Management Groups and this would feed into the deep dive relating to training and development expectations. Cadmus had lower engagement with colleagues in the Faculty of Science and Engineering, and had developed different assessment types, workshops and training sessions to support this;
- f) colleagues were thanked for their contributions and were encouraged to share the AFF progress within their teams.

8 Category A Policy Cycle 2024-25

Received: The Category A Policy Cycle 2024-25 which included proposed updates to the Framework for Credit Transfer and Grade Conversion for Study Abroad.

Noted:

- a) a new timeline for the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations had been developed as a result of significant feedback received during consultation, and the complexity of issues requiring clarification. It was proposed that the revisions be presented to AQSC TLS at its 2025-26 autumn term meeting, with the update implemented for the start of the 2026-27 academic year;
- b) following discussion, there were a number of additional updates required to the Framework for Credit Transfer and Grade Conversion for Study Abroad:
 - i. the level of difficulty of course units would be taken into account when grades were converted, particularly where a higher level course unit had been taken. This wording would be clarified at 5.2.2; **Action: Director of Student and Academic Services**

- ii. implementing changes to the Framework should not adversely impact students undertaking placements from September 2025. The wording would be revised to ensure there was no detriment to these students. The changes would apply to students studying abroad from 2026; **Action: Director of Student and Academic Services**
- iii. further consideration had been given to the use of executive summaries. It was proposed that a clear introduction, key terms and definitions would negate the need for an executive summary. A simple overview would be provided and details reviewed by Student and Support and Wellbeing (SSW) and Disability Advisory and Support Services (DASS). There was a need for signposting and for a search function to ensure the Framework reached the appropriate colleagues; **Action: Director of Student and Academic Services**
- iv. the Key Terms (2.1) referred to course units, courses and units. The terminology would be updated to refer to course units; **Action: Director of Student and Academic Services**
- v. the wording at 4.1.10 reflected that exchange advisors were to act as advisors to students raising concerns about their grade conversions. The wording would be updated to reflect that students could raise concerns to an alternative member of staff. **Action: Director of Student and Academic Services**

Agreed:

- a) to support the new timeline for submission of the final draft Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations;
- b) to approve the updates to the Framework for Credit Transfer and Grade Conversion for Study Abroad, subject to the amendments detailed above in Minute 8 Noted b).

9 Update to Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Policy and Procedures

Received: Proposed updates to the Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Policy, the Mitigating Circumstances Procedure, and the Extensions Procedure.

Noted:

- a) the Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Policy and Procedures had been reviewed and extensive engagement had been undertaken with stakeholders, particularly in terms of locating a technical solution, with Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) and the Organisational Management Groups. An impact assessment had been conducted for each school. It was recognised that it would be helpful for students and staff if a consistent approach was applied across the faculties;
- b) there was discussion about evidencing of pre-existing and underlying health conditions. Once a student had registered with DASS there would be no requirement for repeat disclosure;
- c) it was clarified that mitigating circumstances would apply to students with acute unforeseen circumstances of periods of typically less than one year. Students would be required to seek support from DASS for the management of longer-term issues, although it was confirmed that a new short-term difficulty, resulting in a request for mitigating circumstances, could run concurrently with an existing longer-term condition;
- d) the Policy wording at 3.0.2 would be revised to include events relating to undiagnosed elements which may result in a student seeking support and could fall outside the current scope for mitigating circumstances; **Action: Professor Jenn Hallam**
- e) there was concern around students raising repeated extension requests, and how these could convert to mitigating circumstances. The proposed changes to the policy and procedures should aid clarity, and improve support and consistent management. Consideration would be given to providing students with two extensions per year without evidence, or automatic extensions in line with other Russell Group universities. A technical

solution would be required to manage this, and further consideration could be given to this at a future meeting of the Committee;

- f) the purpose of mitigation would be moved earlier in the document to ensure prominence;
Action: Professor Jenn Hallam Consideration should be given to the responsibilities of the schools in terms of wider perspective and understanding students as a whole. There should be early consideration and clarity on unforeseen circumstances;
- g) the variable extension periods within the procedure could be difficult for Professional Services staff to manage, e.g. 7 days up to 14 days, and 21 days for DASS. It was confirmed that extensions would run from the date of submission rather than the original submission date. The Feedback Policy indicated that feedback should be provided to students within 15 days, which could create difficulty if assignments had not been submitted due to extension requests. It was recognised that the proposed revisions would support the improvement of current practice, and further review and revisions could be agreed by the Committee at a future date;
- h) that 2.12 of the Extension Procedure should be updated to reference the staff involved in the process. **Action: Professor Jenn Hallam** The facility to submit assignments both electronically and via hard copy would remain.

Agreed:

- a) to approve the updates to the Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Policy, subject to minor amendments;
- b) that the Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Procedures would be further revised and re-circulated to the Committee members for approval.

10 Quarterly Update on TLS Functional Areas

Received: The Quarterly Update on TLS Functional Areas.

11 University of Manchester Students' Union Report

Received: The University of Manchester Students' Union Report which focused on support for academic societies.

Noted: It was recognised that academic societies contributed to an improved sense of belonging for students. Members were asked to consider, in their teams, examples of effective practice in supporting academic societies. This would be discussed further at the next meeting.

12 Educate MCR Survey Report

Received: The Educate MCR Survey Report.

Noted:

- a) the SU representatives and insights team were thanked for their excellent work to produce the report. Colleagues were encouraged to review and utilise the data contained within the report, which could contribute towards the TEF and would be presented to the next meeting of the TEF Working Group. The data could also be used alongside the NSS;
- b) links to past reports would be provided. **Action: SU Faculty Officer (FSE)**

13 Outgoing Members

Noted: Thanks were noted to Dr Francisco Eissa-Barroso who was nearing the end of their term of membership on Senate, and the sub-committee. A number of members were approaching three years of membership on the sub-committee and would be contacted separately to confirm if they wished to continue to the end of their term on Senate. **Action: Governance Manager**