

Committee:	Date:
Board of Governors of Guildhall School of Music and Drama	18 February 2019
Subject: Report of Action Taken Between Meetings – School's Academic Assurances and TRAC Returns	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information

Summary

In accordance with Standing Order 41, this report provides Members with the details of decisions taken by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Board, since the Board's last meeting in November 2018.

Recommendation

That the contents of the report be noted.

Main Report

Background

1. Standing Order 41(a) provides a mechanism for decisions to be taken between scheduled meetings of the Board, where in the opinion of the Town Clerk, it is urgently necessary for a decision to be made. Standing Order 41(b) provides a mechanism for decisions to be taken between scheduled meetings of the Board, where the Board has delegated power to the Town Clerk. In each case, the decisions are taken in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Board.

Delegated Decisions Taken Between Meetings

2. A delegated decision has been taken in respect of the following matter since the last meeting of the Board in November 2018:-

Approval of School's Academic Assurances for Office for Students (10.12.18)

3. At its meeting on 19 November 2018, the Board considered a report of the Principal informing it that, as part of the School's 2018 Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students (OfS), the Board of Governors would be required to make the following assurance statements to OfS relating to:-
 - The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider's own periodic review processes, which fully

involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.

- The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.
- The governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

For self-validated provision (ie the School's taught degree programmes and associated awards):

- The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.

For the Doctoral programme validated by City, University of London:

- The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately maintained.

4. The Board received a number of items during the academic year 2017-18 that supported the assurance statements, including the Academic Board annual report and an update during the year on actions highlighted in the previous annual report. Whilst not a requirement of the OfS, the Board's Academic Assurance Working Group had been expected to meet prior to the November meeting of the Board to consider a wider range of academic assurance documentation. Unfortunately, this had not been possible.
5. The Board agreed at its meeting that the Academic Assurance Working Group be asked to review appropriate documentation and, subject to their comments, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors, to approve the academic assurance statements to the OfS.
6. A briefing note was therefore circulated to the Working Group providing information about the School's quality assurance and enhancement processes that would support the assurances required, cross referenced against documentation previously received by the Board and other supporting quality assurance documentation available.
7. As part of their considerations, the issue of grade inflation, a sector-wide issue, was raised by the Working Group in respect of the statistics provided in the Academic Board annual report; it was highlighted that it was important that the higher degree classifications could be justified. It was noted that this matter had been discussed in detail by the Working Group last year and that this had led to more explicit conversations at the assessment boards at the end of the academic cycle. It was also noted that External Examiners' comments on standards, which were noted as a main test on comparability with other

institutions, had been extracted and summarised in the Academic Board annual report.

8. It was further noted that grade inflation had been addressed explicitly in the School's TEF submission (which had led to a Gold award to the School). Further information was supplied in respect of more recent School Board of Examiners discussion on this issue, and it was noted that the Programme Leaders' Group would be considering the issue of borderline classification raising during this academic year.
9. No further comments were received and the Chairman of the Academic Assurance Working Group confirmed that he was satisfied that he was able to recommend that the Board give the academic assurances required by the OfS.
10. On the basis of the above, the Town Clerk subsequently gave approval to the submission of the Academic Assurance Statement to the OfS.

Urgent Decisions Taken Between Meetings

11. An urgent decision has been taken in respect of the following matter since the last meeting of the Board in November 2018:-

Submission of TRAC and TRAC(T) Returns to OfS

12. As part of its statutory requirements to the OfS (previously the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE)), the School is required to make an annual TRAC return. Since 2000, TRAC has been the standard methodology used by the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK for costing their main activities (Teaching, Research and Other core activity) and it is increasingly informing the public funding of higher education. Additionally, TRAC(T) is a related return focussing on the cost per student of teaching UK & EU publicly fundable students.
13. The returns, annex A and B to the report elsewhere on the agenda, are in a standard format required by OfS. Due to the School's position, being owned by the City, a large section of the submission does not apply, but requires completion and return as the School is in receipt of funding from HEFCE. The validation sheets demonstrate that the checks built into the return have been passed prior to the submission of the returns.
14. The deadline for the submission of the TRAC return to OfS by the School was 31 January 2019. The returns were submitted for the approval of the GSMD Finance and Resources Sub Committee on 28 January 2019, but the inquoracy of that meeting meant that the decision to submit the returns was required to be taken under the urgency provisions of Standing Order No. 41(a). The Sub Committee members were informally consulted on the proposed submission and no objections were received.

15. On the basis of the above, the Town Clerk subsequently gave approval to the submission of the TRAC and TRAC(T) returns to the OfS.

Conclusion

16. In accordance with Standing Order 41, Members are asked to note the decisions taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman since the Board's last meeting in November 2018.

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