UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
17 October 2014**

Present:

Professor M Peel (Chair)
Professor A Cashmore   Professor T Lawson
Dr D Luckett   Mr Y Nikolov
Dr B Norman   Dr T Oliviera
Dr R Parry   Mr M Rubin
Professor J Scott   Dr D Watkins
Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Dr L Matthews (vice Professor S Law), Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Dr C Jarvis and Professor S Law

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

14/M76 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

14/M77 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2014.

The Committee **approved** the minutes as a correct record.

14/M78 **MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M66 the Committee noted that a further workshop had taken place to map the development of pathways from a departmental perspective. Additional market research was underway with focus groups in local schools, questionnaires at open days and a survey of current students. The Committee welcomed the on-going development of pathways, and agreed that an update from the Project Implementation Group should be a standing item on future agendas.

Further arising from M66, the Committee noted that as part of the consultation on the revisions to the academic year and the harmonisation of the credit framework five consultation workshops had been held with academic and Professional Services staff. In addition, the Chair and the Academic Registrar had attended all College Management Boards and had invited comment from all College academic and research committees. Feedback from stakeholders, including the student body, was under consideration and would feed into final proposals due to be presented to Senate in November 2014.

Further arising from M66, the Committee noted that following discussions at the recent Taught Postgraduate Summit, it had been agreed that a single Postgraduate Implementation Group should be convened to progress the proposals for flexible masters provision.

Arising from M67, the Committee **approved** a proposal from the Chair that the University Librarian should be invited to become a member of the Committee.

Arising from M69 the Committee noted that the proposals for revisions to Senate Regulation 6 were due to be circulated to the Colleges for consideration shortly.

14/M79 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

(i)   University Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Chair reported that the process of developing a new University strategy was under consideration by the University Leadership Team, and noted that a critical element of this would be the development of a new Learning and Teaching Strategy, which took due account of aligned policies such as the Estates Strategy and the development of the digital campus.

The Committee agreed that the development of a new Learning and Teaching Strategy should be a collaborative and aspirational process, whereby the institution agreed what it wished to accomplish and put in place clear steps to achieve this. The Committee agreed that a core element of this was articulating the knowledge and skills that defined a graduate of the University.

The Committee **agreed** that it would be helpful to ask the new President and Vice-Chancellor meet with members of the Committee to discuss his vision for learning and teaching at the institution. It further **agreed** that an away day event may provide a more conducive environment for the development of a draft strategy document.

(ii)   Themes for 2014/15

Following discussion at the previous meeting, members proposed a series of themes for consideration at future meetings, namely:

- Student feedback and evaluation
- Recognising, measuring and rewarding good teaching
- Creativity in the curriculum
- Research informed teaching
- Sustainability in teaching
- Contact hours

The Committee noted that as it was the body responsible for strategic development of learning and teaching it may be appropriate for it to consider a theme at a strategic level and then task the Student Experience Enhancement Group with its further development and implementation.

The Committee **agreed** that the Chair and Secretary should liaise to agree a timetable for the consideration of each theme at particular meetings.

(iii)   Chairs for Periodic Developmental Review

The Chair reported that he had requested that Heads of College nominate group of senior academic colleagues who could act as Chairs for Periodic Developmental Reviews.

14/M80 **POLICY FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The Committee considered a draft policy and procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. The policy, which was based on the principles articulated in Senate Regulation 2, had been drafted by a working group chaired by the Academic Registrar. The policy set out clear principles and procedures for the accreditation of both certificated and experiential prior learning. Departments would continue to decide whether or not to accept APL for particular programmes and this would be clearly indicated in publicity material and programme specifications.

The Committee considered the issues around whether the University should grade certificated or experiential prior learning.

The Committee agreed that where students had completed credit bearing study (APCL) with a higher education institution it was possible to evaluate the syllabus studied against the intended learning outcomes of University modules and to use the marks awarded in order to assign a grade to the module from which a student was seeking exemption. The Committee also agreed that due to the highly diverse nature of the experiential learning (APEL) which may be considered for exemption, while a general assessment may be made regarding the achievement of learning outcomes, it would not be a straightforward matter to assign it a grade.

In light of this, the Committee **agreed** that prior certified learning should be graded, and prior experiential learning should be ungraded. The Committee further **agreed** that no fee should be charged for the consideration of APEL.

The Committee agreed that subject to these and other minor amendments discussed in the meeting, the draft policy should be circulated for consultation, with a final version to be considered at the January 2015 meeting of the Committee.

14/M81 **POLICY ON STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION**

The Committee considered a revised draft policy on student pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption. The document had been drafted in consultation with the Equalities Unit and Safety Services, and took account of previous comments made by the Committee.

The Committee welcomed the development of the policy. The Committee agreed that the wording of the policy should be amended to make it clear that it applied both to students who were pregnant upon entry to the University, and those who became pregnant following registration.

The Committee noted that the University needed to consider whether Senate Regulation 2.36, which states that periods of suspension remain part of a student's overall period of registration, could in fact be applied in circumstances where students were taking a period of maternity leave. The Committee further noted that there were additional implications of the policy for international students on Tier 4. Further advice on these matters would be sought from the Equalities Unit, Student and Academic Services and the International Welfare team.

The Committee **agreed** that once further advice had been obtained and reflected in the draft policy this would be circulated to departments and College Academic Committees for comment. A final version would be presented a meeting of the Committee in Spring 2015.

14/M82   **ANNUAL REPORT ON PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCEDURES**

The Committee considered a report which analysed the operation of the Code of Practice on the Development, Approval and Modification of taught programmes over the 2013/14 academic year.

The Committee was pleased to note that the report confirmed that both the Committee and Senate could have confidence in the academic quality and standards of both the new provision developed over the course of the 2013/14 academic year, and the amendments to existing programmes.

The Committee considered whether it would be helpful to include within the Code of Practice a requirement for business cases to be formally reviewed if the academic case was not brought forwards for consideration by a Programme Approval Panel within 18 months. The Committee **agreed** that this would be helpful to ensure the on-going validity of programme proposals and approved this amendment to the Code of Practice

The Committee considered the current approval routes for amendments to programme titles, or the creation of specialisms within programmes. The Committee **agreed** that it would be helpful to develop a process for the approval of such modifications that was flexible and proportionate to the risk involved.

The Committee considered whether the training available to Programme Approval Panel chairs and members could be further enhanced. It would also be useful for chairs and members to share experience and examples of good practice, especially in regard to ensuring that approval paperwork and mechanisms were as effective, efficient and helpful as possible to programme development teams. The Committee **agreed** that it should be mandatory for all colleagues sitting on Programme Approval Panels to have undertaken a short formal training session, and agreed that the Quality Office should work with the Leicester Learning Institute to develop appropriate training. An annual review meeting or similar event would also be trialled. The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful to further enhance the level of College support available to teams developing new programmes, and agreed that the College Academic Directors should send a summary of their current processes to the Assistant Secretary for initial review.

The Committee noted that a summary report of this process and the actions agreed would be presented to the meeting of Senate in November 2014.

14/M83   **PROGRAMME APPROVAL REPORTS**

(i)   BA and BSc Economics and Accounting

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on the 18 September to consider the introduction of a new BA and BSc in Economics and Accounting. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and noted that the Chair of the Panel had considered the Department's response to the report and recommended that, on this basis, the programmes should be approved. The Committee agreed to **approve** the programmes for introduction in September 2015.

(ii)   MA Intelligence and Security (DL)

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on the 15 September to consider the introduction of a new MA in Intelligence and Security by distance learning. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and noted that the Chair

of the Panel had considered the Department's response to the report and recommended that, on this basis, the programme should be approved. The Committee agreed to **approve** the programmes for introduction in September 2015.

14/M84   **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW**

(i)   School of Modern Languages

The Committee considered the report and initial response initial response to the Periodic Developmental Review of the School of Modern Languages which took place in March 2014.

The Committee **approved** the report and the initial response.

(ii)   School of Psychology

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the School of Psychology which had taken place in February 2012.

The Panel **approved** the final response.

(iii)   School of Biological Sciences

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the School of Biological Sciences which had taken place in May 2012.

The Panel **approved** the final response.

14/M85   **RISK ASSESSMENT FOR COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

The Committee considered risk assessment reports for two new School-led Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) arrangements, proposed by the School of Education. The Committee noted that the School already operated three such SCITT arrangements with other school consortia, and therefore the proposed new relationships would fit into an existing successful model of delivery. The proposed partners were:

(i)   Inspiring Leaders Teacher Training Partnership
(ii)   Tommy Flowers Partnership

The Committee noted that both proposals related to the establishment of relationships with school consortia and fell under the category of Module Delivery. The Committee noted that the risk assessment for both proposals identified them at being at the lower end of the moderate risk category, however further noted that established models of delivery, governance structures and contracts existed for this type of provision, and therefore this mitigated the level of risk indicated.

The Committee approved both the risk assessments for both the Inspiring Leaders Teacher Training Partnership and the Tommy Flowers Partnership to proceed to the next stage of the approval process.

Duration of meeting: Two hours