

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
17 December 2013**

Present:

	Ms C Fyfe (Chair)
Professor A Cashmore	Ms J Dunne
Dr C Jarvis	Dr T Lawson
Dr T Oliveira	Dr R Parry
Mr M Rubin	Professor J Scott
Dr D Watkins	Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Professor M Peel (for M110), Professor S Law and Mr A Petersen (Acting Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Flatt, Professor S Hainsworth and Mrs L Masterman

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

13/M110 PATHWAY APPROACH TO UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a pathway approach to undergraduate provision in the College of Arts, Humanities and Law and the College of Social Science commencing in 2015/16. The proposal would emphasise student centred flexibility as the core of the University's undergraduate offer, making the Leicester approach more distinctive in the market place. Combinations of pathways would be attractive to high achieving students with broader intellectual interests, whilst also allowing students to combine traditional academic study with vocational elements should they wish.

Under the proposal students would have the choice of following a single pathway (100%), two joint pathways (50%:50%) or a major/minor combination (66%:34%). The University's existing single honours degrees would still exist as pathways within the new structure, however these traditional subject areas could also be offered as 240 credit, 180 credit or 120 credit pathways corresponding to the joint, major and minor categories above. In addition to this, new pathways could be created in areas that spanned the Colleges such as entrepreneurship, heritage or international communications. The Committee noted that each pathway would be a coherent set of modules and that although optionality would be available, this would be primarily achieved through developing more specialised pathways within a subject area for example in Early Modern History or Social History. It was therefore envisioned that the pathway approach would offer a more cohesive learning experience to students.

The Committee agreed that academic ownership of individual pathways and combinations would be vital. In this regard the Committee noted that:

- a) the ability for students to study in different departments and across Colleges placed greater emphasis upon the need to develop a coherent approach to the support and administration of programmes between departments.
- b) the role of the personal tutor under the proposals would be vital in terms of supporting students studying across multiple subject areas and departments, and

the Committee agreed that further central guidance would be required to assist academic staff in the undertaking the personal tutor role.

- c) there would be a number of practical issues such as timetabling which would need to be considered and modelled in detail.
- d) it would be necessary to agree a clear policy on the approval of new and existing pathways, and how these would be expressed through the programme documentation.

In addition, the Committee noted that the wording and timing of the announcement of the new approach in the prospectus and in other public information sources would need careful consideration. The Steering Committee should agree the marketing plan in conjunction with the Chair of the Fee Setting and Programme Development Committee, the Director of External Affairs and the Academic Registrar.

In addition the above the Committee noted that there would be a number of practical issues such as timetabling which would need to be considered. In addition, the Committee noted that it would be necessary to agree a clear policy on the approval of new and existing pathways, and how these would be expressed through the programme documentation.

The Committee welcomed the proposals and **approved** in principle the development of the pathway approach. The Committee agreed that the Pathway Project Steering Group should report regularly to the Committee in order to maintain academic oversight. The Committee agreed that the Steering Group should be invited to further develop the proposals for consideration at the Committee's February meeting. In particular, the Group should prepare an overall project plan, a schedule for the development and approval of pathways and some modelled case studies as discussed above, demonstrating how the approach would function in practice.

13/M111 **MINUTES THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of a meeting held on 28 November 2013.

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

13/M112 **MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted that arising from M103 the Code of Practice on Joint Degrees and Shared teaching would need to be reviewed in order to align with the principles of the pathway approach to undergraduate provision discussed under M110 above.

13/M113 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair reported that she had taken Chair's action to approve a request from the Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning for a dispensation from Regulations for the Cert HE in Psychology to allow for the grant of a repeat of a full module, in the event that students failed both the first and the re-assessment attempt for the module. This exceptional dispensation was for 13/14 and this would not be offered to future cohorts.

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13/M114 **DL QUALITY CONTROL POLICY**

The Committee received a progress report on the ongoing implementation of the new Quality Control Policy for Distance Learning materials. It was noted that for the majority of departments the list of modules and required level of review had been agreed, and the Quality Office was in the process of finalising with departments the timescale for completing the review.

The Committee considered a number of issues arising from the report. The Committee agreed that the policy would apply to all distance learning materials delivered by the University, and the requirement for review would extend to CPD module materials also. It was noted that where modules were delivered by collaborative partners an assessment would have to be made on an individual basis as to whether the University policy would be applied, or whether to partners' own quality assurance policies would be sufficient.

In response to issues raised in a small number of departments, the Committee confirmed that it was not appropriate to use existing external examiners to review materials, and that as the content remained under copyright with the University there was no perceived risk in providing these for external review. The Committee further emphasised that the cost of external review would have to be built into the business case for all new DL programmes.

The Committee also noted that the level of support provided for distance learning dissertations in terms of study guides and other written resources varied between departments, however was likely to be less substantial than in taught modules. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the corresponding level of review for dissertation modules and the fee payable to an external reviewer for this task could be reduced.

13/M115 **PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

The Committee considered a due diligence report regarding the potential development of a new LLB/Grado in English and Spanish Law joint award with the University of Granada.

The Committee noted that the University of Granada was a well renowned University in Spain, which had a series of Joint Awards in place with other Universities internationally. It was also noted that Granada was an established Erasmus partner. The Committee noted the internal quality assurance structures in place within the institution, and also noted that the Law programme at Granada held accreditation from the Spanish national HE quality assurance agency, ANECA. The Committee considered the report in detail and agreed that the University of Granada was a reputable Higher Education Institution and **approved** the University as an appropriate collaborative partner.

The Committee noted that a detailed evaluation of the overall academic case for the programme would need to be undertaken by the Programme Approval Panel, and final decision regarding whether the proposed collaborative arrangement should be approved would rest with that Panel. The Committee agreed that the programme team should be encouraged to refer in detail to the Code of Practice on the Management of Higher Education with others in the development of the full proposal for submission to the Programme Approval Panel.

13/M116 **CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE PERSONAL SUPPORT OF STUDENTS**

The Committee considered a report on compliance with the Code of Practice on the Personal Support of students in the 2012/13 academic year. The Committee was pleased to note that the report, which was based upon feedback from academic departments and colleges, demonstrated a high level of compliance with the Code.

The Committee noted comments within the report that further centrally delivered guidance and training for personal tutors would be helpful, particularly in terms of supporting students on distance learning programmes, or those students with special educational needs. The Committee agreed that the particular needs of distance learning students could be considered through the Distance Learning Forum [ACTION: Jackie Dunne]. The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful to develop a more cohesive approach to personal tutor training, which could include a mixture of online resources and training sessions with experienced staff [ACTION: Academic Practice Service].

The Committee also noted that a survey would be taking place after the Christmas vacation to seek student and staff feedback on the impact of the Code of Practice and whether further amendments are required. The Committee agreed that the outcome of that survey should be considered at a future meeting.

13/M117 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group that took place on 7 November 2013. The Committee considered and **approved** the Terms of Reference and membership of the Group for the 2013/14 academic year.

13/M118 **INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the ISC Academic Management Board that took place on 19 November 2013.

The Committee considered and **approved** the Terms of Reference and membership of the Board for the 2013/14 academic year.

The Committee noted in particular that the external examiner reports for the ISC programme had been positive and confirmed that the standards of the curriculum and assessment were appropriate and comparable to other similar programmes. The Committee also noted that the report of the QAA Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) from June 2013 had identified no major concerns.

13/M119 **REPORTS FROM COLLEGE ACADEMIC COMMITTEES**

The Committee received reports of the recent meetings of the College Academic Committees in the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology and the College of Science and Engineering. The Committee noted the consideration of Annual Developmental Review (ADR) reports and the range of enhancement activities underway at College level.

In addition, the Committee was pleased to note that ADRS had been received from all departments within the College of Arts, Humanities and Law and the College of Social Science, and had been considered by the relevant College Academic Committees.

Duration of meeting: 1 hour 40 minutes