

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
19 February 2015**

Present:

Professor M Peel (Chair)
Professor A Cashmore Dr S Gabbott
Professor T Lawson Dr Dominic Lockett
Mr Y Nikolov Dr B Norman
Mr M Rubin Professor J Scott
Ms C Taylor Dr D Watkins
Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Ms T Bird (for M22), Mr R Dickinson, Ms L Freeman, Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Professor S Law, Dr T Oliviera and Dr R Parry

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

15/M18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

15/M19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2015.

The Committee noted that the reference under M12(ii) should read 'Intercalated' and subject to that amendment approved the minutes as a correct record.

15/M20 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M3 the Chair reported that he had met with the Head of the Department of Economics with regard to the response to the Periodic Developmental Review report for the Department. The Chair was pleased to report clear improvement in the organisation and uptake of pastoral support systems of taught postgraduate students within the Department.

Arising from M4(i) the Chair thanked members for the comments received to date regarding the ambition statement for learning and teaching within the institution. The Committee noted that a second workshop had taken place, this time mostly with Professional Services staff, and that the statement would now be developed into a draft strategy document for further consideration.

Arising from M4(iii) the Chair reported that the University had taken part of the available matched funding from HEFCE for taught postgraduate scholarships. The scholarships

would be targeted towards those student groups traditionally underrepresented at PGT level.

Arising from M7 the Committee noted that the Chair would be meeting with the Heads and other colleagues from the Departments of Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science to discuss the feedback regarding the proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 6.

Arising from M8(i) the Chair noted that he had received feedback from the Academic Directors regarding the creation of guidance notes to support departments in the increase of hours per credit from 7.5 to 10. The Committee noted that work was underway with Leicester Learning Institute to further develop and publish the guidance.

15/M21 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that notes of guidance were being drafted to assist departments in identifying, developing and approving their suite of pathways. The Committee noted that the formal launch of pathways would take place in July 2015 with the first pathways being offered in 2016/17.

The Chair also reported that an implementation plan for the amendments to module credit weightings and the revisions to the academic year would be presented to the next meeting of Senate for consideration.

15/M22 LECTURE CAPTURE

The Committee considered a paper from the Leicester Learning Institute which set out an analysis of the potential benefits and risks of wider adoption of lecture capture technology across the institution, following the pilot project

The Committee noted that a survey of peer institutions demonstrated that provision of lecture capture was becoming commonplace and was likely to become an expectation for future cohorts of students. Feedback from students at the University on the pilot had been very positive. It was further noted that the evidence suggested that students did not view lecture capture as a replacement for attendance at learning and teaching events, but rather as an additional resource to supplement in-class engagement. Finally, it was noted that the technology provided opportunities to enhance other aspects of learning and teaching and the student experience.

While acknowledging that arrangements for 2015-6 would remain partial, the Committee strongly supported the roll-out of lecture capture technology across the University. The Chair agreed to develop a short proposal for the University Leadership Team and, if the resources are agreed, to convene a Group to oversee the roll out of lecture capture.

15/M23 ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a series of principles for the monitoring and reporting of student attendance, which had been informed by good practice identified at a range of other institutions and by systems that are already in place within our university. For a number of reasons, it is important that we develop and implement a policy as soon as possible. The proposed policy was designed to ensure a more consistent approach and to form part of a wider focus on student engagement, with a view to identifying as quickly as possible those students who were not engaging and might benefit

from support. It is also designed to ensure that the University continues to meet the requirements of the UKVI with respect to its Highly Trusted Sponsor status. Students on taught programmes would be required to be monitored through attendance at a series of 10 defined learning and teaching events per semester, and postgraduate research students would be monitored through attendance at regular supervisory meetings.

The Committee agreed that this represented an opportunity to ensure that a lack of engagement was identified early and appropriate support provided. In addition, it was noted that this could align with a number of other opportunities for monitoring student engagement, such as library use.

The Committee noted that many areas of the University were already operating a system similar to this and that overall resource requirements of the policy should not be significant. It was acknowledged that implementation of the policy would require alterations to existing practice in some departments.

The Committee approved the policy for submission to the next meeting of Senate. The Committee noted that the requirements of the policy would be incorporated into the relevant Senate Regulations for 2015/16.

15/M24 **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADMISSIONS**

The Committee considered a revised Code of Practice for Admissions. The drafting of the revised code had been informed by the requirements of Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code, and the revised document was designed to more clearly articulate purpose and principles, clarify the requirements upon applicants and present a clearer approach to appeals and complaints regarding admission decisions. The Committee noted that the Code would be supported by a range of guidance notes which the Admissions Office was drafting.

The Committee welcomed the draft revised code, and subject to some minor amendments approved it for introduction in 2015/16, noting that this would be reported the next meeting of Senate.

15/M25 **STRATEGIC THEME: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK**

The Committee considered how the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to students could be enhanced, and how students could be supported in making full use of the feedback that they receive.

The Committee agreed that it was essential for the feedback given to students to be clearly linked to the marking criteria for the assessment in question. Additionally, in order to enhance students' understanding of the feedback that they were receiving, the Committee agreed that it was good practice to involve students in the design of assessment criteria, to ensure that these were articulated in way which students could understand. The value of this approach had already been demonstrated through the GRAFT project in the School of Law. The outcomes of this project will be broadly shared with colleagues across the university. Similarly, the Students Union had developed a Feedback Charter which set out the expectation upon students to use the feedback provided. It was agreed that a broader circulation of this document would be useful as a means of informing staff about the importance of feedback.

The Committee agreed that a critical issue was ensuring that students knew how to use the feedback that they were given in order to inform their subsequent work. It agreed that it was good practice to clearly link how the feedback given to students on one assessment fed forwards to the next assessment. Methods could include requiring students to undertake reflective work where they were required to comment on how an assessment had been informed by previous feedback. In order to support this, it would be helpful for markers as standard to provide not only feedback, but also feed-forward, which focused entirely on specific issues to be addressed in future work. The Committee noted that this could impact upon the timescales for the provision of feedback, especially where assessment patterns included a larger number of small scale assessments with only a short period between submissions. The Committee noted that if it was not practical to provide individual feedback on each assessment in this timescale, good practice would be to provide cohort level feedback on general issues or common mistakes made across the group.

The Committee also noted that there was a significant difference between the type of feedback students received at university compared to school. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to build into the Fabulous First Year initiative a structured transitional approach to the provision of feedback that bridged the gap between school and university.

Recognising the many examples of excellent assessment design and feedback practice that already exist, the Committee agreed that it was important to continue to achieve incremental change in the provision of feedback, which often resulted from colleagues learning about and emulating the excellent work of their colleagues. It was agreed that a 'bank' of good ideas and good examples, perhaps linked to module specification forms but also available on-line, could be a way of encouraging this emulation. This could be supported by identifying a list of core commitments, to be discussed at this and other for a and to which departments would then be expected to sign up. In the first instance this might include the design of feedback sheets or methods to make explicit the use of feed forward comments, and a guarantee that where one assessment provided preparation for a subsequent assessment, either specific or broad cohort level feedback on the first piece of work should be provided in time to inform submission of the second.

15/M26 **QUALITY CONTROL POLICY FOR DISTANCE LEARNING MATERIALS**

The Committee considered proposals to revise the current Quality Control Policy for Distance Learning materials. The draft proposed that the operation of the policy to date had demonstrated that the internal mechanisms for the review of Distance Learning materials were sufficiently robust to mean that further external review was unnecessary.

The revised policy proposed that the requirement for external review should be removed and that Heads of Department should have responsibility for implementing an internal peer review process for the approval of Distance Learning materials. Programme Approval Panels would continue to consider the materials associated with one module, and the Committee agreed that, as above, the Head of Department would then be responsible for ensuring that all remaining modules were subject to internal review before delivery.

Subject to this minor amendment the Committee approved the revised policy for immediate implementation, and noted that this would be reported to the next meeting of Senate.

15/M27 SUMMARY REPORT ON UNDERGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORTS, 2013/14

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Academic Registrar and the Academic Directors of the Colleges which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for undergraduate programmes in the 2013/14 academic year.

As in previous years, the reports confirmed that the Committee and Senate could have confidence in the standards of the University's awards and the operation of the external examining process. The reports also noted that the quality of the learning opportunities for students were at an appropriate level and identified many examples of good practice.

The Academic Directors of the Colleges noted that where comments related to departmental level provision reports from the relevant departments indicated that appropriate action was being taken in response. The summary report identified a small number of issues where further University guidance or policy development was required.

The Committee considered comments from External Examiners regarding use of the full scale of available marks. The Committee agreed that in order to support markers in using the full range it was essential to ensure that the marking criteria for the assessments were sufficiently granular to demonstrate where allocation of a higher mark was appropriate. The Committee referred this point to the Assessment and Feedback Working Group in order to develop further guidance.

The Committee considered comments regarding the criteria within the scheme of assessment for a student to be considered as being within a borderline for potential promotion to a higher degree classification. The Committee agreed that this element of the undergraduate scheme of assessment within Senate Regulation 5 should be reviewed in light of these comments, and that draft proposals should be considered at a future meeting.

The Committee noted that the summary report along with a list of the actions agreed would be reported to the next meeting of Senate.

15/M28 REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE PERSONAL SUPPORT OF STUDENTS

The Committee considered a report on the operation of the Code of Practice on the Personal Support of Students in the 2014/15 academic year. The report confirmed that the principles in the Code of Practice were well established and working effectively within departments.

The Committee agreed that the report should be disseminated to College Academic Committees. Academic Directors were requested to follow up upon those specific issues raised in each college. The Chair also agreed to take forwards the development of additional training for personal tutors with the Leicester Learning Institute.

15/M29 RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Committee considered and approved risk assessments for collaborative links recommended by the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group (CPMG) as follows:

- (i) Articulation agreement with Bard College
- (ii) Articulation agreement with SEGi University

- (iii) Study abroad agreement with Seoul National University
- (iv) Study abroad agreement with Chuo University
- (v) Study abroad agreement with Shanghai International Studies University (SISU)

The Committee considered a proposal from the Chair that all risk assessments should be considered by CPMG before being recommended for approval to Academic Policy Committee, and that only more complex proposals should be considered by APC in full.

The Committee approved this recommendation and agreed that the Code of Practice on Managing Higher Education Provision with Others should be amended to reflect this.

15/M30 **REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION FROM SENATE REGULATION 7**

The Committee considered a request from the School of Management for exemption from the requirements of Senate Regulation 7.106 for the pool of staff who may serve on Mitigating Circumstances Panels (MCPs) to be limited to 5. Although it was recognised that this sought to ensure consistency, the School noted that the volume of its provision and associated MCPs was such that this resulted in a disproportionately high workload for a small number of staff.

The Committee approved the request of the School to expand the pool to 15 members of academic staff, three of whom would be necessary to constitute a Panel. The Committee agreed that in addition to the standing Chair proposed in the request, there should be a nominated Deputy Chair to ensure consistency of practice in the event that the Chair was unable to attend.

15/M31 **STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Widening Participation Committee that had taken place on 10 December 2014.

15/M32 **QUALITY ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

The Committee received a consultation document from the Quality Assessment Review Steering Group regarding the future of quality assessment in higher education. The Committee noted that the Academic Registrar was compiling the University's response and any comments should be directed to him.