

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
20 May 2015**

Present:

Professor J Scott (Chair, *vice Professor Peel*)
Professor A Cashmore Professor D Davies (*vice Professor Yeoman*)
Dr S Gabbott Professor S Hainsworth
Professor S Law Professor T Lawson
Dr D Lockett Mr Y Nikolov
Dr B Norman Dr R Parry
Mr M Rubin Ms C Taylor
Dr D Watkins

In attendance: Dr R Dickinson, Ms L Freeman, Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr T Oliviera, Professor M Peel and Professor T Yeoman

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

15/M51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

15/M52 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015.

The Committee approved the minutes as a correct record, subject to the minor clarification in M46 that the University Postgraduate Certificate in Supporting Learning in HE was also open to research students who teach.

15/M53 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M39, the Committee noted that College Academic Committees had been considering whether it might be possible for the annual process for amendments to curricula to take place earlier in the academic year so that it would more closely align with the Annual Developmental Review process. The Chair requested that any further feedback on this be sent to him directly.

Arising from M40 the Committee noted that the issue regarding the maximum number of credits allowed as APL for undergraduate campus-based and distance learning programmes was still under consideration with the relevant academic departments.

Arising from M45 the Committee noted that all of the programmes listed had now been given full approval.

15/M54 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reminded members that peer observation of feedback would be taking place in the 2015/16 academic year, and that it would be interdepartmental.

15/M55 PATHWAYS

The Committee received a report on the progress of the Pathways Project. Dr Parry reported that the first Steering Group meeting had taken place, which had considered and endorsed the list of Pathways under development. It was also reported that the UCAS convention, held in April had been successful, with a significant number of students expressing interest in a major/minor combination.

The Committee considered proposals for Pathways to be delivered in the 2016/17 academic year. In line with the approval process agreed at the previous meeting, the Committee noted that approval in principle would allow the necessary information about majors and minors to be recorded on the UCAS database, be actively marketed, and to proceed to the final formal approval stage. The Committee noted that the majority of the Pathways presented were based on existing provision, with only a small number of new modules due to be introduced. Additional meetings of College Academic Committees would be scheduled to consider and approve major and minor pathways between July and October.

The Committee noted that the majority of pathways offered an equal number of credits in semester 1 and 2. However, there was a small number where this was not the case. The Committee agreed that it was desirable that all pathways should have an equal credit split between semesters. The Committee also noted that a number of the minor pathways included significant optionality throughout each year of study. The Committee considered this in detail, noting that optionality was already provided for students through the ability to study a minor in a separate subject, and that it would be complex to ensure that all of the learning outcomes for a minor were met without a significant amount of core content. The Committee agreed that this issue should be referred back to the Steering Group with a recommendation that there should be very limited optionality in years 1 and 2 of a minor.

The Committee noted that the credit structures proposed for 2016/17 varied between departments and that this may result in certain major/minor combinations not equalling the standard credit load for a student. The Committee noted that the movement towards a harmonised credit structure from 2017/8 would enable establishment of a common approach. However, in order to maximise flexibility in the choice of majors and minors departments should be encouraged to consider what options may be available for students to meet the standard credit expectations in 2016/17 and what exceptional arrangements might be necessary in particular cases.

Subject to further consideration of the above issues the Committee gave approval in principle to the proposed major and minor pathways and agreed that they should proceed to formal approval.

15/M56 AMENDMENTS TO SENATE REGULATIONS

The Committee considered proposed amendments to Senate Regulations as follows.

Senate Regulation 2: Regulations governing admission and registration for taught programmes and Senate Regulation 4: Regulations governing student obligations

The Committee considered amendments to Senate Regulations 2 and 4. The proposed amendments reflected the new attendance monitoring policy recently approved by Senate, and provided greater clarity on the processes in place for the consideration of cases of neglect of academic obligations. The latter had been removed from Senate Regulation 11 and incorporated into Senate Regulation 4, as it was viewed as a student obligation, rather than a disciplinary matter. The Committee approved the amendments to be implemented for the 2015/16 academic year.

Senate Regulation 10: Regulations governing academic appeals

The Committee considered proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 10. The amendments were designed to ensure that the University met the requirements of the Good Practice Framework recently published by the OIA, and incorporated two additional internal review stages. The Committee approved the amendments for introduction for the 2015/16 academic year.

Senate Regulation 11: Regulations governing student discipline

The Committee considered amendments to Senate Regulation 11. The proposed amendments resulted from a review of the regulations by a working group comprising the Academic Registrar and Plagiarism Officers from each College. The amendments clarified the departmental process for the consideration of plagiarism cases, and also slightly reduced the penalty for repeat offences of plagiarism where one of the cases was of a minor nature. The Committee approved the amendments for introduction for the 2015/16 academic year.

Senate Regulation 12: Regulations governing student complaints

The Committee considered proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 12. The Committee noted that, as for Senate Regulation 10, the amended regulations were designed to ensure that the University processes were compliant with the OIA Good Practice Framework. The revisions also provided additional detail regarding the process for the termination of complaints conducted in a frivolous or vexatious manner. The Committee approved the amendments for introduction for the 2015/16 academic year.

15/M57 POLICY ON STUDENT PREGNANCY, MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION

The Committee considered a final draft of the policy, noting that it had been informed by detailed discussions with academic and professional services colleagues including the Equalities Office, the Graduate School Office, the Student Welfare Service and Safety Services.

The Committee noted that there were a number of issues relating to international students who were pregnant or were eligible for maternity leave during their students, which could impact upon their visa status and their overall registration period. The Committee noted that additional guidance notes would be provided to support staff in advising students, however also agreed that it would be helpful to revise the title of section 9 to refer directly to visas, in order to be clear that the whole policy applied to all students at all levels. It was also noted that the policy should specify that it applied to students who were pregnant at the point of commencing their studies.

The Committee also noted that, although the University provided some facilities for breast feeding on campus, consideration should be given to expanding these. It agreed that this issue should be referred to the Equalities Office.

Subject to these minor amendments the Committee approved the policy for implementation in 2015/16.

15/M58 PROGRAMME APPROVAL REPORTS

(i) BA Politics and International Relations

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel held on 26 March 2015 to consider the introduction of a new BA Politics and International Relations. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and agreed that the Panel Chair should be authorised to approve the introduction of the programme in September 2015 pending receipt of a satisfactory response from the programme team.

(ii) Certificate of Higher Education in Social Science

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel held on 3 March 2015 to consider the introduction of a new Cert HE in Social Science. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report. The Committee noted that the programme team had responded to the recommendations in the report and the response had been endorsed by the programme team. The Chair of Academic Policy Committee had therefore taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve the programme for introduction in September 2015.

(iii) MSc Security and Risk Management

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel held on 3 March 2015 to consider the introduction of revisions to the MSc in Security and Risk Management by DL. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and agreed that the Panel Chair should be authorised to approve the introduction of the programme in September 2015 pending receipt of a satisfactory response from the programme team.

(iv) Articulation agreement at Masters level with Lingnan University, Hong Kong

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel held on 14 April 2015 to consider the introduction of a new articulation agreement at postgraduate level between the Department of Economics at UOL and Lingnan University, Hong Kong. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report noting that no further response was required from the programme team, and therefore approved the arrangement for introduction from September 2015. The Committee also considered and **approved** the proposal for a dispensation from Senate Regulation 6 in order to classify the programme solely on the basis of the credits studied at Leicester.

15/M59 PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Geology which had taken place in November 2013. The Committee noted the positive response to the majority of the recommendations. The Committee also noted that the Department was seeking to enhance student interaction with the wider University while at the same time retaining a strong departmental identity.

The Committee welcomed this, however requested that this be more clearly articulated in the formal response to the report.

Subject to this request the Committee **approved** the final response.

15/M60 **ANNUAL REPORTS**

(a) External Examiners for Taught Programmes

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Academic Registrar and the Academic Directors of the Colleges which had reviewed the 2013/14 external examiners' reports for taught postgraduate programmes and the departmental responses to these.

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 including curriculum design and the quality of teaching.

The Academic Directors of the Colleges noted that where comments related to departmental level provision, the departmental responses to the reports demonstrated that these were under consideration within departments and appropriate action was being taken. A small number of External Examiners comment on aspects of the scheme of assessment within Senate Regulation 6. However, the Committee noted that these should be addressed by the proposals to revise Senate Regulation 6 which would be brought forward for final consideration at its next meeting.

The Committee considered and approved the recommendation from the Group that a standard proforma be used for future responses to External Examiners' reports. It agreed that this should be implemented with respect to reports received following the mid-summer examinations.

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

(b) Annual Developmental Review

The Committee considered a summary of the Annual Developmental Review (ADR) reports submitted for the 2013/14 academic year, compiled on the basis of individual College level summaries. The Committee was pleased to note that the report confirmed that the process had operated in line with the framework set out in the Code of Practice for Annual and Periodic Developmental Review.

The Committee noted the many examples of good practice identified through the reports, such as the wide engagement with enhancement activities such as the pathways project, readinglists@leicester and also with the Career Development Service for the provision of employability skills for students. The Committee noted that departments were considering student feedback in detail, with particular emphasis upon enhancing assessment and feedback processes. The Committee agreed that these should be fed into the Assessment and Feedback Working Group.

The Committee approved the report and noted that it would be reported to the next meeting of Senate.

15/M61 STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 13 January and 26 February 2015.

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 13 April 2015. The Committee noted in particular the development of guidance regarding the application of marking practices for summative work. The Committee welcomed the development of the guidance and agreed that this should now be circulated to departments.

15/M62 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Committee held on 3 March 2015.

15/M63 STUDENTS' UNION BUSINESS

The Committee received a report from the Student's Union Sabbatical Officers. The Committee noted that the Union had been undertaking projects examining both the operation of the personal tutor system and the enhancement of the HEAR as a developmental tool for students during their studies. The Committee noted that the reports and recommendations from both of these projects would be considered at its June meeting.

15/M64 THANKS

The Committee recorded its thanks to Professor Sue Law who was leaving the University, for her contribution to the work of the Committee.

15/M65 RESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015.

The Committee approved the minutes as a correct record.

15/M66 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The Committee considered and **approved** the appointment of the following External Examiners:

College of Arts, Humanities and Law

Centre for American Studies

Professor Zoe Trodd, University of Nottingham

Period of Office: September 2015 to July 2019

Programme(s): BA American Studies (including year abroad variant)

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology

School of Psychology

Professor Reg Morris, Cardiff University

Period of Office: September 2015 to December 2019

Programme(s): Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

The Committee noted that Chair's action had been taken to approve the following nominations:

College of Arts, Humanities and Law

School of History

Dr Richard Goddard, University of Nottingham

Period of Office: September 2014 to July 2019

Programme(s): MA English Local History and Family History

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology

School of Biological Sciences

Dr Cahir O'Kane, University of Cambridge

Period of Office:

Programme(s): BSc Biological Sciences (Genetics), BSc Medical Genetics

School of Medical and Social Care Education

Dr Maurice Stringer, University of Ulster

Period of Office: September 2014 to July 2017

Programme(s): Intercalated BSc (Scheme C, Human Behaviour)

College of Social Science

School of Education

Mrs Emma Whewell, University of Northampton

Period of Office: September 2014 to July 2018

Programme(s): PGCE SCITT

Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning

Dr Claudia Fox, University of Warwick

Period of Office: September 2014 to September 2017

Programme(s): FDA in Integrative Counselling

Dr Sharron Ogle, University of Edinburgh

Period of Office: September 2014 to September 2018

Programme(s): CertHE in Global Ecology and Wildlife Conservation

Duration of meeting: Two hours

CHAIR