

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**  
**ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a meeting held on**  
**21 May 2014**

**Present:**

Ms C Fyfe (Chair)  
Professor A Cashmore    Ms J Dunne  
Professor S Hainsworth    Dr C Jarvis  
Professor S Law    Professor T Lawson  
Dr B Norman    Dr T Oliviera  
Dr R Parry    Mr M Rubin  
Professor J Scott    Dr D Watkins  
Professor T Yeoman

**In attendance:** Mrs N Cunningham for M34, Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

**Apologies for absence** were received from Mr D Flatt and Dr D Lockett

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

**14/M31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**14/M32 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2013

The Committee noted that Dr D. Watkins was not present the meeting, and with this amendment **approved** the minutes as a correct record.

**14/M33 MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M23 the Committee noted that comments were still being received regarding the draft Code of Practice on managing higher education provision with others and that a revised Code incorporating this feedback would be considered at the Committee's meeting in June.

**14/M34 INTERNATIONAL CREDIT AND GRADE TRANSFER**

The Committee considered a paper which outlined proposals for a more structured approach to the management of grade and credit transfer for students who undertake study in overseas institutions as part of their degree programme. The Committee noted that the proposal was also designed to more clearly demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Chapter B10 of the QAA Quality Code governing the management of higher education provision with others.

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The Committee noted that it was not possible to set a single grade conversion scheme at University level, due to the significant variation of equivalencies within the range of partner institutions. The proposal focussed upon ensuring that there was a clear process for and oversight of calculating the equivalencies in each case. The proposal required the nomination of a Credit/Grade Transfer representative to carry out this role in departments. It was proposed that the College Academic Committees (CACs) would have an overarching role in the monitoring of student performance at partner institutions, however the precise process for this was unclear. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to clarify the role of the new Collaborative Partnerships Management Group in this process, and also to provide more detail on the precise responsibilities and requirements both of the CAC and of the Credit/Grade Transfer representative, in order to inform nominations within departments.

The Committee supported the principles within the paper and agreed that, once the above points had been addressed, the policy should be incorporated within the draft Code of Practice on managing higher education provision with others for consideration at the Committee's June meeting.

#### 14/M35 ANNUAL DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW

The Committee considered a summary of the Annual Developmental Review (ADR) reports submitted for the 2012/13 academic year. The Committee noted that this had been compiled on the basis of individual College level summaries from each College Academic Committee. 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 agreed that the reports provided a helpful summary of the good practice and issues for consideration raised through the ADR process. The Committee noted that the comments raised regarding the operation of the Senate Regulations were being addressed through either current or upcoming reviews. The Committee also noted comments relating to accommodation issues and agreed that these should be fed through to the Student Experience Enhancement Group. The Committee welcomed the focus upon themes of good practice for wider dissemination, particularly those in the areas of assessment and feedback.

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

#### 14/M36 MODERATION PRACTICES

The Committee considered a paper which provided further guidelines on the University requirements in terms of moderation processes for work which contributed to the final degree classification. The Committee noted that the paper supported Senate Regulation 7 in setting clear requirements for the moderation of such work and providing operational guidelines for the implementation of the policy in terms of module and sample size.

The Committee **approved** the paper for circulation to academic departments. The Committee agreed that the policy statement would need to be accompanied by additional supporting guidance on the moderation requirements for particular assessment types in use across the University, and confirming the requirements for the maintenance of records with relation to marking and moderation.

14/M37 **OIA GOOD PRACTICE FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered a consultation document from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which outlined proposals for the introduction of a Good Practice Framework for the consideration of academic appeals and student complaints. The Committee noted that in many aspects the University's existing processes aligned with the proposals in the framework.

The Committee considered the consultation questions set out in the document. In particular, the Committee noted that the proposals to establish stricter time limits for the completion of each element of the process would have significant resource implications for the University. The Committee agreed to feed back to the OIA that the current proposals did not take sufficient account of the volume and complexity of appeals received, particularly from distance learning students, and that it would be helpful if there were a total time limit set from receipt of the appeal to completion of a review process, rather than specific stages as proposed.

The Committee agreed that the framework was currently unclear as to whether students were required to be in attendance at an appeal hearing. It was noted that this may not be possible for the University's large distance learning cohort, could conflict with the timescales set for resolution, and may introduce a potential inequity between those students who were and were not able to attend a hearing. The Committee further agreed that it would be unhelpful to include the formal option of legal representation for both parties within the complaints and appeals process in certain circumstances because it would add cost and create a perception of a two tier system, which itself might become subject to challenge.

The Committee noted that the Chair and Secretary would draft the University response to the consultation in light of these discussions.

14/M38 **EXTERNAL EXAMINER APPOINTMENT HELD BY UNIVERSITY STAFF**

The Committee considered a proposal to use the IRIS system to record the external examining appointments held by members of University staff. The Committee noted that this would enable the individual departments and the University to have greater oversight of outgoing external examining activity in order to avoid reciprocal arrangements, share experience of award and assessment processes across the sector and facilitate staff development in this regard. The Committee **approved** the proposal and methodology, noting that it would be necessary to regularly remind academic staff to keep IRIS updated with this information.

14/M39 **ERASMUS+ MASTERS PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a joint award under the Erasmus+ scheme. It was noted that the Committee had considered and approved an initial proposal to establish a dual award under a similar scheme in September 2012, however following further development work and the announcement of new funding the emphasis of the project had shifted towards the provision of a programme across several partners leading to a single award, thus becoming a joint, rather than a dual award.

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The Committee noted that the proposed partners had been evaluated and approved through the previous process, and that the scheme was well established, with several other UK institutions currently offering programmes through Erasmus Mundas.

The Committee **approved** the proposal to revise the proposal into a joint award.

#### 14/M40 **DISSERTATION MODULE FOR DIABETES**

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a distance learning dissertation module for the MSc in Diabetes. This would be offered as an alternative to the campus-based module for students on the University MSc but it was also proposed that it provide a progression route for students who had been awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Diabetes, offered by the BMJ and validated by the University.

The Panel noted that the proposal would require dispensation from Senate Regulations to permit students from the BMJ programme to be granted APL for 120 taught credits, compared to 60 credits permitted by the Regulations. The Committee was concerned about the precedent this would set, but was particularly concerned that the BMJ Postgraduate Diploma had not been designed as part of a master's programme, so the taught modules did not incorporate research skills nor was there a separate research skills module. It therefore considered that students who had completed the BMJ Postgraduate Diploma would not be appropriately prepared to undertake an extended piece of independent research.

In light of this the Committee agreed that it **could not approve** the proposal. The Committee noted that the Department of Health Sciences may wish to consider developing a 60 credit taught component which delivered appropriate research skills, and students could then use 60 of the credits gained through the BMJ programme as APL and complete the remaining 120 credits of the MSc programme at the University.

#### 14/M41 **ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS**

The Committee considered a proposal, endorsed by the Postgraduate Research Policy Committee, to amend the English Language requirements for admission to postgraduate research programmes. The proposal would reduce the number of English Language qualifications accepted, set minimum component scores in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and establish bands to differentiate the requirements for different subject areas. The Committee noted that this was one of a number of measures designed to improve research degree completion rates.

The Committee noted that the proposed bands were based on existing English language requirements by subject area, with a small number of exceptions where proposals had been made to increase the requirements. If in future a department wished to amend its English language requirements it would need to submit a case to the Academic Policy Committee.

The Committee welcomed the proposal and noted that should ensure a consistently higher standard of English Language capability among doctoral level students, and that it would bring the institution more closely into line with practice at comparator institutions. The Committee **approved** the proposal to amend the English language requirements for research degrees for implementation in 2014/15.

14/M42 **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Geology which had taken place in November 2013, and the initial response from the Department. The Committee noted the positive tone of the report, and the proposed actions set out in the response from the Department. The Committee approved the report and the initial response, noting that a further full response would be provided in March 2015.

The Committee considered the report of the follow-up Periodic Developmental Review of the MBChB programme which had taken place in March 2014. The review had been convened to consider the response of the MBChB programme team to the conditions set out in the original Periodic Review report from April 2013. The Committee noted that the Panel had concluded that all of the conditions had been satisfactorily met, and **approved** the report.

14/M43 **PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION**

The Committee considered a paper on the professional accreditations currently held by programmes offered by the University, and the opportunities for further expansion which had been referred by the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC).

The Committee noted that, whilst accreditations could enhance the University's offer to students, it was necessary to assess the resources required to obtain and maintain accreditation, and the requirement for changes or constriction of the curriculum that may result from the requirements of professional recognition. The Committee agreed that this should be considered in the planning of new provision and review of existing programmes. The Committee agreed that the section of the programme development form relating to accreditation should be expanded to require departments to comment on both the value and the requirements of PSRB accreditation. These standard questions should also be factored into the Annual Developmental Review template.

Duration of meeting: One Hour and 40 minutes