

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

**Minutes of a meeting held on  
23 May 2018**

**Present:**

	J Scott (Chair)	
A Cameron		E Clapp
F Deepwell		R Dickinson
C Hewitt		D Lambert
D Lockett		L Masterman
B Norman		M Peel
C Taylor		G Wynn

**In attendance:** M Rawlinson (for M72) and A Petersen (Secretary)

**Apologies for absence** were received from S Handa and R Parry

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

18/M66 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

18/M67 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting that had taken place on 30 April 2018.

The Committee **approved** the minutes as an accurate record.

18/M68 **MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M56 the Committee noted that the institutional response to the Subject Level TEF pilot consultation document had been submitted.

18/M69 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair reported that:

- a) He had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve the final transformed curricula for the taught postgraduate programmes in Criminology.
- b) That the refreshed Learning Strategy had been approved at the recent meeting of Council.
- c) That the Programme Approval Panels (joint with the NMC) that had considered the new MSci programmes in Nursing with Leadership and Midwifery with Leadership had been successful and both programmes had been endorsed, with a small number of conditions to meet.
- d) That the University Portfolio Management Group had approved an additional mechanism for reviewing the sustainability of programmes via the Annual

Developmental Review process. The Committee noted that specific threshold for student numbers at programme or module level to ensure viability had not been set at University level.

#### 18/M70 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Committee considered extracts from the Strategic and Corporate Risk registers for the Summer term, along with a report which highlighted the changes to risk ratings since the last update.

The Committee noted alterations to the Registers. The rating associated with the risk of poor NSS and TEF outcomes had been raised, as had the ratings associated with the impact of industrial action and subsequent student complaints. The Committee noted that the risk associated with the effective delivery of pathways had been removed and that the risk associated with matching peer Universities in terms of employability outcomes had been reduced.

The Committee recommended that the categorisation of 'Current controls' and 'Mitigation Plan' currently stated be reviewed for consistency across the register.

The Committee endorsed the registers for consideration by ULT and Audit Committee.

#### 18/M71 **MONITORING OF THE LEARNING STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a report on the ongoing implementation of the Learning Strategy in the Summer term of 2018, and an updated Strategy Implementation Plan. The Committee noted that the documentation related to the refreshed Learning Strategy that had recently been approved by the University Council.

The Committee noted the many achievements listed in the paper which included the almost complete Curriculum Transformation of UG programmes, the development of the assessment strategy, increased numbers of ATQs and the process improvements delivered through the Student Lifecycle Change Programme. Following this, the Committee noted the significant challenges outlined in the document. These included improving NSS outcomes, introducing a University wide Module Evaluation System, improving processes around curriculum management and implementing new processes through the Student Lifecycle Change Programme.

The Committee noted the achievements and the challenges outlined in the documentation, and the actions being taken in light of these. The Committee agreed that the rating associated with the PGT should be changed to Amber.

The Committee noted that the ongoing monitoring of the Learning Strategy would be reported to Senate at its meeting in June 2018.

#### 18/M72 **STUDENT APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND OIA CASES**

The Committee considered a series of reports which detailed the number and nature of academic appeals, student complaints and OIA cases that had been submitted to the University in the 2016/17 academic year. M Rawlinson presented the key elements of the reports.

The Committee noted that the number of appeals, notably from undergraduate students, had risen in the 2016/17 academic year with a particular rise in the number of appeals

against degree classification. Going forwards the introduction of the new Mitigating Circumstances Policy would be likely to have a significant impact upon appeal outcomes where the submission was based on mitigating circumstances.

The Committee noted the overall numbers and trends in relation to student complaints. It was noted that there had been a notable increase of stage one complaints upon previous years, but that these were largely resolved at this stage and there was not a corresponding rise in stage 2 appeals. The Committee noted that following the outcome of an internal audit significant work had been undertaken to revise the policy framework for complaints. The Committee noted the clear principles of consistency and transparency of the framework for students, and visibility of the process, outcomes and lessons learned at senior levels of the institution.

The Committee noted the number of OIA cases that had been submitted and was pleased to note that the vast majority had been found to be not justified, thus demonstrating that the University's own internal procedures were robust and effective in reaching appropriate outcomes.

The Committee did note, however, that the number of OIA cases received by the University regard to academic status was high in comparison with the sector. Although these were generally not successful, it indicated a need to enhance the information and guidance for students around the operation of the process, eligibility criteria and potential outcomes. In light of this, the Committee noted the significant work on the part of the Quality Office to support both academic departments in the management of appeals, and also in the provision of additional guidance to students in terms of the eligible grounds for appeal, preferred and available outcomes. The Committee noted in particular the extended level of analysis undertaken regarding the reasons for the submission of appeals and complaints, and the manner in which this was being used to identify trends and learn from both the generation and outcome of individual cases. The Committee noted in particular that significant work had been undertaken with departments in terms of support for providing appropriate and reflective responses to appeals or complaints once received.

The Committee noted that the data was extremely helpful to identify trends in terms of the basis for appeal or complaint, but also the spread across departments, levels, gender and other factors. The Committee considered how this might be used to inform the work underway with departments, partly via the Education Excellence framework. It was agreed that it would be very helpful to present a more focussed dataset and narrative to both colleges and selected departments.

The Committee thanked J Donovan and his team for the report and the underpinning work in enhancing the operational of the appeals and complaints process.

#### 18/M73 **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

The Committee considered a report which summarised the final position with regard to the completion of the NSS for 2018, and outlined the planning and preparation underway for NSS 2019.

The Committee noted that the overall completion rate was above the sector rate but slightly below the institutional level for the previous year. All departments had reached the reporting threshold. The Committee noted that once the threshold had been reached for a

department promotion of the NSS had been reduced in that area, and subsequently focussed on departments with lower response rates.

The Committee noted that the rules for the publication of the NSS outcomes had changed to mean that sector data would not be released to institutions prior to full external publication. The Committee also noted that the impact of the recent industrial action on NSS outcomes was not known, but that for the purposes of benchmarking it would be important to compare with other institutions that had experienced disruption.

The Committee noted the proposals for preparation for NSS 2019 which included working with departments over the summer of 2018 to align departmental activities with those at University level, and also to ensure that departments were involved with defining the survey population. Finalist workshops would also be run over the course of semester 1.

#### 18/M74 **TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Chair, College Academic Directors and the Deputy Director of Academic Services which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for taught postgraduate programmes in 2016/17.

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 Committee noted that where issues had been raised in relation to particular disciplines this was being addressed within the departments, and that no issues were raised for consideration at University level.

The Committee noted feedback from the Colleges regarding the effective engagement with the external examiner reporting process, and how this might be enhanced. It was noted that there were national moves towards a review of the external examining system which may introduce a greater expectation with regard to training for externals. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to consider whether amendments could be made to the internal processes for consideration of external examiners' reports at local, college and University level in order to enhance engagement.

#### 18/M75 **MONITORING OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION OF TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

The Committee considered a report which reviewed the operation of the Code of Practice on the Development, Approval and Modification of Taught Programmes in the 2016/17 academic year. The report included a number of recommendations for enhancement, particularly significant amendments to the current Programme Approval Form.

The Committee noted that the Code of Practice was mapped against the indicators in Chapter B1 of the previous UK Quality Code. The Committee was pleased to note that all core indicators were met via the Code of Practice. The new format of the Quality Code did not provide the same level of detail with regard to expectations of practice, but it was noted that once the additional guidance on individual processes was issued, institutional Codes of Practice such as that for programme development and approval would be mapped against them to identify any gaps.

The Committee noted that there were no major amendments to the procedure or framework for programme development proposed. The report highlighted a number of areas of potential enhancement such as the alignment of documentation and guidance to

the developing themes from Curriculum Transformation and Education Excellence. The Committee approved all of the proposals for procedural enhancement set out in the report. The Committee noted, in particular, the introduction of an Early Strategic Business Case form to be completed before a programme proposal could be submitted to UPMG in full.

The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to further strengthen the requirement that submission to the College Programme Development Group should be the gateway to the approval process for new programmes, and that no programme should be able to submit for a formal approval stage without having first been endorsed by PDGs. It was also noted that it would be helpful to further formalise the processes for ensuring College level sign off of the business case for new programmes before they could proceed to University consideration.

The Committee considered the proposed revisions to the Programme Approval Form. These had been developed in conjunction with Central Services. The amendments focussed Section C of the form onto several of the themes developed through Curriculum Transformation and Education Excellence including assessment design and variety, more detailed consideration of transferable skills, teaching resiliency, sustainability and internationalisation. It also made student engagement central to programme design and development. The Committee welcomed all of the amendments, further recommending that form be revised slightly to ensure that all of the strategic drivers set out in the early business case form could be addressed in the PAP form.

The Committee endorsed the new form subject to the above amendments, and it was noted that it would now be circulated to College Programme Development Groups for comment before finalisation.

#### 18/M76 **REFLECT POLICY**

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Reflect Lecture Capture Policy, as a result of the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Following legal advice the Committee was assured that current policy and practice in informing students of their rights with regard to Reflect was compliant with GDPR requirements.

The Committee considered the legal basis for storing and processing personal data for lecture capture. The Committee noted that following the publication of the new Data Protection Act Universities were considered public authorities, and as such legitimate interest was highly unlikely to be a suitable legal basis for processing the data in question. Other potential bases were consent, contract or public task (related to the University's status as a public authority). Legal advice had been sought on the issue but had provided some conflicting information. Although Contract appeared to be a legally robust basis the advice received from HR proposes that contractual changes are only made for new staff contracts issued from September 2018. It had been advised that Consent was not an appropriate legal basis in the context of an employer and employee relationship and that the basis of Public Task was a potentially weaker legal basis, particularly as it has not been tested and may be open to challenge.

The Committee also noted the implications of the GDPR legislation upon the issue of the assignment and waiver of performer's rights as they related to publication of the reflect recordings. This could be managed with the introduction of a registration form for

members of staff. The Committee recommended that legal advice be sought regarding whether moving to an opt-in system might strengthen the case with respect to consent as a legal basis, but noted the logistical issues associated with this.

The Committee noted the amendments to the Reflect policy to reflect the above, but further noted that this could not be finalised until the position regarding the legal basis for holding the data had been confirmed.

The Committee agreed that given the significance of the issue further legal advice should be sought with regard to the issues around both Contract and Public Task as potential legal bases, as well as the issue around 'opt-in' on the basis of Consent, and that following this a judgement would need to be taken by ULT.

**18/M77 EDUCATION EXCELLENCE**

The Committee received an update on the Education Excellence project from G Wynn.

The Committee noted that the project team had undertaken a wide programme of communication with colleagues throughout the institution. The overall aims and initial headline projects for the Ed Ex programme were underway and had been aligned with the wider discussions through the Provost Planning process. There would also shortly be away day for those colleagues who had expressed interest in engaging with aspects of the programme.

The Committee noted that detailed analysis of the metrics generated through the Curriculum Transformation project was almost complete and would be included in the CT report that was due later in 2018.

**18/M78 DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

This item was deferred.

**18/M79 PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND WITHDRAWAL**

The Committee noted the final approval of the amendments to Phase II of the MBChB curriculum.

**18/M80 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS MANAGEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received a report of the meeting of the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group that had taken place on 1 May 2018.

**18/M81 COLLEGE ACADEMIC COMMITTEES**

The Committee received reports of the meetings of the College Academic Committees that had taken place on:

- a) College of Life Sciences, 9 May 2018
- b) College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, 11 April 2018 and 9 May 2018

Arising from a) the Committee noted the comments from colleagues regarding the impact of the revised academic year structure, notably the timing of the re-sit period.

Arising from b) the Committee noted that the School of Law had revised its undergraduate progression criteria to align with the standard progression scheme set out in Senate Regulation 5.

18/M82 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

The Committee considered and approved the nomination of the following External Examiners:

College of Life Sciences

**School of Biological Sciences**

Dr Sheila MacIntyre, University of Reading

Period of Office: September 2018 to September 2022

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

**Department of Health Sciences**

Ms Claire Graham, University of Bradford

Period of Office: September 2018 to September 2022

Programme(s): BSc Physiotherapy

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

College of Science and Engineering

**School of Geography, Geology and the Environment**

Professor Alex Singleton, University of Liverpool

Period of Office: September 2018 to November 2022

Programme(s): MSc Geographical Information Systems,  
MSc Environmental Informatics, MRes Geography

College of Life Sciences

**Department of Genetics and Genome Biology**

Dr Philip Burns, University of Leeds

Period of Office: September 2018 to November 2019

Programme(s): MSc Molecular Pathology and Therapeutics of Cancer

18/M83 **AWARD OF THE INTERCALATED MSC**

The Committee noted that a new Intercalated MSc programme was under development for MBChB students, to be undertaken between years 3 and 4 of the undergraduate programme.

The Committee considered when the MSc degree should be awarded to successful students. The Committee noted that the entry onto the MSc was not reliant upon prior completion of the bachelors award, and that the two awards were not linked. On that basis it was agreed that the Board of Examiners should award the MSc to students who at the end of the year of study had met the requirements for the MSc. The student should then be eligible to attend the next available graduation session for the conferral of the award, separate to the award of the MBChB that would be given upon completion of that programme.

The Committee also noted and approved the proposal that the IMSc should be slightly shorter in duration than a standard MSc programme, due to the need to integrate it into the existing schedule for delivery of the MBChB clinical components.

18/M84 **THANKS**

The Committee wished to record its thanks to D Lockett who would be ending his term on Council and therefore on the Committee in June 2018. The Committee thanked him for his invaluable input to its work over several years.

DURATION OF MEETING: One Hour and Fifty minutes

CHAIR