

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
24 June 2014**

Present:

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

In attendance: Professor M Peel, Mr B Dodgson (for M55), Ms C Taylor (for M56 and M57), Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Dr C Jarvis, Professor T Lawson and Professor J Scott

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

14/M44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

14/M45 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2014.

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

14/M46 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M36 Dr Parry noted that the College of Arts, Humanities and Law Academic Committee had held a workshop on marking and moderation practices following the publication of additional guidance by APC, which had been helpful and well received.

Arising from M41 the Committee noted that further consideration had been given to the proposal to amend the English Language requirements for Postgraduate Research degrees in light of additional comments from a range of stakeholders. It had been agreed that a Group should be established to undertake a detailed review of the English Language requirements for doctoral level study in the context of a wider consideration of approaches to improving completion rates. It was further proposed, as an interim measure until the conclusions of the Group were known, to amend the proposal initially considered by APC at its May meeting to allow for a student not meeting the normal IELTS requirements to be admitted to a research degree programme on the basis of successful completion of a University pre-sessional English course at a level specified for the subject area.

Subject to a minor amendment to the wording to remove the phrase 'with the approval of the Department', the Committee **approved** the proposal.

14/M47 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that Professor Peel, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Law would Chair the Committee in the 2014/15 academic year.

The Chair also reported that the following members of academic staff had been awarded University Teaching Fellowships in 2014:

Dr Sinead Drea (Biological Sciences)
Dr Sarah Gretton (Natural Sciences)
Professor Mike Lovell (Geology)
Dr Diane Hudman (Medical School)
Dr Harry Whitehead (English)
Dr Patrick White (Sociology)

The Committee congratulated all of the recipients on their awards.

14/M48 PATHWAYS PROJECT

The Committee received an update from Dr Parry regarding the progress of the project to introduce a pathway approach to undergraduate degrees.

The Committee noted that following feedback from a previous meeting, the team had removed references to parallel honours, and was engaging effectively with the remaining Colleges in the development of the proposals. Work was underway in a number of departments to amend provision ahead of the introduction of pathways, and this was generating examples of good practice to inform future developments. Funding for a Project Manager post had been agreed to support the development, and a series of workshops would be held over the summer to address the quality assurance and regulatory elements of the project. The Committee agreed that as part of these discussions it would be essential to agree a process for the development and approval of pathways which met the requirements of the relevant University Code of Practice whilst remaining proportionate to the scale of the provision under consideration.

14/M49 RESTRUCTURING THE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Committee considered a paper which set out a strategy for the implementation of proposals to restructure the teaching curriculum. Under the proposals the workload hours per credit would increase from 7.5 to 10 and a standard range of credit weightings would be established for modules across the institution. It was also proposed to restructure the academic year in order to extend the overall teaching period, reduce the Christmas and Easter vacations and alter the timing of the examinations. The paper proposed a consultation period with academic departments between September and December 2014 followed by a period of programme and module development planning until September 2015 before academic approval of the revised provision for full implementation in September 2016. The Committee approved the proposals and suggested timescale.

The Committee considered the consultation process for the changes, particularly the question of harmonisation of module weightings. The Pathways Project Steering Group

had proposed that the most effective model for major and minor pathways would be for the latter to represent 25%, or 30 credits per year, of the total study. The Committee agreed that this should be included in the consultation information to inform the proposals for standardising credit weightings. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for the consultation to propose models for a harmonised credit framework along with worked examples. This would then allow departments to map their own provision against each model to inform their feedback.

The Committee also noted that it would be helpful to indicate in the proposal whether there was any discretion for maintaining modules that did not comply with the standard weightings, where these were required for accrediting bodies or other significant reasons.

14/M50 FLEXIBLE MASTERS PROVISION

The Committee considered a paper from the Graduate Dean regarding the development of flexible masters programmes. Market research emphasised the growing importance of flexible learning to the market for masters level study, particularly among those working professionals looking to increase their employability. The paper proposed a model by which students would be able to study individual modules either on campus or distance learning. Modules would be selected from a series of 'baskets' each of which met a high level intended learning outcomes, thus allowing students to combine modules towards an award. As with the Pathways project, under this proposal students would be able to select modules to graduate with degree titles denoting either a single area of study, two areas studied equally, or a major/minor combination.

The Committee also considered a paper from a Task and Finish Group in the College of Social Science regarding the development of flexible masters provision. The Group was proposing a model by which students would be able to alternate their registration status between full-time, part-time, campus-based and distance learning.

The Committee welcomed both papers and fully supported the development of flexible provision at masters level. However, the Committee noted that significant development in the area of fee policy, regulatory framework and student records management would be required to support the proposals, and these had not been fully accounted for in the proposed timescales for implementation. It was further noted that a Group had been established following the recent PGT Summit to review the wider masters provision across the Institution. The Committee agreed that both papers should be considered by this Group and that further detailed consultation with relevant central services should be undertaken in order to address the points of implementation raised above.

14/M51 COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

The Committee considered a final draft of the Code of Practice for the Management of Higher Education Provision with Others. The Committee noted that the draft Code had been subject to several rounds of consultation with academic departments and central services. The Committee noted in particular that this version of the Code had been amended to incorporate procedures for credit transfer as discussed at its previous meeting (M34 refers) and reflect feedback from academic departments regarding the monitoring of student exchange arrangements. The Committee **approved** the Code noting that it would be subject to review following its first year of operation.

The Committee considered a revised Strategy for Collaboration for Taught and Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes, following feedback from academic departments. The Committee noted that the Quality Office would shortly be working to implement the framework set out in the Code of Practice above, and that this may usefully inform the further development of the strategy. In light of this the Committee agreed that an updated strategy should be considered in the new academic year.

14/M52 **REPORT ON THE CONSIDERATION OF TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Academic Directors, the Graduate Dean and the Academic Registrar, which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for taught postgraduate programmes in the 2012/13 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 reports made a number of comments regarding the operation of Senate Regulation 7, which had been considered in full in the review of that regulation.

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 noted comments from a small number of External Examiners regarding the Scheme of Assessment for taught postgraduate programmes within Senate Regulation 6, and specifically the criteria for the award of Merit or Distinction classifications. The Committee confirmed its earlier decision that Senate Regulation 6 should be reviewed in 2014/15 and agreed that the comments from External Examiners would inform this process. The Committee also noted that comments regarding the need to ensure use of the full range of available marks would be considered at College level through the Academic Committees.

14/M53 **UNIVERSITY TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS**

The Committee considered a paper which proposed amending the title of the University's award for recognising teaching excellence. The current title of 'University Teaching Fellow' had been so named as to echo the national level fellowships awarded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), however feedback had indicated that this title may be confusing due to its perceived similarity with the post of 'Teaching Fellow' within the institution.

The Committee **agreed** to amend the title of the award to 'University Distinguished Teaching Fellowship'.

14/M54 **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEWS**

- (i) School of Archaeology and Ancient History

The Committee considered the report and initial response from the Periodic Developmental Review that had taken place in March 2014. The Committee noted the positive tone of the report, commended the engagement of the School with the review

process, and welcomed in particular the commitment of the School to ensuring that all staff achieved HEA accreditation within 5 years. The Committee **approved** the report and the initial response.

(ii) Department of Politics and International Relations

The Committee considered the report and initial response from the Periodic Developmental Review that had taken place in February 2014. The Committee again noted the highly positive tone of the report, and the constructive approach of the Department to responding to the small number of issues raised. The Committee **approved** the report and the initial response.

(iii) Department of Health Sciences

The Committee considered the report and initial response from the Periodic Developmental Review that had taken place in December 2013. The Committee noted the many examples of good practice evident within the Department, however noted the recommendation made by the Panel that the Department seek to harmonise processes across all of its provision, in order to share good practice. The Committee **approved** the report and the initial response.

(iv) Annual Report on the Periodic Developmental Review process

The Panel considered a report regarding the operation of the Periodic Developmental Review (PDR) process in the 2013/14 academic year. The report analysed the operation of the PDR process in line with the indicators set out in Chapter B8 of the QAA Quality Code, and identified good practice and issues for further consideration.

The Committee was pleased to note that the PDR process had confirmed that in the departments under review the Committee and Senate could have confidence that the processes in place for managing and assuring the quality of learning opportunities, the standards of the awards and the support provided to students were robust.

The Committee considered how good practice identified through the PDR process could be disseminated to enhance provision across the institution. The Committee noted that it would be helpful to establish an institutional catalogue of good practice. The Academic Practice Service (APS) was developing an online resource to support learning and teaching, which could be further developed for this wider purpose. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for the Quality Office and APS to work closely in order to feed good practice identified through the full range of quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms through for dissemination.

The Committee supported a proposal to include representation from Professional Bodies on Panels where appropriate. Similarly, the Committee welcomed the work of the Students' Union with the Quality Office to enhance student engagement in PDRs and agreed that it would be helpful to involve other Panel members in this process where possible. The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful to develop further staff development resources to support both the Panel and the Department in the review process. The Committee further agreed that it would be helpful to enhance the reflective element of the PDR process through the production by the department under review of a Self-Evaluation Document (SED) in place of the Head of Department's statement, and agreed that a template should be drafted for consideration in the new academic year.

14/M55 REGULATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES

The Committee considered draft regulations for the range of Professional Doctorates offered by the institution. The Committee noted that while the draft regulations aligned in many respects with Senate Regulation 7, in several areas the additional expectations and requirements at doctoral level had necessitated a difference in approach.

In particular, the Committee noted the proposals to remove of the Panel of Examiners for the purposes of Professional Doctorates due to the individual nature of each student's research project; extend the deadline for the return of assessed work on Professional Doctorate programmes in light of the use of external markers; and revisions to submission dates for assessed work, the consequent removal of late penalties and the zero-tolerance policy with regard to plagiarism at doctoral level.

The Committee noted that it would be helpful within the document to emphasise the individual nature of the programme of study for each student, and demonstrate the alignment of these regulations with the principles set out in Senate Regulation 9.

The Committee specified minor amendments to the wording of the regulations, and subject to these **approved** them for submission to Senate. The Committee also **approved** the consequent amendments to the Policy for the Return of Assessed work in line with the proposals for Professional Doctorates set out above.

14/M56 AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS

The Committee considered proposed minor amendments to the Regulations governing the Library for the 2014/15 academic year. The Committee **approved** the amendments.

The Committee considered proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 10 governing academic appeals, which were designed to ensure that the regulations fully articulated current practice. The Committee **approved** the amendments and noted that Senate Regulation 10 would be subject to a wider review to ensure compliance with the OIA Good Practice Framework, once published.

14/M57 REVIEW OF LIBRARY LOANS AND FINES POLICIES

The Committee considered a paper from the Library outlining the conclusions and proposals arising from the recent review of its loans and fines policies.

The Library had undertaken a detailed survey of users regarding its current policies in light of the increasing use of digital resources by staff and students, and to ensure that appropriate account was taken of the needs of all user groups. As a result of the review, the Library proposed to harmonise loan periods for staff and students and establish a single minimum loan period of 7 days for all items. It was also proposed to disband the short loan collection in favour of reference only copies of high demand texts, as well as to work with academic staff to promote the use of ReadingLists@Leicester and other digital resources to ensure student access to core readings. Finally, it was proposed to only charge fines on overdue items where these had been requested by another user.

The Committee welcomed the structured approach that the Library had taken to engaging its users to inform its provision, and supported the movements towards maximising digital resources and increasing access to key academic texts for large cohorts. The Committee

approved all of the proposals, with the exception of the proposal to alter the policy on fines, as this had not been endorsed by the Planning Support Group.

14/M58 STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 4 June 2014.

The Committee noted the review of the advice and guidance regarding plagiarism that had been undertaken by the Group. The Committee fully endorsed the range of actions that had been agreed by the Group.

The Committee also noted the Group's consideration of the adoption of a more standardised approach to academic referencing. The Committee noted that it was not proposed to introduce a single style of referencing, but rather to ensure that referencing styles within individual departments were clearly articulated to students from the commencement of their studies, and applied consistently throughout the department.

14/M59 STUDENT RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting Student Recruitment, Admissions and Widening Participation Committee held on 8 May 2014.

14/M59 UK FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

The Committee noted that the QAA was undertaking a consultation on the bringing together of the FHEQ and the FQHEIS into a single document, and that any comments to feed into the formal University response should be directed to the Secretary.

14/M60 QAA TNE IN THE WEST INDIES

The Committee noted that the QAA was undertaking a review of Transnational Education (TNE) in the West Indies which included a number of programmes in the Department of Media and Communication by distance learning in Trinidad and Tobago.

14/M61 THANKS

The Committee expressed its thanks to the Chair for her dedication to the promotion of learning, teaching and the enhancement of the student experience within the University. The Committee in particular thanked her for her strong leadership in a period of significant development for the University and wished her well in her retirement.

The Committee also thanked Mr Dan Flatt, outgoing President of the Students' Union, and Ms Jackie Dunne, Dean of Distance Education, for their contributions to the work of the Committee and wished them well for the future.

Duration of meeting: Two hours and thirty minutes