

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
26 March 2015**

Present:

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Ms L Freeman, Professor S Hainsworth and Mr M Rubin

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

15/M35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

15/M36 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2015.

The Committee approved the minutes as a correct record.

15/M37 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M20 the Committee noted that the Chair had met with representatives of departments within the College of Science and Engineering to discuss the issues raised with the proposed revisions to Senate Regulation 6. It had been agreed that these departments would work together to produce an alternative proposal for consideration. Arising from M22 the Committee noted that the University Leadership Team (ULT) had strongly supported the proposal to roll out lecture capture technology across the institution, ideally for the 2016/17 academic year. The Committee in particular thanked the Leicester Learning Institute and the Students' Union for their contribution and support.

Arising from M23 the Committee noted that Senate had approved the Attendance Monitoring Policy and procedural guidance would follow shortly.

Arising from M25 Professor Scott reported that a workshop on assessment and feedback was due to be held on 1 May, facilitated by the Leicester Learning Institute.

15/M38 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair thanked members for their input into the development of the new Learning Strategy. The Committee noted that the introduction and draft commitments would be circulated for further comment shortly, and that the Chair was preparing a draft action plan.

The Chair also reported that Senate had approved the implementation plan for the amendments to the structure of the academic year, module weightings and credit hours. The Committee noted that the online resources to support departments in moving into the new structure were under development.

The Chair reported that bids had been submitted to ULT to fund a number of developments in learning and teaching including a University wide student peer mentoring scheme, funding for the Students' Union to undertake Student Partnership Projects, expansion of the Learning and Teaching Conference and resources to investigate the use of student engagement software.

15/M39 UPDATE AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR PATHWAYS

The Committee received a report on the progress of the Pathways Project. The Committee noted that the printed undergraduate prospectus included a brief section on Pathways with additional information available online. The Committee also noted that a summit had taken place on 12 March with representatives from the Colleges and Professional Services which had agreed a timescale for the development, marketing and approval of new pathways with a view to meeting the UCAS deadline in June 2015.

The Committee noted that the summit had considered whether it would be helpful to move the curriculum change process earlier in the year in order to combine it with Annual Developmental Review. The Committee noted the potential benefits of this, but as this may require significant changes to existing departmental planning processes, the Committee agreed that College Academic Directors should discuss this via College Academic Committees so that further consideration could be given to the proposal at a future meeting.

The Committee considered a paper which outlined the proposed approval processes for Pathways.

The processes had been designed to be sufficiently robust to meet the University's requirements articulated in the Code of Practice for the Development, Approval and Modification of Taught Provision but flexible enough to recognise that the development of majors and minors were, in many cases, based on existing provision.

The Committee noted that a list of all proposed majors and minors would be presented to its meeting in May, for approval in principle, and that the full approval processes for these would take place over the summer.

The Committee approved the proposed approval processes.

15/M40 POLICY ON THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The Committee considered a revised draft of the policy for the accreditation of prior learning, which included minor amendments on the basis of feedback from the Committee, academic departments and Professional Services.

The Committee considered the specific points raised through the consultation.

The Committee agreed that only prior learning achieved in the five years prior to application would be considered as current. However, Departments would have discretion to set a shorter period of time where appropriate. The Committee also agreed that, where appropriate, credits achieved at a higher level could be counted for APL at a lower level, that no more than 60 credits of APL would be allowed for taught postgraduate programmes, and that no fee would be charged for the consideration of APL applications unless the volume of such cases expanded significantly.

The Committee considered whether the amount of APL permitted on undergraduate campus-based and distance learning programmes should be different. The Committee noted that the structure of DL programmes allowed for students to be more flexible in the point at which they joined the programme and this may not be possible for campus-based delivery, but agreed that this required further consideration. It agreed that the issue should be discussed with the Department which had raised the question in the consultation and with departments who offered undergraduate degrees in both modes of study. The Committee agreed that the policy should be approved once this issue had been resolved.

15/M41 MODULE SPECIFICATION TEMPLATE

The Committee considered potential amendments to the University module specification template, with a view to making it more user-friendly and promoting its use as a tool for effective pedagogic design.

The Committee agreed that although the document served a dual role in terms of both public information and data collection, it was essential that its format primarily served the needs of students and academic staff. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to make the template an online web form which could then effectively link staff to support from LLI, Registry or the Quality Office. A new form should also include clearer reference to the Transferable Skills Framework, allow colleagues to more closely link the intended learning outcomes with the proposed delivery and assessment patterns and link to Readinglists@Leicester. It would also be helpful to capture the anticipated allocation of teaching within modules, to ensure that the proper financial 'flow' from modules is being captured. This could then be re-confirmed or changed during the annual curriculum change process.

The Committee noted that significant amendments to the form would require wider input from the academic community and support from Registry and IT Services, and there may therefore be limitations in what could be delivered in the short term. The Committee therefore agreed that the current form should be amended to include indicative syllabus information, a clearer definition of the workload hour breakdown and a more structured link between the intended learning outcomes, delivery methods and assessment in order to demonstrate constructive alignment. The Committee agreed that a draft revised specification should be presented to a future meeting for consideration.

15/M42 **STRATEGIC THEME: MODULE AND TEACHING REVIEW**

The Committee agreed to defer this item to a future meeting.

15/M43 **REPORT ON APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND OIA CASES, 2013/14**

The Committee considered a report on the volume and distribution of the appeals, complaints and OIA cases that had been considered in the 2013/14 academic year, and the themes arising from these.

It was noted that the overall number of appeals had continued to increase, particularly at undergraduate level. The majority of appeal submissions were on the basis of mitigating circumstances, and trends indicated that there were particular demographics within the student population which submitted proportionately higher numbers of appeals. The Committee agreed that the report should be circulated to College Academic Committees for consideration.

There was no significant change in the number of complaints received, and the Committee noted that recent amendments to Senate Regulations had helped to make the process for their consideration more streamlined. The Committee also noted that of those cases submitted to the OIA the majority were found to be not justified, confirming that the University's appeals and complaints policies and processes were robust and operating effectively. The Committee noted that proposals to revise the appeals and complaints regulations to ensure compliance with the Good Practice Framework published by the OIA, would be submitted to its next meeting for consideration. .

15/M44 **BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE**

The Committee considered a paper from the School of Management outlining the School's experience of using Blackboard Collaborate for online synchronous communication with students on distance learning programmes. It was noted that the School had been in a position to invest in the technology directly; however, significant benefits could be provided for departments looking to enhance existing provision or create new provision if technologies such as this were to be purchased and supported centrally.

The Committee agreed that a centralised approach to the development of the digital campus was essential, and the Chair agreed to raise the issue with the Director of IT Services.

15/M45 **PROGRAMME APPROVAL PANEL REPORTS**

(i) MSc Leadership and Management

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on the 20 February to consider the introduction of a new MSc Leadership and Management. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and noted that the Chair of the Panel had considered the Department's response to the report and recommended that, on this basis, the programmes should be approved. The Committee agreed to **approve** the programmes for introduction in September 2015.

(ii) MSc Engineering with Management

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on 20th February to consider the introduction of a suite of new MSc programmes in Engineering with Management. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and agreed that the Panel Chair should be authorised to approve the introduction of the programmes in September 2015 pending receipt of a satisfactory response from the programme team.

(iii) Major Modifications to Undergraduate History Programmes

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on 15th October to consider major amendments to the undergraduate provision in the School of History. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and introduction of the new curriculum.

(iv) PGCE SCITT

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on 24th February to consider the introduction of two new PGCE SCITT programmes. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and agreed that the Panel Chair should be authorised to approve the introduction of the programmes in September 2015 pending receipt of a satisfactory response from the programme team.

(v) PGCert in Academic and Professional Practice

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on 27th January. 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.

(vi) MA Journalism Studies

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which took place on 20th February to consider the introduction of a new MA in Journalism Studies. The Committee **approved** the Panel's report and noted that the proposal would be resubmitted for further consideration in due course.

15/M46 UNIVERSITY CERTIFICATE IN ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a 30 credit University Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice. This would be for staff members completing the first module of the new PG Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice, and would confer Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The Committee welcomed the proposal and approved the establishment of this interim exit point, but agreed that the title should be amended to University Postgraduate Certificate, so as to distinguish it from any undergraduate certificates which may be developed in the future. .

15/M47 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group that had taken place on 29 January 2015.

15/M48 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group that had taken place on 4 February 2015.

15/M49 RESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the reserved minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2015.

The Committee approved the minutes as a correct record.

15/M50 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

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

College of Arts, Humanities and Law

School of English

Professor Urszula Clark, Aston University

Period of Office: October 2014 until November 2018

Programme(s): MA in English Language and Linguistics (CB and DL)

College of Social Science

School of Education

Dr Luke Harding, Lancaster University

Period of Office: October 2014 until November 2018

Programme(s): MA TESOL, MA Applied Linguistics and TESOL (CB and DL)

Professor John Kirkman, University of Birmingham

Period of Office: October 2014 until September 2019

Programme(s): PGCE Secondary (Science and Mathematics), PGCE (M level and H level)

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

College of Arts, Humanities and Law

School of History

Professor Patricia Hudson, University of Cardiff

Period of Office: October 2014 to November 2015 (final one year extension)

Programme(s): MA English Local History

Professor Peter Larkham, Birmingham City University

Period of Office: October 2014 to November 2015 (final one year extension)

Programme(s): MA Urban History, MA Urban Conservation,
MA European Urbanisation

College of Science and Engineering

Department of Mathematics

Professor Ben Rickayzen, Cass Business School
Period of Office: Semester 2, 2015 (extension)
Programme(s): BSc Mathematics and Actuarial Science

Ms Mary Hall, University College Dublin
Period of Office: Semester 2, 2015 (extension)
Programme(s): BSc Mathematics and Actuarial Science

Duration of meeting: Two hours

CHAIR