

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

**Minutes of a meeting held on  
27 March 2014**

**Present:**

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

**In attendance:** Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Mr A Petersen (Assistant Secretary)

**Apologies for absence** were received from Mr D Flatt, Professor S Hainsworth and Professor J Scott

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

**14/M17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**14/M18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2014.

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

**14/M19 MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M10 the Committee noted that the revised regulations governing the assessment of taught programmes had been approved by Senate.

**14/M20 CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair reported that the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC) had recently considered a report on professional accreditation of University programmes. The report highlighted some areas where additional accreditation could be sought, however also considered the extent of the value added to University qualifications when compared with the resources required to obtain and maintain accreditation. The Chair reported that the paper would be considered at the Committee's meeting in May.

The Chair reported that she had taken action to approve the introduction of the revised BSc Biological Sciences programme and the new BSc Biological Sciences (Neuroscience) programme.

14/M21 **PATHWAYS PROJECT**

The Committee considered a progress update and project plan for the Pathways Project. The Committee noted that following further consideration of the structural issues associated with harmonising the credit framework and the development of the student record systems that would be required to support the change (M22 refers), it had been agreed to move the introduction of the pathways model until 2016/17. The report set out the proposed governance structure for the project. A Steering Group would undertake overall management, supported by a Project Manager funded by the Colleges. The Steering Group would establish three working groups focussing on issues relating to Design, Delivery and Communication respectively. The Committee welcomed the allocation of formal project management resource to support the development of the pathways model, and **approved** the proposed governance structure for the project.

The Committee noted that the project team had considered differentiating joint and parallel honours. This was intended to provide for existing joint programmes which had been designed with a coherent set of learning outcomes, as distinct from the wide range of potential non-complementary subject selections students may select under the pathways model. Although it was desirable to accommodate those existing combinations which had been designed as single cohesive programmes, the Committee agreed that the introduction of parallel honours could prove confusing to students, and therefore did not support the proposal. The Committee noted that where an existing programme clearly integrated two existing subject areas this could be offered as distinct pathway with a revised title.

The paper referred to the role of other Colleges within the pathways project. The Committee noted that neither the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology, nor the College of Science and Engineering had confirmed whether it would take part in the project. The Committee agreed that it was essential that the University was clear to students which subject areas would be offering pathways. Furthermore, given the timescale for the production of marketing materials and the infrastructure work that would be required to support the project, it was essential that the Colleges agree swiftly whether they wished to contribute pathways either for the launch in 2016/17 or a later date.

The Committee **agreed** that the report should be forwarded to College Academic Committees. In particular, the Committee **agreed** that the Academic Committees in the Colleges which were not currently involved in the pathway project should use this opportunity to consider whether they wished to be involved and provide feedback to their College Management Boards. It was further **agreed** that an update on the progress of the pathways project should be a standing item on the Academic Policy Committee's agenda for future meetings.

14/M22 **RESTRUCTURING OF THE CURRICULUM**

The Committee considered a paper which proposed a series of measures in order to restructure the institutional curriculum for taught programmes. The Committee noted:

- a) that the University credit framework was out of line with sector norms;
- b) that the range of module credit values across the institution created administrative difficulties and was incompatible with the Pathways Project (M21 refers);
- c) that the structure of the academic year meant that the estate was underutilised;
- d) that the student records system was potentially undergoing re-implementation and that this process would need to take place in line with the above priorities.

The Committee noted that it was necessary to raise the current workload hours associated with a University credit from 7.5 to 10 in order to bring the University into line with the sector. The Committee agreed that this amendment would need to be handled sensitively and with reference to the particular context of each discipline, as where it may be appropriate to increase contact time in some areas, in other subject areas it may be to the students' advantage to allocate more hours to guided independent study.

The Committee supported the proposals in the paper, noting that they would make better use of the University estate, reduce overall workload associated with the management of the curriculum, and allow graduates to enter the employment market earlier. The Committee noted that the proposals would be taken forward by a Curriculum Project Board with representatives from all of the stakeholder groups, and with reporting lines to Academic Policy Committee, Senate, and the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee.

#### 14/M23 **CODE OF PRACTICE ON MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION WITH OTHERS**

The Committee considered a revised draft Code of Practice on Managing Higher Education Provision with others. The Code had been updated in light of feedback from academic departments, and to reflect the requirements of Chapter B10 of the QAA Quality Code with reference to the management of student exchanges.

The Committee welcomed the framework established by the Code for the purposes of better structuring the University's development, management and monitoring of provision with others. The Committee noted minor amendments to the Code in light of feedback and, in addition to these, agreed that the role of the College in considering the overall case for collaboration should be made clearer in the process flow diagrams. The Committee **agreed** that as the expansion of the Code with reference to student exchanges would be relevant to the majority of departments within the University, the revised draft should be circulated for a further consultation with College Academic Committees.

The Committee also considered a paper regarding the establishment of a strategy for collaboration for taught and postgraduate research degree programmes. The Committee welcomed the establishment of a strategy to guide the identification of opportunities for collaboration, and to provide a clear framework and criteria for these to be evaluated against. The Committee supported the principles in the strategy and agreed that this should be circulated with the draft Code for consultation. The Committee agreed that departments should in particular be asked to comment on whether the proposed criteria for evaluating partners were appropriate, and whether there were any types of collaboration that the University should not engage in.

The Committee agreed that comments on both the revised code and draft strategy should be considered at its meeting in May 2014.

#### 14/M24 **APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

The Committee considered a report on academic appeals and complaints received by the University in the 2012/13 academic year. The report analysed the trends in the volume of appeals received and the appellants' subject areas. The Committee noted that the move to allow students to appeal against any decision of an academic body affecting their progression had resulted in a significant increase in the total number of appeals received. It also noted an increase in the number of submissions which did not meet any of the eligible grounds for appeal and were therefore unable to proceed to a Panel.

The Committee agreed that the report was a very helpful summary of the number and breakdown of appeals received. It was **agreed** that the summary should be circulated to College Academic Committees for information, and to identify whether there were any actions which could be taken at College level in this regard. The Committee further **agreed** that it would be helpful if the grounds on which students appealed could be summarised in future reports. The Committee also **agreed** that Senate Regulation 10 governing Academic Appeals should be reviewed in due course to ascertain whether amendments may be necessary. This review would be linked to the OIA's current consultation on a good practice framework for handling complaints and academic appeals.

#### 14/M25 PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the review of the Centre for American Studies which had taken place in December 2013, and the initial response from the Centre.

The Committee noted that the report was positive and commended the excellent student experience provided by the Centre. However, the report also highlighted that the reliance of the Centre on a small number of key staff presented a risk. The Committee endorsed the report's recommendation to establish the Centre more clearly within the governance structure of the College of Arts, Humanities and Law. However, overall the Committee was satisfied that the current level of risk associated with the Centre was mitigated.

The Committee **approved** the initial response, noting that a full response would be provided in December 2014.

#### 14/M26 STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 27 February 2014.

The Committee considered and **approved** the proposed amendment to the membership of the Group and the minor proposed amendment to the terms of reference for the Group.

#### 14/M27 INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the ISC Academic Management Board held on 27 February 2014.

The Committee also requested clarification in M03 relating to the progression rates of students from the ISC on University programmes, to confirm whether they were consistent with direct external entrants to year one. Finally, the Committee agreed that the Students' Union should liaise with the ISC to include student membership on the Committee.

#### 14/M28 QAA PUBLICATIONS

The Committee noted that the following QAA documents had been published:

(i) MOOC Statement

The Committee noted that the University policy on the Quality Assurance of MOOCs met the QAA expectations.

(ii) Revised Subject Benchmark Statement for Criminology

The Committee agreed that the publication of revised Subject Benchmarks should be highlighted at the relevant College Academic Committee, and that Departments should be required to confirm how they had considered and incorporated the requirements of such benchmarks in their programmes through the Annual Developmental Review process.

Duration of meeting: One hour and 40 minutes