

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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

Present:

Professor M Peel (Chair)	
Dr S Gabbott	Professor S Hainsworth
Professor S Law	Professor T Lawson
Mr Y Nikolov	Dr B Norman
Dr T Oliviera	Dr R Parry
Mr M Rubin	Ms C Taylor
Dr D Watkins	Professor T Yeoman

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

Apologies for absence were received from Dr D Lockett and Professor J Scott

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

14/M88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

14/M89 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2014.

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

14/M90 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M79 ii) the Chair reported that he had worked with the Secretary to assign themes for consideration to each meeting and that these had been communicated to members separately.

Arising from M79 iii) the Chair reported that he had approved a list of nominations for additional Chairs for Periodic Developmental Review Panels from Heads of College, and that the colleagues in question would be contacted regarding the role shortly.

Arising from M82 the Committee noted that at its meeting on 12 November Senate had approved the review of Programme Approval Processes and endorsed the Committee's proposals for action in this regard. The Code of Practice on Programme Development, Approval and Modification would be revised to reflect the agreed actions and this would be presented to the Committee for consideration in due course.

14/M91 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed Ms Taylor and Dr Gabbott to their first meeting of the Committee.

(i) University Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Chair reported that the formal University level strategic review would commence in the new year with a view to developing final proposals for presentation to Senate and Council, most likely in Autumn 2015. The Committee noted that the development of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy would be aligned to this process and further noted that this process would need to consider how to ensure that the task of contributing to a revised learning and teaching strategy would engage both the academic departments and the Professional Services of the University.

(ii) University Governance

The Chair reported that the Registrar and Secretary had initiated a review of the University committee structure with a view to overall rationalisation and revising the schedule of delegated authority. As part of this, the Committee noted that the role of the Academic Policy Committee and its contributing groups would be under review, with potential amendments being presented for approval in due course.

(iii) Academic Year and Credit Harmonisation

The Chair reported that at its meeting on 12 November Senate had approved the proposals for the amendment to the University's academic year and credit framework. Senate had also approved the recommendation that a minor pathway consist of 30 credits per year, and a major pathway consist of 90 credits per year. A number of issues had been referred to the Committee for further development, most notably the timing of the re-sit examination period. The Committee would also have responsibility for managing the implementation of the structural changes over the course of the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years.

The Chair thanked all of the members of the Committee for their roles in supporting the consultation process and for the helpful feedback provided on behalf of the wider academic and student community.

14/M92 **RESEARCH INFORMED TEACHING, PEDAGOGIC RESEARCH AND TEACHING FOCUSED CAREERS**

The Committee considered the theme of how research informed teaching could be promoted, supported and rewarded within the institution.

The Committee noted that there were a number of small scale groups and events which took place to support the development of projects in the area of research led teaching. These included the PedR group in the College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology, and the College of Science and Engineering Teaching focus day. However, it was noted that these engaged only a relatively small and relatively constant proportion of the academic community. It was also noted that although the ultimate aim was to engage the wider academic community with this theme, the current networks operated well at disciplinary level and the format might not be scaleable to University level. It may therefore be more appropriate to formally establish a university structure to support research led teaching, but with a focus at College level for the actual development and support of pedagogic research. This could then be supported by a University level network to highlight the outputs of such research.

Following this, the Committee agreed that greater co-ordination and publication of the output of pedagogic research would be helpful. Further, it was noted that while academic staff were trained to undertake research within their own fields, many would benefit from access to training resources which specifically addressed the methodological tools for conducting pedagogic research. This could include a single website showcasing outputs, case studies of research impact and toolkits for how to embed research led teaching within existing curricula. This could also include specific ideas for pedagogic research projects, which could be mentored by staff with more experience in these areas. Regular communications could publicise the resources and the range of important and valuable pedagogic research being undertaken at Leicester.

The Committee noted that the definition of 'pedagogic research' remained variable and that while some very helpful clarity had been achieved around issues such as access to study leave, some further work to clarify these issues and provide colleagues on what is still in many departments a relatively novel form of career would be helpful. The Chair would raise these issues with the new Director of Human Resources when she arrives in January. Promotion criteria for these routes will also be examined as part of a broader review of promotion, reward and recognition at the university. The Committee agreed that linking progression routes to internal and external awards such as UDTFs, NTFs, Superstar Awards or HEA fellowship status may be one means of promoting engagement with these routes.

The Chair would also include the suggested action points in the plan he was developing for the teaching, learning and student experience portfolio.

14/M93 **PATHWAYS PROJECT**

Dr Parry reported that further research had been undertaken with a wide range of current and prospective students via the Students' Union, focus groups in schools and 5 minute interviews with attendees at open days. The output of this process was currently being analysed, but it was noted that this was already providing extremely valuable data regarding demand for various combinations of programmes.

The Committee also noted that the business case for the first new major/minor pathways in Global Studies had been approved, and that the experience of this process would feed into the development of workshops and other supporting resources to assist colleagues in preparing the programme approval documentation for new pathways.

Finally, the Chair reported that the Pathways project had been publicised via local media and the Employer Advisory Forum. This had been well received, and more detailed publicity materials were under development for release early in 2015.

14/M94 **RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

i) International Study Centre

The Committee considered a risk assessment which had been compiled with regard to a proposal to extend the University's existing partnership with the International Study Centre in order to include a Certificate of HE delivered by the ISC and validated by the University.

The Committee noted that the University already had a partnership with the International Study Centre in which the latter delivered an international foundation year programme which provided a progression route into undergraduate programmes at the University. The link was managed through an established governance structure and the majority of the

policies and procedures operated for the international foundation year were in line with the requirements of the University's Senate Regulations.

The Committee noted that the proposal to establish a validated programme was a significant expansion of the relationship with the International Study Centre and therefore carried a higher risk. However, the Committee also noted that the existing quality assurance structures and the positive outcome of the Centre's recent QAA review mitigated the risk to a significant extent.

The Committee approved the risk assessment for the International Study Centre to proceed to the next stage of the **approval** process.

ii) National Space Centre

The Committee considered a risk assessment which had been compiled with regard to a proposal to establish a collaborative relationship with the National Space Centre (NSC) for the purpose of module delivery on a new MSc in Education and Space Science which also included interim awards and short courses.

The Committee noted that the University had been involved with the creation of the NSC and both of the proposing departments, Education and Physics and Astronomy, had close links with the NSC over a number of years. The NSC also had significant experience in the delivery of CPD activity to teachers. Up to 60 credits of content would be delivered by the NSC however this would be quality assured through University processes.

The Committee **approved** the risk assessment for the National Space Centre to proceed to the next stage of the approval process.

iii) Association of School and College Leaders

The Committee considered a risk assessment which had been compiled to consider a proposal to establish a collaborative relationship with the Association of College and School Leaders (ASCL) for module delivery on a new Postgraduate Certificate in Effective Middle Leadership.

The Committee noted that under the relationship module content would be delivered by ASCL tutors but quality assured and assessed by University of Leicester staff. The Committee noted that ASCL was a large organisation with a good track record of delivering high quality content for a range of organisations, and that it was already working with another Higher Education Provider (University of Ulster) to provide a similar programme. The Committee noted that although the risk assessment indicated that the proposal was medium risk, the School had good experience of similar partnerships and that ASCL was a well-established and reputable provider within the sector.

The Committee **approved** the risk assessment for the Association of College and School Leaders to proceed to the next stage of the approval process.

14/M95 **RETURN OF MARKED WORK**

The Committee considered a paper from the Assessment and Feedback Working Group which set out a number of agreed action points for adoption by Departments in order to support the provision of timely and constructive feedback to students. The Committee noted that these proposals had been approved by Senate at its meeting on 12 November.

The Committee agreed that the document should be circulated to all Heads of Department and College Academic Committee members for immediate implementation.

The Committee also considered revisions to the policy statement on the return of marked work. The Committee noted the amendments that had been incorporated to reflect the provision of feedback on examination performance, **approved** the revised policy and agreed that it should be circulated to academic departments for immediate implementation.

14/M96 **REVIEW OF DISTANCE LEARNING MATERIALS**

The Committee considered a report from the Distance Education Advisory Committee regarding the operation of the policy for the review of distance learning materials. The Committee noted that the operation of the policy to date had shown that the internal scrutiny of learning materials provided a robust assurance of their quality and originality and additional external review may not be necessary.

The Committee **agreed** that the current policy should be reviewed and a revised policy should be developed for consideration at a future meeting.

14/M97 **PROGRAMME APPROVAL REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel which had met on 7th November to consider the introduction of an MA in Migration Studies. The Committee noted the positive tone of the report, and that the programme team were working towards a response to the conditions which had been set by the Panel.

The Committee **approved** the report, and agreed that the Chair should be formally authorised to consider and, if appropriate, approve the programme for introduction following receipt of the programme team's response.

14/M98 **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW**

i) Criminology

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Criminology which had taken place in November 2011.

The Committee welcomed in particular the Department's commitment to increasing the amount of employability provision in the undergraduate curricula, through the pilot of the Talent Academy and the Criminal Justice Fast Track scheme.

The Committee **approved** the final response.

ii) Economics

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Economics which had taken place in November 2012.

The Committee noted that the response addressed a number of the issues raised by the Review Panel, and welcomed the progress made in these areas. However, the Committee also noted that further consideration was required in some of the areas raised and agreed that the Chair should use the response as the basis for further discussions with the Head of the Department of Economics to address these.

iii) Education

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the School of Education which had taken place in March 2012.

The Committee **approved** the final response.

iv) Sociology

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Sociology which had taken place in June 2013.

The Committee in particular welcomed the considered approach that the Department had taken to the review of assessment methods and loading at undergraduate level, and encouraged the Department to undertake a similar review at postgraduate level.

The Committee **approved** the final response

v) Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning, which had taken place in November 2012.

The Committee **approved** the final response.

14/M99 **EUROPEAN JOINT MASTERS PROGRAMME**

This item was deferred to a future meeting. The Committee agreed that given the holiday period, should action be required on this issue before the next meeting a sub-Group of the Chair and the Academic Directors of the College would be authorised to act upon the Committee's behalf.

14/M100 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group which had taken place on 6 November 2014.

14/M101 **LIBRARY FINES POLICY**

The Committee considered a report from the University Library detailing proposals to amend the Library fines policy to only charge fines on overdue texts when the text had been requested by another user.

The Committee noted that it had considered and approved the proposal in principle at a previous meeting (14/M57 refers), however it had been subject to separate approval through the University planning round in light of the financial implications of reduced income from fines. The Committee noted that these had now been approved, and itself **approved** the remaining recommendations in the report.

14/M102 **HEFCE UPDATE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Committee received for information a letter from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) regarding future developments in UK quality assurance in light of the removal of the student number cap after 2015. The Committee noted in particular a

focus on the revised role of the external examiner, comparative approaches to quality assessment and the arrangements in place for the swift informal and formal processes for the resolution of student complaints. The Committee noted that in considering the latter it would be essential to take account of the requirements of the OIA Good Practice Framework once it was published.

14/M103 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of a meeting of the Equal Opportunities Committee which had taken place on 9 October 2014.

14/M104 MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS) AND FUTURELEARN

The Committee considered a paper which outlined the progress of the two pilot MOOCs which the University was delivering through the Futurelearn platform, the impact of the work to date, and the final stage of the pilot phase.

The Committee noted that the two current MOOCs, England in the time of Richard III and Forensic Science and the Criminal Justice System, had attracted over 40,000 registrations. The pilot had also provided significant amounts of data through the use of learning analytics which had informed the development of two further MOOCs in Mathematics and Museum Studies while also feeding through into the design of degree programmes. The report also indicated significant potential to utilise the skills developed in terms of high quality media and teaching quality to inform academic practice more widely within the institution.

The Committee noted that the MOOC Review Group would present a full summary analysis of the impact of the MOOC pilot in summer 2015.

Duration of meeting: Two hours