

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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

Present:

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Professor S Law, Dr D Luckett and Dr T Oliviera

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

14/M7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

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

14/M8 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M4 the Committee noted that the Academic Registrar and the Dean of Distance Education were working with the International Office to categorise the precise level of support provided by each of the University's respective educational delivery partners.

Arising from M5 the Committee noted that follow-up meetings had taken place with the Department of Economics in which additional information had been provided regarding the research profile of Lingnan University and the nature of the collaborative relationship that was being proposed, which fell into a lower risk category than originally described. The Chair reported that on the basis of these discussions she had taken action on behalf of the Committee to **approve** Lingnan University as an appropriate partner.

14/M9 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair noted that the start of the May meeting of the Committee would be moved to 2:30pm. The Chair also reported that the University Teaching Fellowship Scheme for 2014 had been launched, and encouraged members to publicise this to colleagues. The Chair finally reported that she would shortly be establishing a Public Information Steering Group which would bring together representatives from the Colleges, the Students' Union, the Library, IT Services and the Division of External Relations in order to improve the management of the University's many streams of public information.

14/M10 AMENDMENTS TO SENATE REGULATION 7

The Committee considered feedback from colleges, academic departments and other central services in relation to the draft revised regulations governing the assessment of taught programmes. The revised regulations along with two consultation questions had been circulated widely within the University for consideration. The Committee noted that a number of departments had welcomed the revisions, whilst further feedback had been provided on a range of points.

The Committee considered responses to the first consultation question on whether students should be permitted to re-take an assessment in the event of mitigating circumstances, regardless of whether they had achieved a pass mark. Feedback from departments indicated general sympathy with the principle, but raised a number of practical and logistical issues with the implementation of such a policy. The Committee also noted that this could potentially encourage speculative submissions of mitigation. After detailed consideration the Committee agreed not to alter the current policy that students would not be permitted to re-take any assessment that had been passed, even in the event of mitigating circumstances. However, the Committee noted that a group was considering the introduction of a 'fit to sit' policy at University level. If such a policy was introduced students who attempted an assessment would be declaring themselves fit to undertake it, meaning that evidence of mitigation would not be accepted should they fail.

The Committee considered the responses to the second consultation question, which had sought feedback from departments on whether there should be borderline categories within the schemes of assessment and, if so, what criteria should be considered for promotion to a higher classification. Feedback from academic departments and external examiners on this point was varied, however the majority of internal feedback supported the use of borderline categories. On the basis of the feedback provided the Committee agreed that borderline categories should be maintained at undergraduate level, however the thresholds and criteria used for promotion should be reconsidered, and aligned with the introduction of borderline criteria at taught postgraduate level. The Committee noted that the Working Group of the APC would be reviewing Senate Regulations 5 and 6 as part of the ongoing rolling review of regulations, and that the issue of borderlines would be considered at this point.

The Committee considered the feedback on the wider regulations. The Committee considered the role of decimal places within the calculation of component, module and credit weighted average marks, and agreed that the latter should be expressed as an integer, whilst the remaining elements should be expressed to two decimal places, in order to reduce rounding errors. The Committee also agreed that a clearer statement should be incorporated with regard to the University's expectation that all summative work which contributed to a student's degree classification should be subject to a system of moderation by an internal examiner. The Committee also agreed a number of minor typographical amendments to clarify sections of the regulations.

Subject to these minor amendments the Committee **approved** the revised regulations and noted that these, along with proposals for the timing of their implementation, would be presented to the meeting of Senate on 12 March 2014 for consideration.

Following this, the Committee noted that the feedback from departments demonstrated a further need for additional training and guidance in the operation of the regulations.

14/M11 **REPORT ON EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS FOR TAUGHT UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Academic Directors of the Colleges which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for undergraduate 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 (M10 refers).

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 that in response to comments from External Examiners a team led by the Academic Registrar was gathering information on the current marking and moderation practices across departments to identify good practice and develop University level guidance on the expectations for these processes. The Committee also noted that in response to comments from External Examiners a group including the Academic Registrar and the Director of the Academic Practice Service was developing further guidance for Chairs of Boards of Examiners in order to better support the effective operation of the assessments and award process. Such guidance could potentially be incorporated into a revised training programme for Heads of Department in the longer term.

The Committee noted comments from External Examiners regarding the revised form and the structure of the feedback that they were asked to provide on the quality and standards of the programmes that they were examining. The Committee noted that the comments had been fed back to the Quality Office and that proposed amendments to the form would be presented for consideration by the Committee later in the academic year. The Committee also noted a range of feedback from External Examiners regarding the role of borderline categories within the taught schemes of assessment. The Committee noted that this had been addressed within the review of Senate Regulation 7 (M10 refers).

14/M12 **PROPOSAL FOR A SPLIT-SITE PHD WITH NANTONG UNIVERSITY**

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a collaborative relationship with Nantong University in China, for the provision of split-site PhDs. The Committee noted that under the proposed scheme students would spend a period of time in both institutions, however would remain a registered University of Leicester student subject to the University's processes for supervision and monitoring throughout the whole programme. The Committee noted that the academic case for the collaboration had been considered in detail and endorsed by the Postgraduate Research Policy Committee.

The Committee considered the risk assessment that had been conducted in relation to the proposed relationship. The assessment had returned a relatively high risk score, however this was in part due to the fact that the partner was an overseas institution which does not currently award doctoral degrees. The Committee noted that as this was entirely the

University of Leicester's award and the students would be subject to the University's processes throughout the risk associated with these factors was mitigated. On this basis the Committee **approved** the proposed collaboration. The Committee noted however that it would be helpful to include an audit section within the risk assessment template to allow the approving body to add comments, where appropriate, outlining how risk associated with the programme would be mitigated.

14/M13 DISPENSATION FROM REGULATIONS

The Committee considered a request for a dispensation from regulations for Scheme B of the Intercalated BSc Programme.

The Committee noted that the programme team was requesting dispensation from elements of Senate Regulation 7 governing the assessment of taught programmes, specifically SR7.94 and 7.95 relating to the late submission of coursework. The Committee noted that Scheme B of the IBSc constituted a single year-long research project. The programme team requested that, in light of this, Mitigating Circumstances Panels be permitted to set a revised date for submission in the event of mitigating circumstances, in order to provide greater structure for students.

The Committee noted that this policy was in line with the proposed amendments to regulations discussed under M10, and therefore **approved** the dispensation from the current regulations.

14/M14 CHAIR'S ACTION

The Committee noted that the Chair had taken action on behalf of the Committee to **approve** a dispensation from the standard Scheme of Assessment for the recently approved Scheme C of the Intercalated BSc, in order to allow the degree to be classified on the basis of credit weighted average alone.

The Committee also noted that the Chair had taken action on behalf of the Committee to **approve** revised entry criteria for taught postgraduate programmes in the Department of Museum Studies.

Duration of meeting: Two hours and fifteen minutes