

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
19 January 2016**

Present:

Professor J Scott (Chair)	
Professor Cashmore	Dr F Deepwell
Dr R Dickinson	Ms T Dodman
Ms L Freeman	Mr G Green
Dr C Jarvis	Ms L Masterman
Dr B Norman	Dr R Parry
Ms L Patrick	Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Mr A Moseley and Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Ms R Holland, Dr D Luckett and Ms C Taylor

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

16/M1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

16/M2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015.

The Committee noted that M125 should be amended to note that a Student Communications Officer was due to be appointed shortly.

Subject to the above and minor typographical amendments the Committee **approved** the minutes as a correct record.

16/M3 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M118 the Committee noted that the targets referred to for percentage of staff holding teaching qualifications by the end of the year were global institutional targets and it was anticipated that there would be some variation at departmental level reflecting the differing proportions of research only staff. It was further noted that obtaining a teaching qualification such as fellowship of the HEA was now a condition in new academic staff contracts in order to successfully complete probation.

Arising from M119 the Chair reported that the Assessment and Feedback Working Group would be taking forwards the development of the module specification skills matrix.

Arising from M122 the Committee noted that the University Leadership Team had approved the Lecture Capture Policy subject to minor amendment. The final policy would be circulated for discussion by College Academic Committees.

Arising from M121 the Chair reported that he had submitted the University's response to the consultation questions arising from the Green Paper entitled *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. It was noted that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills had received a large number of responses from across the sector regarding the proposals in the paper.

16/M4 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair welcomed Dr Frances Deepwell, newly appointed Director of the Leicester Learning Institute, to her first meeting of the Committee.

The Chair noted that the QAA Higher Education Review of the University was taking place in the week commencing 1 February and would last 4 days. The final requested documentation was due to be submitted on 22 January and the identification of staff and students to attend Panel session was underway.

The Chair reported that the National Student Survey for 2016 would open for final year students shortly. The Committee noted that there would be a campaign to encourage student responses and departments should seek to remind students to complete the survey in order to maximise response rates.

The Chair reported that he had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve the nomination of the following External Examiner:

Professor Sana Salous, University of Durham

Period of Office: September 2015 to November 2019

Programme(s): MSc Advanced Electrical and Electronic Engineering,
MSc Advanced Electrical and Electronic Engineering,
MSc Advanced Engineering, MSc Advanced Materials Engineering,
MSc Advanced Mechanical Engineering,
MSc Embedded Systems and Control Engineering,
MSc Information and Communication Engineering,
MSc Electrical and Electronic Engineering with Management,
MSc Advanced Engineering with Management
and MSc Mechanical Engineering with Management
(including 'with industry' variants of all of the above)

16/M5 PATHWAYS UPDATE

a) Approval of Pathways

The Committee considered the report of a Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 12 November 2015 to consider the introduction of the Major Pathways in History of Art and Film and Visual Arts. The Committee approved the report and approved the pathways for introduction in the 2016/17 academic year.

b) Pathways update

Dr Parry reported that following the UCAS deadline in mid-January nearly 500 applications had been received covering 210 unique major/minor pathway combinations.

The Committee noted that the Pathways Steering Group was due to meet shortly and would consider the application data in detail in order to inform recommendations to the

relevant Colleges regarding which individual pathways or combinations should be withdrawn for 2016/17 and which should remain available for applications in the UCAS Extra and clearing processes. There would be a further consideration of conversion rates in May 2016 which would inform further decisions regarding the range of Pathways to be delivered in 2016/17.

Dr Parry noted that work was ongoing with departments that offered existing joint degrees to establish how these might integrate with the overall Pathways offer. It was also noted that the Pathways Steering Group would be considering a range of other issues regarding the implementation of pathways including the introduction of selected new pathways for 2017/18 in the Department of Geography and a new potential minor in Enterprise with Deloitte. The Committee welcomed the developments but agreed that there would need to be consultation with departments already offering pathways to ensure that the University's provision in the area of Enterprise remained coherent.

16/M6 **MODULE WEIGHTINGS AND CREDIT HOURS**

The Committee considered a paper which outlined the breadth and scope of the project to harmonise module weightings within the institution and to increase student workload hours. The paper identified a number of considerations with regard to the organisation, governance and scope of the major change project. The Committee undertook a detailed consideration of the points raised in the report.

The Committee noted that the University Leadership Team had approved term dates for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years and these would be published shortly. The Committee considered the timing of the re-assessment period which currently took place in the first week of September. It was noted that bringing the re-assessment period forward would have a number of benefits. These included re-assessments taking place closer to the original teaching, allowing students to undertake paid employment up until the start of term, and allowing additional time for students to complete the academic appeals process ahead of the start of the new academic year. The Committee noted that this may impact upon the structure of research and other staff activities during the summer, however agreed that the benefits for students were substantial and therefore agreed that from 2017/18 the re-sit period should take place in the last week in July or the first week in August.

The Committee considered the scope of the major change programme. It was noted that the movement to a 15/30 credit structure and 10 hours per credit would ultimately be implemented for all taught provision. However, there were a number of factors relating to the timing of the changes which would require further consideration. In order to meet its obligations under the Consumer Rights Act, the University would not be altering the credit or workload hour structure for third or fourth year undergraduate students in 2017/18. The amendments to the third and fourth years of programmes could be submitted and considered through the major change approval process due to commence shortly and would be phased in for 2018/19. The Committee considered the merits of a fully phased approach over the course of several academic years. However, the Committee agreed that the benefits for new and returning second year students arising from a revised and refreshed curriculum in 2017/18 were substantial, and this coupled with the need to ensure adherence to sector benchmarks around workload hours represented an overall enhancement of the student learning experience, therefore justifying introduction in 2017/18.

The Committee considered the timing and scope of changes at taught postgraduate level and for distance learning programmes. It was noted that all programmes would introduce the new structure of credit hours as outlined above although there may be some circumstances under which moving to a 15/30 credit structure immediately may not be appropriate. The Committee noted in particular that distance learning programmes which used substantial hard copy teaching materials could not be converted to a new structure without significant resource implications. The Committee agreed that in such circumstances, and where the modules in question were not used outside of the programmes or departments in question, requests to defer structural changes could be considered on a case by case basis.

The Committee considered a range of additional themes which were aligned to but not directly within the scope of the major change project as articulated. The Committee agreed that the departmental level reviews of provision would consider a range of factors, including where it was appropriate to increase contact time at module level, or providing a justification for where this was not proposed. The Committee agreed that there would be a requirement for all departments to consider their assessment strategies in detail as part of the curriculum review, with an emphasis upon reducing the overall assessment load and the proportion of written examinations, particularly those in the January assessment period. The Committee agreed that this would be tested through the approval process, which would also seek to ensure clearer consistency in assessment loading across the University. This departmental level review of assessment would also be required to address the use of alternative re-assessments where appropriate. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for detailed guidance on these expectations and how they may be incorporated into departmental curriculum reviews to be drafted.

The Committee considered and approved the proposals articulated in the paper for the governance of the major changes which included the establishment of a Steering Group, the identification of academic and Professional Service leads for the project, and several specific streams of work.

16/M7 **A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR 2016-2020**

The Committee considered the final report from a sub Group of the Task and Finish Group for Distance Learning which had specifically considered the current University VLE and how University provision in this regard could be enhanced.

The Group had undertaken a wide ranging review of current VLE use and proposed a number of options for how this could be developed, which included potentially exploring alternative systems of delivery. The Group had proposed the establishment of a further more targeted Working Group to consider the options identified and undertake relevant evaluation and costing exercises with a view to recommending a final course of action.

The Committee approved the creation of the new Group, and agreed that the membership should be expanded to include external participation from a relevant learning technology specialist. It was noted that an initial timeframe for recommendations had been set for Easter 2016, however the Committee agreed that given the extent of research that would be required in order to evaluate and prepare a business case for alternative provision, the Group should not be bound by the timescale as stated.

16/M8 REVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a Working Group to review the current English Language requirements articulated in Senate Regulation 1 and Senate Regulation 9 in order to ensure that these remained appropriate and to address points raised by individual departments regarding the level of English Language required for entry onto specific programmes.

The Committee approved the establishment of the Working Group, subject to the addition to the membership of colleagues from Marketing and Communications.

16/M9 REVIEW OF TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

The Committee received the interim report from the Task and Finish Group that was considering taught postgraduate provision within the University. The Committee noted that the report was wide ranging and explored a number of factors impacting upon the University's current and potential future portfolio of campus-based taught postgraduate programmes.

The Committee thanked Dr Anna Claydon, Chair of the Group, for the very helpful expression of the current position and possible opportunities for academic and procedural enhancements. It was noted that there was be a final report due in February 2016 which would reflect a number of actions already agreed with respect to University portfolio management. It was also agreed that the final report would benefit from clear prioritisation of the proposals for action.

16/M10 AMENDMENT TO SENATE REGULATIONS

The Committee considered a proposal to add a requirement into Senate Regulations that it is the responsibility of all students who require ATAS clearance to obtain this before they commence their studies. The Committee noted that this was essential in order to ensure that the University met its obligations under its license to sponsor international student visas.

The Committee approved the addition with immediate effect, noting that it was best placed in Senate Regulation 2 governing admission and registration.

16/M11 PROGRAMME APPROVAL PANELS

The Committee considered the reports of the following Programme Approval Panels

- a) Revisions to UG provision in Criminology, Major and Minor in Criminology

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 1 December 2015 to consider major amendments to the undergraduate provision in Criminology, including the introduction of a BSc Criminology and Major/Minor Pathways in Criminology. The Committee noted that the report had set a number of conditions regarding the assessment strategy for the programmes which were under further consideration between the Panel and the Department. The Committee agreed that pending satisfactory resolution of these issues, the Chair of the Panel should be authorised to approve final introduction of new provision for 2017/18.

b) MSc Marketing suite of programmes

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 6 November 2015 to consider the introduction of the new suite of MSc programmes in Marketing which included MSc International Marketing, MSc Marketing for Places and Tourism and MSc Marketing for the Creative Industries. The Committee noted that this represented an expansion and enhancement of the current offer and welcomed the developments. The Committee approved the report and authorised the Chair of the Panel to approve the programmes for introduction in 2017/18 subject to a satisfactory response to the conditions set.

c) MSc Bioinformatics and Molecular Genetics

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 6 November 2015 to consider the introduction of the MSc Bioinformatics and Molecular Genetics. The Committee noted that this brought together two existing areas of strength within the College and University, and welcomed the development. The Committee approved the report and authorised the Chair of the Panel to approve the programme for introduction in 2016/17 subject to a satisfactory response to the conditions set.

16/M12 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group that took place on 11 November 2015.

16/M13 **ISC ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the ISC Academic Management Board that took place on 27 November 2015.

16/M14 **STUDENT MISCONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR**

The Academic Registrar reported that a Working Group had been established to review the current processes for consideration of student misconduct and behaviour.

16/M15 **COURSE REPRESENTATIVES**

The Academic Registrar reported that a Working Group had been established in conjunction with the Students' Union to review the process and timescales for the election and briefing of course representatives, and information sharing in this regard between the University and the Union.

DURATION OF MEETING: Two hours and Forty minutes