

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
14 July 2017**

Present:

Professor J Scott (Chair)	
Ms A Abdulla	Dr A Cameron
Dr E Clapp	Dr R Dickinson
Ms L Freeman	Mr G Green
Dr C Hewitt	Dr C Jarvis
Dr D Lockett	Mrs L Masterman
Ms A Moran	Professor B Norman
Dr R Parry	Ms C Taylor
Professor G Wynn	

In attendance: Mr N Cooper (for M113), Ms G McIntyre (for M114) and Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor H Atkinson

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

17/M109 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

17/M110 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting that had taken place on 16 June 2017.

The Committee **approved** the minutes as an accurate record.

17/M111 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M95 the Committee noted that the revised Lecture Capture Policy had been reviewed by the University legal team and that only minor amendments were required for the purposes of clarity. The revised policy would be signed off by Chair's action shortly.

Arising from M96 the Chair reported that following consideration by a sub group of the Committee he had taken Chair's Action to approve a new statement on data protection and the use of student data, to ensure compliance with new statutory requirements.

Arising from M98 the Committee noted that the revised Mitigating Circumstances Policy and revisions to Senate Regulation 7 had been approved at the recent meeting of Senate. Amendments to Senate Regulation 8 arising from M101 had also been approved.

Arising from M103(d) the Committee noted that following consultation with the QAA it had been confirmed that the Juris Doctor was not a recognised award at level 6 of the FHEQ and that the University would not be pursuing the creation of this award unless that position changed.

17/M112 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair reported:

- a) That a very successful workshop for academic staff had been run with school teachers from King Edward VII School to highlight changes in the GCSE and A-Level curricula, and how these might impact upon the characteristics of future intakes.
- b) The 2017 UCAS end of cycle report had been published. Although this showed an overall reduction in applications the data demonstrated a more complex landscape with major reductions in EU and mature student applications, but an increase in applications among 18 year olds.
- c) The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and UNITE had produced a report which analysed the perception that pre-university students had of what their experience at University would be like. This demonstrated some significant disparities in areas such as teaching contact time and preparation for living with others away from home.
- d) The University Executive Board had undertaken a review of various ranking and league table mechanisms. These included a review of the Guardian League table with particular reference to value added. The Committee noted that this would be an item on all upcoming academic departmental staff meetings. It was also noted that there appeared to be variation across departments in the manner in which the role of teaching was considered within the Performance and Development Discussion (PDD) process. The Committee noted that work had already been undertaken between the Chair and the Academic Directors, and that it would be helpful if a paper could be presented in the new academic year to propose some standard indicators for how teaching might be reflected in the PDD process.

17/M113 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered a paper on Risk Management. The paper noted that as part of the expansion of the responsibility and oversight for risk within the University individual sections of both the Corporate and the Strategic Risk Registers were being presented to relevant Committees for consideration. The report highlighted one risk from the Strategic Register and a further five from the Corporate Register which aligned with the remit of the Committee and were owned by the PVC (Student Experience).

The Committee agreed that the list was appropriate but made a number of comments in relation to the rating of individual risks or the explanation of current controls in order to feed into the next iteration of the Register. In particular, the Committee recommended considering whether a risk relating to ensuring CMA compliance should be added to the Strategic Register. The Committee also recommended considering whether the strategic level risk associated with maintaining or enhancing the University's TEF outcome should make specific reference to student outcomes.

The Committee noted that the sub-set of University risks would be presented for consideration by the Committee on a termly basis going forwards.

17/M114 STUDENT SUPPORT STRATEGY

The Committee received a summary of the Student Support Strategy for 2017/18. The item was introduced by the Head of the Student Support Service.

The core of the strategy was developing a more holistic supportive environment to support students in their transition to and day-to-day life within University. At present the Service was primarily engaged with supporting students who actively sought help, often at the point of crisis. Through a more pro-active approach, in addition to the specialist 1-1 support already provided, it was intended that the new strategy would allow the Student Support Service to embed student wellbeing into every day activity for all students on the University. There were a series of enabling projects, notably in the area of data collection and analysis, to support the implementation of the strategy.

The Committee welcomed the direction of travel for the strategy. It was noted that student perceptions of their transition to University started in school and expectations set at this time could influence a student's approach to later University life. The Student Support Service recognised this issue and was working with the Widening Participation Team to engage with Schools to better understand this aspect of transition. The Committee also noted that the language of the document focussed in places around the needs of young, full time campus-based students and it was important to ensure that the needs of distance learning and mature students were also addressed through the development of the strategy. The Committee agreed that the final strategy document needed to reference the different communities of students within the University and how their differing needs might be met.

The Committee supported the broad framework set out in the paper and, subject to the above comments, endorsed this for further development.

17/M115 **CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION**

The Committee received an update on the Curriculum Transformation Project from Professor Wynn.

A communication would be going out to all returning students shortly with information regarding the new academic year structure and the amendment to credit hours for 2017/18. The merged Marketing and Student Communications Task and Finish Group would be managing the process of consultation with students.

The Committee noted the submissions that had been received and were progressing through the approval process. The project team was working on the roll out schedule for the transformation of distance learning provision. The Committee also noted the development of further KPIs in relation to the project, in particular a metric to demonstrate the increased efficiency of programmes post-transformation.

17/M116 **DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The Committee considered a paper outlining the development of the University's vision for the Digital Learning Environment (DLE). The Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Digital) gave a presentation on the core elements of the proposals.

The paper and presentation demonstrated how the DLE sat over several of the strands within the wider strategic development of the digital campus. The report highlighted that it was critical to view the DLE as consisting of multiple varied elements, including the core learning space, assessment tools, media archive, learner analytics, lecture capture and a number of related projects. A core principle of the DLE was that although the full range

of elements should be viewed as part of a single environment, it was not necessarily the case that they should be provided by a single system.

Detailed work had been undertaken to identify the University's requirements for the core elements of the DLE, and it had originally been proposed that the procurement process for this should commence in 2017/18. The Committee noted that the University Leadership Team had approved a proposal that the procurement process should be deferred for a year. During this period the focus would be upon the enrichment of Blackboard provision, particularly utilising aspects of existing functionality which had not been fully exploited previously.

The Committee noted in particular that the development was aligning with the timescale for Curriculum Transformation and several major deliverables from the Student Lifecycle Change Project. This was intended to ensure that the additional functionality within Blackboard would be rolled out in a manner that would align with the development of the materials to support the transformed curricula due to commence in 2018/19.

The Committee noted that an initial tranche of funding had been approved and that additional funding may be available through future rounds. Although the Committee welcomed the initial funding it noted that a commitment to the ongoing resourcing of the project would be essential to ensure that it could deliver to its full potential. As this represented a major strategic investment theme it was also proposed that an item on the development of the DLE should be presented to the University Council.

The Committee noted that a key enabling factor for the enrichment of the current Blackboard platform would be working with staff and students in academic departments to champion the opportunities for change and support colleagues through this process.

The Committee thanked Dr Parry and the LLI for all of the work to date. The Committee agreed that regular reporting on the development of the DLE should be an item on the agenda for future meetings.

17/M117 **ASSESSMENT STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a final draft of the Assessment Strategy and Self Evaluation Tool. The Committee noted that the draft had been out for consultation and only very minor amendments had been proposed. These had been included where appropriate. The Committee approved the Strategy for introduction and noted that this would be reported to the next meeting of Senate. The Committee recorded its thanks to Dr Hewitt and the Assessment and Feedback Group for the development of the Strategy.

As part of implementation, Student-Staff focus groups would be used to evaluate local engagement with the strategy. The Committee considered how the principles set out in the strategy might be embedded within various existing mechanisms. The Committee agreed that it would be vital to incorporate these within the programme development process and noted that the Quality Office would be reviewing the documentation over the summer to ensure that this was captured. The Committee also agreed that as part of the periodic review process there should be a requirement to undertake an assessment audit to establish whether programmes were meeting the expectations set out in the strategy. The Committee agreed that the interaction between the strategy and the Annual Developmental Review process should be considered outside of the meeting.

17/M118 SENATE REGULATION 5

The Committee received an update on the review of Senate Regulation 5.

The Committee noted that consultation regarding the revised Regulation was ongoing. A number of departments had commented upon the potential impact of the revised regulations on overall student progression, and a small number of further points of clarification had also been identified. The Committee noted that a modelling exercise would be undertaken to establish what the impact of the new regulations might be on student progression. The Committee also noted that the College of Science and Engineering would be asked to consider and make a recommendations with respect to the respective weightings of levels within integrated masters programmes.

The Committee considered classification borderlines. The Committee noted that the proposed borderline rules were informed by wider practice within the sector, but noted that it would be helpful to supplement the core Regulation with notes of guidance to ensure consistent application across the institution.

The Committee noted that as a result the consideration of a further draft of the revised Regulation would take place in the Autumn term.

17/M119 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK OUTCOME

The Committee noted that the University had achieved a Silver rating in the recent Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. The Committee received a report that the Chair had compiled for the University Leadership Team which provided context for the rankings and proposed a series of actions in the short and medium term.

The Committee noted and supported the recommendation that the University should take a period of time to address the core issues flagged in the institutional metrics, and also to enhance performance in others, before resubmitting to the TEF. The Committee noted that unless there was a significant improvement in the University's metrics, a further submission to the TEF would be unlikely before 2019.

The Committee noted and supported the actions underway, which included a focus on further enhancing assessment and feedback processes, additional analytics to identify students at risk and greater support for them to improve retention rates.

17/M120 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Policy on Attendance at Timetabled Teaching Events. The Deputy Academic Registrar (Student Administration) presented the key elements of the revised policy.

The Committee noted that following the introduction of the new Attendance Monitoring Policy for 2016/17 there had been a number of technical and administrative issues which had impacted upon its effective implementation. Following the first year of operation a number of amendments were proposed to the policy in order to clarify aspects of implementation, provide additional guidance for staff and ensure that the process was more sensitive to the distinction between non-attendance and non-engagement.

The amendments proposed would retain the stepped approach whereby students would be contacted after specified periods of non-attendance. However, the new approach

would provide of more detailed data on patterns of attendance to provide context for individual student cases. The revised policy also clarified the role of Attendance Panels, providing clearer criteria for decision making and a wider range of potential outcomes. It was proposed that appeals against a decision to withdraw a student for non-attendance should also be considered on the same grounds as academic appeals.

The Committee noted that it was not clear how the operation of Attendance Panels aligned with the principles of the new Mitigating Circumstances Policy, and noted that there was the potential to consider an individual expert role for decisions under the Attendance Policy. It was also not immediately clear how the principles of the academic appeal process would apply to decisions taken under this policy and the Committee agreed that that this would require further consideration. The Committee also agreed that it was essential that the stepped approach met the requirements set in the recent UKVI audit.

While welcoming the general recognition of student engagement as being distinct from simply attendance, the Committee agreed that the language in the policy was in places unclear with regard to this issue and that further clarity was required as to how overall engagement would be considered in cases of non-attendance.

The Committee agreed that the draft policy should be reviewed in light of the above feedback and a revised version presented for consideration over the summer. The Chair requested that any further feedback on the draft policy be directed to the Secretary for inclusion in this process.

17/M121 **MAJOR/MINOR REVIEW REPORT**

The Committee considered a report on the student experience in the first year of Major/Minor programmes. Dr Dickinson presented the main elements of the report.

Feedback had been sought from a range of students undertaking Major/Minor combinations and the departments that offered them. The report identified that the majority of students on such combinations felt that they benefitted from this model of study. The report did, however, identify a number of elements of the wider learning experience that were more complex for this group of students.

The Committee noted in particular that there was a need to develop clearer descriptors and shared understanding of key support roles within the process, such as Academic Advisors and Major/Minor Tutors. The Committee noted that a role descriptor had been drafted for these roles and agreed that this should be considered at the next round of College Academic Committees. The Committee noted the range of comments in the report relating to the consistency of provision between departments and how this could impact particularly upon Major/Minor students. The Committee agreed that the support for Major/Minor students should be a standing item on CAC agendas going forwards.

The Committee wished to record its thanks to Fran McKay (Ambitious Futures Graduate) for her work in compiling the report.

17/M122 **APC PANEL VISIT TO DUT, PANJIN CAMPUS**

The Committee considered the report of the Panel that had visited Dalian University of Technology, Panjin Campus (DUT) in June 2017 to follow up on a number of the conditions set via the programme approval process.

The team had worked closely with DUT colleagues to develop a shared understanding of the systems and processes that underpinned the student lifecycle at the two institutions, and this would form the basis of agreed policies in these areas. The Committee noted that there were a small number of areas where further discussion would be required to reach an agreed position, including the timing of re-sits, the level of UoL responsibility for students on modules bearing no UoL credit, and the format of academic appeals.

The Committee noted that detailed scrutiny of these proposals would be undertaken by the Programme Approval Panel.

17/M123 **PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL AND WITHDRAWAL**

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 20 June to consider the introduction of an MA International Media. Gender and Social Justice. The programme team had submitted a response to the conditions set out in the report, and this had been approved by the Panel Chair. The Committee approved the report and **approved** the introduction of the programme from September 2018.

17/M124 **COLLEGE ACADEMIC COMMITTEES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings of the College Academic Committees held on the following dates:

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology, 27 June 2017

College of Science and Engineering, 21 June 2017

17/M125 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

The Committee considered and **approved** the nomination of the following external examiners:

College of Science and Engineering

Department of Geography

Professor Ed Maltby, University of Liverpool

Period of Office: September 2017 to November 2018

Programme(s): MSc Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Centre for American Studies

Dr Andrew Priest, University of Essex

Period of Office: September 2017 to September 2021

Programme(s): BA American Studies (incl Year Abroad variant)

Duration of meeting: Two Hours and Thirty Minutes

CHAIR