

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

**Minutes of a meeting held on**  
**16 February 2017**

**Present:**

Professor J Scott (Chair)

Dr A Cameron	Dr E Clapp
Dr R Dickinson	Mr G Green
Ms N Gretton ( <i>vice Dr F Deepwell</i> )	Dr C Hewitt
Dr D Lockett	Ms L Masterman
Mr A Mitchell	Dr B Norman
Ms C Taylor	Dr G Wynn

Dr R Young

**In attendance:** Mr R Wilcock and Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

**Apologies for absence** were received from Professor H Atkinson, Dr F Deepwell, Ms L Freeman, Dr M Higgins, Ms R Holland and Dr C Jarvis

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

17/M16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

17/M17 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

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

17/M18 **MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M07 the Committee noted that the Academic Registrar was working with the Quality Office and the Security Office to consider the future role of Security Office staff in supporting investigations into allegations of non-academic misconduct.

Arising from M09 the Committee noted that the TEF 2 Provider document had been submitted and the University expected to receive the outcome in May 2017. The Committee noted that work was underway to adapt the TEF submission into a more public facing document available to staff, students and wider audiences.

Arising from M10 the Committee noted the complete membership of the Senate Regulation 5 Review Group, and that the first meeting had taken place and work was underway to develop a draft set of principles for consideration and consultation.

Arising from M06 the Committee noted that a draft Learning Spaces Strategy was due to be submitted to the next meeting, and that the University had received a HEFCE grant of £660,000 to support the development of teaching infrastructure.

17/M19 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair reported that:

- a) The University had received its initial assessment from HEFCE under the new Annual Provider Review (APR) mechanism. The Committee was pleased to note that the HEFCE APR Group had identified no concerns on quality and standards matters, and no concerns regarding financial sustainability, good management and governance matters. The final risk categorisation would take place at the next meeting of the APR Group, however on the basis of the preliminary assessment it was likely that the University would be considered to be 'not at higher risk'.
- b) The National Teaching Fellowships and Collaborative Teaching Award schemes were underway. The Chair and the LLI would be running briefing sessions ahead of the deadline for submission in April.
- c) The National Student Survey was underway. The Committee was pleased to note that the response rate for UoL was currently 52% which was significantly higher than both the equivalent point in the previous year and the sector response rate.
- d) The Consumer and Marketing Authority had mounted a legal challenge against the University of East Anglia under Consumer Rights legislation, regarding late course changes. The Committee noted that the outcome of this would begin to establish case law in this area that would impact upon future University policy. The Committee was pleased to note that in a recent internal audit for CMA compliance the University had received a positive outcome, however there was raised a need to provide a greater level of module information in student offer letters.
- e) The University Portfolio Management Group was developing a new process for reviewing the overall performance of programmes. The process would be based initially upon data gathered through Annual Developmental Review, but with a focus upon programme and module level recruitment and performance data.
- f) He had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve a number of additional Appeal Panel members, as listed under 17/M19 appendix A.

17/M20 **CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION**

- a) Update

The Committee noted that mapping was now completed to roll out the second year of Major and Minor Pathways on a revised credit structure reflecting the multi-phased introduction of Curriculum Transformation. The Committee recorded its particular thanks to the project team for this achievement.

The Committee received examples of the resources that had been developed by the various task and finish groups to support programme teams when transforming their programmes. These included detailed marketing timelines and narrative evaluation documents which allowed programme teams and approval bodies to reflect on the extent to which proposal met the wider aims of the Curriculum Transformation Project.

b) Progression Requirements

The Committee considered a proposal from the Student Development Task and Finish Group of the Curriculum Transformation project regarding student progression. In order to support students in achieving their full potential and enhance their employability it was proposed that all students in year 1 of a campus based, undergraduate degree programme should be required to undertake and pass the Leicester Award (LA) as a pre-requisite for progression to year 2. The Committee noted that those employers surveyed supported the proposal, and that UoL would be the only institution to formally incorporate development and employability activities within the core programme requirements in this manner, potentially making it a unique selling point.

The Committee explored whether it was appropriate to require students to undertake additional work which did not relate directly to their core programme. The team responded that the proposal would see the LA positioned within the core curriculum, rather than an additional task. The programme was also designed to develop transferable skills that would support students in their wider academic development. The Committee noted this response, however agreed that students may not perceive this as integral to the curriculum and that might influence how they approach the LA. The Committee also agreed that it would be critical for students to be able to identify a specific activity outside of their academic activity in order to undertake the reflective work associated with the LA, and students would require support with this.

The Committee noted that given the diversity of the student population, there would be those who did not wish to engage with the LA or who possessed the academic ability to succeed in their programme of study but were unable to succeed in the LA, which could impact on their ability to progress through their academic programme. The team identified the opportunity for an opt-out system. The Committee noted that this would be appropriate in cases of specific learning disabilities, however may not be practical on a case by case basis outside of these circumstances. The Committee noted that it may be possible to consider programme level op-outs where there was clear evidence of the relevant skills being covered elsewhere in the curriculum.

The team highlighted that it was not the intention of the proposal to potentially prevent academically focussed students from progressing if they have failed to engage with or pass the LA. However, it was noted that it would be highly complex to develop a set of criteria which would encourage engagement with the LA while also balancing achievement between the LA and the academic programme when making progression decisions. The Committee noted that in order for this to be a formal progression requirement it would need to be built into Senate Regulations. In light of the points raised above the Committee agreed that there was a need for careful safeguards to be developed in order to articulate clearly what would happen in circumstances where students failed to engage with or pass the LA.

The Committee thanked the project team for the development of the proposal and welcomed the principle intentions to further increase engagement with the LA. However, in light of the issues noted above the Committee agreed that further work was required to articulate how this would be presented to and perceived by students, and also how these proposals would interact with wider progression requirements, and the options that would be available where students did not engage with or pass the Leicester Award element of the curriculum. The Committee agreed that this should be taken up with the Curriculum Transformation Working Group initially and the developed proposals reconsidered

**17/M21 AMENDMENTS TO SENATE REGULATIONS**

The Committee considered a proposed amendment to Senate Regulation 7.83(a) which removed the requirement for the Head of Department to Chair all Boards of Examiners, and instead authorised the relevant Head to delegate this function to an appropriate senior member of academic staff. The Committee noted that this resulted in part from the recent academic restructuring which had seen the creation of several larger Schools containing a broad range of programmes. The Committee noted that a register of approved Examination Board Chairs would be maintained within the Directorate of Academic Services and academic staff would be required to undertake either full or refresher training prior to Chairing a Board.

The Committee agreed that the wording should be revised to reflect that Exam Board Chairs must have undergone training and **approved** the amendment for submission to Senate at its meeting in March 2017. The Committee endorsed the proposal that the amendment be introduced with immediate effect.

The Committee considered proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 8 governing examinations. The first amendment formally reflected the move towards external invigilation as standard and the Committee **approved** this for implementation from August 2017.

The Committee considered amendments to revise the timescale for production of the examination timetable and to extend the period in which examinations sessions could be held to include every day of the week and up to three examination sessions per day. The amendments were designed to ensure that examinations could be accommodated under the new academic year structure. The Committee **approved** the amendment regarding examination timetable publication for implementation from August 2017.

The Committee considered the expansion of the examination schedule. It was noted that the significant increase in capacity would allow the prioritisation of examination sessions and therefore provide a means of mitigating any risk associated with decreased student satisfaction. Curriculum Transformation was seeking to reduce where appropriate the number of traditional examinations and therefore the immediate pressures caused by the amendment to the academic year structure would be reduced in future years. The most likely impact would only be in January 2018 when the delay in curriculum transformation due to the need to comply with the Consumer Rights Act would mean there had not been the anticipated reduction in the number of exams. It was noted that there may be logistical considerations to ensure that students were able to attend examination sessions on a Sunday, and that at present staff were required to be contactable during examination sessions in case of queries arising. The Committee agreed that it would be necessary to conduct an Equalities Impact Assessment in order to consider the impact of this proposed change on staff and students.

The Committee **agreed** that the amendment should be reconsidered once this additional information was available.

**17/M22 SUMMARY REPORT ON UNDERGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Chair and the College Academic Directors which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for undergraduate programmes in the 2015/16 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. Where comments related to departmental level provision reports from the relevant departments indicated that appropriate action was being taken in response. The report identified a small number of issues where further consideration was required.

a) Scheme of Assessment and borderlines

The Committee noted that comments relating to the Scheme of Assessment had been fed into the review of Senate Regulation 5.

b) Anonymous consideration at Boards of Examiners

Although noting the comments, it was agreed that in light of the anonymous marking policies and the format of progression and award decisions it was appropriate to retain current policy in this area.

c) Notice period for External Examiners

The Committee **approved** the addition of a three month notice period for resignation to the terms and conditions of an external examining appointment, for incorporation in appointment letters and the relevant Senate Regulation (7.34).

d) Departmental interactions with External Examiners

The Committee noted that additional guidance would be developed to assist departments in managing their relationships with External Examiners, in terms of provision of appropriate documentation and opportunities to meet with students.

e) Response format

The Committee noted that programme teams and College Academic Committees would be reminded that from 2016/17 responses to External Examining reports should be submitted on the standard template or they would not be accepted.

f) Further clarity around consistency of moderation practices, late penalties and penalties for exceeding word counts

The Committee referred this point to College Academic Committees.

The Committee **noted** that the report and actions would be reported to Senate in March.

## 17/M23 **MODULE EVALUATION**

The Committee considered draft Terms of Reference for an Implementation Board for the Module Evaluation Project.

The Board would be responsible for ensuring the effective and consistent implementation of the revised processes for module evaluation across the institution, and oversee the procurement of a supporting technology solution. The Committee welcomed the development, noting that it was essential to provide colleagues and students with a clear procedure for how module evaluation would operate and feed into wider processes such

as Annual Developmental Review. The Committee noted that an initial pilot phase with a small number of departments would grow to full institutional roll-out for 2018/19. The Committee agreed that HR and Students' Union representation should be added to the membership. Subject to this the Committee **approved** the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Board.

The Committee noted that once the Project Board had completed its work it would need to be clear which body or individual owned the institutional process of module evaluation, and the Academic Registrar agreed to take this issue outside of the meeting.

The Committee considered a document summarising feedback from College Academic Committees with regard to the module evaluation process and draft documentation. College Academic Committees had been supportive of the revised processes, however had raised a number of technical questions relating to how the process would operate for specific types of modules and the format in which the data generated via this process would be presented. The Committee **agreed** to refer these questions to the Project Board for consideration within the implementation plan.

#### 17/M24 **PROGRAMME APPROVAL**

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had considered the introduction of year abroad to the Major in Media. The Committee noted that the addition had been approved by the Panel with no further conditions or recommendations.

The Committee **approved** the addition of the Year Abroad variant to the Major in Media for all current and future students.

#### 17/M25 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received a report of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 12 January 2017.

The Committee noted and **approved** minor amendments to the Group's Terms of Reference to incorporate the reporting line from the Learning Technologies Advisory Group.

#### 17/M26 **REPORTS FROM COLLEGE ACADEMIC COMMITTEES**

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

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology, 18 January 2017

College of Science and Engineering, 25 January 2017

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, 7 February 2017

Arising from the above, the Committee noted the discussion in the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities with relation to the impact upon staff of maintaining the University's 21 day turnaround policy for marked work. The Committee noted the issues raised however also noted that many of these reflected more the operation of local marking and moderation practices within individual Schools and that there were opportunities for efficiencies in this area.

17/M27 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

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

College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology

**Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation**

Professor Donald Fraser, Cardiff University

Period of Office: September 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): MSc Chronic Disease and Immunity

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

**School of Arts**

Dr Hannah Crawforth, Kings College London

Period of Office: September 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): MA English Studies

Dr Saihong Li, University of Sterling

Period of Office: January 2017 to September 2020

Programme(s): BA Translation and Interpreting,  
BA Modern Languages and Translation,  
BA Modern Languages with Translation

The Committee **noted** that Chair's action had been taken to approve the following external examiner appointments:

College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities

**School of Business**

Dr Zulfiqar Shah, University of Warwick Business School

Period of Office: September 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): Master of Business Administration

**Leicester Law School**

Professor Bill Bowring, Birkbeck University of London

Period of Office: September 2016 to November 2017 (exceptional extension for fifth year)

Programme(s): LLM Law (campus-based)

DURATION OF MEETING: 2 Hours

**Additional Appeal Panel Members**

**Dr Mervyn Roy** – Department of Physics and Astronomy.

**Dr Caroline Beardsmore** – Department of Immunity, Infection and Inflammation

**Dr Laura Mongan** and **Dr Diane Hudman** – Department of Medical Education

**Dr Catherine Vial** and **Dr Sue Shackleton** – Department of Molecular and Cell Biology

**Professor Ruth Luthi-Carter** and **Dr Tessa Webb** – Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour

**Professor Elizabeth Wicks** and **Dr Pascale Lorber** – Leicester Law School