

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
18 May 2016**

Present:

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

In attendance: Mr P Horspool (for item M46), Dr Chris Willmott (for item M47), Mr A Mitchell and Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor A Cashmore, Professor S Hainsworth and Dr D Lockett

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

16/M45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

16/M46 ENDORSEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING OVERSEAS

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a model whereby the University's English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) would review and potentially endorse the English language teaching provision of overseas institutions.

The Committee considered the principle of endorsement. Under the model proposed potential partners would be evaluated against a series of quality assurance and content criteria defined by ELTU and approved by the Committee, to establish the level and standard of provision. If the University was satisfied with the provision the institution in question would be permitted to display the University logo and confirm in their marketing materials that the academic standard and quality of their provision had been endorsed by an established institution. The specific use of the University's brand would be subject to approval by the Division of External Relations. The endorsement would not carry any credit or award of the University and would not entitle students to preferential entry or any advanced standing within the University of Leicester.

The Committee considered the process for the approval of new partners and for ongoing quality assurance. It was noted that there was a high hurdle to achieve endorsement with detailed documentary requirements, a programme of visits and a template contract governing the relationship. Ongoing quality assurance would be achieved through annual review and the Committee noted that the contract would allow for the removal of endorsement should the partner fail to maintain the standards required.

The Committee noted that an initial visit had been undertaken to a potential partner, the Arab Academic for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT), Egypt. The Committee noted that this was an appropriate institution with which to pilot the proposed endorsement model as the initial visit had demonstrated a high level of compliance with ELTU requirements, and progress was being made towards the conditions set.

The Group welcomed the development, noting that it potentially represented a model which could be expanded to include additional partners and represent an income stream for the institution. The Committee agreed that in addition to the quality assurance measures listed, partners should be required to comment upon and develop their professional development opportunities for staff as part of the endorsement process.

Subject to the minor amendments outlined above, the Committee approved the principle of endorsement and the proposals for the approval and monitoring of partners' provision. The Committee also approved AASTMT as a partner under this model, subject to satisfactory completion of the requirements set by ELTU. The Committee noted that following approval of the model of endorsement, future partners would be considered on an individual basis by the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group, and an annual report on the operation of the partnership should also be submitted to that Group.

16/M47 **PERSONAL TUTORING WORKING GROUP**

The Committee considered the report of the Working Group that had been considering amendments to the Personal Tutoring System, along with proposed revisions to the Code of Practice for the Personal Support of Students and other supporting documentation. The Committee noted that the consistent implementation of the Code of Practice had been identified as a recommendation in the Higher Education Review. It was noted that the review of the Code had already been underway at the time of the Review and that its outcome would be reported in the upcoming Action Plan.

The Committee noted that the review had been undertaken by a Working Group constituted of both staff and students. The Group's report made a series of recommendations for revisions to the Personal Tutor System for implementation from September 2016. The recommendations fell into the following key areas:

a) Senior Tutor

It was proposed that a new role of Senior Tutor be created. There would be approximately three roles per college, designed to monitor the implementation of the Code, analyse the output of monitoring to identify enhancements and provide support to tutors. The Committee noted personal tutors would receive training in signposting students to appropriate resources (M47 b) and c) refer) and therefore the role of Senior Tutor was not intended to provide additional pastoral support to students, unless it was as a result of a breakdown between tutor and tutee, or providing advice on the overall personal tutoring process. The Committee agreed that the relevant section of the Code of Practice should be amended to reflect this.

b) Training

It was proposed that online personal tutoring training should be developed and made mandatory for all staff undertaking personal tutoring roles. There would also in due

course be specific training on crisis support. Training would be developed by the LLI and it was the intention for all staff to have completed this by December 2016. The Committee noted that this was an ambitious target but agreed that this was desirable.

c) Signposting

It was proposed that an infographic and other web based resources be designed for staff to signpost students to the appropriate support service for their needs. The Committee considered a draft infographic which was based on best practice from other institutions, and noted that an equivalent document would be available for students. The Committee welcomed the documentation, noting that its final format may vary slightly following input from the Design Team.

d) Frequency

It was proposed that a minimum of four personal tutor meeting sessions take place per year. The Committee agreed that this was an appropriate number, and further agreed that this was a threshold requirement that departments may choose to exceed.

The Committee considered the proposal to encourage all departments to have a personal tutoring week which was free of contact time. The Committee strongly supported this proposal and agreed that the language should be amended to make clear that departments should have such provision, rather than it being optional.

e) Monitoring

It was proposed that a simple web based form be introduced to log all personal tutoring meetings, to serve as a record for the ongoing support of students, and also to allow for analysis of the successful implementation of the Code. The Committee noted that this could present an additional workload for staff, however the team reported that a pilot had been undertaken in the School of Biological Sciences which indicated that it did not represent a significant burden.

f) Workload and Recognition

It was proposed that the workload associated with acting as a personal tutor should be formally recognised and accounted for within workload allocation models. The Committee supported this fully and agreed that it should be referred to the groups reviewing workload allocation.

The Committee noted that there was no reference to the maximum number of tutees that a tutor may have, however the team noted that this was intentional in recognition of the differing circumstances between campus based and distance learning delivery. The Committee welcomed the recommendations in the document regarding the support for staff wellbeing within the personal tutoring process.

Subject to the amendments outlined above and additional minor points to be compiled by the Secretary, the Committee approved the proposals and the revisions to the Code of Practice for the Personal Support of Students, for implementation from the start of the 2016/17 academic year. The Committee agreed that the approved proposals should be presented to Senate for information, and to engage Heads of Department with both the changes and their important role in terms of their implementation.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the Group, in particular Dr Willmott and Ms Patrick, for the comprehensive review of the current system and the considered recommendations for action.

16/M48 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2016.

The Committee **approved** the minutes as a correct record subject to the minor amendment to Committee dates in M41.

16/M49 **MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M32 the Committee noted that a revised module specification for 2017/18 onwards had been considered and approved by Chair's action.

16/M50 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair noted that the report of the Higher Education Review had been published. The University would submit an action plan detailing responses to the recommendations in the report in early July.

The Chair reported that following the publication of the white paper entitled 'Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice', the University qualified for TEF 1 status 'Meets Expectations'. Technical consultations were underway with regard to the TEF, 2 year degrees, student mobility and graduate outcomes and the Chair was co-ordinating the process of responding to these.

The Chair reported that HEFCE had announced its preferred bidders for the six tenders outlined under the new framework for quality assessment. The QAA had been named for four of these, with the HEA named as the preferred bidder for degree standards, and the Leadership Foundation preferred for institutional governance. The Committee noted however that following the creation of the Office for Students there would likely be a further review of processes in this area.

The Chair reported that UUK had circulated a self-evaluation checklist with regard to compliance with the Consumer Rights Act (2015). This had been completed and the outcome would be circulated to the Committee and reported to the University Executive Board (UEB) The Chair also reported that the CMA Working Group had produced guidelines for staff in terms course changes within the context of the Consumer Rights Act, and these would be circulated to College Academic Committees.

16/M51 **CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION PROJECT**

Dr Wynn reported that the Terms of Reference and Scope documents approved at the last meeting of the Committee had been compiled with a range of other resources to support the project. These included Frequently Asked Questions, programme story boards and data sets, provided by the Planning Office. Dr Wynn had attended all of the College Academic Committees to introduce the approach and documentation to support departments in the process of curriculum transformation. The Committee also noted that the next phase of the project would start in the week commencing 23 May with visits to departments in order to scope and plan changes in detail.

16/M52 **PATHWAYS**

a) Amendment to Senate Regulation 5

The Committee considered a proposal to amend the progression and award requirements set out in Senate Regulation 5 in light of the introduction of Major/Minor Pathways. The Committee noted that this had been developed over a significant period following consultation with a number of stakeholders.

Under the proposals, students undertaking minor subjects would be required to pass at honours level at least one module in each level of their minor in order to progress and to achieve an award. The Committee noted that this would ensure that students were able to demonstrate an appropriate level of achievement in order to meet threshold standards on their Minor subject area.

The Committee approved the amendment to Senate Regulation 5 to be implemented for the 2016/17 academic year and noted that this would be submitted to Senate for final approval at its meeting in June 2016.

b) Pastoral support for students on pathways

The Committee considered a paper which outlined the responsibilities of departments for the support of students on Major/Minor pathways. The document identified a student's Major department as being the lead for the purpose of student support, and outlined how the responsibilities of both Major and Minor departments should be exercised in a variety of areas including academic support, assessment and progression, administration and provision of information.

The Committee welcomed the document and noted that a number of the principles outlined could have wider application for students on joint degrees. It was agreed that given the scope of the document it would be appropriate to pilot the arrangements for Major/Minor pathways and that following an initial period of implementation they proposals could be reviewed and developed for a wider roll out.

The Committee considered the proposal to use a pro-forma for communication between Panels and Boards of Examiners regarding students on Minors. It was noted that the addition of a further manual process was undesirable, however may be necessary in the short term. The Committee agreed that this should be addressed outside of the meeting.

The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful to specify within the document that the responsibility for implementing the attendance monitoring policy for students would rest with the Major department.

c) Update from the Pathways Steering Group

Dr Dickinson reported that based on typical conversion rates the University anticipated just under 100 students to register onto major/minor combinations in 2016. The Pathways Steering Group was working with the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities to review Minors with low numbers of projected students. Additionally, in the Clearing period only particular combinations of Majors and Minors would be offered in light of overall numbers.

The Committee noted that the final Lecture Capture Policy was due to be considered at its next meeting. The Pathways Steering Group had been considering other potential options for delivery in the event that Lecture Capture was not available, however it was noted that the draft policy required that alternate provision be put in place.

Finally, the Committee noted that the Pathways Steering Group had identified that the term 'Pathways' was not being used consistently across the institution and this had led to some confusing messages for applicants. The Steering Group recommended that the term be removed from front line marketing, instead focussing on a wider narrative around the University's flexible offer. The Committee endorsed this proposal.

16/M53 **SUMMARY REPORT ON TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report from a meeting of the Chair and the Academic Directors of the Colleges which had reviewed all of the reports from External Examiners for taught postgraduate programmes in the 2014/15 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.

It was 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 only one issue where further University guidance or policy development was required, namely encouraging greater variation in assessment methods. The Committee noted that the upcoming Curriculum Transformation process would provide such an opportunity and that the supporting resources would allow departments to reconsider their assessment strategy in detail.

In procedural terms, the Committee noted that the use of the standard form for responding to External Examiners' reports was inconsistent and agreed that the standard form should be used at all times, and should be signed off by the Head of Department.

The Committee noted that the report and confirmation of the actions above would be reported to the next meeting of Senate.

16/M54 **PROGRAMME APPROVAL PANELS**

The Committee noted that following consideration of the Panel's report and the response from the programme team the Chair had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve the introduction of the following programmes for 2016/17:

MSc Quality and Safety in Healthcare
BA Sociology (Major Amendments)

- a) BSc Accounting and Finance with a Year Abroad

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 6 April to consider the addition of a Year Abroad variant to the BSc in Accounting and Finance. The Committee noted that this was an addition in order to reflect student demand and harmonise study abroad opportunities for students across the School. The Committee noted that the programme team had responded satisfactorily to the

conditions set and approved the addition of the year abroad with effect for both current and future students from 2016/17.

- b) BA Media and Society with a Year Abroad, and BA Media and Communication with a Year Abroad

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 6 April to consider the addition of a Year Abroad variant to the BA Media and Society and the BA Media and Communication programmes. The Committee noted that this would replace the semester abroad options currently in existence and welcomed this harmonising of the overall study abroad offer.

The Committee approved the report and empowered the Chair of the Panel to approve the introduction of the programme for current and new students from 2016/17 subject to satisfactory completion of the conditions set out in the report.

16/M55 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 21 April 2016.

16/M56 **REPORTS FROM 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, 17 March 2016

College of Science and Engineering, 23 March 2016

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, 22 March 2016

16/M57 **THANKS**

The Committee noted that this was Ms Patrick's last meeting of the Committee before her term as a sabbatical officer ended. The Committee thanked Ms Patrick for her contribution to the work of the Committee and the University during her period of office, in particular her invaluable contribution to the successful Higher Education Review.

16/M58 **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 Health Sciences

Dr Neil Thomas, University of Birmingham

Period of Office: September 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): MRes Applied Health Research

College of Science and Engineering

Department of Chemistry

Professor Sabine Flitsch, University of Manchester

Period of Office: October 2016 to September 2020

Programme(s): MChem and BSc Chemistry,
MChem and BSc Pharmaceutical Chemistry
MChem and BSc Chemistry with Forensic Science
All with industry and year abroad variants of the above

Department of Engineering

Professor Rob Dwyer-Joyce, University of Sheffield

Period of Office: October 2016 to September 2020

Programme(s): BEng and MEng Mechanical Engineering including with a year abroad
and with a year in industry variants

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

School of Archaeology and Ancient History

Dr Rachel Pope, University of Liverpool

Period of Office: October 2016 to September 2020

Programme(s): BA Archaeology, BSc Archaeology

School of Education

Mr Andrew Evans, University of the West of England

Period of Office: October 2015 to September 2019

Programme(s): PGCE (SCITT) (M level and H level)

The Committee noted that Chair's action had been taken to approve the following
External Examiner appointments.

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

School of Museum Studies

Mrs Sara Hilton, Heritage Lottery Fund

Period of Office: September 2015 to November 2019

Programme(s): MA/MSc/PGDip Museum Studies (DL) and
MA/MSc/PGDip Heritage and Interpretation (DL)

DURATION OF MEETING: One Hour and Forty Minutes