

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on
23 June 2016

Present:

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

In attendance: Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Hainsworth, Dr C Jarvis, Dr D Lockett, Mr A Mitchell and Professor T Yeoman

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

16/M59 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

16/M60 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting that took place on 18 May 2016.

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

16/M61 **MATTERS ARISING**

No matters arising were identified which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

16/M62 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

a) NSS Working Group

The Chair reported that an NSS Working Group had been established with representation from a variety of stakeholders. The Group would meet monthly in order to co-ordinate the University approach to securing a positive NSS outcome, including enhancing communication with students and staff about the response to issues raised previously, and preparing the action plan for the coming year.

b) Digital Learning Environment

The Chair reported that the University would shortly be formally considering whether to renew its contract with Blackboard or to move to an alternate Virtual Learning Environment.

c) UDTF Winners

The Committee noted that the following colleagues had been recommended for the award of a University Distinguished Teaching Fellowship in 2015/16.

Dr Alison Fox, School of Education

Dr Shaun Heaphy, Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation

Dr David Holwell, Department of Geology

The Committee **approved** the awards and congratulated the recipients on their fellowships. The Committee also noted that applications for both the National Teaching Fellowship scheme and a new Collaborative Teaching award scheme were underway.

d) Minor amendment to Senate Regulation 3 governing fees

The Chair reported that he had taken action on behalf of the Committee to **approve** a minor amendment to Senate Regulation 3 governing fees in order to allow the Director of Finance to authorise fee waivers, instead of the Academic Registrar as currently stated.

16/M63 **CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from Dr Wynn on the Curriculum Change project. The Committee noted that the project was proceeding well, and the team had visited the majority of departments to undertake discussions about planned changes to their curricula and the opportunities to enhance the learning opportunities for students.

The Committee noted the risk register for Curriculum Transformation, and noted that a new support post had been secured for the project. The Committee noted the register of actions, and also noted the summary of themes or issues arising from departmental meetings. These points were being referred to the Working Group.

The Committee welcomed the ongoing progress of the project and thanked Dr Wynn and the team supporting Curriculum Transformation for the approach to and communication of the overall project.

16/M64 **PATHWAYS**

The Committee received an updated from Dr Parry on the Pathways project.

Following a review of application data a small number of additional pathways had been suspended for 2016/17. The Group considered a proposal to withdraw the Minor in Leadership and Management, following its movement from the Vaughan Centre for Lifelong Learning to the School of Management. It was noted that there were small numbers of applicants and that students would be counselled regarding other options for minors offered within the School. The Committee noted that the School was confident that students could be helped to identify another minor which would fit their interests. The Committee approved the proposal.

The Committee noted that when Dr Parry finished his term as Academic Director in July 2016, Dr Dickinson would assume the role, and would also become Chair of the Pathways Steering Group. The Committee also considered a proposal from the Group that following the completion of the initial stage of developing, approving and implementing the Pathways model, the Steering Group would focus upon embedding these processes

into business as usual. In light of this, it was proposed that the frequency of the Group's meetings would reduce to once every two months, and would cease in February 2017. The Committee **approved** this proposal, however **agreed** that it would be helpful for the Group to meet again following the completion of the first full academic year of operating Majors and Minors, in order to review in light of experience.

16/M65 **LECTURE CAPTURE POLICY**

The Committee considered a final draft of the Reflect Lecture Capture Policy, alongside a summary of feedback from College Academic Committees.

The Committee noted that the policy had been subject to a number of revisions following the consultation period. Key alterations included further clarification that the recording of teaching events was not mandatory, extension of the period available between the lecture and upload for the purposes of editing, clarification of which events would be eligible for capture, and to confirm the situation regarding the assignment of performance rights by members of staff.

The Committee considered the issue of assigning performance rights. It was noted that it would be necessary for academic staff to assign performance rights to the University in order to allow the material to be accessed off-campus. The Committee considered a draft wording for a consent form for academic staff. The Committee noted that the form currently covered a wide range of uses which may not be appropriate for the majority of the University's lecture capture content. There may be some circumstances where through specific institutional arrangements material might be shared with partners, however these were limited. The Committee therefore agreed that there should be one standard consent form which confirmed that use was limited to educational or teaching purposes. Where specific arrangements would involve the sublicensing of material, a separate form should be developed for the affected staff to cover these additional uses.

The Committee noted that where a member of staff had not completed the form however captured and uploaded a teaching session, the University could infer from this that performance rights had been assigned. Where colleagues refused to sign a consent form and withhold content from publication, the Committee noted that they would be required to discuss this with the Head of Department and would be responsible for ensuring that equivalent academic content was made available.

The Committee noted that for the 2016/17 academic year the default position was that recordings published on Blackboard would be audio and presentation slides only, however individual academic staff could elect to publish the in-lecture video if they wished. This Committee noted that the overall policy would be subject to review following a full year of operation.

The Committee noted that Heads of Department would play a critical role in supporting the implementation of the Policy, and in particular in working with staff who did not wish to publish captured sessions. The Committee agreed that the implementation of the policy and the role of the HOD should be considered at the next University Executive Board meeting.

In addition to these points the Committee noted that there were a number of underpinning operational issues which would require further consideration. The

Committee agreed that operational guidelines should be developed by the Leicester Learning Institute for consideration at a future meeting.

Subject to the above and other minor amendments to wording discussed in the meeting, the Committee **approved** the Reflect Policy for implementation from the commencement of the 2016/17 academic year.

16/M66 **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS WHO TEACH**

The Committee considered a draft policy on Postgraduate Research students who undertake teaching. The Committee noted that the Policy had previously been considered and endorsed by the Postgraduate Research Policy Committee. The Policy had been developed to more clearly codify the practices already in place within the institution, as identified by the QAA Higher Education Review.

The Policy had been developed in line with Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code, and with reference to Senate Regulations 7 and 9. Under the Policy all PGR students who wished to perform teaching duties would first be required to undertake mandatory training. The Committee noted that this would be centrally organised training that could be supplemented by departmental specific training, unless local training covered all of the content of the University level provision, when a case could be made for exemption from the latter.

The Policy set out the parameters within which students could undertake teaching, including the nature of the duties performed and the limits on the number of hours that could be worked. The Committee agreed that the latter should be subject to minor amendment to confirm that additional limitations may be imposed by funding bodies, and that international students would only be able to operate within the conditions of their visa.

The Policy also confirmed that all students who undertook teaching should be paid at the agreed rate for the duties performed. It was noted that the amount of resource available to employ PGR students for this purpose was limited and there may be more students who wished to gain teaching experience than there was funding to pay them. The Committee agreed that students could undertake voluntary, unpaid teaching, however this would be at the request of the student on the understanding that it was not a requirement and was unpaid, and all students would be required to undertake the training noted above.

Subject to the above minor amendment, the Committee **approved** the Policy.

16/M67 **ATTENDANCE MONITORING POLICY**

The Committee considered a paper which proposed amendments to the University's Attendance Monitoring Policy and consequent amendments to Senate Regulation 4 governing student obligations.

The Committee noted that the revised process would replace the interim solution that had been in place in 2015/16 with an automated, centrally co-ordinated system which would require students to tap in using their student card in all centrally managed teaching spaces. This information would be collated and held centrally thus removing the previous requirement for departmentally held records.

The policy also articulated a staged process for the management of unauthorised absence. This process was designed to provide support to students in terms of identifying periods of absence engaging students with University Welfare or other services where appropriate. If however students were persistently absent for a period of 28 consecutive days and did not engage with the support offered by the institution, these students would be assumed to have withdrawn from their programme and their registration with the University would be withdrawn.

The Committee noted that this revised policy required consequent amendments to Senate Regulation 4 governing student obligations in order to reflect the processes for the management of student attendance and to establish these as being distinct from the wider issue of neglect of academic obligations. Academic departments and tutors would be able to use data from the system to identify students with poor attendance and provide support as may be required. The Committee noted that students would have the right to appeal against a decision to withdraw them on the basis of non-attendance or neglect of academic obligations, however the precise mechanism for this would need to be incorporated into the regulation.

Subject to the inclusion of a defined appeal process as noted above, the Committee **approved** the Policy and endorsed the amendments to Senate Regulation 4 for submission to Senate.

16/M68 **ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS**

The Group considered the report and recommendations from the Working Group which had been established to consider the University's English Language Requirements. The review had taken into account practice within the sector, feedback from departments and compliance requirements with regard to the UKVI and sponsoring of international students.

The Committee noted that the Group had made a number of recommendations for amendment to Senate Regulation 1. These amendments clarified the definition of prior study in the medium of English, extended the list of accepted English language qualifications, and identified a number of specific institutions from where an undergraduate degree would be considered sufficient evidence of English language competency.

The Committee **approved** the amendments and noted that they would be submitted for ratification by Senate. If approved, they would be implemented for applications received from the start of the 2016/17 academic year.

16/M69 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE SERVEY EQUALITY REPORT**

The Committee considered a report from UCAS which provided a detailed breakdown of the profile of applicants to the University with reference to various equalities categories including age, gender, ethnicity and participation in HE.

The Committee noted that the University appeared in line with national averages for the measures quoted. It was however noted that the data presented would benefit from further analysis in order to identify key trends for consideration by the Committee. It was agreed that this should be raised with the Planning and Equalities Offices.

16/M70 **TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered a briefing on the recent Teaching Excellence Framework Technical Consultation, and how the University might respond to the questions posed.

The Committee agreed that this was a helpful document and supported the majority of the responses. The Committee agreed that in response to question 9 the University should propose that if institutions were to receive commendations on the basis of TEF submissions these should be directly linked to outcomes for students and therefore the majority of the categories listed in this section were not appropriate. It was also noted that in response to question 12 the proposed titles of each outcome rating should be reconsidered, as the use of 'Meets Expectations' may not be understood outside of the UK and this could therefore impact upon the standing of UK Higher Education.

Subject to the above the Committee **approved** the proposed responses to the consultation questions, noting that the precise final wording would be agreed by the Chair and the Head of the Planning Office.

16/M71 **PROGRAMME APPROVAL AND WITHDRAWAL**

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 Diabetes (Distance Learning)

- a) MSc/PGDip/PGCert Post Mortem Radiology and Forensic Death Investigation

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had taken place on 3 May 2016. The Committee welcomed the development of this innovative and thoughtfully designed programme. The Committee noted that the assessment pattern for the programme required students to pass all assessment elements within the majority of the programme. This assessment strategy was designed to reflect the professional practices that graduates would need to use in employment and therefore the Committee approved the non-standard assessment pattern, and **approved** the programme as a whole for introduction from September 2016.

- b) Withdrawal of the BA International Communications and Culture

The Committee considered a proposal from the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities to withdraw the BA International Communication and Culture for 2016/17 onwards. The Committee noted that this proposal arose following the transfer of this programme to the Department of Media and Communications, as the small numbers on the programme threatened its viability.

The Committee noted that there were applicants currently holding offers on the programme and considered whether it should be withdrawn at this stage. The Committee agreed that the small numbers on the programme could impact upon the quality of the learning experience for students and therefore applicants should be contacted to discuss other options which may fit their interests and deliver a more rounded student experience. It was however agreed that if any of the students in question wished to remain on the BA International Communications and Culture the University had an obligation to run the programme in 2016/17.

The Committee therefore **approved** the withdrawal of the programme from 2017/8, however agreed that it should remain in place for 2016/17 unless all affected students elected either to alter their course of study or not take up their place at the University.

16/M72 **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW**

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Engineering which had taken place in May 2015.

The Committee welcomed the detailed response to the range of recommendations that had been identified by the Panel. The Group noted that significant progress had been made on a number of issues, and in particular it commended the department on its engagement with the range of activities designed to enhance the student experience. The Committee also welcomed the new mechanisms in place for sharing good practice, the collection of quantitative student feedback and enhancements to the support for PGR students. The Committee noted the comments in the response relating to resources and infrastructure requirements. The Committee acknowledged the concerns raised however noted that this was an issue for consideration within the College and that these should be incorporated with the planning round for the College.

The Committee **approved** the final response, noting that the focussed support for the department to continue enhancing the student experience would continue.

16/M73 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group held on 2 June 2016.

16/M74 **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS MANAGEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group held on 18 May 2016.

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Group that the approval process for new progression accords be amended to only require a business case where there was a financial aspect to the proposed arrangement, and also to confirm that the academic case could, as standard, be approved by the College Academic Director. The Committee **approved** this recommendation.

16/M75 **ISC ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the ISC Academic Management Board held on 13 May 2016.

The Committee also noted that the ISC had undergone QAA review since the meeting and this had received a positive outcome.

16/M76 **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, 21 April and 26 May 2016

College of Science and Engineering, 17 April and 1 June 2016

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, 10 May and 7 June 2016

16/M77 **THANKS**

The Committee expressed its thanks to Professor Hainsworth, Dr Parry and Professor Yeoman, all of whom had finished their terms. The Committee thanked all three for their contributions to the work of the Committee over several years.

16/M78 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

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

College of Science and Engineering

Department of Mathematics

Professor Sergei Fedotov, University of Manchester

Period of Office: October 2016 to September 2020

Programme(s): All UG Mathematics programmes (Applied)

Dr George Stretfaris, Heriot Watt University

Period of Office: October 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): BSc Mathematics and Actuarial Science, MSc Actuarial Science

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

School of Education

Dr Paul Miller, Brunel University

Period of Office: October 2016 to November 2020

Programme(s): MSc Educational Leadership (DL)

School of Management

Dr Liz Barnes, University of Manchester

Period of Office: October 2015 to September 2019

Programme(s): Cert HE Management Studies (IY1) – validated provision delivered by Study Group

Department of Sociology

Dr Andy King, University of Surrey

Period of Office: October 2016 to September 2020

Programme(s): BA Sociology

DURATION OF MEETING: Three hours and five minutes