

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

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

**Present:**

Professor J Scott (Chair)	
Professor A Cashmore	Dr F Deepwell
Dr R Dickinson	Mr G Green
Professor S Hainsworth	Dr C Jarvis
Dr D Lockett	Mrs L Masterman
Dr B Norman	Dr R Parry
Ms L Patrick	Ms C Taylor

**In attendance:** Dr L Cunningham, Mr D Norton and Mr A Petersen (Secretary)

**Apologies for absence** were received from Ms L Freeman, Ms R Holland and Professor T Yeoman

**UNRESERVED BUSINESS**

16/M16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

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

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2016.

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

16/M18 **MATTERS ARISING**

Arising from M6 the Committee noted that:

- The term dates for 2017/18 and 2018/19 had been published and the new structure was widely supported by students.
- The Admissions Office would be writing to all prospective new students for the next academic year in March 2016 to inform them of the changes to the academic structure of their programmes in 2017/18.
- The Chair had begun a schedule of attending College Academic Committee meetings in order to discuss the standardisation of assessment loading, reduction in overall written examinations and use of more authentic assessment.
- That a workshop was taking place on 19 February with academic and Professional Services representatives in order consider more detailed operational questions regarding the curriculum transformation project. This would include the timing of the changes for different student groups and proposals would be brought to the Committee in due course.

Arising from M8 the Committee noted that the Chair had met with the Director of Admissions to establish the Working Group to review English Language entry

requirements. The Committee agreed that a representative of the Postgraduate Research Policy Committee should be on the Working Group.

Arising from M15 the Committee noted that the Chair of the Working Group considering the Course Representative System would be appointed shortly. The Group had agreed a proposal that the elections for returning course representatives should move to before the summer break so that the representatives could be as effective as possible from the commencement of the academic year.

#### 16/M19 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that the QAA Higher Education Review of the University had taken place between 1-4 February and the initial findings had recently been received.

The Committee was pleased to note that the University had been judged to be meeting UK threshold standards in all key judgement areas. The review had highlighted four areas of good practice, namely:

- The inclusive approach to the management of change which will enable the realisation of strategic priorities
- The commitment to widening participation which promotes student inclusivity
- The strategic approach to the professional development of students which enhances their employability
- The continuing effective oversight of the postgraduate research student experience

The Review Panel had also reported two affirmations of action already underway the University regarding the publication of external examiners' reports to students and in the use of management information.

The Review Panel had made three recommendations for action by September 2016 as follows:

- The University should review its regulations to assure itself that all graduates will meet threshold standards in minor subject pathways
- Ensure that departments are fully implementing the code of practice on the personal support for students, for all modes of programme delivery
- Articulate a policy governing the employment of postgraduate research students as teachers

The Committee noted that proposals regarding these three themes would be brought to future meetings of the Committee.

The Committee welcomed the extremely positive outcome of the Review, which confirmed that the policies and processes underpinning the management of academic standards and the student experience were of a high standard. It was noted that the positive outcome would feed directly into the upcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. The Committee expressed its thanks to all colleagues who had been involved in the preparation for the Review and those who had been interviewed by the Panel. In particular, the Committee wished to record its thanks to Professor Scott, Louise Masterman, Andrew Petersen and Lily Patrick, and to the wider team in the Quality Office.

**16/M20 STUDENT RETENTION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning Office regarding the outcome of a recent analysis of retention rates among undergraduate students. The analysis has considered a range of different factors including the qualifications with which students entered, age, gender and socio economic groupings. The analysis had been undertaken on a cohort basis using 2012/13 entry as a baseline.

For typical students entering with A-levels the analysis demonstrated that there was not a demonstrably higher attrition rate among students entering with a lower tariff. The data did however demonstrate a significantly higher rate of attrition among students with non-standard qualifications such as BTEC and Access qualifications. However, it was also noted that within these non-standard qualifications groupings there was a similar pattern in that a lower tariff equivalence did not lead to a demonstrably higher attrition rate. The analysis demonstrated higher drop-out rates among mature students, students with disabilities and students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds.

The Committee noted that 65% of undergraduate University withdrawals took place in year 1 and that addressing this would be a key aspect of the Fabulous First Year initiative and the peer mentoring programme.

The Committee welcomed the analysis as a means of identifying trends among student withdrawals. It was agreed that it would be helpful to continue undertaking an equivalent analysis on a cohort basis going forwards, and noted that the Planning Office could provide more detailed analyses of individual student groups or departments upon request. The Committee agreed that in due course the data could feed into the Annual Developmental Review Process, however it would be helpful to have several years of comparator data in order to support this exercise, and therefore this would not be included in the next round of ADRs.

The Committee thanked Dr Lisa Cunningham and Daniel Norton for the analysis and presentation.

**16/M21 PATHWAYS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report from Dr Parry regarding the ongoing pathways project. Dr Parry reported that the Pathways Steering Group had reviewed the proposals for new pathway developments and had endorsed the development of new minors in Human Geography, Sustainability and Counselling Skills for 2017/18 entry. The Group had also reviewed the current profile of offers and pathway combinations for 2016/17 and agreed that a small number of pathways where no students were holding offers should be withdrawn. Once further information regarding the conversion rate of offer holders became available the Group would undertake a further exercise in order to identify those combinations with lower student numbers and engage in a dialogue with the relevant College to consider whether these should be withdrawn.

It was also noted that on the basis of the above data the Registry and the Academic Administration Business Partners were able to undertake more detailed mapping of the potential timetable for 2016/17.

The Committee noted that the Pathways Working Group on student support and induction was holding a workshop to engage pathways leaders in departments with the particular issues regarding support for students on pathways.

16/M22 **POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES WITH INTEGRATED PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

The Committee agreed that this item should be deferred to a future meeting.

16/M23 **REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE UNDERPINNING THE MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY, ENHANCEMENT AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

The Committee considered a paper regarding the University's governance structure supporting the management of academic quality, enhancement and the student experience.

The Committee noted that the University Executive Board provided a helpful forum for University leaders to discuss issues of policy and strategy. It was proposed that it may be helpful to establish a similar group of teaching and learning leaders from academic departments and the Professional Services in order to share developments and good practice in a similar fashion. The Committee supported the proposal, noting that it may help to formalise a number of existing networks at departmental and college level and provide a forum for dissemination and discussion. The Committee explored how this may interact with the range of other workshops run by the LLI however noted that the overall schedule of events would be run through the LLI and this should remove the risk of overlap.

The Committee supported the establishment of the forum and agreed that it would be critical to ensure effective student engagement. In light of this and the competing priorities of staff, the Committee agreed that it would be helpful to establish an initial forum meeting and to design the agenda in such a way as to allow academic staff and students to attend part of the event, rather than requiring a half day commitment.

The Committee considered a proposal to establish a review of the APC sub structure. The Committee welcomed the proposal, noting that it offered an opportunity to consider how all of the activities in the areas of both assurance and enhancement were co-ordinated and fed through to University level. The Committee agreed that the review should consider feed through from the Postgraduate Research Policy Committee and the Careers and Employability agenda. The Committee also agreed that the review should consider the composition of each body to ensure that they represented the diversity of the institution in the area of teaching and learning.

The Committee agreed that terms of reference and membership of the review group should be considered at the next meeting.

16/M24 **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

The Committee received summary reports from the Academic Directors of the Colleges regarding the range of activities underway in order to enhance the student experience and support the University's performance in the National Student Survey. The Committee welcomed the range of initiatives which included enhancement to pastoral and peer mentoring processes and a more systematic approach to undertaking exit interviews with students.

The Committee also received/considered a summary of the action points with regard to the NSS that had been identified through the Annual Developmental Review process. The Committee welcomed the summary and noted that the document could form the basis of a mechanism for the further sharing of good practice between departments. The Committee agreed that where it had been identified that several departments were affected by a particular issue, the initiatives of each department in response to the issue should be collated and shared, for example through the Teaching and Learning Forum referred to under M23 above. It was further noted that although there were a number of specific issues identified through the NSS, there were also a number of more general University issues where standardisation of expectations and practice would be helpful. It was agreed that the Teaching and Learning Forum would be a helpful opportunity to discuss these themes also.

The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful if College Academic Committees were to identify a small number of key activities underway within departments which might be particularly useful to share across the institution and report these to the Committee for dissemination.

The Committee considered comments regarding the level of information available to departments in order to support the NSS process. The Committee agreed that it would be very helpful to more clearly publicise the key dates in the NSS process in order to inform departmental planning processes.

#### 16/M25 **PERIODIC DEVELOPMENTAL REVIEW**

The Committee considered the final response to the report of the Periodic Developmental Review of the Department of Physics and Astronomy that had taken place in December 2014.

The Panel was pleased to note the number of commendations made by the Review Panel and the open, positive and collegial nature of both the review and response process. The Committee agreed that the Department had satisfactorily addressed all of the requirements and recommendations, and welcomed in particular the development of employability provision. The Committee noted that a number of the recommendations for the institution had been addressed through the development of the strategic plan.

The Committee approved the final response.

#### 16/M26 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

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

College of Science and Engineering

##### **Department of Chemistry**

Professor Peter Licence, University of Nottingham

Period of Office: September 2015 to October 2016 (final year extension)

Programme(s): MSc Cancer Chemistry

Cont/...

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

**School of History**

Dr Kate Giles, University of York

Period of Office: September 2015 to October 2019

Programme(s): MA English Local History and Family History

**School of Management**

Professor Andy Charlwood, Loughborough University

Period of Office: September 2016 to October 2020

Programme(s): MSc Human Resource Management and Training

**School of Modern Languages**

Dr Kate Taylor-Jones, University of Sheffield

Period of Office: September 2015 to June 2019

Programme(s): BA International Communication and Culture

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 Education**

Professor Gillian Trocoglus, Leeds Beckett University

Period of Office: September 2015 to June 2016 (final year extension)

Programme(s): PGCE Primary (Upper and Lower) and PGCE French

**Department of History of Art and Film**

Professor John Paul Davies, University of Reading

Period of Office: September 2015 to June 2019

Programme(s): BA History of Art, BA History of Art and English

DURATION OF MEETING: Two hours