

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
13 December 2017**

Present:

	J Scott (Chair)	
A Abdulla		A Cameron
E Clapp		F Deepwell
R Dickinson		G Green
D Lambert		D Lockett
B Norman		L Masterman
A Moran		R Parry
	G Wynn	

In attendance: D Kemp (for M183 and M184) and A Petersen (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from S Handa, C Hewitt and C Taylor

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

17/M179 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

17/M180 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting that had taken place on 20 November 2017.

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

17/M181 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from M168 the Committee noted that Council had approved the Academic Annual Assurance return for submission to HEFCE.

Arising from M170 the Committee noted that the relevant amendments had been made to the refreshed Learning Strategy in light of the feedback received, and that this was due to go to ULT and Senate for approval in the New Year.

Arising from M172 the Committee noted that the item on Learner Analytics would now be considered at its January meeting.

Arising from M173 the Committee noted that Chair had taken action to approve a further minor amendment to the wording of the derogation from Senate Regulations required by the NMC. The amendment had been for the purposes of clarity and had not affected the overall principles previously approved by the Committee.

17/M182 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair reported that he had taken Action on behalf of the Committee to approve final Curriculum Transformation submissions for undergraduate programmes in Chemistry, English, History, History of Art, Film Studies, Modern Languages and ODP and taught postgraduate programmes in English.

The Chair also reported that:

- a) The 2 follow up Webinars for the Director of Learning and Teaching development programme had taken place and the Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Forum in January 2018 would build further on this work.
- b) By Christmas the next round of NSS meetings with Departments would be complete, in which Heads were required to provide updates against the action plans that had been agreed earlier in the year. The Chair reported that departments had generally engaged positively with the process but there were some areas where further work was required to embed appropriate practices throughout departments.
- c) That the NUS had announced a boycott of the National Student Survey, but it was noted that the UoL Students' Union would not be participating in the boycott. The Student Experience Team was working with Departments to help support local approaches to maximising responses and performance in the NSS.
- d) The University response to the UK Quality Code Consultation had been submitted, and the institutional response to the consultation on the Office for Students would be submitted shortly. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to have a summary of the issues raised through the OfS consultation at a future meeting.
- e) That the Provost would be moving to a new role in the New Year, of Director of Education Innovation overseeing a portfolio of projects which would include a review of PGT provision and the University's engagement with flexible learning. An Interim Provost, Professor Gill Nicholls had been appointed whilst the recruitment process took place for a full time replacement.

The Committee also wished to record its congratulations to Graham Wynn who had been appointed Academic Director of the Education Excellence programme.

17/M183 PREPARATIONS FOR SUBJECT LEVEL TEF

The Committee considered a report on the University's preparations for submission to the subject level TEF exercise in 2018. A commentary on the actions underway was provided by Dawn Kemp, Education Excellence Programme Manager.

As reported at the Committee's meeting in November 2017, UoL was part of the Model B method of submission in which each subject was fully assessed through a consideration of subject-level metrics and Subject Group submissions, combined with a provider submission. The Committee noted that this model also included a "pilot within a pilot" regarding a potential new teaching intensity metric, which was designed to measure the teaching time provided per subject, weighted by student-staff ratio. The Committee noted the intention for subject-level rating to be rolled out as standard from TEF year 5 and therefore welcomed the opportunity to engage with the process at this early stage.

An initial analysis of subject level metrics demonstrated that the key defining factor was the distribution of the overall student headcount, and that excellence in small areas could not offset poor performance in higher volume subject areas. The analysis also demonstrated that a small number of subject areas with large headcounts, with negative

flags in areas such as assessment and feedback or student outcomes and employability, had a dramatic impact on the overall institutional outcome in this model of assessment.

Academic leads had been identified to develop the Subject Group submissions, with input from Professional Services and the Students' Union. The submission deadline for the subject-level pilot was 28th February 2018.

17/M184 **EDUCATION EXCELLENCE**

The Committee received a report which summarised the developing blueprint for the Education Excellence programme and set out the specific projects which sat within it. The document also set out the enabling projects that underpinned delivery of the wider strategy and the interdependencies and alignment between Education Excellence and the other major programmes underway such as the Digital Learning Environment, Curriculum Transformation and the Student Lifecycle Change Programme.

As outlined in M183, the Committee noted that negative flags in high volume subject areas had a significant impact upon institutional outcomes within the subject-level TEF. In light of the impact of overall headcount, the initial analysis had demonstrated a set of core issues in a number of specific higher volume departments which would require addressing in order to move the institution to a position where it could potentially achieve a Gold rating in future TEF exercises. The Committee noted that this clear expression of the issues provided the basis for the Education Excellence programme to target its activities over the coming period.

The Committee agreed that the metrics and their impact as articulated above was a powerful expression of the specific actions required in order to enhance the learning experience and student outcomes across the University, and in specific subject areas. The Committee further agreed that this analysis should be shared widely to embed this understanding within academic departments. It was noted that this would be followed by direct engagement with delivery level academic staff in target areas in order to promote the necessary developments and behaviours, and challenge the current varied levels of engagement. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful to develop a variant of the NSS dashboard which presented those specific aspects which contributed to the TEF metrics, to support this process.

The Committee welcomed the full support of the University Leadership Team in recognising the centrality of teaching and the student experience to the success of the institution. The Committee noted that this would shortly be reinforced through an institutional level communications plan. The Committee agreed that this represented an opportunity to establish the relationship between the upcoming TEF and REF exercises in terms of the role of individual colleagues in contributing to both.

17/M185 **RETENTION AND STUDENT SUCCESS**

The Committee considered a summary of student outcomes on first year modules in selected departments. The summary was on the basis of modules with greater than 50 students and in which the failure rate at the first attempt was above 15%. The Chair was working with the relevant departments to understand the factors which contributed to these outcomes and how these might be addressed.

The Committee noted that many of the subject areas were heavily mathematics based and explored whether this was a relevant factor. The Committee agreed that it was not a simple matter of the complexity of the material, but related instead to a network of contributing factors which included the coverage at a-level or within other entry qualifications, and the calibration of teaching and assessment approaches to be appropriate for the characteristics of the intake. It was noted that minor tweaks to approaches such as the use of engagement marks could have a marked impact upon outcomes.

The Committee agreed that it was essential to understand the changes to the A-level curricula in mathematics, and how this might need to inform the structure of programmes and the approaches taken through induction and transition to University. The Committee also agreed that it would be helpful to build a community of practice in the teaching of mathematics within the University, through bringing together the convenors of the relevant modules along with the Mathematics Help Centre. The Committee agreed that this issue should be referred to the Retention component of the Education Excellence programme.

17/M186 **SENATE REGULATION 6**

The Committee considered some internal feedback regarding the application of the thresholds for award and classification in Senate Regulation 6.

The Committee noted that a number of points had been raised regarding the absence of borderlines within the PGT scheme of assessment, and that a view had been expressed in some areas of the institution that this might impact upon student outcomes by not taking full account of excellent performance in particular areas of the programme, or of exit velocity.

The Committee noted that the issue had been considered in detail in both recent reviews of the Regulations in this area and that the introduction of both a CWA and a preponderance option for classification had addressed many of the points raised. There was conflicting feedback from external examiners regarding the appropriateness of borderlines at PGT level. It was further noted that the establishment of any threshold inherently leads to some students falling slightly short of the requirement, and that creation of a borderline threshold would have the same result.

The Committee noted that no modelling of impact had been undertaken within the subject areas in which the issues had been raised and therefore it was not possible at this stage to evidence whether the extent of the issue matched its perception. The Committee agreed that at this stage a further review would not be undertaken, but that if departments wished to provide specific evidence of the potential impact of introducing a borderline this would be taken into account in the future.

17/M187 **DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The Committee received an update on the development of the Digital Learning Environment (DLE) project from Ross Parry. Work had been undertaken to clearly align the remits of the DLE and the Education Excellence programme and to clarify where individual projects and workstreams rested within this. Following this, the Programme Team had undertaken scoping and project initiation for the three main projects to support the enrichment of Blackboard namely:

- Restructuring the information architecture to align where possible with SITS
- Enriching the templates available to programme and module teams within Blackboard
- Adding in or promoting greater use of functionality within Blackboard.

It was noted that the need to ensure compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) was significantly impacting upon the IT resource available to support the range of projects underway and there was a plan to bid for additional resource in this area within the upcoming planning round. The Committee acknowledged the work that had been necessary to ensure compliance, but further noted that it may be necessary to re-examine current resourcing levels across projects if it appeared that a lack of available IT resource might result in key agreed milestones being missed.

The Committee further noted two significant upcoming considerations for the DLE. First, the formal process and approval route for the review of the enrichment activities to date in order to inform a decision regarding whether to start a tender process for a new VLE. Second, the project team would be considering how to transition from the major change project infrastructure to the management of new processes and systems within the business as usual environment.

17/M188 **CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION**

The Committee received an update on the Curriculum Transformation project from Graham Wynn. The Committee was pleased to note that the majority of transformed undergraduate programmes had now been approved, with only a small number awaiting a final response from the programme team.

The communication plan for 2017/18 entrants for whom their programme would transform in 2018/19, had been disseminated to all departments, and a number of subject areas were already engaging in the formal consultation process with their students.

17/M189 **PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL**

The Committee considered reports of the Panels which had considered the following:

a) MBChB Phase II Review

The Committee considered the report of the Panel that had considered the reviewed and revised Phase II Curriculum for the MBChB programme. The Committee noted that this had been a complex set of amendments and expressed its thanks to those colleagues who had been involved in the development and approval process. The Committee noted that due to the short window for implementation the response to the issues raised would be considered by a joint panel of representations from the Programme Approval Panel and APC to consider final sign off.

The Committee agreed that any further issues identified by members relating to the revised curricula should be fed back to the Quality Office so that these could be considered within the response process.

b) LLB (Juris Doctor Pathway)

The Committee considered the report of the Programme Approval Panel that had considered the introduction of the Juris Doctor pathway to the LLB programme. This would

replace the current Senior Status degree which was specifically designed for the North American student market. The Committee noted that the award title remained LLB in order to ensure compliance with the QAA framework, but that inclusion of Juris Doctor in the full title would help relate the qualification to the market. The Committee noted that the team had submitted a response that had been approved by the local Panel, and the Chair had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve the programme for introduction in September 2018.

17/M190 **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS MANAGEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received the report of the meeting of the Collaborative Partnerships Management Group that had taken place on 27 November 2017.

17/M191 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP**

The Committee received a report of the meeting of the Student Experience Enhancement Group (SEEG) that had taken place on 1 December 2017.

The Committee noted the account in M58 of the 'boot camp' that had been run for returning students in Modern Languages to assist them with transitioning back into UoL, and developing resilience to manage the stress associated with final year study. The Committee agreed that this represented a very positive approach and model which could be expanded to have University wide application. The Committee agreed that this should be flagged to Directors of Learning and Teaching as an option and noted that the potential for provision at University level was being explored under the auspices of SEEG.

17/M192 **COLLEGE ACADEMIC COMMITTEES**

The Committee received reports of the meetings of the College Academic Committees that had taken place on:

- a) College of Life Sciences, 9 November 2017
- b) College of Science and Engineering, 15 November 2017
- c) College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities, 15 November 2017

17/M193 **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

The Committee considered and approved the nomination of the following External Examiners:

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Department of Criminology

Dr Louise Grove, Loughborough University
September 2017 to November 2021

Programme(s): MSc Security and Risk Management (DL)

School of Education

Professor Mary Hayden, University of Bath
Period of Office: September 2017 to November 2021

Programme(s): MA International Education (CB and DL variants)

School of Law

Dr Dimitrios Kyritsis, University of Reading
Period of Office: September 2017 to November 2021
Programme(s): LLB Law

DURATION OF MEETING: Two Hours

CHAIR