UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 6 July 2011

Present:

Ms C Fyfe (Chair)
Dr A Armellini       Mr D Cox
Ms L Jones          Dr P Lynch
Ms B McGinley (vice Mrs L Bailey)
Dr M Rawlinson      Dr J Scott
Professor Thomas

In attendance:  Miss K Pountney (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L Bailey, Professor Cashmore, Mr S Johnson and Mrs Masterman (Secretary)

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

11/M13  MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 3 March 2011.

The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

11/M14  MATTERS ARISING

With respect to Student Handbooks (minute 11/M2 refers), the Chair reported that the Academic Policy Committee had agreed she would chair a task and finish group to review student handbooks. The review would commence early in the autumn term and link with the University’s work on the Key Information Set and the Academic Registrar’s review of student regulations. The task and finish group would consider all aspects relating to student handbooks, including their purpose, content, format and means of delivery. The Group welcomed the decision to establish the group and the holistic approach it would adopt.

In discussing student handbooks, the Group noted that the Student and Academic Services (SAS) website was undergoing a radical overhaul and would be re-launched in an improved format later in the calendar year. The Assistant Secretary, who was part of the SAS web-team, reported that a conscious effort was being made to optimise the currency and accessibility of all information on the site, including documents. The Group welcomed the forthcoming introduction of the improved website. The Assistant Secretary agreed to circulate the website address to members of the Group at an appropriate point before the launch date to give them an opportunity to preview the site.

11/M15  CHAIR’S REPORT

The Chair reported that

a)  Dr Jon Scott had been named Bioscience Teacher of the Year 2011. This was a prestigious national award recognising outstanding learning and teaching practice in the biosciences. The Group congratulated Dr Scott on his achievement.
Chair’s report continued

b) she had attended a seminar about the Government’s recent Higher Education White Paper - Students at the Heart of the System. She outlined initiatives presented at the seminar that were planned by the University of Warwick to increase student employability. These included the introduction of a series of employability-related diplomas and the adoption of tailored employability support commencing upon registration.

The Group discussed the role and potential of the HEAR in this context. The Chair reported that the Academic Registrar was currently overseeing technical aspects involved in the launch of the HEAR for undergraduates graduating in 2010-11. A more sophisticated HEAR would be available for subsequent graduates. This would reflect decisions to be made by the Academic Policy Committee about the requirements, capabilities, potential and scope of the HEAR. The Chair confirmed that these would be communicated to the Colleges on identification.

11/M16 UNIVERSITY TEACHING FELLOWSHIP SCHEME

a) The Group noted that University Teaching Fellowships would be awarded to the following members of staff at the July 2011 degree ceremonies:

i) Dr David Harper (Department of Biology)
ii) Dr Katy McKenzie (Department of Chemistry)
iii) Dr Pamela Rogerson-Revell (School of Education) *

The Group wished to minute its congratulations to these individuals.

b) The Group received a discussion paper from the Head of the Academic Practice Unit and Assistant Secretary presenting proposals for changes to the operation of the University Teaching Fellowship Scheme. These were presented in the context of reduced applications in 2011 and it being prudent after eight years of operation to consider how the Scheme could be reinvigorated.

The Group agreed that the similarity of title University Teaching Fellowship to the currently used job title ‘Teaching Fellow’ needed to be addressed. It discussed some possible solutions and resolved to return to the issue at a forthcoming meeting.

The Group resolved to make the following changes to the Scheme from 2012:

i) more active ways would be used to promote and market the Scheme;
ii) the annual launch date would be brought forward to November and a reminder launch introduced early in the calendar year;
iii) an additional Academic Practice Unit led UTF preparation workshop would be held;
iv) the limit would be removed on the number of awards available in any one year;
v) the monetary value of the award would be raised to £3,000;
vi) the opportunities for University Teaching Fellows to contribute to the University would be increased.

The Group asked the Head of the Academic Practice Unit and Assistant Secretary to identify some more detailed proposals in respect to i) and vi) for it to consider at its next meeting.

* To be awarded at a January 2012 degree ceremony in recognition of achievements in postgraduate learning and teaching.
11/M17  TEACHING PARTNERSHIP AWARDS FOR STUDENTS 2011

a) The Group noted that Teaching Partnership Awards would be conferred to the following three students at the July 2011 degree ceremonies:

i) Kate Jennings (BA Human Geography 3/3)
ii) Gemma Riley (BSc Psychology with Sociology 3/3)
iii) Mervyn Thomas (MBChB/PhD 4/5).

The Group wished to minute its congratulations to these students.

b) The Chair reported that six applications had been submitted in 2011 the launch year of the Scheme and the overall standard of these applications had been encouragingly high.

The Group agreed that promotion of the Scheme should be improved for 2012 but its operation should otherwise be unchanged. It confirmed that submission of group applications was acceptable and agreed that in the event of a successful small group application each member should receive £200.

11/M18  THEMES FOR 2011-12

The Group considered themes for its work in the 2011-12 academic year. It agreed themes as follows:

i) Information, advice and guidance for students;
ii) Student mentor schemes.

The Group agreed that Dr Scott would lead the work on student mentor schemes; the objective of which would be to identify and disseminate good practice in this area as an aid to departments.

The Group also considered student engagement in its discussion of this item. It noted that groups in the University involved in policy and practice were increasing involving student members and its own task and finish working groups had had considerable success with this membership model. The Group noted that programme approval panels convening in the 2011-12 academic year were due to include a student member for the first time. The Chair reported that efforts to further advance student engagement in the Institution would take place as part of a forthcoming work in the University involving curriculum design and development.

11/M19  TEACHING ROOM UPGRADES

The Chair gave an update upon the University’s programme of teaching room upgrades. She reported that the University had allocated £750,000 to be used over the upcoming teaching year to develop seminar and flat lecture rooms on campus. The Project Implementation Team’s members included representatives from the four colleges, IT Services, Estates, and the Roombookings and Timetabling sections. The project would draw upon previous work at the University involving the development of learning spaces. The Group noted that refurbishment would range from cosmetic alterations to changes of a more substantial nature and would be conducted according to a schedule designed to minimise disruption to teaching. Consideration would be given to the activities each room was used for and in making the most effective use of resources whilst retaining flexibility for the rooms’ future development.

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11/M20 **ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP**

The Group received a report of a meeting of the Working Group held on 11 April 2011. Its Chair reported that following its consultation process some further work would be done to the policy on the return of marked work but it had University support in principle in its current form.

11/M21 **PERSONAL TUTORS WORKING GROUP**

The Group noted that student representatives of the Personal Tutor Project Group had reported the main findings of their research at the June meeting of the Academic Policy Committee and presented a revised Code of Practice on the Personal Tutor System. The Committee had welcomed the proposed Code, which was broadly similar to its predecessor, but requested some further changes. A consultation process with Colleges would then follow with the ultimate aim of a revised Code being in place for 2012. The Chair reported that she would be writing to Heads of Department to ask them to implement some of the key points of the Group’s research for the forthcoming academic year.

11/M22 **WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY**

The Group received draft minutes of a meeting of the Working Group held on 11 April 2011. It supported the Working Group’s view that there was value in Human Resources assisting in its work to draft guidelines for staff about writing student employment references. The Group agreed that the Chair would raise this request with the Director of HR.

11/M23 **SUSTAINABILITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

The Group noted that this project had gathered a substantial amount of valuable information and its reports were awaited by the University with interest.

11/M24 **TEACHING FUNDS APPROVALS GROUP**

The Group received minutes of meetings of the Teaching Funds Approvals Group (Fund for Teaching Enhancement Projects) held on 23 February and 25 May 2011.

The Chair reported that the Approvals Group had not been able to allocate all available teaching enhancement funds on the strength of the applications received this year. There had been some misconception from applicants about the purpose of the fund, which was principally to advance pedagogic research and innovation. The Approvals Group would be considering how it could assist colleagues in positioning themselves to take advantage of teaching enhancement opportunities and ensuring projects were completed and their successes disseminated effectively.

Duration of meeting: Two hours 15 minutes

CHAIR