UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Thursday 10 November 2011

Present:

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

In attendance:  Miss K Pountney (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L Bailey

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

11/M25 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP
The Group considered and approved its terms of reference for the 2011/12 academic year.
The Group approved changes to its membership for 2011/12 as recorded in the appendix to this minute (11/M25 App).

11/M26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 6 July 2011.
The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

11/M27 PEER MENTORING TASK AND FINISH GROUP
The Group noted that the membership of its peer mentoring task and finish group was in the process of being formed and would include staff and student members. Its Chair reported that a good initial response rate had been received to a request he had sent out on behalf of the Working Group for information about the extent and nature of existing schemes operating across the University.

11/M28 PERSONAL TUTORS WORKING GROUP
The Group received an update from the Chair of the Personal Tutors Working Group on the status of the Personal Tutor System Code of Practice that was to replace the existing guidance. The Group noted that at the request of the Academic Policy Committee the Code was to be extended to apply to distance learning and part-time students. The next draft of the Code, revised in light of comments from Academic Policy Committee members, would be available before the end of the calendar year for departments’ consideration. The Code would then return to Academic Policy Committee for approval.
11/M29 WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

The Group noted that the role and governance of the Working Group on Student Employability was under consideration in light of outcomes of the institutional review of the Student Development section of SSDS. The Chair of the Working Group outlined the history of the Working Group, which had originally reported to the Careers Advisory Committee. She reported that the Working Group would continue its current business whilst its review was underway and with this in mind had filled vacancies in its membership so that all four colleges were represented. A representative from the Development and Alumni Relations Office would also be invited to join it. The Group noted that the main item under consideration at the Working Group’s forthcoming November meeting would be the creation of guidance for consultation by academic staff involved in writing employment and other references for students. The Group welcomed the news that Human Resources had reconsidered its earlier decision and would be assisting the Working Group in this project (minute 11/M22 refers).

11/M30 WORKING GROUP ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The Group welcomed the news that a report presenting the findings of the review of the sustainability of learning and teaching of the seven selected departments would be completed by the end of November 2011.

11/M31 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP

The Chair of the Working Group reported that an Assessment and Feedback workshop about online marking would be held at the University on 16 December 2011. In addition to online/electronic marking, the Working Group’s project themes for 2011/12 comprised assessment design with particular reference to validity and reliability.

11/M32 TEACHING AWARD SCHEMES

a) University Teaching Fellowship Scheme 2012 launch

The Group received a schedule for the 2012 University Teaching Fellowship Scheme and update about publicity for the Scheme from the Head of Academic Practice. The Group noted that information about the launch of the 2012 Scheme had been emailed to Heads of Department and departmental secretaries/managers for circulation to eligible members of staff. An announcement would also appear in the eBulletin and on staff homepage. As agreed at the previous meeting (minute 11/M16 b) refers), the Academic Practice Unit had scheduled an additional workshop on ‘Applying for a University Teaching Fellowship’. The Group noted that the website providing details of the Scheme and its application process (www.le.ac.uk/utf) had been refreshed as part of agreed efforts to attract more eligible applicants and the pages now included profiles of two University Teaching Fellows with their advice for applicants.

The Group agreed that the Secretary would also send a version of the launch email to chairs of departmental learning and teaching committees.
TEACHING AWARD SCHEMES (continued)

b) National Teaching Fellowship Scheme

The Head of the Academic Practice Unit reported that efforts to identify eligible candidates for a National Teaching Fellowship award had begun earlier in the year. Several individuals had already been approached and were receiving encouragement and advice about submitting a case for an award.

The Group agreed that the Secretary would ask the University’s National Teaching Fellows to provide written profiles to use to promote the Scheme to promising candidates.

c) Teaching Partnership Awards for Students

The Group noted that the University had received praise both internally and externally for its Teaching Partnership Award Scheme, which had launched last academic year.

The Group agreed that the Secretary would develop the details of the Scheme published online to include profiles of the 2011 winners to attract applicants for the 2012 awards.

STUDENT HANDBOOKS

The Group received a discussion paper from the Chair about the purpose of student handbooks and a proposal that they become an online resource rather than a print publication.

The Group noted that there were significant advantages both for students and departments in making student handbooks an online rather than print resource. It heard that there were technical issues to overcome in making this change but that there were solutions from which to choose.

In discussing the proposal, the Group noted that the OIA consulted student handbooks when reviewing student appeals and that the publications were also of known interest to prospective students. It agreed that online handbooks would need to be easily and publicly accessible in order to meet the needs of current students and their wider audience. The Group agreed it was also important that the principle of the student handbook as an authoritative and structured source of information was not lost if handbooks moved to an online resource. The Group agreed that work would need to be done to ensure that students were aware that it was their responsibility to access and read the online material. The Group discussed ways in which this could be achieved and monitored.

The Group was mindful of the importance of avoiding duplication of information in handbooks because this increased the likelihood of inaccurate and out-of-date material. It welcomed the proposal for an online handbook template through which links were provided to authoritative sources of information and to which departments would add content of specific relevance to their students. The Group agreed that the chosen format and design of template should not preclude students from printing out elements of the handbook if they so wished.

The Group resolved that online presentation of handbooks should be pursued. To this end, the Chair would continue to consult with Marketing and Communication to resolve design and technical issues. The Group noted that overall authority for the content of student handbooks would remain with the Academic Policy Committee. The membership of the Committee’s Student Handbook Task and Finish Group would include the Academic Registrar and representation from Marketing and Communication.
TEACHING ROOMS REFURBISHMENT

The Chair gave an update about progress over the summer with the University’s programme of teaching room upgrades. She encouraged members of the Group to view rooms 214 and 215 in the Attenborough Building. These had been refurbished as part of the first phase of the project, which had funding of £750K. The renovation works for two small seminar rooms had cost approximately £25K and had comprised new furnishings, decoration, carpets and AV equipment. The result had been a significant improvement.

An additional eight teaching rooms of differing sizes and functions were scheduled to be refurbished during the Christmas vacation. The Group noted that it would be possible to assess after these teaching spaces had been completed how many rooms could be refurbished with the initially allocated funds.

The Group noted the refurbishment of larger, more versatile, teaching rooms required considerable planning. It recommended that advice from suitably qualified experts should be taken into account to ensure that furniture intended for renovated rooms was also ergonomically suitable.

TEACHING FUNDS APPROVALS GROUP

The Group received minutes of a meeting of the Teaching Funds Approvals Group (Fund for Teaching Enhancement Projects) held on 14 October 2011.

DATES OF 2011/12 MEETINGS

The Group noted the dates of its remaining meetings in the 2011/12 academic year:

Thursday 8 March 2012  2.00 pm
Thursday 7 June 2012  2.00 pm

Duration of meeting: One hour 30 minutes  CHAIR
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Membership:

(a) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) (Chair)
(b) One academic representative from each College (including Teaching Fellows where possible; at least one member should be drawn from a department with significant distance learning provision)
(c) An academic representative of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
(d) The Professor of Learning Innovation
(e) The Director of the Careers Service
(f) The Director of Library Services
(g) The Head of Academic Practice
(h) The Assistant Director of IT Services
(i) The Academic Affairs Officer of the Students’ Union

Reports to: Academic Policy Committee

Secretariat: Quality Office, Student and Academic Services

Terms of reference:

• To take strategic steps to enhance the quality of the student experience of learning and teaching, support services, the learning environment and student facilities
• To evaluate and benchmark the student experience
• To develop and use key performance indicators orientated from the student perspective
• To identify and respond strategically to the external environment including relevant legislation and social, political and financial trends affecting students