UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Monday 13 April 2015

Present: Professor Jon Scott (Acting Chair)
Professor A Cashmore
Mr Michael Dunmore (vice L Bailey)
Mr Y Nikolov
Mr M Rubin
Mr R Wilcock (vice B Athwal)

Ms T Dodman
Professor S Law
Dr R Norman
Dr D Watkins
Mr B Wynne

In attendance: Mrs K Galloway (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Peel,
Mr B Athwal, Ms L Bailey, Mr J Gillott,
Mr R Greenhill, Mrs F Stone and Professor T Yeoman

15/M12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 26 February 2015.
The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

15/M13 MATTERS ARISING

a) Referencing styles

Arising from 15/M8 c), the Deputy Librarian reported that a referencing style for the
Department of Economics had been agreed and a standard text entry on referencing styles
would be included within the Academic Integrity section of the University’s Guidelines on the
production of student handbooks 2015/16.

b) Assessment and Feedback Working Group: Plagiarism

Arising from 15/M11, the Academic Registrar reported that a sub-group of the Working Group
was in the process of developing revisions to Senate Regulation 11 informed by discussions
held with plagiarism officers. Its proposals would be considered by the Academic Policy
Committee and Senate in due course.

15/M14 UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS (UDTF)

The Group noted the launch of the 2015 University Distinguished Teaching Fellowship scheme and
the deadline of 16 April 2015 for candidates to submit their initial applications.

15/M15 NATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP SCHEME (NTFS)

The Group noted that the University’s annual publicity about the National Teaching Fellowship
Scheme focused upon staff members who had been successful in being recognised as National
Teaching Fellows by the HEA. It considered that the University was potentially missing an
opportunity to celebrate also the achievements of those that it nominated for a Fellowship given
that the prestige of the competition meant that nomination was a significant accomplishment in
itself.

The Group agreed that the Academic Registrar would raise the University’s publicity of the NTFS
with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) as chair of the internal panel.

[ACTION: J SCOTT]
TEACHING PARTNERSHIP AWARDS FOR STUDENTS (TPA)

a) The Group noted the launch of the 2015 Teaching Fellowship Awards scheme and the 11 May 2015 deadline for students to submit their application. The Group noted the promotional arrangements for this year’s scheme. It agreed that the Students' Union would additionally publicise the competition through its newsletter.

[ACTION: M RUBIN & Y NIKOLOV]

b) The Group considered the membership of the Panel that would consider submitted TPA applications and agree awards on its behalf. The Group agreed that it was appropriate for the membership to remain the same as for previous years excepting that the Panel Chair would be the President of the Students’ Union.

[ACTION: M RUBIN & K GALLOWAY]

STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: STUDENT WELCOME, INDUCTION AND TRANSITION

The Group discussed the experience of the University’s students from the time of confirmation in August through to the end of their first year. It noted various examples of local good practice of welcome and induction provided by departments and by central services. The Group considered where there might be gaps or missed opportunities in current practice.

The Group noted that a large amount of information was conveyed during the induction period and students inevitably forgot a proportion of it. For this reason, the Group agreed that it was important information was streamlined as far as possible and its release staggered according to priority so that students received appropriate details at the relevant time – whether this be before they arrived, when they arrived, or shortly after arrival for information that was still important but could be deferred until a later time.

The Group discussed opportunities to increase student engagement with induction information. It noted that creative induction sessions were typically more effective than lecture-style delivery and that receptiveness to some information could be improved when it was issued to new students by current students.

The Group noted that first-year undergraduate students were often unaccustomed to living away from home. At the start of their first term, many students were more anxious about the practical tasks and responsibilities that this involved than about coping with the academic rigours of study. It noted furthermore that the newly experienced freedom prompted some students to take risks with their safety and health. The Group agreed that it was important that the University prioritised assisting students in coping with this adjustment in lifestyle in order that they were equipped to protect their own physical and mental well-being. It noted that this would in turn facilitate success in their studies.

The Group noted that students also needed help adjusting to the transition to Level 7 and Level 8 study as well as to distance learning. It noted that effective induction was particularly important for distance learning students because there was no or very limited opportunity for them to gather information through face-to-face contact.

The Group noted that central services providing student support had moved to a standard set of opening hours, remaining open throughout each week day. The Group recommended exploring the potential for evening opening on one or two of those days. The Group noted that extended opening hours would be particularly advantageous for students who balanced their studies with employment commitments.

The Group concluded that feedback should be sought from students about their experience of the University from the time of confirmation in August through to the end of the first year and how they considered we could improve the student welcome, induction and transition. The Group recommended that a small task and finish group be established to conduct this research. It agreed that this group should link with the student mentoring project and Students’ Union.
The Group agreed that the Academic Registrar would update the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) about its discussions over this topic.

[ACTION: J SCOTT]

15/M18 MODULE SPECIFICATION FORM

The Group received a copy of the current module specification form, which was discussed at the Academic Policy Committee meeting on 26 March 2015. It noted that the Committee had identified several improvements that it wanted to introduce to make the information in module specifications more comprehensive and transparent, including:

- reference to the Transferable Skills Framework;
- evidence of constructive alignment of intended learning outcomes, delivery, and assessment;
- an indicative syllabus with a clear definition of workload;
- change of the format of the form to be online, use drop-down menus and incorporate information buttons;
- accessible reading list via hyperlink to Readinglists@Leicester.

The Group welcomed the changes planned by the Academic Policy Committee. It considered that they would benefit students and would also make the module specifications more useful to staff for processes such as programme approval. The Group considered further revisions that it would like the form to feature.

The Group noted that there was currently a disconnection between programme- and module-level information and it considered that any changes to the module specification that would strengthen this link would be particularly valuable.

The Group discussed the current student workload breakdown. It noted that the categories was not well suited for distance-learning modules and that guided independent study in particular was prone to be interpreted differently by staff and students because there was not a University agreed definition for the term. The Group noted that a group led by the Academic Director of the College of Social Science had formulated proposals for how guided independent learning could be broken down into more meaningful categories and these could usefully inform the module specification revision. The Group agreed that inclusion of indicative times for completion of assessments and revision would assist students in managing their study time.

The Group noted that several other institutions included in module specifications details of student achievement – such as marks distribution – and information about action taken in response to student feedback about a module. The Group recommended inclusion of these in the revised module specification. It agreed that the document could also usefully include a section on resources; it noted that this would be particularly helpful to identify any atypical resources to be used. The Group suggested that some standard text entries be made available to assist staff members in completing the revised module specifications.

The Group noted that the Academic Policy Committee wanted the new module specification form to be developed over the forthcoming academic year. A consultation process with departments would take place.

The Group welcomed the opportunity it had been given to consider improvements to module specifications and noted that its discussion would be fed back to Academic Policy Committee through receipt of these minutes.

15/M19 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP

The Group received a report of a meeting of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group held on 17 March 2015. It noted items of particular interest.
a) **Guidance about marking practice**

The Group welcomed the developed guidance about marking practice, which it noted focused upon moderation in particular and was intended to clarify content in Senate Regulation 7.

**The Group agreed** that members with any suggestions for improvement of the guidance prior to its considered by the Academic Policy Committee would email their comments to the Academic Registrar.

[ACTION: ALL MEMBERS AS APPROPRIATE]

b) **Use of the full scale of available marks**

The Group noted the Working Group’s project on the use of the full scale of available marks

15/M20 **WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY**

The Chair of the Working Group on Student Employability reported that the Working Group was in the process of finalising its guidance to staff on writing employment and further study references for students. The Group noted that Human Resources had provided some assistance with the development of the guidelines and would need to endorse the final version before publication, including the example and template references that had been requested from Colleges.

[ACTION: A CASHMORE, K GALLOWAY & HR]

The Group noted that the Working Group on Student Employability was long-established but there were now several groups across the University concerned with issues of student employability and because of this there was potential for duplication of effort. **It agreed** that the future of the Working Group should be reviewed to determine if its existence remained worthwhile or if its business might now be more effectively absorbed by other groups.

[ACTION: M PEEL, B ATHWAL & A CASHMORE]

15/M21 **PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH PROJECT: STUDENTS AND STAFF WORKING TOGETHER**

The Director of GENIE reported that although a student staff partnership research project had been planned for 2014-15 it had not proved possible for it to be taken forward. Contributing factors to this eventuality had been the workload commitments of the Students’ Union and continuing commitments from the previous year’s project. She reported that discussions had begun with the Students’ Union about the possibility of a partnership project running next academic year. An aim of the project would be to create an online resource of student and staff partnership initiatives across the University.

The Group noted that the Students’ Union was currently working alongside the University in several important projects – including HER, Pathways and the Fabulous First Year - and these would continue into the 2015-16 academic year. These existing commitments would need to be factored in by the Union when considering proposals for any new project collaborations, therefore. The Group welcomed confirmation it received from the President of the Students’ Union that the Students’ Union was keen to be involved in a partnership project if it directly fitted with its aims and workload permitted.

15/M22 **TEACHING FUNDS APPROVAL GROUP**

The Group received the minutes of a meeting of the Teaching Funds Approvals Group: Funds for Teaching Enhancement Projects held on 18 February 2015.

The Group noted the revised guidance the Approvals Group had developed to assist recipients of funds in accessing the money awarded for projects.
15/M23  LEARNING AND TEACHING CONFERENCE 2015

The Director of the Leicester Learning Institute reported that invitations had been sent out to the University's third annual learning and teaching conference, which would take place on Tuesday 30 June 2014. The Group encouraged its members to attend.

15/M24  DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3 June 2015 at 10.00 a.m. in the Haldane Committee Room, FJB.

Duration of meeting: One hour and 30 minutes  CHAIR