UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE
STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 3 June 2015

Present: Professor M Peel (Chair)
Ms L Bailey
Mrs G McIntyre (vice B Athwal)
Dr R Norman
Professor Jon Scott
Mr B Wynne

Ms T Dodman
Mr Y Nikolov
Mr M Rubin
Mrs F Stone

In attendance: Mr G Reay (IT Services), Mr R Wilcock (for the business recorded in 15/M25), Mrs K Galloway (Secretary) and Mr M Hodgkinson (Observer)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Peel, Mr B Athwal, and Dr D Watkins

15/M24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on Monday 13 April 2015
The Group approved the minutes as a correct record

15/M25 CHAIR’S REPORT
The Group received a report from the Director of Residential and Commercial Services (RACS) which identified the role of RACS in the induction and welcome process for new students. The paper included details of the current e-induction and pre-arrival communication and ResLife Team involvement. The Group noted that feedback from students about the induction and welcome process was positive and that the report identified future University-wide E-induction opportunities. This prompted a discussion about the use and benefits of predictive software packages.

The Group noted that other providers were piloting predictive tools which had performed well in highlighting potential students at risk of discontinuing their studies. The results allowed the institutions to respond with targeted measures to reduce attrition rates. The Chair informed the Group of a commitment by the University to explore the use of predictive and analytical software in reducing attrition rates. The Group was informed that there would be funds to support this, which would also support attendance monitoring initiatives. The Group welcomed this news as it recognised that the management of student exits is important both in terms of reducing the overall number of exits and ensuring that necessary exits are dignified and not do any damage to a student’s future re-engagement in higher education. However, some concerns regarding the methods in which the software gathered its attendance monitoring data were raised. The consensus was that students should be free to decline interventions but not measurement. The Group noted that there is JISC forum discussing the ethics of monitoring students. It agreed that the Academic Registrar would provide a summary of the JISC forum discussion for consideration at a Spring term meeting of the Group.

[ACTION: J SCOTT]

15/M26 TEACHING PARTNERSHIP AWARDS FOR STUDENTS 2015
The Group received a report from the Teaching Partnership Award Panel about the 2015 scheme. The Group welcomed the high number of strong applications.
The Group ratified the Panel’s decisions about the 2015 Teaching Partnership Awards winners:

AFZAL, Zeeshan  MBChB 4
AZMAT, Maheer  LLB 3
FOX, Gina  PhD (Criminology)
LING, Stephen and McHUGH, Melissa (joint award)  PhD (Physics and Astronomy)
JONES, Oliver  MBChB 4/Intercalated BSc
MITCHELL, Rafael  PhD (Education)
PLUMB, Sarah  PhD (Museum Studies)
SHAW, Alice  LLB Maitrise
VELAZQUEZ MARRONI, Cintia  PhD (Museum Studies)

The Group agreed the Teaching Partnership Award Panel’s recommendations for amendment to the operation of the 2016 scheme.

[ACTION: TPA Panel and Secretary]

15/M27 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: STUDENT WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE

The Group discussed student well-being and resilience in terms of strengths and areas for improvement in current practice. The Head of Student Support Services reported that the Support Services had successfully supported 354 appointments with students over the last week alone, which covered a whole series of student well-being and resilience related issues. The Group noted that the challenge was how to develop students to learn from these interventions and thus to become responsible for their own well-being and more resilient for the future. The Group considered that a common understanding of what resilience means and who would be responsible for its implementation were important factors in improving student well-being.

The Group was informed, by the Associate Director of the Career Development Service, that the Service had received a sector award for its preparation of students for employment. Despite this solid foundation, further data from DHLE and employer feedback indicated that Leicester graduates were not as successful as those from competitor institutions when performing under pressure and managing themselves in different situations. This spoke again to issues of resilience and confidence. The Group noted the need to develop students’ self-awareness, confidence and mindfulness. It recommended adding a second and third element to the Career Journey that linked with the curriculum and personal development. The Group considered that whatever approach was adopted, to be successful, it must help students to understand how the curriculum content and activities develop these capabilities and how they link to the world of work. The Group noted the importance of considering students’ priorities because these would influence their engagement with activities to increase resilience. The Group also noted that the University should alter its practice to complement these activities. For example, the Personal Tutor role could become more pro-active; it potentially would be better conceived as a performance coach role, coaching students in the capacities that lead to a successful graduate outcome. The Group noted there was currently tension between the demands of the curriculum and assessment and the time and incentive for students to undertake the development of capabilities to enhance their well-being and resilience. The Group felt that to manage this tension a holistic approach was required. This would require further consideration but in principle it was agreed that the University should highlight the importance of well-being and student resilience directly and indirectly. The Group noted that it would be particularly important for the first year of a programme to aim to develop these capabilities, disposition, skills and behaviours through a number of interrelated activities.

The Group agreed to revisit this as part of other developments, especially in terms of the ‘Fabulous First Year’ initiative.
15/M28 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP

The Group received a report of a meeting of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group held on 5 May 2015. It noted items of particular interest as highlighted by its Chair.

a) Module specification form

The Group noted that the Working Group was collating learning and assessment student workload category suggestions received from the colleges. These would be considered by the Working Group in due course.

b) Smart Watches

The Group noted the Assessment and Feedback Working Group had discussed the potential for instances of improper practice to occur in examinations because of use of Apple Watches or other smart watches now on the market. The Working Group had recommended an additional announcement be made at the start of each examination reminding those students present that use of any electronic device that connects to the internet is prohibited within examination rooms and invigilators will be on the lookout for smart watches and all other forbidden electronic equipment. The Group noted that this had been taken forward by the Academic Registrar.

c) Peer Review of Marking and Feedback

The Group noted that departments were required by the University to undertake Peer Review of Marking and Feedback in the 2015/16 academic year. The Working Group was reviewing the guidance for departments, redrafting it to include feedback on examinations.

This item prompted a question about the ability to record and electronically save oral feedback. The Academic Registrar reported that currently this feature is not available in Grade-mark but could be replaced by text annotation. It was suggested that in future Blackboard could be a repository for these recordings when compatibility issues with Grade-mark are resolved. The behaviour of students in storing feedback they received on assessments was discussed and the Group recommended that the use of e-portfolios should be encouraged.

15/M29 WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

The Chair of the Working Group on Student Employability reported that the Working Group had not met recently but planned to soon to finalise the guidance to staff on writing employment and other references for students.

The Chair of the Working Group reported that she would also be discussing the Working Group’s future with the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) to ensure its efficacy and she had already met with the Director of the Student Experience for his input. He had noted this working group provided the only opportunity for Chairs of College student employability groups to meet. The Group suggested in future that the emphasis may change to the promotion of student enterprise ventures such as the project undertaken by Computer Science undergraduates to develop a student reference template for use on their behalf by academics. The Director of IT Services welcomed these opportunities but requested the involvement of IT services, when appropriate, to ensure the projects are sustainable after the students graduate.

The Group agreed that the Chair would encourage Professor Levesley and the Director of IT Services to meet to discuss the opportunities for student enterprise to develop internal projects.

[ACTION: M PEEL, J LEVESLEY & L BAILEY]

15/M30 HEAR 6.1 ACTIVITY VERIFICATION

The Group agreed the approval of the HEAR 6.1 activity: Erasmus+ traineeship as recommended by the HEAR 6.1 Approvals Group.
THANKS

The Group noted that this was the last of its meetings that Mr Michael Rubin and Mr Yordan Nikolov would attend. It thanked them for their contributions to the Group and its work during their terms of office as President and Education Officer of the Students’ Union.

The Group noted also acknowledged that the Director of Residential and Commercial Services, Mrs Frances Stone, would be retiring shortly and it thanked her for her hard work and dedication over the past years.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 13 July 2015 at 10.00 a.m. in the David Wilson Library First Floor Library Seminar Room.

Duration of meeting: One hour and 40 minutes

CHAIR