UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 4 June 2014

Present:
Ms C Fyfe (Chair)
Professor A Cashmore
Ms J Dunne
Professor S Law
Dr R Norman
Ms F Stone
Dr D Watkins
Mr B Wynne
Professor J Scott
Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Ms J Chalmers and Mr C Gooch (for the business recorded in 14/M16), Ms E Cornish (for the business recorded in 14/M14, Professor R Dalgleish (for the business recorded in 14/M15) and Mrs K Galloway (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr B Athwal, Professor G Conole, Mr R Greenhill, Ms G Miles and Dr R Parry

14/M10 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 27 February 2014.

The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

14/M11 NSS RESPONSE RATES

The Chair reported that the University’s response rate for the 2014 NSS survey was lower than in previous years and for the first time had dropped below the sector average. This was despite having run a more energetic and longer-lasting campaign. Other institutions had also reported a marked drop in response rates without an obviously attributable reason.

The Group discussed possible explanations for the decline, including survey fatigue. The Group noted that the University was considering introducing completion incentives for next year’s survey.

The Group agreed to request:

a) the Planning Office renew and extend its work on managing surveying across the University [ACTION: B FAWCETT];

b) departments consider, via College Academic Committees, proposals for increasing the response rate to next year’s campaign [ACTION: COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES]

14/M12 PLAGIARISM: TRAINING AND INFORMATION ISSUED TO STUDENTS

The Group considered a commissioned report from Professor John Goodwin about the nature, type and location of plagiarism training and information offered by departments to their students. The Group noted that the research had shown that there was some excellent provision in this area across the institution but there an over reliance on written materials and corrective training. The report favoured early onset preventative education that promoted academic integrity and good practice rather than emphasising disciplinary measures. It also advocated that participation in training should be recorded and/or validated.

The Group welcomed the valuable research that had conducted by Professor Goodwin and was in agreement with its overall conclusions. The Group considered in turn each recommendation to make the information provided to students more consistent and to shift the emphasis of training. The Group noted that the Learn@Leicester website had the potential to become a
The Group agreed:

a) to recommend that the report’s recommendations should apply to all taught students

b) to request that College Academic Committees discuss the paper, updated with the Group’s comments, and report back to it at the next meeting of SEEG [ACTION: COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES]

c) to request the Graduate Dean consider how recommendations from the report could be incorporated into postgraduate research student training [ACTION: S HAINSWORTH]

d) to task the Quality Office with organising a training session(s) for plagiarism officers and resource workers, to be held before the start of the academic year and with input from the Education Unit and relevant student representatives [ACTION: QUALITY OFFICE];

e) that the list of plagiarism officers should be published online and departments should be required to check its accuracy on a frequent basis [ACTION: QUALITY OFFICE]

14/M13 REFERENCING STYLES: ADOPTING A MORE CONSISTENT APPROACH

The Group considered a paper presented by the Deputy Librarian that reported on the wide variety of different referencing styles in use across the University and the resultant challenges that could be experienced by students. The Group noted evidence of minor variations being applied to widely-used schemes with, in some cases, differences in expectations between members of the same of department. The report proposed that: a definitive version of each referencing style should be agreed by the University; each department should choose one style appropriate to its specific subject discipline then require all its taught students to follow it when citing publications and other resources in their assignments; a central record of the style in use within each department should be kept by the Library.

In discussion, the Group noted that of core importance was that students had a thorough comprehension of the content of references, particularly when different source types were involved. It noted that confusion over referencing styles could be a barrier to gaining this understanding. The Group noted it was especially important that students whose degree involved the study of more than one subject were clear which referencing style they were required to follow for each discipline.

The Group agreed to recommend that the University introduces a consistent approach from the start of the 2015/16 academic year. It agreed that extensive consultation with departments would be essential for this to be successful and also that it would be important for colleagues to collaborate across departments and projects. The Group agreed that the paper should be disseminated for discussion at College Academic Committees and departmental learning and teaching committees, with reports being made back to the Group at its next meeting [ACTION: COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES, LIBRARY & K GALLOWAY].

14/M14 HEAR 6.1: VERIFICATION OF ACTIVITIES

The Group considered a paper presenting the proposed approval process and eligibility criteria for the verification of HEAR 6.1 activities and requesting approval. The Group approved these documents subject to some minor amendment.

The Group considered and approved the verification of the following new HEAR 6.1 activities:

- Criminal Justice Fast Track
- EU Careers Economic Challenge Competition
- TESOL Taster Course
- Students’ Union Officers
- Quality Circles Student Consultant
IT TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES

The Group considered a paper from Professor Dalgleish that evaluated the current provision of computing facilities for student education and recommended measures that might enhance that provision. The Group thanked Professor Dalgleish for the useful research and considered each recommendation in turn.

The Group concurred with the view that students would benefit from improved systems that provide information about the location of available PCs around campus. It noted that IT Services was already considering how it might increase the usefulness of these systems in terms particularly of taking account of building opening hours and times when rooms were booked for teaching. The Group agreed to recommend to IT Services that this work is given a higher priority [ACTION: N MOLEDINA].

The Group noted that mobile printing would soon be made available by IT Services and this would be likely to relieve some of the pressure on popular Library computing resources. The Group agreed that the successes of the Library model should be used to inform IT provision in new social learning spaces, such as the development proposed for the Charles Wilson Building. It noted that in the longer term this may allow some of the under-utilised IT teaching spaces across the University to be re-purposed.

The Group discussed possible advantages and disadvantages of the University providing each student with a computing device suitable to their degree upon the commencement of their studies. It considered it probable that most students would instead prefer to be able to access their University Windows 7 desktop on their personal devices. The Group acknowledged that the costs involved would be substantial but would likely be less than those involved with gifting an IT device to each student. The Group noted that it would be important for the University to ensure that such an arrangement would not disadvantage students in their studies should their financial circumstances prohibit them from purchasing a suitable personal IT device. The Group agreed to request that IT Services investigate the feasibility of University use of the Microsoft Remote Desktop Protocol and report to SEEG at its next meeting [ACTION: N MOLEDINA]

The Group agreed to establish a further task and finish group to identify institutions recognised for their good practice in IT teaching and learning space provision and to undertake site visits. The Chair and Professor Dalgleish would develop the terms of reference for the task and finish group and nominate members [ACTION: C FYFE & R DALGLEISH].

The Group agreed to recommend that alternatives to fixed PC rooms as a computing-provision model should be kept under consideration by the University. The Group agreed that it was essential that any proposed enhancement of computing facilities involved consultation with IT Services at the earliest opportunity.

LECTURE CAPTURE PILOT

The Group received a final report on the lecture capture pilot from its Project Manager. She reported that feedback so far gained from students and staff involved in the pilot had been positive overall. Although licences for the two systems featured in the trial would expire in July/August, she was with in negotiation with suppliers for content to remain available for the September re-assessment period.

The Group welcomed news that the Estates and Facilities Management Division had recently agreed to fund the next stage of the project following acceptance of the case for funding by the Financial Forecasts Group. It noted that a formal procurement process had to be completed before the University could commit to a specific supplier and technology type and consider making lecture capture available across the whole institution.

The Group noted that it had been necessary for IT Services to tightly control the boundaries of the trial. The Group agreed to establish a task and finish group to review these principles and recommend to the next meeting of the Academic Policy Committee the academic policies that would apply for the transition of the trial into the next project stage. [ACTION: C FYFE].

The Group welcomed the progress that the trial had made and noted that the project had been fully student-initiated.
14/M17  ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP

The Group received a written report of a meeting of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group held on 19 May 2014.

a) Feedback on examination performance

The Group considered recommendations from the Working Group about feedback to students on examination performance. It noted that these had been made in light of the Working Group’s review of the experiences of departments involved in a pilot scheme to provide feedback on performance in the January 2014 examinations.

The Group supported the Working Group’s recommendation that the flexibility of the University schemes in operation for the pilot should be retained.

The Group agreed to recommend to the next meeting of the Academic Policy Committee that 2014-15 should be a transitional year whereby departments would be strongly encouraged to provide feedback to students on examination performance but that from the 2015/16 academic year onwards all departments should be required to do so through operation of one of the University’s schemes [ACTION: J SCOTT & K GALLOWAY].

b) Moderation of marking

The Group noted discussion of University guidance for meeting the requirements of Senate Regulation 7 about moderation of marking.

14/M18  WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

The Group received minutes of a meeting of the Working Group on Student Employability held on 30 May 2014.

The Group welcomed recent progress with the project to create guidance for staff about writing employment, further study and other references for students.

14/M19  PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH PROJECT: STUDENTS AND STAFF WORKING TOGETHER

The Group received a verbal progress report from the Director of the GENIE CETL on the partnership research project. She reported that:

a) the project group had organised a successful national conference in November 2013 promoting students and staff working together and it was building up a compendium of partnership activities in operation across the University. Other institutions had shown interest in the University’s work as a model of good practice.

b) the focus of this year’s research had been on reviewing the effectiveness of the personal tutor scheme following the development of the Code of Practice on Personal Support for Students in 2011. An evaluative report was planned to be available in September 2014.

14/M20  UNIVERSITY TEACHING AWARDS 2014

a) Teaching Partnership Awards for Students (TPA)

The Chair reported that six awards would be made this year, the maximum number available. The successful students had demonstrated themselves to be deserving of this accolade of excellence on the basis of a variety of activities that had meaningfully impacted upon the student learning experience.

The Group noted the students to receive Teaching Partnership Awards for 2014 were:

Sara BENEDI LAHUERTA (PhD student; Law)
Dominic CORTIS (PhD student; Mathematics)
Adam DYER (BA Contemporary History)
Stephen LING (PhD student; History)
Ryan NUTTING (PhD student; Museum Studies)
Nikitha YEMULA (MBChB/BSc Intercalated; Medicine).
b) University Teaching Fellowship (UTF) scheme

The Group noted that nine of the 14 applicants who submitted initial cases this year had been invited to submit developed applications for panel consideration. The Fellowships to be conferred at the July 2014/January 2015 degree ceremonies would be agreed by a Panel on behalf of the Group following a meeting on 16 June 2014 and reported to the June meeting of the Academic Policy Committee.

14/M21 ENHANCEMENT THEMES FOR THE 2014/15 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Group considered possible themes for its business in the coming academic year. It agreed that, in addition to its continuing enhancement themes, its work in 2014-15 would focus upon:

a) Peer mentoring: the Group noted that it had not proved possible to take this work forward in the current academic year as originally intended.

b) Learn@Leicester: The Group welcomed the progress made to date by representatives in IT Services, the Library and the Academic Practice Service. The Group agreed to establish a steering group that would report to the Group to coordinate the Learn@Leicester activities.

14/M22 MEETINGS IN 2014-15

The Group noted the dates of its meetings in the 2014-15 academic year, as recorded in the University almanac:

- Thursday 6 November 2014  2.00 p.m.
- Thursday 26 February 2015  2.00 p.m.
- Wednesday 3 June 2015     10.00 a.m.

14/M23 THANKS

The Group thanked Mr Dan Flatt for being an active member of the Group representing students and Ms Jackie Dunne for her contribution to the Group. It wished them well in their new roles outside the University.

The Group gave special thanks to Ms Christine Fyfe for constructing and chairing the Group, and its predecessor the Student Experience Enhancement Committee, noting that the progress the group had made in its work to enhance the student experience was testament to her leadership. It wished her well in her retirement.

Duration of meeting: Two hours CHAIR