UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Thursday 25 February 2016

Present:

Professor J Scott (Chair)
Professor A Cashmore  Dr F Deepwell
Dr R Dickinson  Ms T Dodman
Mr G Green  Mr R Greenhill
Mr C Harrison  Dr C Hewitt
Dr B Norman  Mr R Patel
Ms L Patrick  Mr G Reay
Mr B Wynne  Professor T Yeoman

In attendance: Ms L McKenna (Secretary)

Apologies for absence from Mr B Athwal, Miss R Holland, Ms L Cunningham, Mr M Hodgkinson

16/M12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Group noted that there were no declarations of interest.

16/M13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016.

The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

16/M14 MATTERS ARISING

Arising from 16/M3, the Chair reported that both the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and UK Engagement Survey (UKES) would be launched in early March. So as to avoid interference with the NSS response rates, only first and second year students would be asked to complete the UKES.

Arising from 16/M9, the Chair reported that a presentation had been given to CSE and CSSAH on assessment strategy, with a view to reducing the number of exams in January and developing more authentic assessment methods.

16/M15 CHAIR’S REPORT

a) QAA Review

The Chair confirmed that the University had received a positive outcome from the review. The Reviewers have highlighted four areas of good practice that the University
should be commended on, including

i. The inclusive approach to the management of change
ii. The University’s commitment to widening participation and the promotion of student inclusion
iii. Support provided to students which enhances their employability
iv. The continuing effective oversight of the postgraduate research student experience

The Chair thanked those involved in the preparations and those present at the meetings with the reviewers during their visit.

b) Standing Together Campaign

The Chair reported on the Standing Together Campaign which is being run by the Student Support Services to promote gender equality. Communications are planned to target new and returning students.

c) Teaching Partnership Awards for Students

The Chair reported that the scheme is due to launch at the beginning of March. Applications are invited from students who teach and support learning, or those who make a real impact by contributing directly to the enhancement of the student learning experience. The awards offer a cash prize of £200 and successful applicants are presented with their award and certificate at the SU awards, which will take place on 8 June 2016. Efforts to publicise the scheme will begin shortly, in the meantime the Chair asked members of the group to support and encourage students to apply.

d) University Distinguished Fellowship Scheme (UDTF)

The Chair reported that this scheme is also due to launch in early March and would follow a similar process to that of the previous year. The Chair asked members of the group to support and encourage staff to apply.

e) National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)

The Chair confirmed that the details of the scheme had not yet been announced. Further information would follow when available. In the meantime, departments should be encouraged to identify suitable applicants.

16/M16 LEARNING AND TEACHING WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

Dr Deepwell provided the group with an overview of learning and teaching workshops and activities planned by LLI, specifically:

- 12-14 April 2016: focused workshops are planned on a number of topics including assessment, lecture capture and pathways
- May: College-based support, particularly in relation to visit days
- 28-30 June: targeted workshops are planned for 28 and 30 June. On 29 June, college focused events are proposed for the morning, with a debate on examinations due to take place in the afternoon.
Dr Deepwell also highlighted the range of support available from LLI, including:

- Consultation workshops/meetings with specific departments to discuss programme level changes, in preparation for the Curriculum Transformation project
- LLI presentations/involvement in Department away days
- Workshops on PEERs
- Themed workshops on subjects like enquiry based learning

Dr Deepwell confirmed that a further, detailed communication was due to be sent to highlight the above. The Group agreed that colleagues, particularly based in departments should be encouraged to engage with suitable activities to share and enhance good practice.

16/M17 PEER MENTORING SCHEME

Ms Patrick provided an update to the Group on the progression of the scheme since the last meeting.

Ms Patrick reported that 556 mentors had been recruited, with a large number already registered for scheduled training sessions. Minor changes have been requested to the website design and key areas of focus for the training sessions have been agreed.

The Group agreed it may be useful to explore further opportunities to publicise the scheme, including through accommodation literature and planned events and the Fabulous First Year initiative.

16/M18 PERSONAL TUTOR REVIEW

The Group received a verbal update on the progression of the working group. The Chair confirmed that the working group had met and agreed to the set-up of four sub-groups to focus on particular aspects including the Code of Practice, Staff Training, Infographics and Record Keeping.

It was noted that the review aimed to result in a single system of personal tutoring that was consistent with the values of the University and in line with a revised Code of Practice. It was envisaged that the system should be able to flexibly adapt to different cohort sizes and programme needs.

16/M19 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP

Dr Hewitt updated the Group on the key actions taken by the Assessment and Feedback Working Group. Dr Hewitt reported that the Group was continuing to focus on the following project themes, including; e-assessment, student engagement with feedback, innovative assessment methods, contact time. Further updates would continue to follow.

16/M20 A SENSE OF BELONGING

The Group considered a paper on enhancing the sense of belonging and community within the University. The Chair reported that a strong sense of belonging has been repeatedly shown to be a major factor in student retention and success and in the overall expression of student satisfaction. Growing evidence, from free-text comments from the
NSS and other surveys, indicates that this sense of belonging is declining within the University.

The Group considered the collated areas of discussion arising from a dinner hosted by Professor Boyle on the same topic. A wide ranging discussion followed, with the Group agreeing the points below:

- Mature students, students living at home and distance learning students are key groups that could be lacking in a sense of belonging to the institution.
- The Peer Mentoring Scheme could help foster relationships between students and the University and although focussed at present on campus-based students, there are plans to expand the scheme to include distance learning and other student groups.
- The availability of flexible space was an issue. It is important that students have space to socialise as well as study, particularly key for students who have to travel to campus.
- There is a lack of this type of space in some departments; the Group felt it was especially important for students to feel connected to their departments.
- Student involvement in teaching and learning discussions helped in the enhancement of the sense of belonging.
- Ways of linking the staff and student communities should be considered.
- There was evidence that group work and fieldwork were a good way of fostering relationships between staff and students at department level. The Group noted that fieldwork was mainly applicable to students in CSE.

The Group agreed that a working group focusing on ways to enhance a sense of belonging with students living at home should be set up. [ACTION L PATRICK]

The Group agreed that it would be helpful to investigate whether it were possible to collate data on the numbers of students living at home, particularly as a proportion of the student population as a whole. [ACTION G GREEN]

The Group agreed that consideration should be given to possible ideas and current good practice relating to fieldwork in the CSSAH. Examples from other institutions would also be helpful. Representatives from CSSAH were asked to report back in this regard. [ACTION R DICKINSON AND T DODMAN]

The Group noted that the feedback presented in the paper accompanying this topic (APC/SEEG/16/9) covered a vast spectrum of themes. The Group agreed that it would be useful to identify actions that had already been taken and those that could be distributed to appropriate colleagues for responses and actions. [ACTION SECRETARY]

16/M21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 2:00PM on Thursday 21 April 2016 in the Haldane Committee Room.