UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

STUDENT EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENT GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held on
Friday 28 May 2010

Present:

Ms C Fyfe (Chair)
Mrs L Bailey        Mr D Cox
Dr P Edirisingha (*vice* Professor Salmon)
Mr P Jackson        Ms L Jones
Dr M Rawlinson      Dr J Scott
Mr A Smith          Professor Thomas

In attendance: Mr A Nutt, Dr C Willmott (for the business recorded in minute 10/M17), Mrs L Masterman (Secretary) and Miss K Pountney (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Cashmore and Dr J Goodwin

UNRESERVED (ONLY) BUSINESS

10/M14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Group considered the minutes of a meeting held on 25 February 2010.

The Group approved the minutes as a correct record.

Arising from minute 10/M2 b), the Chair reported that the visit of the HEA link person had been postponed until a later date.

Arising from minute 10/M9, the Chair reported that Professor Salmon had contacted the HEA about the quality of the 2008-09 Annual Institutional Report and the HEA had apologised for the omissions and inaccuracies contained in it.

10/M15 CHAIR’S REPORT

The Chair reported that:

a) she had agreed that some changes should be introduced to the University Teaching Fellowship award scheme from 2011. The Chair outlined the main changes and reassured the Group that they would not alter the fundamental nature of the award. The Chair reported that a group comprising the Graduate Dean, the Professional Development Co-ordinator (*Academic Practice*) and the Academic Affairs Officer of the Students’ Union would meet to agree the proposed amendments to the Scheme. A detailed proposal would be considered at the Group’s next meeting;
b) half of the recent Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Committee away-day had been devoted to the consideration of matters relating to the international student experience. Several areas had been identified for further consideration;

c) the summer term open-forum meeting with course representatives held on 28 May had been very well attended. Course representatives’ questions had revealed that the University needed to do more to publicise how students could obtain help on visa-related issues. The Group was concerned to note that several questions had related to cheating in examinations. The Chair reported that this issue would be raised with the Academic Registrar and advised any department with concerns or comments on the issue to contact the Academic Registrar;

d) the Higher Education Academy had appointed Professor Craig Mahoney as its new Chief Executive;

e) the University had appointed Susan Lapworth, formally Academic Registrar at Brunel University, as Academic Registrar from September 2010.

10/M16 TIMETABLING AND TEACHING ROOM ALLOCATION 2010/11

The Chair reported that there would be particular pressure on teaching rooms in 2010/11. The Registrar was leading a working group considering the matter and the Academic Registrar and the Head of Registry were preparing a discussion paper for consideration by the Academic Policy Committee with proposals for how the pressures might be alleviated. The Committee would review the various policies in place that affect timetabling and teaching room allocation. The Chair reported that in the meantime refurbishment work had commenced on a number of rooms to make them more usable.

10/M17 CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE WORK OF STUDENT/STAFF COMMITTEES

The Group considered the proposed Code of Practice on the Work of Student/Staff Committees. It noted that the document had been prepared by the Student/Staff Committees Working Group and was a revision of the 2005 Guidelines on the Work of Student/Staff Committees. The Chair of the Working Group reported that the revised version tightened the guidance and brought the phraseology up-to-date but the fundamental principles of the previous document were unchanged.

The Group noted that the Academic Policy Committee would consider the Working Group’s strong recommendation that the document should be elevated to Code of Practice status.

The Group welcomed the revised document. It thanked Dr Willmott for chairing the meetings and commended the Working Group for its considerable efforts and the pleasingly high level of student involvement in the revision process. It noted that the Working Group would reconvene at an appropriate point in the next academic year to review how the new guidance had been received by departments and embedded into practice.

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10/M18 **ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKING GROUP**

The Group received a report of a meeting of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group held on 17 May 2010. The Chair of the Working Group reported that peer observation of marking returns were now due from departments. These would be reviewed and a summary of the responses prepared that identified examples of good practice. The Working Group would meet in July to discuss its next projects: self/peer assessment and turn-around times for marking.

10/M18 **LEARNING SPACES**

The Group noted that the Working Group’s activities dovetailed with the work on teaching room allocation referred to in minute 10/M16. The Group supported a proposal made by the Academic Affairs Officer of the Students’ Union to involve students in discussions about improvements to learning spaces.

10/M19 **PERSONAL TUTORS WORKING GROUP**

The Group noted that the next activity of the Working Group would involve a detailed review of the Guidelines on the University’s Personal Tutor System. It would consider, in particular, the organisational aspects of the current system.

The Group welcomed the planned review and encouraged the Working Group to collect qualitative information from staff and students about the features of the personal tutor system working well in their departments to use to inform any revisions to the Guidelines.

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

The Group received the minutes of a meeting of the Working Group on Student Employability held on 10 May 2010. The Working Group had discussed possibilities for holding practice interviews for students. These would be conducted by University staff who were experienced interviewers.

The Group was supportive of the initiative, regarding it as a valuable opportunity for students to practice their employment interviewing technique particularly for those with no prior experience of a formal interview. The Group acknowledged that there would be some differences in the interviewing style typical within the University to that in the private sector for instance. It would be important to be clear to students about the type of experience on offer.

10/M21 **WORKING GROUP FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

The Group received a report of a meeting of the Sustainability Working Group held on 11 March 2010. The Group noted that by the start of the new academic year five departmental reports should have been completed and two further review reports started.

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RECOGNITION OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE IN THE PROMOTION SYSTEM

The Chair reported that Professor Cashmore was in discussion with the Vice-Chancellor about the ways in which recognition of teaching excellence in the promotion system could be improved. Professor Cashmore had also discussed the issue with the HEA and an overseas institution.

FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The Group received the Executive Summary of the former Government’s Framework for Higher Education: *Higher Ambitions – The future of universities in a knowledge economy*.

TEACHING FUNDS APPROVALS GROUP (FUND FOR TEACHING ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS)

The Group received minutes of a meeting of the Teaching Funds Approvals Group held on Thursday 18 February 2010.

Duration of meeting: One hour and 15 minutes

CHAIR