

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 4 February 2009 at the Coleraine campus

PRESENT

Professor D A McAlister (Chair), Ms S Alexander, Dr D Barr, Professor N D Black, Professor S Boyd, Miss C Cochrane, Dr T Cook, Mrs H Farley, Mr A Freaney, Dr C Gormley-Heenan, Professor K Greenan, Mr I Hanna, Ms A Honan, Professor D Hunter, Professor R Hutchinson, Mr D McGivern, Mr M McKinney, Professor R J Millar, Professor A Moran, Professor P Ó Dochartaigh

APOLOGIES

Professor A Adair, Professor J M Allen, Professor R R Barnett, Mr M Beagan, Professor C Curran, Dr P J Lundy, Mr L McCurry, Professor I Montgomery

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs C G Avery, Mr A G Faulkner, Professor E M Lillie

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

Mr Hanna, the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment representative, and Dr Barr, the Faculty of Arts representative, were welcomed to their first meeting of the Committee.

09.1 MINUTES

Subject to the amendment of 'German' to 'Irish' in minute 08.234, the confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2008 were signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

09.2 BA Hons Creative Technologies (Min 08.206)

The Committee noted that a meeting had been held to discuss the course structure, assessment and group work arrangements in the final year of the BA Hons Creative Technologies programme. A resolution to these matters had been agreed with the two 60 point modules in the final year being replaced by three 20 point modules in Semester 1, one of which would have an element of group work, and a 20 point dissertation preparation module and a 40 point dissertation in Semester 2. The proposal would be included in the Faculty's response to the evaluation report. No further action was required of the Committee in this regard.

09.3 Invigilation at Belfast Campus (Min 08.207)

The Committee noted that the Director of Student Administration had advised that, with the introduction of 'Exam Scheduler' in 1997, the Academic Policy Committee had agreed that academic staff would be assigned randomly to invigilate examinations, with the result that some might invigilate examinations in their own subject area. In the case of Saturday morning examinations module co-ordinators were routinely assigned to invigilate their own examinations.

The Committee was content that the current arrangements based on random allocation and explicit assignment on Saturdays should continue.

09.4 Student Survey - Module Evaluation (Min 08.208)

Mrs Farley reported that the new online student survey had gone live on 16 January and that to date there had been a 70% response rate with 4,190 students having completed over 12,000 surveys. The Semester 1 survey would close on 13 February 2009. A communication would be sent to all academic and academic-related staff advising them that the aggregated quantitative results and qualitative responses would be available to module co-ordinators from the week beginning 16 February 2009. The timely availability of the information would allow module teams to consider any modifications and enhancements more promptly.

It was noted that consideration would be given to the form of higher-level reporting, taking account of the National Student Survey (NSS). The qualitative and quantitative analysis would be useful for the University in support of thematic lines of enquiry and development.

The very high response for the Semester 1 survey was welcomed and it was hoped that this would be maintained or improved upon in the Semester 2 survey.

The Chair expressed thanks to Mrs Farley and members of the Working Group for their work, and in particular Mr A Jaffrey, Access and Distributed Learning, and also to Mr A Trimble, Director of Information Services, for their substantial technical support and interventions which ensured the successful implementation of the online survey.

09.5 Campus Co-ordinating Group Annual Report 2007/8 (Min 08.233)

The Committee received the annual report of the Campus Co-ordinating Group report for the Coleraine campus (TLC/09/1).

It was noted that there had been a 42% increase in enrolments and that a positive report had been received from the Chief External Examiner.

It was noted that the Faculty of Arts was conducting a review of its programme provision and that the Group had noted that the addition of further subjects might complicate timetabling arrangements. The Dean assured the Committee that there were unlikely to be significant changes in its provision at the Coleraine campus but that some enhancements at Magee would be considered. The Faculty agreed to consult with the Campus Directors of Combined Studies

regarding its proposals to ensure that any implications for current combinations would be considered.

Mr McCurry had reported that an investigation of timetabling in Semester 1 had revealed no serious issues for modular combined provision at Magee campus. It was only slightly more problematic for integrated programmes. This matter had been raised in the report of the Themed Audit and referred to the Campus Co-ordinating Groups (min 08.140 refers).

09.6 Associate Student Status (Min 08.243)

The Chair reported on progress on a number of matters relating to the introduction of the status of Associate Student from 2009/10.

At the December meeting, the Committee had asked Student Administration to make arrangements for the more timely provision of identity cards. Dr Scott had highlighted the role of the Finance Department, which required all capitation fees to be paid by colleges before releasing registration forms to Student Administration, and suggested that the departments involved in card production should meet to discuss arrangements. The Chair advised that she would refer this matter to Professor Allen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Information and Student Services), to take forward.

The Committee had also asked the Director of Finance to report on the review of the fee structures for collaborative courses as a matter of urgency, taking account of the cost of ID cards. The Chair would remind Finance that this was residual business from a Value for Money Working Group report of 2007 and should be led by the Finance Department.

It was noted that Information Services Department was progressing the necessary revisions to the Library regulations and would clarify any licensing restrictions.

09.7 Variations within University Regulatory Framework: BSc Hons Dietetics (Min 08.245)

The Committee at its December meeting had agreed to recommend to Senate two variations, one of which related to a proposed amendment to the consequences of failure in final year. Since then the Course Approval Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 15 January 2009, had received the report of the revalidation panel and Faculty proposals regarding the departures.

The Sub-Committee had endorsed the proposal that the model of two 60-point clinical placements in the final year be re-structured to two 50 point modules and one 20-point synoptic module. The Committee noted that the Faculty had now brought forward a further proposal to replace the 20-point synoptic module with two 10-point modules to ensure that students would achieve a pass in the different aspects of competence in line with HPC standards and the professional body's curriculum framework. Consequently it was necessary to revise the previously agreed exception in Honours degree regulations. This restriction would also apply in the Postgraduate Diploma in Dietetics.

AGREED: that it be recommended to Senate that the following replacement be made to clause 26 of the Honours degree regulations:

'In Year 4 of the BSc Hons Dietetics, candidates shall be permitted to repeat in modules up to a value of 70 credit points once only.'

CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

09.8 Wednesday Afternoon Teaching

The Chair reported that the Sports' Union President had written to Professor Allen following a complaint about timetabled classes in the 12.15 – 1.15 pm slot on Wednesday afternoons. It was noted that Senate had previously agreed that there would normally be no afternoon teaching on Wednesdays in order to facilitate participation in sports (or other leisure activities) and that practice had been to timetable classes up to 1.15 pm. Exceptions were permissible later in the afternoon.

Professor Allen had advised that the rule appeared to be problematic and asked for the Committee's view. Some concern was expressed that a change in practice would have significant timetabling implications with the current 12.15 – 1.15 pm slot having to be re-scheduled in the rest of the week, and that such a change was not likely to be popular among the majority of students and staff. One option might be to permit seminars to be timetabled, but not core lectures. The Committee recognised that this matter warranted further consideration, in view of the University's priority for sport in its Corporate Plan.

AGREED:

- i) that there would be merit in consulting more widely on this matter, given the implications for the student body as a whole, and that this should be led by Information and Student Services Committee, with recommendations to Senate, as appropriate;
- ii) that it be suggested to Professor Allen that the Sports Union President be invited to attend the meeting which would discuss the matter.

09.9 DEL: Review of Variable Fees and Student Finance

The Chair reported that DEL had announced that it would be undertaking an independent review of variable fees and student finance in the current academic year and that Ms J Stuart, current chairperson of the Institute of Directors in Northern Ireland, had agreed to act as independent chairperson for the review. Professor McAlister would represent the University on the review steering group which comprised appropriate stakeholders.

09.10 Student Employability Conference

A conference on innovation in supporting student employability would be held on 7 May 2009 at the Jordanstown campus which would involve Dr P Hawkins and Mr K Hermann as keynote speakers. The Chair encouraged attendance at the conference.

09.11 COURSE APPROVAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Professor McAlister presented the report of the meeting held on 15 January 2009 (TLC/09/2).

09.12 Course Approval (Item 1)

The Committee noted that eight evaluation/revalidation reports had been considered. Three new programmes with January 2009 starts had been approved by Chair's action as follows:

PgCert/Dip/MSc Hydrogen Safety Engineering;
PgDip/MSc Cataract and Refractive Surgery (Theory);
CertHE in Policing (PSNI).

The Committee noted revisions approved by Faculties and withdrawals.

The Sub-Committee had noted the Ulster Business School's proposal to convert the MSc Innovation Management in the Public Service from a joint award with HETAC to an Ulster award only and for Ulster to be solely responsible for delivery from the January 2009 intake, owing to insufficient recruitment at Letterkenny Institute of Technology. The Ulster Business School had since advised that the change would not now be implemented but would be retained as a contingency, as Letterkenny Institute has agreed to underwrite its contribution.

The Committee noted that the evaluation of the proposed MSc Health Psychology had been deferred to 2009/10 for a January or September 2010 start date and that the Ulster Business School had advised that the evaluation of the Certificate/Diploma in Services Management Practice would not now proceed.

09.13 Submission of Final Documents (Item 3)

The Committee noted that Faculties were continuing to work to clear outstanding documents.

09.14 Revalidation Schedule 2009/10 (Item 4)

The Committee noted that the Sub-Committee had approved a proposal from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences to bring forward the revalidation of units 22C1 and 22C2 (postgraduate/Nursing) from 2009/10 to the current academic year. For the Ulster Business School, the revalidation of the FdSc Hospitality and Tourism at SERC (Bangor) had also been brought forward to the current academic year.

AGREED:

- i) that the course provision be approved and re-approved as set out in the Appendix;
- ii) that it be recommended to Senate:

- a) that the following changes of title be approved:

<u>Old</u>	<u>New</u>
BA Hons Literature	BA Hons English Literature (from 2008/9)
Diploma in Belfast: The Social and Cultural History of a Changing City	Diploma in the Family and Community History of the Belfast Area: 1600 – 2000 (from 2009/10)

- b) that the following one-year extensions to periods of approval be approved:

Undergraduate Honours subject: American Studies (Unit 14D)	– to include the 2009 intake.
PgDip/MSc Bioinformatics	– up to January 2010, but with suspension of full-time and part-time intakes.
MClinRes	– to include the 2009 intake, but with suspension of intakes.

- iii) that the proposals regarding outcentre provision in units 15A1 and 15A2: Hospitality, Leisure and Consumer Studies (Ug/CE/JN/Outcentres) be approved, subject to clarification of some matters by the Faculty.

09.15 BSc Hons ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

The Committee received the accreditation report of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologies (CIAT) and noted that the University's status as an Accredited Centre for Learning and Teaching in Architectural Technology had been re-approved for a further five years from October 2008. CIAT had confirmed that graduates would continue to meet fully the requirements for Associate Membership.

The Committee welcomed the report and noted the comprehensive and positive response provided by Mr G Alexander, Course Director.

In terms of CIAT's recommendations, it was noted that the Faculty would ensure through its internal monitoring processes that the course content and projects remained current and diverse and would expand upon the theme of sustainability. There would also be as much engagement as possible with industry. It was

noted that a new member of staff who had taken up a post in January 2009 would contribute to the development of the programme.

The Chair extended congratulations to Professor H Elkadi, Mr Alexander, and the course team for the successful outcome of the accreditation review.

09.16 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Chair reported that NICENT's annual report would be considered, along with a report on activity in semester 1 of the current academic year, at the April meeting.

Invest Northern Ireland funding for NICENT would end in March 2009. Project objectives to embed entrepreneurship in the curriculum in the SET and non-SET subject areas had been met. The Committee noted NICENT's, and in particular Professor McGowan's contribution, to the success of the initiative and the positive external evaluation report by BDO Stoy-Hayward consultants.

The Committee recognised the excellent progress made to date and noted that, in the absence of continuation funding, it was now incumbent upon Faculties to ensure that activities were mainstreamed.

Given that the training currently undertaken by NICENT would not be available from the end of April, Faculties were encouraged to seek support from NICENT staff for specific activities in the period remaining.

AGREED: that consideration for enhancements and future staff development needs be integrated with the overarching Skills Strategy, as part of the deliberations arising from the Skills Strategy Working Group, chaired by Professor Ó Dochartaigh, and in time be subject to evaluation.

09.17 REVIEW OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: OUTSTANDING MATTERS

The Committee, at its meeting in October 2008, had set up a working group to consider three outstanding matters from the 2007/8 review of the regulatory framework (min 08.189 refers).

Mr McKinney, Chair of the Working Group, presented paper TLC/09/5 which summarised the views of the Working Group and set out proposals in regard to condonement, classification and the modular framework. The Committee noted that the consultation paper had been circulated to Faculties and an online survey of all academic members of staff was to be launched shortly. Responses to the proposals were invited by 20 March 2009. Mr A Jaffrey was thanked for his technical expertise in facilitating the survey.

A special meeting of the Committee would be held on 8 April 2009 (Jordanstown, 11.00 am) to consider the responses and proposals in detail so that recommendations could be made to Senate in time for implementation in 2009/10.

Members were invited to give their initial views on the main proposals.

09.18 Condonement

The Committee broadly welcomed the proposal to abolish condonement of failure, and to revise the existing definition for passing a module, so that it included a minimum standard of not less than 5% below the overall pass threshold in each assessment element (coursework and examination).

It was noted that condonement was not considered fully compatible with an outcomes-based model of achievement. Course teams could continue to specify a pass standard in each assessment element if required. The simplified rules would be clearer to students and staff and easier to apply at Boards of Examiners.

09.19 Award Classifications

The Committee noted the proposal that the classification of Honours degrees be normally determined exclusively by the student's average performance in the 120 credits of modules studied at the highest level (Level 6 [3]). Any deviation from this rule, to meet professional body requirements, or for other reasons, would require formal consideration by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

The Working Group had considered that the current divergent views derived in part from a lack of clarity about which the summary classification was intended to indicate, either average performance across the whole or most of the period of study or so-called 'exit velocity'. It was proposed that the University should explicitly state that at Ulster final summary judgements were determined by students' achievement in their most recent work at the most challenging level. This would give the most representative assessment of current and potential performance.

The Committee noted that the Burgess review had concluded that summary classifications were not fit for purpose and should in time be replaced by a comprehensive profile, which was now being developed through the ongoing work on the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). Mr McGivern reported that some employers would be particularly interested in the marks achieved in specialist modules and not just the overall degree classification obtained. It was noted that basing classification on final level modules would reduce the difficulties associated with transferring marks awarded by other institutions for a student admitted with advanced standing. Some members stressed the value of a year 2 contribution, as it was thought to motivate students. Others, however, reported that there was research to indicate that a second year contribution could actually reduce classification and that it was a normal pattern of study in undergraduate degrees for student effort to slacken in the second year.

The Working Group also proposed that the classification of Honours degrees be determined exclusively by the average mark at Level 6 [3] with modules weighted according to their credit value, removing the requirement for at least half the credits in or above the class. This would address the small number of anomalies where students did not show breadth of achievement but met the overall average. Although significant polarisation of module marks was rare, a view was given that it remained appropriate to consider the whole module profile of a student.

The Working Group proposed to extend the principle of classification on the basis of final level studies to all other awards. The current rule in courses with fewer than 200 credits was that all modules (regardless of level) counted.

09.20 Modular Framework

The Working Group had confirmed that the current principles for the operation of the modular framework were sound and no proposals for change had been made.

AGREED:

- i) that Mr McKinney and members of the Working Group be thanked for the work to date;
- ii) that Faculties should debate the proposals widely;
- iii) that the Working Group give consideration to consultation with student groups.

09.21 STUDENT TRANSITION AND RETENTION (STAR)

Dr Cook presented the 2009 STAR Report (TLC/09/6) and the booklet 'STAR Projects – Embedding Good Practice'. The paper set out the findings of the HEA project and included a list of case studies, other publications and a summary of dissemination activities. The Committee noted that at the University the project had supported the implementation of the first year transition guidelines through the sponsorship of STAR fellowships, raised awareness of Peer Assisted Student Sessions (PASS) (supplemental instruction) and sponsored the training of PASS supervisors.

While the causes of poor student retention were multi-dimensional, two main factors were identified. These were poor student preparation for higher education, and a poor understanding of student support and the assessment schemes in higher education.

In addition, social reasons played an important role. Although recognising a changed attitude among students to campus life and the social support networks it developed, it was acknowledged that the University and the Students' Union should consider further the social spaces and activities on campus and that support from University academic staff would be helpful to provide continuity in the running of Clubs and Societies. The Students' Union accepted that the lack of such social activities was an issue, but limited staff resources had an impact on the Union's ability to support them.

The Chair commended the excellent work of the project and recognised that the challenge was now in applying its findings across the University.

09.22 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Mr McGivern presented, on behalf of Mr V McNair, chair of the PDP Forum, the revised draft Personal Development Planning Policy (TLC/09/7).

The Committee noted that the policy had been updated by the Forum following the publication of new PDP guidelines from the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA). It was noted that no major change in direction was proposed and that the revisions sought to embed the PDP Forum as a key support agency in the University, included subject benchmarks as guides to PDP activity and promoted collaboration with subject centres, the HEA and other organisations.

Mr McGivern advised that, following consultation with Faculties, the PDP strategy would be updated and considered by the Forum at its May meeting and forwarded to the Committee in June.

AGREED: that the revised PDP Policy be endorsed.

09.23 DEVELOPMENT OF A TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT CHARTER

The Committee noted that the Charter Review Group, a sub-committee of the Academic Development and Enhancement Committee, had established a Working Group to draft a support charter for teaching and learning. Professor Hunter, chair of the Working Group, presented the draft Charter (TLC/09/8) which drew on the main Student Charter and the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The Committee welcomed the Charter and the use of additional text in boxes to clarify important aspects of teaching and learning. A number of minor drafting points were proposed. It was also suggested that the reference to opportunities being provided to develop numeracy and literacy (page 2) be reviewed, given that the proposed unit had not yet been set up, and that the expectation that students complete module evaluation should be included. The Committee noted that the Review Group would consider how students would receive the Charter, for example in course and student handbooks and electronically.

AGREED: that, subject to drafting amendments, the Committee's endorsement of the Charter be conveyed to the Charter Review Group.

09.24 STUDENT COMPETITION

The Committee, at its meeting in February 2008, had agreed that a review of the operation of the 2008 Student Competition should be undertaken by the Project Team and a report forwarded to the Committee for consideration.

The Committee noted that thirteen entries had been received. The three awards had been presented in June 2008 with the winning entries published on the Centre for Higher Education Practice website, together with a summary of key points selected from all entries. These had been used in staff development workshops to guide teaching staff on student views regarding feedback practice.

The Committee noted the following topics for the 2009 Competition, which had a closing date of 27 February 2009:

“If I could do it all again..... the advice I would give a new student”.

“How I was inspired to choose my course of study at university”.

AGREED:

- i) that Faculties encourage student entries in 2009;
- ii) that publication of winning entries in the *INSIDE* magazine be considered;
- iii) that consideration be given to ‘social learning spaces’ as a possible topic in the 2010 competition;
- iv) that Dr S Maguire and her colleagues be thanked for their work in relation to the competition.

09.25 NEW PRIZE

The Committee received paper TLC/09/10 which proposed a new prize in the Faculty of Computing and Engineering - The Asidua Scholarship (value £25k).

AGREED: that it be recommended to Council, through the Communication and External Affairs Committee, that the prize be approved.

Duration 2 hours 20 minutes

12 February 2009

AGF/CA/lh

COURSE APPROVAL

FACULTY	COURSE TITLE	MODE		INTAKES	CAMPUS	MAX COHORT SIZE (Partner)	
		FT	PT			FT	PT
Art, Design and the Built Environment	PgCert/PgDip/MSc Hydrogen Safety Engineering		√	2009 – 2010 (Jan 09 start)	DL with some face-to-face teaching in the form of block sessions delivered at different venues in different countries.		
	PgDip/MSc Hydrogen Safety Engineering (with PgCert exit award)	√	√				
	MSc Hydrogen Safety Engineering (with PgCert and PgDip exit awards)	√	√				
Computing and Engineering	BSc Hons Financial Engineering	√		2009 – 2012	CE		
Life and Health Sciences	PgDip/MSc Cataract and Refractive Surgery (Theory) (with Postgraduate Certificate exit award)		√	2009 – 2012 (Jan 09 start)	DL		

COURSE RE-APPROVAL

FACULTY	REVAL UNIT	COURSE TITLE	MODE		INTAKES	CAMPUS	MAX COHORT SIZE (Partner)	
			FT	PT			FT	PT
Arts	14A	Diploma in the Family and Community History of the Belfast Area: 1600-2000 (with Certificate exit award)		√	2009 – 2013	BT		
		BA Hons History	√	√		CE		
		Undergraduate Honours Subject: History (Major/Main/Minor)	√	√		SRC (Newry) [Level 3 modules - outcentre] CE		

FACULTY	REVAL UNIT	COURSE TITLE	MODE		INTAKES	CAMPUS	MAX COHORT SIZE (Partner)	
			FT	PT			FT	PT
Life and Health Sciences	3D	BSc Hons Dietetics	√		2009 – 2013	CE		
		BSc Hons Food and Nutrition (with DIS/DAS)	√			CE		
		BSc Hons Human Nutrition (with DIS/DAS)	√			CE		
		PgDip/MSc Dietetics	√	√		CE [PT – MSc Project only]		
		PgDip/MSc Human Nutrition	√	√		CE		
	12B	PgDip/MSc Coastal Zone Management (with PgCert exit award)		√	2009 – 2013 [two intakes per annum for DL programmes]	DL		
		PgDip/MSc Environmental Management (with PgCert exit award)		√		DL		
		PgDip/MSc Environmental Toxicology and Pollution Monitoring (with PgCert exit award)		√		DL		
		PgDip/MSc Geographic Information Systems (with PgCert exit award)	√	√	CE – full-time only [one intake per annum] DL – part-time only			
Social Sciences	26L	Certificate of Higher Education in Policing	√		2009 – 2012 (Jan 09 start)	PSNI Training College, Garnerville (validated)		

FACULTY	REVAL UNIT	COURSE TITLE	MODE		INTAKES	CAMPUS	MAX COHORT SIZE (Partner)	
			FT	PT			FT	PT
Ulster Business School	5G	Master of Business Administration (MBA) (with PgDip in Management Studies exit award)	√	√	2009 - 2013	JN (FT & PT) ME (PT only)		
		Master of Business Studies (MBS) (with PgDip in Business Studies exit award)	√			JN		
		MSc Sport Management (with PgDip in Sport Management exit award)	√			JN		

COURSE WITHDRAWALS

FACULTY	COURSE	LOCATION
Art, Design and the Built Environment	HND Building Engineering	Northern Regional College (Ballymena campus) (validated)
Arts	CertHE in Humanities BA Hons History and Politics PgDip/MA History	South West College (Enniskillen campus) (validated) ME BT
Computing and Engineering	FdEng Telecommunications	Northern Regional College (Newtownabbey campus) (validated)
Social Sciences	Undergraduate Hons Subject: Social Policy (Major/Main/Minor)	ME
Ulster Business School	Advanced Diploma in Management Practice [Capita Life and Pensions (6077)]	JN
	Advanced Diploma in Management Practice [Explorers and Connections (1926)]	JN