

Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016 at Coleraine Campus.

Present: Mrs N Cameron, Mr J Curran, Mr L Curran, Mrs C Davison,  
Mrs L Lavery, Mrs S McCall, Mr D McDowell, Mrs D McElwee,  
Mrs T Millar, Mrs H Miller, Mrs M Paris (Chair), Ms C Reid.

Apologies: Mrs J Alleyne, Dr M Keenan, Professor D McAlister,  
Mr J Marley, Mr P Quinn, Mrs M Sowney.

In Attendance: Mr H Deighan, Mrs C McIntyre (for min 16.47), Ms K Moore (for  
min 16.58), Mrs C Murphy (for min 16.62), Ms R Roberts.

## MINUTES

16.42 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2016 were approved.

## MATTERS ARISING

16.43 Outcomes from the 2014/15 Annual Course Review (Min 16.26)

The QMAU forwarded to SPMs the contact details of the member of staff in partner institutions with overall responsibility for ensuring all information is approved by the University prior to publication.

Some Course Directors are still forwarding information to individual SPMs and HE Co-ordinators were asked to remind staff that information for approval should come through the named contact within the College.

16.44 Course Consolidations (Min 16.27)

SPMs reviewed the information provided to students affected by the course consolidations at Ulster University and reported on this in their SPM report.

16.45 Library Services (Min 16.36)

HE Co-ordinators confirmed that Associate Students have now been informed that they no longer have access to the University's electronic resources.

Agreed: that if they have not already done so then SPMs liaise with their Faculty Sub-Librarian to advise Course Directors of databases relevant to their subject areas and confirm that this has been done at the next meeting.

## CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### 16.46 Forum Papers

The Chair informed that the Forum agenda, papers and minutes will now be made available on the QMAU website

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/spmforum.html>.

### 16.47 Affiliate Staff

Affiliate staff status will be renewed for a further year from 30 October 2016. HE Co-ordinators were reminded that outstanding renewals lists for Affiliate Staff status should be forwarded as soon as possible to Mrs Cathy McIntyre. If renewal advice has not been received for any current affiliate staff, accounts will be removed with effect from 30 October 2016 as per University guidelines.

Subject Partnership Managers were reminded that applications for Affiliate Staff status should be entered onto the RAD system as soon as possible after receipt.

### 16.48 Annual Course Review

HE Co-ordinators were reminded that the annual course review submissions were due by Friday 23 September 2016.

### 16.49 Staff Development Event

The Chair noted that three successful staff development events have been held since the last meeting, namely the Chairing of Boards of Examiners, a workshop on responding to external examiners' reports and a one-off event to train new course directors. The material for the new course directors event can be accessed at <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/collaborative.html>.

### 16.50 Distinguished Service Team Award

The Chair informed the Forum that the QMAU have been successful in the nomination for a Distinguished Service Team Award. The award ceremony will take place in December 2016.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

### 16.51 Members received paper CPF/16/21 on the updated Terms of Reference and membership of the Forum. The University is currently undergoing major restructuring and at this stage it is unclear which Committee the Forum will report to.

The Terms of Reference and membership will be reviewed during the year as the new Committee structures bed in.

## DATES OF MEETINGS 2016/17

- 16.52 Members received a paper detailing the dates and venues for meeting in the 2016/17 academic year.

## REVIEW OF COLLEGE PLAGIARISM POLICIES

- 16.53 Members considered paper CPF/16/27 summarizing the findings from the review of the Plagiarism Policy in place in partner institutions.

The key elements absent from some policies were a full definition of plagiarism and a framework of penalties for plagiarism offences. Partner Institutions are asked to address the issues identified where appropriate. Few policies referred to a plagiarism register, to enable the tracking of offences, and the monitoring of the phenomenon across an institution. All colleges are requested to establish a central plagiarism register.

Members suggested that a workshop could be held on the preparation of coursework briefs to eliminate the possibility of plagiarism.

Agreed: that HE Co-ordinators update their Plagiarism Policy in line with the findings in the paper and resubmit them to Mrs C McIntyre in the QMAU.

## PROGRESSION FROM ACCESS COURSES

- 16.54 Members considered paper CPF/16/23 on progression from Access courses by Faculty.

An analysis of progression in 2015/16 was conducted, which focused on 2014/15 data when there were 1286 students registered on 30 courses.

Members noted with concern the low level of progression to Ulster University (97 in total, of which 78 progressed to full-time, and 19 part-time). The evidence would suggest that the majority of Access students aspire to progress onto Social Work, Nursing and other Health-related programmes. Anecdotally, it appears that some may go to universities in England and Wales as they cannot get into universities here. A number go to higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

The analysis of the data shows that courses with small numbers tend to see higher levels of progression. However, the data does not show how many students applied to Ulster University but were unsuccessful.

While it is possible to track Access students progressing to Ulster University it is not easy to get information on students who progress to other higher education institutions as currently no final destination/leavers survey is undertaken. DEL instigated a pilot final destination survey but the current status of this initiative is unclear.

Members agreed that at both University and Faculty level a range of marketing activities takes place which are targeted at Access students. It was felt that this could be better co-ordinated with perhaps input from the Forum.

- Agreed:
- i) that SPM attempt to identify and analyse data within their own Faculty on the number of Access students who apply to Ulster University and are unsuccessful;
  - ii) that HE Coordinators attempt to identify institutional information on destinations of Access students;
  - iii) that Mr P Quinn be asked to report on current marketing activity targeted at Access students;
  - iv) that the Chair write to Department for the Economy (DfE) regarding the status of the final destination pilot.

## HLA SURVEY OF ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRESSION

16.55 Members considered paper CPF/16/24 a review of the use of fast track part-time Foundation degree courses for higher level apprenticeships.

In 2015/16 there were 28 versions of fast track part-time Foundation degrees listed on the programme database, based on a total of 19 distinct programmes. The fast-track route differs from the normal part-time route as students take 120 credits over three semesters in two years. The fast-track route was originally designed for what might be termed academic high fliers, in other words, applicants who had high UCAS tariff (although not high enough for entry to the University course), who were in relevant employment, and who were deemed capable of undertaking full-time work and what is effectively a full-time study load, continuously over two years.

A Working Group was established to undertake a small survey of three part-time fast track courses, in order to track the progress of the 2015/16 cohort, and compare progress with entry requirements to see if a correlation between entry requirements and progression could be established. Three colleges were asked to provide information on entry grades for the first year fast track cohorts on the Foundation Degrees in Engineering, Sustainable Construction, and Applied Industrial Sciences. The Partnership Managers were to track progress at the Boards of Examiners in September. Information was received for the FdEng in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, and the FdEng in Electrical and Electronic Engineering in Northern Regional College, the FdSc in Applied Industrial Sciences in Southern Regional College, and the FdSc in Sustainable Construction in South West College.

A review of the three courses is summarised below:

<b>Progress Decision</b>	<b>Total Students</b>
Fail/ Withdraw (U1, L1 or LOA)	12
Non-progressing (N3)	8
Progressing with max 20 failed credits (P3)	10
Clean Progression (P1)	24
<i>Total enrolled</i>	<i>54</i>

Hence, in crude percentages, 22% of students failed or withdrew, 14% were unable to progress and will have to repeat the year in part, and a worrying 19% progressed carrying failed modules which if not passed on the final attempt will result in the loss of both the Foundation Degree, and a lower exit CertHE award. Only 44% progressed cleanly, which is a disappointing result, especially as it indicates that 56% of students, the majority, had issues with progression on the courses. From

these results it can be assumed that there is no correlation between asking grades and success.

Members agreed that the results from the survey highlighted that many students are unable to cope with the demands of full-time work and full-time study. As a result they are having a poor student learning experience.

The DfE is reluctant to deviate from their 2 year higher apprenticeship model which means that for funding students must complete their studies within two years.

The Faculty of Computing and Engineering concluded that Colleges should either adopt the normal part-time mode of study for Foundation degrees, or spread the teaching over two full days instead of one day. The other Faculties will reflect on these findings and report back to the Forum.

Members were advised that this University will have to consider further the issues surrounding the approval of fast track part-time Foundation degrees.

#### NEW TARIFF POINTS FOR NI ACCESS DIPLOMAS FOR 2017 ENTRY

- 16.56 Members received paper CPF/16/25 showing the new UCAS tariff for Access Diplomas for entry into higher education for 2017. The awarding of UCAS tariff is a significant milestone, especially as Access Diplomas in England and Wales do not accrue tariff.

Members were informed that UCAS has completed an assessment of Northern Ireland Access Diplomas and has aligned them with the new tariff table. This will have implications in relation to the University's equivalence tables which are currently under review.

#### ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR ASSOCIATE STUDENTS

- 16.57 Members considered paper CPF/16/26 from the Working Group investigating a process for facilitating online registration for Associate Students.

Members were reminded that the pilot for online applications is based on two stages; online applications and subsequent module enrolments. The two courses identified for the pilot are the FdSc Business Information Technology at NRC and the FdSc Interactive Design at BMC.

The online application process is currently underway with enrolment forms, with the relevant modules pre-populated, due to be sent out to the Course Directors from the Collaborative Courses Unit (CCU). The standard University enrolment form is being used, rather than the amended CCU form. It was noted that over 80% of information on the admissions applications received matched the information on the UCAS application.

The next stage of the process will involve the selection of modules. Staff from the CCU and SPMs will go out to Colleges to assist students to register their modules online.

Members noted that an additional benefit of online applications is that students will get their student cards earlier.

If the pilot is successful it is the intention that online enrolments will be rolled out to all courses from next year.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATION

- 16.58 The Chair informed that at the last meeting of the Academic Development and Enhancement Committee (ADEC) it was agreed that the President of the NWRC Students' Union be invited to the next meeting of the Forum to discuss issues relating to student representation.

Members were advised that the president of NWRC Students' Union has left the College. However, the Head of Student Services at NWRC, Ms K Moore, provided an oral report on student representation within the College.

Ms Moore informed members that NWRC is currently in the process of restructuring its Students' Union. The College is meeting with representatives from the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to discuss how this might best be achieved. The College is looking at the possibility of introducing a full-time Sabbatical Officer and this will be considered as part of the overall restructuring of the Students' Union.

Ms Moore agreed to come back to the Forum at a later date to update members of the outcome of the restructuring of the Students' Union within the College.

## MANAGEMENT OF SUBJECT NETWORKS

- 16.59 Members received paper CPF/16/27 on updated guidelines for the management of subject networks.

A Subject Network is a specialisation of validated provision: it refers to the situation where the same validated programme operates at a number of different partner institutions. This is the University's preferred model for collaborative activity.

The only change to the guidelines is a more detailed calendar of annual activities.

## RETENTION AND PROGRESSION DATA

- 16.60 Members received paper CPF/16/28 on retention and progression.

Members were advised that as part of the HEFCE revised operating model for quality assurance the University has to report on its quality assurance processes, in particular how these processes improve the experience of students.

This paper analysed data on retention and progression within partner institutions.

### i) Retention

Student retention refers to the extent to which learners remain within a higher education institution, and complete a programme of study within a pre-determined time-period.

Within Ulster University non-continuation (attrition) includes early leavers, non-returners and fails. The University's HESA benchmark for attrition is 8.1%.

The data (with overall retention across all Colleges ranging from 5.6% to 16.7%) demonstrates that retention is not a major problem with most Colleges meeting, or close to, the HESA benchmark set for the University. Members noted the difference in retention between full and part-time courses. This is normal within the higher education sector and similar discrepancies occur in programmes offered within the University.

Attrition rates for Access provision are higher, ranging from 15.7% to 25%, but again this is normal within the sector due primarily to the profile and background of students enrolling on these programmes.

Agreed:        i) that a benchmark of 10% attrition be set for HE provision  
                  ii) that a benchmark of 20% attrition be set for Access provision

## ii) Progression

The key output from any course is the number of successful students who progress between years, or to completion. The University has two success measurements.

Success 1:  $(\text{Proceed} + \text{Award}) / (\text{Total} - (\text{Early Leavers} + \text{LOA} + \text{Non-Returners}))$   
Success 2:  $(\text{Proceed} + \text{Award}) / (\text{Total})$

The data available for both success measurements for 2015/16 (as at June 2016) shows a marked difference between Colleges. For example, Success 1 data for full-time students across Colleges ranges from 74.4% to 36%. For part-time students the figures range from 71.1% to 38.3%. The average across all seven Colleges for Success 1 is 53.3% for full-time, and 57.8% for part-time provision.

Looking at the data for Success 2 the average across all Colleges for full-time provision is 49.2% and 48.6% for part-time mode of delivery.

A similar pattern emerges for Access provision. The range for Success 1 for those Colleges offering full-time Access programmes is 80.0% to 33.8%. For part-time provision the range is 78.9% to 20.1%. The average for Success 1 is 64.2% for full-time and 46.1% for part-time provision.

The range for Success 2 across the 5 Colleges is 57.6% to 28.8% for full-time, and 56.3% to 15.5% for part-time provision. The average is 49.8% for full-time and 33.8% for part-time programmes.

The data highlights a significant difference in the success rates between Colleges for both HE programmes and Access provision. There is also a marked difference in success rates between full-time and part-time modes of study.

Members considered what action should be taken to address programmes with poor progression. One approach is to look at courses with poor success rates and drill down to the module level, and prepare an action plan to redress any problems identified. However, it is up to individual course teams to identify why students are failing to progress and address the problem within that particular programme.

- Agreed:
- i) that the QMAU provide HE Co-ordinators with progression data for all programmes within their College.
  - ii) that Colleges select courses at risk, investigate the problem, and prepare an action plan.

## MARKETING WORKING GROUP

16.61 Members received an oral update on current marketing activity. This includes:

- All Colleges were sent communications regarding Open Days across all three campuses. In addition, further communication will be sent regarding the Belfast campus open event ([ulster.ac.uk/openevents](http://ulster.ac.uk/openevents)) and information events taking place over the coming months ([www.ulster.ac.uk/informationevents](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/informationevents)).
- The Recruitment Manager is happy to work in conjunction with the Colleges to assist in any queries prior to prospectuses being sent for printing.
- Communication and presentation to all first and second year associate students:
  - Three first year presentations already provided with NRC and offer to all other colleges sent out. Presentations for first year will focus on their entitlements as an associate student
  - Second year presentation focuses upon entry in to Ulster.
- The associate student section of the website has been fully updated and will continue to be updated during the year (<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/ulster-life/study-at-ulster/associate-students>).
- All Colleges have been provided access to Edlink, our career teacher portal. There are some additional pieces of work required to display information correctly across multiple campuses, however this work is on going.
- Updates on progression routes are required to update the content on the landing page.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

16.62 Members received paper CPF/16/29 a draft agenda for the annual staff development conference at CAFRE on 21 October 2016.

The theme for this year is 'Quality of Information on Higher Education Provision'. The keynote speaker will be a representative from the QAA, with other sessions including Transition to HE, an overview of Project 10, Library Services and three examples of good practice within Colleges.

Mrs Murphy provided members with an update of the Project 10 pilot at SRC.

## MATTERS ARISING FROM INFORMATION PAPERS

16.63 Members received information papers from SPMs and HE Co-ordinators on matters relating to collaborative activity.



With regard to a query concerning Level 2 Essential Skills the Chair reaffirmed the University's position that students on all programmes approved by Ulster University must have GCSE English grade C, or a University-approved equivalent. The Maths requirement is more subject-specific and is agreed at a Faculty level; however, most Faculties do not accept Level 2 Essential Skills in Application of Number.

Agreed: that HE Coordinators would forward to QMAU a list of courses for 2017 entry by College and SPMs would indicate general and faculty entry requirements where requested.

Clarification was sought regarding annual course review submission from courses offered on multiple sites in the same college.

The Chair confirmed that the University does not require separate submissions and that it would be preferable to review the course overall, with cohort data presented separately in the statistical analysis section. There is an expectation that there is one course committee, and one staff-student consultative committee. Both the external examiner and the partnership manager send one report each, with differentiation between campuses specified within that one report only if necessary. Comparability of standards across campuses can be assured by this mechanism. The submission of a single report is standard practice in other Colleges where the same course runs across multiple campuses.

A number of HE Co-ordinators expressed concern that some students, particularly on FdSc programmes, exit with a CertHE and enter Year 1 of an Hons degree programme at Ulster University or QUB. If this practice continues it will impact on the viability of the Foundation degree. The Registry Office noted that there were no CertHE offers specified in the standard offer library, so it was not common practice to make CertHE offers.

The Chair confirmed that the CertHE is not an entry requirement for any programme at Ulster University and she would be concerned that students were being advised to apply in this manner. She asked HE Co-ordinators to provide examples of courses where this was happening.

As there were no other matters the papers were taken as read.

Duration: 1 hr 55 minutes

ACTION SHEET

	MINUTE	ACTION	ACTION BY	DEADLINE
1	16.45	that if they have not already done so then SPMs liaise with their Faculty Sub-Librarian to advise Course Directors of databases relevant to their subject areas and confirm that this has been done at the next meeting.	SPM	28/10/16
2	16.53	that HE Co-ordinators update their Plagiarism Policy in line with the findings in the paper and resubmit them to Mrs C McIntyre in the QMAU.	HE Co-ordinators	28/10/16
3	16.54	i) that SPM attempt to identify and analyse data within their own Faculty on the number of Access students who apply to Ulster University and are unsuccessful; ii) that HE Co-ordinators attempt to identify institutional information on destinations of Access students. iii) that Mr P Quinn be asked to report on current Marketing activity targeted at Access students' iv) that the Chair write to Department for the Economy (DfE) regarding the status of the final destination pilot.	SPMs	30/11/16
			HE Co-ordinators	30/11/16
			Mr P Quinn	30/11/16
			Mrs M Paris	28/10/16
4	16.60	i) that the QMAU provide HE Co-ordinators with progression data for all programmes within their College. ii) that that Colleges select courses at risk, investigate the problem, and prepare an action plan.	QMAU	28/11/16
			HE Co-ordinators	30/12/16
5	16.63	HE Co-ordinators would forward to QMAU a list of courses for 2017 entry by College and SPMs would indicate general and faculty entry requirements where requested.	HE Co-ordinators	31/10/16

