

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 11 December 2012 at the Jordanstown campus

PRESENT

Professor D A McAlister (Chair), Professor A Adair, Professor R R Barnett, Professor P Carmichael, Miss C Cochrane, Mr J Cunningham, Dr L Fitzpatrick, Professor N McClenaghan, Professor M McColgan, Mr D McGivern, Professor M McHugh, Dr T McLernon, Professor G McMullan (for Professor Curran), Professor R J Millar, Dr R Monaghan, Professor I Montgomery, Professor A Moran, Dr I Taylor, Dr J A C Webb

APOLOGIES

Ms S Alexander, Mr M Bell, Professor C Curran, Professor D Heenan, Mr L McCurry, Dr A McKillop, Ms R Mullan, Professor P Ó Dochartaigh, Mrs U Quinn

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs C G Avery, Mr A G Faulkner, Ms R Wasson (for minute 12.145)

UNRESERVED

12.121 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Dr McLernon, the new representative for the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment.

12.122 MINUTES

The confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2012 were signed by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING

12.123 Cheating (Min 12.82)

The Chair reported that Senate, at its November meeting, had approved the addition of 'contract cheating' to the examples of academic disciplinary offences in Regulation 35 of the Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study. Senate has asked it to be made explicit that, if the contracted party were an Ulster student, both students would be guilty of contract cheating. The Committee noted that the Regulations already stated that 'it is an offence for a candidate [...] to engage in, or to attempt to engage in, conduct for the purpose of gaining for himself or herself, or for another candidate, an unfair advantage'. In instances where a University student provided unfair assistance to a candidate, whether for payment or not, both students would be dealt with in accordance with

the disciplinary procedures. No addition to the regulations or procedures was required.

12.124 Sharing of External Examiner Reports - Implications of Reproduction of External Examiners' Signatures on VLE (Min 12.88)

At its previous meeting, the Committee had discussed the question of the inclusion of external examiners' signatures as part of their annual reports when these were published in Course Support Areas on the VLE. The University Secretary had been asked to advise whether there were any legal implications or concerns. The Chair reported that the Secretary had advised that, given that the identity of the external was known, there should be no particular issue about the reproduction of the signature, nor, however, was there any particular reason to reproduce it.

The Committee also noted that headings of external examiner reports often included full contact details such as their work address and telephone/email and sometimes home contact information. It was considered inappropriate for this information to be so readily accessible as students were advised not to seek to contact external examiners directly.

AGREED: that, before external examiner reports were uploaded to the VLE, Faculties should ensure that all contact details and signatures were redacted with only the name and institution of the external remaining.

12.125 Course Approval Sub-Committee (Min 12.89)

The Committee noted that Chair's action had been taken to approve a request for a delayed start to the semester 1 teaching period in the current academic year, for BSc Hons Computing Systems at QA Business School.

At its previous meeting the Committee had noted that, following the evaluation of the FdEng Building Services and Renewable Energy at South West College, the Faculty had been asked to ensure that there would be appropriate articulation to the Faculty of Computing and Engineering's proposed new honours degree in Renewable Energy at the Magee campus. Professor Montgomery reported that this Foundation degree also articulated to the BEng Hons Energy and Building Services in the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment at Belfast and that this should be made clear to the College, in order to ensure that students were informed of all progression routes to the University.

12.126 Assessment of Placement Year: Use of Grades instead of Marks (Min 12.99)

Although there was not universal support in Faculties for the adoption of a grade-based scheme of assessment for the DPP placement year, Senate had now approved the change with effect from the 2013/14 placement year. It had noted that further guidance on the implementation of the recommendations would be provided by the Sub-Committee on Employability and that there was an expectation that placement assessment strategies should be reconsidered by course teams (see also min 12.137).

12.127 Response to Chief External Examiner's Report 2011/12 from Campus Co-ordinating Group (Coleraine) (Min 12.110)

The Committee noted that Dr Leanne McCormick had been appointed as the new Director of Combined Studies for the Coleraine campus and that a response to the Chief External Examiner's Report had still to be received from the Campus Co-ordinating Group for consideration by the Committee.

CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

12.128 Director of Centre for Higher Education Practice

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair expressed thanks to Professor Kate Greenan, Director of CHEP, who had taken early retirement, for her excellent contribution to the work of the University during her career, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.

12.129 Distinguished Teaching Fellowship

The Committee noted that Senate had awarded a Distinguished Teaching Fellowship to Dr David Comiskey, Lecturer, School of Architecture and Design.

The Committee's congratulations were extended to Dr Comiskey and also to Dr Nicola Ayre and Dr Catherine Hack who had respectively been highly commended and commended.

12.130 Teaching and Learning Strategy

The Chair reported that Mr Gabriel Jezierski's Critical Friend report on the current Strategy was expected to be received by the Committee at the March 2013 meeting.

A new Strategy for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18 would be formulated during the current academic year and an article on the process for its development and approval would appear in the December 2012 issue of *Inside* magazine. It was noted that there would be three stages: pre-consultation, formal consultation and approval. The pre-consultation stage would include four 'Big Conversations' in January 2013, one on each campus, to which all academic staff and support staff, as well as Deans, Heads of School, members of the Collaborative Partnerships Forum and student representatives would be invited. The events would be facilitated by Faculty Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators, CHEP Associates and Fellows. The Chair asked the Students' Union to encourage the involvement of class representatives.

The draft Strategy would be considered by the Committee in March and by the Organisational Development Committee, before being received by Senate and Council in June.

#### 12.131 Viewpoints Project

The Committee noted that, while the Viewpoints project was now complete, additional funding had been received to pilot its resources at Dundee, Greenwich, Manchester Metropolitan and Nottingham universities and at two of the regional colleges, South Eastern and Belfast Metropolitan Colleges.

#### PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODY ACCREDITATION

#### 12.132 BSc Hons Community Development

The Committee received the report from the All Ireland Interim Endorsement Body for Community Work and Development Education and Training Programmes (May 2012 visit) together with the course team's response (TLC/12/36a).

It was noted that, as required in the relevant guidelines, the placement handbook would reflect a commitment to enhance student practice learning by requiring one placement outside their normal organisation. To address the two recommendations, the criteria for any new posts would include professional education and training requirements as well as experience in community work and development and course content and reading materials would be enhanced by inclusion of a focus on community development in rural areas and with marginalised groups, in the contexts of both Northern Ireland and Ireland.

#### 12.133 Master of Pharmacy

The Committee received the Step 5 (April 2011 visit) and Step 6 (May 2012) Accreditation reports of the General Pharmaceutical Council together with the course team's response to the Step 5 report (TLC/12/36b). Fulfilment of the Step 5 condition and recommendation had been checked during the Step 6 visit.

The Committee noted that the Step 6 report confirmed that the curriculum was likely to deliver the Indicative Syllabus and that the accreditation criteria were likely to be met. A recommendation had been made regarding the assessment processes for dispensing competencies in order to ensure that the test was valid and reliable. This would be looked at during the Step 7 visit, and the Faculty representatives reported that they were confident that this matter would be addressed to the Council's satisfaction.

#### 12.134 SUB-COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYABILITY

Professor Millar presented the report from the meeting held on 14 November 2012 (TLC/12/37).

#### 12.135 Employability Conference (Item 1)

The Committee noted that a half-day Employability Conference would be held on the Jordanstown campus on 9 May 2013 and he encouraged a high level of participation.

#### 12.136 Monitoring of Placement (Item 2i)

The Committee noted that a list of courses identifying compulsory and optional placements had been sent to Faculties and would be updated by Registry through Banner. This would assist future monitoring of availability and uptake.

#### 12.137 Assessment of Placement (Item 2ii)

The Committee noted that, in light of the new grade-based assessment scheme for the DPP, Faculties and course teams were encouraged to take a fresh look at the assessment of the placement year. In courses with more than three assessment tasks, it should be feasible to group them into the three main components: employer's report, academic supervisor's report, and student project/report. It was noted that marks should not feature in the new competency based approach. The importance of explaining the new arrangements to current year 2 students was emphasised.

#### 12.138 Models of Placement (Item 2iii)

The Committee noted the availability of a PPD module in Enterprise Development for Year 2 students who might wish to take the self-employed route in their placement year. Places in the pilot year (2012/13) were limited to approximately 20 students.

The Committee noted that guidelines on self-employed placements were available and that advice from the Office of Innovation had been taken in the preparation of these. The importance of the provision of information to students on legal matters such as public liability insurance and business failure was stressed. The self-employed route was not an easy option and Faculties needed to approve any such placements to ensure that the supervisory and monitoring arrangements were appropriate.

The Chair encouraged as many subject areas as possible to participate in the pilot so that it was representative of a range of disciplines.

#### 12.139 Personal Development Planning (Item 3)

The Committee noted that the PDP Forum had now been reconstituted as a key activity working group. It intended to refine the University's policy and update guidance.

#### 12.140 Employability Modules (Item 12.38)

The Committee noted that 2588 students across all campuses had successfully completed employability modules within the CPPD framework.

#### 12.141 Ulster EDGE Award (Item 12.39)

The Committee noted the request for Faculties to contact Dr Sharon Milner with any additional activities for inclusion in Category 3 of the Award.

12.142 Work and Learn iLINK (Item 12.40)

The Committee noted that the Work and Learn iLINK had been launched and currently short-term, temporary and part-time internal vacancies were advertised. To date 488 students were registered. The scheme would be rolled out to include external vacancies in the next academic year.

12.143 Destination of Leavers (DLHE) (Item 12.41)

The Committee noted that a working group had been established to identify a methodology to consider the adequacy of Faculty/School action plans to address DLHE outcomes and to identify which courses/subjects were under-performing against their benchmark (min 12.101 refers). It was noted that the Unistats website only allowed comparison of three institutions at a time and a larger sample was being investigated.

12.144 PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF COMMENDATION BAND IN POSTGRADUATE AWARDS

Professor McMullan presented a proposal from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences for revisions to the University's regulations for postgraduate awards to add a grade of Commendation for candidates who achieve an overall result in the 60-69% band (Paper No TLC/12/38). The paper included a commentary from the Academic Office. It was noted that the University had reviewed the grading of its postgraduate awards on a number of occasions in the last decade and most recently as part of the 2008/9 regulatory review, when it had explicitly decided not to have a Commendation grade at postgraduate level.

Professor McMullan reported that the proposal reflected comments made by external examiners and staff experience of external examining at other institutions in the UK. It had the support of all schools in the Faculty. Such a band would in particular serve to distinguish between candidates at the lower and upper ends of the 50-69% range.

The Chair reminded the Committee that such a change could not be restricted to one Faculty and would apply across the University.

The Committee noted that there was no common approach to this matter in the sector and that, while the majority of institutions would appear to use three bands, a sizeable minority had two. It was noted that full transcripts were available for postgraduate students to assist employers and others to discriminate between applicants. The expectation was that in due course the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) would be extended to postgraduate courses.

It was noted that a postgraduate award in itself represented a high standard of achievement and that the introduction of an additional band would appear to move away from the current national development, which considered summary grading no longer fit for purpose. There would be other implications including the requirements to guide students on the expectation for this standard and the careful review of candidates at grade boundaries.

AGREED: that the proposal not be approved.

## 12.145 STATISTICAL DATA AVAILABLE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS AND BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

At its December 2011 meeting, the Committee had reviewed the Chapter of the UK Quality Code on External Examining which stated that 'Institutions determine whether, when and how it is appropriate to provide external examiners with quantitative data to support their evaluation of student performance. In addition, examination boards may be provided with descriptive statistical analyses for each cohort at module and programme level' (min 11.141 refers). In June 2012 the Committee noted that, although reports on mean and standard deviation were available by module by course, there was variability in their provision by Faculties to external examiners and boards of examiners. It was agreed that external examiners should be consulted about what information they would find useful (min 12.70 refers).

Ms R Wasson presented Paper No TLC/12/39 on the outcome of a survey of external examiners. The Committee noted that individual responses had been received from 48 out of a total of 332 external examiners. In addition, the Faculty of Computing and Engineering had provided a composite response on behalf of 30 external examiners.

The vast majority of respondents considered that the provision of statistical data on student performance was an important issue, with most agreeing that it was very useful prior to Boards of Examiners to assist the moderation process. The centrally produced means and standard deviations report was useful as a minimum dataset. It was noted that the Faculty of Computing and Engineering did not supply its external examiners with this report but instead exported the data to tailored Excel spreadsheets. That Faculty supplied data routinely to all external examiners for all assessment periods while only 47% of the other respondents received reports routinely.

The Committee noted that suggestions made by external examiners on possible additional statistical reports which would facilitate comparison of performance included information: for particular cohorts within modules; in modules across years; in mark bands within modules and showing the minimum and maximum marks for each module; at programme level to allow comparison of performance across cohorts (for subject external examiners); means and standard deviations for modules taken on subject strands; summary sheets for each programme and its constituent modules; a new version of the course results sheet report to rank final award candidates by overall mark; and an electronic version of the centrally provided course results sheet report which could be organised into different views.

The Committee welcomed the specific proposals from the Department of Student Administration and the prospect of the provision of these reports for summer 2013 Boards. It noted that their development was within the current resource capability of the Department.

It was suggested that the provision of comparative data for a two-year period only could lead to over-interpretation of trends. The Chair indicated that, where there

were concerns regarding standards, externals could exceptionally request additional information.

AGREED that:

- i) Student Administration should aim to provide from summer 2013 for external examiners and Boards of Examiners the following reports as standard appendices to course result sheets:
  - a) means and standard deviations for each module within a course year group (currently available);
  - b) number of results within mark bands and minimum and maximum marks, for each module (currently available for module evaluation reports);
  - c) a new version of the course results sheet to rank final award candidates by overall mark;
- ii) the External Examiner induction workshops take account of this development, and the Assessment and External Examiners' Handbooks be revised accordingly.

#### 12.146 PRIZES AND AWARDS

The Committee received Paper No TLC/12/40 which proposed seven new prizes. It was noted that Chair's Action had been taken to approve three new prizes and revisions to three prizes. The Committee noted the value of the Kelloggs Award for Best MSc Dietetics Student was £175 and not £125 as stated in the paper.

The Committee discussed the proposed criteria of two prizes. In one these related to 'level of participation in class studies and encouragement to fellow students'. The other was awarded for the 'student who, in the opinion of the Course Director, achieves higher marks than anticipated or overcomes challenging extenuating circumstances'. Although both prizes were welcome and well-intentioned, there was concern that the criteria did not lend themselves to a transparent and straightforward selection process.

It was noted that, although the value of some prizes was relatively small, eg £50, the recognition of achievement was greatly valued by students. The Chair welcomed the range of prizes, especially those awarded in earlier years of programmes.

The Committee noted that to date, having delegated authority from Senate, it had recommended the establishment of, and revisions to, prizes to the Communication and External Affairs Committee (to which Council had delegated its authority). Council had now revised its committee structure and delegated authority framework and had delegated its authority for approval of prizes to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning).

AGREED that:

- i) subject to ii) below, the terms and conditions of the seven new prizes be endorsed for approval by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) on behalf of Council;
- ii) the Faculties of Life and Health Sciences and Art, Design and the Built Environment review the selection criteria and process for the Ryan Seeley Award and the Course Director's Prize for Special Achievement respectively.

#### VARIATIONS AND DEPARTURES FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

##### 12.147 BSc Hons Food and Nutrition and BSc Hons Human Nutrition

The Committee at its previous meeting had asked the Faculty to revisit the proposed CertHE exit award title of 'Science with Nutrition' (min 12.119 refers).

The Committee received Paper No TLC/12/41a) proposing the title of 'Science for Nutrition' for the CertHE exit award.

AGREED: that the proposed title be approved.

##### 12.148 BSc Hons Biomedical Science and BSc Hons Biomedical Science with DPP

Professor McMullan presented Paper No TLC/12/41b) proposing the award title of 'Medical Science' rather than 'Biomedical Science' for the CertHE and AB exit awards in the BSc Hons Biomedical Science (with DPP) programmes.

The Committee noted that 'Biomedical Science' was regarded as a 'protected' title by Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC), the regulatory body. The Committee expressed some concern that 'Medical Science' might not be an accurate representation of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 and noted that, although supportive, the external examiner had questioned whether 'Biomedical Studies' might have been used.

Professor McClenaghan confirmed that the title of 'Biomedical Studies' should be acceptable to the MSC as an exit award title.

AGREED: that, subject to confirmation of acceptability by MSC, the title 'Biomedical Studies' be used for the CertHE and AB exit awards.

##### 12.149 Master of Pharmacy

Professor McMullan presented a proposal to adopt undergraduate Honours degree classification bands, instead of the current postgraduate bands, for the overall grading of the MPharm degree, a four year Integrated Master's degree (Paper No TLC/12/41c).

The Committee noted that, although the course was of a postgraduate standard in its final year and met the expectations of a Level 7 qualification in full, the Faculty

reported that the convention adopted by all other Schools/Departments of Pharmacy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland was to grade the MPharm award according to the Honours degree classification system. Previously one School of Pharmacy (Bradford) had used postgraduate grades, but in 2010/11, had decided to adopt an Honours classification system.

The Committee noted that the Faculty had surveyed 34 of the main employers and pharmacy stakeholders within Northern Ireland and the proposal was supported by current final year students.

Although the paper noted that some Schools of Pharmacy had four honours classes for the MPharm and a pass mark at 40%, the Faculty did not propose a reduction in the pass mark and the introduction of the third class band. The Committee noted that those failing to achieve the 50% pass mark threshold, would be eligible for the BSc Hons degree exit award.

The Committee noted that the proposal had implications for the University's other Integrated Master's degrees – MBiomedSci, MEng, MSci - as the University would wish to ensure consistent practice in the regulations for these awards. The Deans of Art, Design and the Built Environment and Computing and Engineering reported that their Faculties would wish to adopt the Honours degree classification system<sup>1</sup>.

AGREED that:

- i) it be recommended to Senate that the regulation for the classification of integrated Master's degrees be revised to grade the overall result in the following Honours divisions:

Class I	At least 70%
Class II (division i) (Ili)	At least 60%
Class II (division ii) (Ilii)	At least 50%

and subject to Senate approval:

- ii) the change be applied from 2012/13 for all cohorts in the MPharm;
- iii) the Faculties of Art, Design and the Built Environment (for MEng and MSci), Computing and Engineering (MEng) and Life and Health Sciences (MBiomedSci) consult their course committees and current students and report to the next meeting on the proposed timing of the implementation of the revision in other integrated Master's degrees.

#### 12.150 MSc Innovation Management in the Public Service

Professor McHugh presented a paper from the Ulster Business School proposing that candidates who have not previously studied on the programme should not be

---

<sup>1</sup> Academic Office Note: It was reported at the meeting that it was not the convention to award the MPharm with Honours. UCAS currently lists all MPharms as 'Hon' and some online prospectus entries use the 'Hons' suffix (eg Brighton). A search of award regulations suggests Honours is applied to other Integrated Master's. Pass marks in final year vary – either 40 or 50% which, for those where a classification system is used, determines the availability of the third class.

permitted to join it with advanced standing, given that it used small-group Action Learning Sets extensively from the outset (Paper No TLC/12/41d).

This matter had been raised at a joint Ulster/HETAC revalidation event and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, the other partner, was supportive of the restriction.

AGREED: that the proposal be approved.

12.151 BSc Hons Sport: Theory and Practice and BSc Hons Sport and Exercise Sciences

Professor McMullan presented a proposal from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences to permit a Level 5 contribution to final classification in two degrees (Paper No TLC/12/41e). The Committee noted that the case made was not exceptional in nature and that there was no professional body requirement to be met. It was largely based on a view that such a contribution would improve the 'motivation' of both students and staff. Professor Adair, Chair of the recent Revalidation Panel, reported that students on the programme appeared satisfied with the profile of marks available through transcripts.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Committee that, when the University had adopted the 'exit velocity' principle in 2001, a number of factors had been considered including consistency, fairness and equity taking account of such matters as admission with advanced standing and the effect of the placement year on final year performance. The Burgess review and HEAR developments further challenged summary grading systems.

This matter had also been revisited during the 2008/9 review when the principle was extended to all other awards. The Committee noted that the final report on the pilot of a Level 5 contribution in BSc Hons Accounting was due in October 2013.

AGREED that:

- i) the proposal not be approved;
- ii) the University's 'exit velocity' principle be reviewed at the time of the Committee's consideration of the report of the Accounting pilot.

12.152 BSc Hons Applied Sport Management at Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), Abu Dhabi (Outcentre)

Professor McMullan presented a proposal from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences to depart from Ulster's minimum entry requirement for English Language proficiency of IELTS score of 6 (with no contributing band at less than 5.5), in respect of BSc Hons Applied Sport Management (Paper No TLC/12/41f). The four year degree, which the Faculty would deliver in the HCT's Men's College as an outcentre, had recently been evaluated. The first year of the degree was at Level 3 and the Faculty proposed to admit students with an IELTS of 5 (with no contributing band at less than 4.5). It would be a requirement that students could only progress to Year 3 (Level 5) if they had met the IELTS 6 standard.

The Faculty considered that the course would not be able to recruit satisfactorily with the normal English entry standard and that this could best be achieved by offering dedicated, intensive support to students over the first two years of the programme. Students would, therefore, be enrolled during that period on a supplementary, non-credit bearing English Language skills course which was designed to enhance their use and understanding of the language and assist them in achieving an IELTS score of 6 or above. Exemption from this English skills course would be available to those students who had achieved IELTS 6 upon entry. There were also a number of credit-bearing modules in the degree related to academic reading, writing and communication, which would enhance the English language capabilities of students.

Further support in the development of English competence would also be offered within HCT and through online engagement with Ulster staff as all teaching, instruction, feedback and support would take place through the medium of English.

The Faculty reported that the majority of Emirati students who enrolled on a degree programme at the College had already completed a generic foundation programme through which they met IELTS 5 (or equivalent) and that this standard had therefore become the minimum entry requirement for all students entering HCT undergraduate degrees.

The Committee noted that the Evaluation Panel had been assured by the Faculty that students would be able to both understand and express themselves in English with sufficient competence to fulfil the expectations for learning outcomes at Levels 3 and 4. It was noted that a lower English entry standard had also been exceptionally approved for two courses in Saudi Arabia: BSc Hons Nursing Sciences offered by the Faculty at the SAAD College (outcentre) and the BSc Hons Nursing Science offered by Dr Soliman Fakeeh College of Nursing and Medical Sciences in Jeddah. Students received English tuition and were required to meet IELTS 6 before being permitted to progress to Year 3 (Level 5) of these four-year programmes.

The Chair noted that the delivery of English language in this model had not been unproblematic and that some operational aspects of the provision required attention. Professor Moran suggested that there should be engagement with the University's Centre for English Language Teaching and consideration given to the provision of online support.

AGREED: that IELTS 5 (with a minimum score of 4.5 in each contributing band) be approved as the entry standard at HCT with the requirement that IELTS 6 (with a score of 5.5 in each contributing band) be achieved prior to progression to Level 5 (Year 3) of the degree programme.

Duration 2 hours 20 minutes

7 January 2013

AGF/CA/lh