

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REPORT OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL MEETING FOR SUBJECT UNIT 28H SPORT (COLLEGE NETWORK - NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE (NRC), NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE (NWRC), SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE (SERC) AND SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE (SRC))

5 February 2019

PANEL:

Professor P Hanna, Associate Dean (Global Engagement), Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment, Ulster University (Chair)

Professor A McKillop, Associate Dean (Education), Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, Ulster University

Ms D Sloan, Academic Programme Leader, Access, Digital and Distributed Learning, Ulster University

Dr K Gibson, Senior Lecturer in Sport Coaching and Physical Education, Faculty of Sport, Health and Wellbeing, Plymouth Marjon University

Mr H Dorling, Senior Lecturer, School of Sport, Health and Social Sciences, Solent University, Southampton

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs M Sowney, Faculty Partnership Manager, Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, Ulster University

Mrs K McCafferty, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office, Ulster University

1 INTRODUCTION

The Panel met to consider the revalidation of the Foundation Degree in Sports Science, Coaching and Fitness (with CertHE in Sports Science, Coaching and Fitness exit award) (previously Foundation Degree in Sport, Exercise and Fitness). The programme would be offered on a full-time basis only at NRC, NWRC and SRC. The South Eastern Regional College would also offer the programme on a full-time basis at their Bangor campus as well as a part-time basis at their Lisburn campus.

The programme comprises a mix of compulsory and optional modules alongside two 20-credit point work-based learning modules. Graduates from the foundation degree would be eligible to apply for entry to the following Ulster University degree programmes having achieved the appropriate average mark in Level 5 as set by the Faculty:

BSc Hons Sport and Exercise Sciences (Year 2)

BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health (Year 2)

BSc Hons Sport Coaching and Performance (Final Year)

The following are the minimum and maximum student intakes recommended by the Faculty:

NRC (Coleraine Campus)
Minimum 15/maximum 20 (FT)

NWRC (Strand Road)
Minimum 15/maximum 20 (FT)

SERC
Minimum 15/maximum 15 (PT Lisburn)
Minimum 15/maximum 34 (FT Bangor)

SRC (Newry Campus)
Minimum 15/maximum 40 (FT)

Having originally been developed as a collaboration project between the University of Ulster and three of the colleges, (NRC, SERC and SRC) back in 2004, the three colleges took the decision at the time of the last revalidation in 2014 to bring forward their own individual foundation degree programmes in Sport, Exercise and Fitness. However, the Faculty's preferred model was for a subject network and this was strongly supported by the Faculty Partnership Manager, the School of Sport, External Examiners and the Course Teams. Following discussions with all relevant parties it was decided that NWRC would join NRC, SERC and SRC to form a subject network to deliver one single Foundation Degree in Sports Science, Coaching and Fitness.

The Panel met initially with Senior Staff from the four colleges to discuss such matters as industry involvement, progression opportunities, staffing and other resources. The Panel then met with a group of first and second year students studying on the current programme at SERC. Finally, the Panel met with the Course Team to discuss the programme in more detail.

2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

- Revalidation Document
- Guidelines for Revalidation Panels
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Hospitality, Sport, Leisure and Tourism (2016)
- QAA Characteristics Statement, Foundation Degree (September 2015)
- External Examiners' Reports for 2016/17 and 2017/18
- Statement from the Faculty Partnership Manager (CA4)
- Preliminary comments from Panel members (CA7)

3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

3.1 Rationale for Subject Network

The Senior Team explained that originally the foundation degree had been a collaborative project between the University of Ulster and three of the colleges. However, at the last revalidation in 2014 the three colleges took the decision to revalidate their own programme. The Panel noted that Ulster University was keen to develop a subject network and suggested to the colleges that consideration should be given to developing a new partnership. Significant discussions took place between the Faculty Partnership Manager, staff from the School of Sports at Ulster, External Examiners and the college course teams. The Senior Team recognised the many strengths in having a subject network. The three colleges were joined by NWRC and one single Foundation Degree in Sports Science, Coaching and Fitness was developed for revalidation. The Senior Team acknowledged there may be less flexibility in the delivery of a single foundation programme, but the strengths of the collaboration would outweigh this. The Panel heard that previous External Examiners had suggested a collaboration and that with the four colleges now delivering the same programme their work would be easier to manage. The Senior Team informed the Panel that the Department for the Economy (DfE) was fully supportive of the subject network and felt it would be better for students. It was recognised that there would be many opportunities to share good practice between the four colleges.

The Panel noted that the three different pathways would be delivered at all four colleges to provide students with the same articulation opportunities onto the three honours degree programmes at Ulster University.

Recruitment onto the programmes was governed by the MaSN allocation. The Senior Team explained that although allocation of numbers to STEM subjects was a priority of DfE they were fully committed to the Foundation Degree in Sports Science, Coaching and Fitness and that sport would continue to be a strong subject area in all four colleges.

3.2 Staff Research Opportunities

The Panel asked the Senior Team if there were plans to allocate time for staff research which would further enhance teaching.

Senior Staff explained that each college had their own individual strategies in relation to staff research opportunities. Some staff had recently joined the HEA and more had been encouraged to consider joining. The Senior Team acknowledged the need for staff opportunities to do research and for continuous CPD. All staff were encouraged to attend conferences and pursue opportunities that would help enhance the student experience. The Panel heard that many staff applying to teach in the colleges were now entering with a Masters. The Panel also heard that many of the staff went out into the industry to work with employers on projects and that up-to-date knowledge and experience of current practices was then filtered through to the students during teaching.

3.3 Management of Subject Network

The Panel was keen to identify how the colleges would ensure consistency in delivery of the programme across the subject network and noted that there would be module leads. Their role would be to ensure the same content for each module was being delivered. Cross-marking days would also be held to ensure everyone was approaching the task in the same way.

To facilitate staff to work and connect with each other various meetings would be timetabled. The Panel heard that all the colleges had multiple campuses so already staff were communicating regularly with their colleagues in the other campuses. Technology was a key component with the use of email, one-drive and skype being important tools. The Senior Team stated that they also aimed to hold meetings once a month face to face with colleagues in the other colleges. The Senior Team emphasised that the model already in place in the colleges would be reflected in the operation of the subject network. The Panel noted that the subject network had already come together on several occasions during the preparation for the revalidation.

To alleviate the Panel's concerns around time available for staff to meet with each other the Senior Team explained that staff workloads would be taken into consideration to ensure enough hours were allocated for both the operation of the network as well as travel time to the face-to-face meetings in the other colleges.

3.4 Modes of Delivery and Resources

The programme would be delivered in all four colleges on a full-time basis. In addition, SERC would also deliver the programme on a part-time basis.

Senior Staff from SERC explained that there was the potential for the programme to be delivered in full-time at Lisburn. SERC appreciated that it was difficult to make projections but with strong leisure facilities in the surrounding area a full-time cohort could be accommodated.

The Faculty Partnership Manager confirmed that facilities were good in all four colleges. The only issue raised was the apparent lack of sport specific ebooks. With a desire from

students for more online resources the Senior Team was asked if there were any plans for more ebooks. The Senior Team fully supported the provision of more ebooks and confirmed that this could be addressed quickly.

4 MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel met with a group of first and second year students currently studying on the Foundation Degree at SERC, Bangor. The following points were noted.

Facilities and Resources

- Resources on the digital learning environment (DLE) 'Moodle' were considered good and could be accessed from home
- Examples of resources included journal articles, Youtube tutorials, lecture slides/powerpoint presentations
- Any issues/problems with the DLE system were passed on through the teaching staff to the IT department and quickly addressed
- The library could also be accessed from home and there was a range of ebooks available

Staff Support

- Staff were very supportive and approachable and provided lots of advice and guidance on module choice
- Regular quality feedback was provided and received in good time

Assessment Load

- Module assessments were spread across the semesters
- There were opportunities to submit early drafts of work for staff to review and students to receive formative feedback
- Students felt the feedback helped make sure they were moving in the right direction

Dealing with Issues/Concerns

- Issues or concerns about the programme could be raised through one-to-one interviews with staff or through the Staff Student Consultative Committee
- The students were satisfied with the speed in which issues were addressed

Work Based Learning

- Students were encouraged to find their own placements
- Staff had many industry contacts and helped direct students towards suitable placements
- Placements were generally sorted during the summer months and commenced at the end of September of second year
- Students attend college part of the week with the rest of the week spent on placement
- If a student wished to go on a placement further afield this could be accommodated

Programme Positives

- Good staff support and encouragement throughout the duration of the programme
- Staff look out for the students and monitor attendance

- The programme was a good stepping stone to progressing to university.
- Staff keep students up-to-date about other certificates they could be gaining, eg, first aid.

Employability

- Students felt Work Based Learning provided them with good experience
- The choice of modules was considered good
- Majority of the students hoped to progress to university

Suggestions for Enhancing the Programme

- More access to the gym. (The Panel noted that presently students could not access the gym unless supervised)

5 MEETING WITH COURSE TEAM

5.1 Programme Learning Outcome Maps

The Panel commented on the programme learning outcome maps and pointed out that K4 did not appear to be addressed at Level 5. There also appeared to be issues around where P1 and T2 were met in the modules. The Panel asked the Course Team to review the programme learning outcome maps to ensure all learning outcomes were addressed at programme level.

5.2 GCSE Mathematics

From the documentation it appeared to suggest that students could enrol on the foundation degree programme without GCSE Mathematics. The Course Team explained that colleges historically have only asked for a minimum of Level 2 Numeracy and felt that the qualification was adequate for the foundation degree. The Course Team also felt that asking for the lower level qualification was important for widening access and for accommodating mature students wishing to return to study. Students who wished to progress to Ulster University were advised that they needed GCSE mathematics. Students could do GCSE Mathematics as an extra-curricular subject alongside the foundation degree programme and this was strongly encouraged by staff. The Course Team also informed the Panel that the Foundation Degree provided an articulation route for the colleges' Level 2 and Level 3 sports related programmes that they did not want to disadvantage this group of students.

5.3 Academic Progression between Level 4 and Level 5

The Panel felt that for some modules at Level 4 there did not appear to be academic progression to a module at Level 5. For example, 'Sports Society' did not appear to have a related module at Level 5 which could further develop the topic.

The Course Team explained that there were constraints in the number of modules on offer to allow students the optimum progression opportunities to university. The Course Team also felt that there was enough knowledge embedded in the Level 4 modules to allow students to progress into Year 2, Level 5 at University.

5.4 Assessment Strategy

There appeared to be a lot of written examinations which the Course Team acknowledged. However, using the 'Sports Nutrition' module as an example, the Course Team explained

that with so many elements in nutrition that students needed to know, it was necessary to have an examination. The Course Team informed the Panel that they had tried to refresh the modules but at the same time appreciated that as the programme evolved there may be a need to make changes to the modules. The Course Team felt they had achieved a good balance in the assessment and had significantly trimmed down the number of examinations.

The Panel enquired about higher education study skills including development of writing and referencing. The Course Team explained that they wanted to embed research into the Level 4 modules and that the tutorials would integrate research and referencing. The Course Team considered this approach to be more beneficial to the students. A comprehensive induction was organised for students and focused on referencing. A refresher induction at the start of semester 2 was also organised for students to reinforce academic skills. The Panel noted that around week six of the first semester students had the opportunity to submit a draft piece of work which was reviewed by staff followed by feedback. Problems with referencing was generally always an issue that needed to be addressed.

The Panel asked for clarification on what diagnostic testing of aptitudes involved and heard that this was used to find out if a student needed education support, eg, more time for examinations, etc. It was appreciated that some students struggled with examinations so support tutorial systems were identified. The Panel noted that similar systems were in place in all the colleges and the induction process included all this information.

5.5 Formative Feedback

The use of formative feedback was not obvious from the document but during the discussions between the Panel and the Course Team it became clear that it did take place on a timely basis.

The Course Team informed the Panel that students had the opportunity to submit a draft piece of work and receive feedback. Assessments were introduced early in the semester to allow students to see how they were progressing. The Course Team informed the Panel that most of the modules had formative feedback built in but appreciated that this may not be entirely clear from the document.

5.6 Compulsory and Optional Modules

The Course Team explained that the progression routes students might want to take had influenced which modules would be compulsory or optional. The main aim was to identify core subject areas that reflected the honours degrees students would progress onto. Psychology and Nutrition were two areas the Course Team felt had to be included as compulsory subjects.

The Panel asked if the reason for less health and wellbeing content in the programme was because only a small number of students progressed to the BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health at Ulster University, Magee campus.

The Course Team explained that they wanted to make sure progression routes were there for all students. The Panel noted that students studying at NWRC tended to choose to study close to home and as a result progressed to the Magee campus. The Panel heard that the Course Team wanted to make sure the progression route onto the BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health remained open.

5.7 Subject Network Challenges

In relation to the challenges that a subject network might face the Course Team stated that the colleges had worked very well during the past eighteen months in preparation for the revalidation. Technology played an important part in communicating with each other, eg, email, skype. The Course Team felt that they could all learn from each other and share good practice from their own institutions. The industry contacts the Course Team had developed helped keep the content up-to-date. The programme was very much student-focused and one of the significant aims was to provide students with transferable skills.

Ensuring consistency in teaching across the colleges was considered by the Panel to present challenges. However, the Course Team explained that they already had experience of teaching across their own college multi-campuses. Good practice was regularly shared between staff and used in developing modules. The Course Team was confident that a model to ensure the standardisation of practice was already in place.

The Course Team appreciated that coming together as a collaboration also needed time to develop. Technology was considered useful but coming together face-to-face as often as possible was the Course Team's main objective. Opportunities to meet each other outside of their working environment were already taking place through attendance at annual collaborative forums and Faculty Partnership Manager meetings.

5.8 Programme Pathways

The Course Team felt that students should expect to have to travel if there was a particular degree they wished to do. As part of the interview process students would be advised of the three pathways and the options available. The Panel emphasised that the information provided to students needed to be clear including the choices they had and if they could, for example, move between pathways.

The Course Team informed the Panel that all relevant information was shared with the student during the interview stage. At this stage students would also be asked where they hoped to progress to.

5.9 Programme Design

The Course Team explained that their approach to engagement with students and employers included module reviews and various meetings. On-site visits where students were doing work-based learning also allowed the opportunity for feedback to be gathered. The Course Team advised the Panel that industry comments had greatly influenced the content of the some of the modules and had helped identify gaps. The assessment methods to be used had also been tailored to reflect industry feedback.

5.10 Work-Based Learning

The Panel felt that the number of student contact hours in college during work-based learning was significantly high. The Course Team explained that before the subject network was established some of the colleges delivered the work-based learning module as a 40 credit-point module. The Course Team appreciated that the module needed to be reviewed and that fifty hours of lectures was incorrect. The Panel appreciated that the colleges had all been delivering work-based learning in different formats but to ensure a consistent approach across the subject network the Panel advised the subject network to discuss and agree exactly how the work-based learning modules were going to be delivered.

The Panel noted students started thinking about their placement during Year One, Semester Two with the aim of having their placement sorted by the end of Year One. As part of the Work-Based learning module students were asked to produce a short video about their placement. This was then shown to first year students and helped them with their decision on where they would like to do their placement.

The Panel also noted that should a student wish to travel further afield on placement this could be accommodated. Colleges already facilitated 'elite' students who had to travel across the world competing in their sport.

6 CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel commended the Course Team on the following:

- the consortium approach to offering one single Foundation Degree
- the number of students articulating to Ulster University
- the support provided by staff as acknowledged by the students
- the range of assessment methods used in the modules
- the strong links that colleges have developed with industry
- the strong engagement by the consortium with Ulster University as well as between the individual college teams

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the provision be approved for a further five years (intakes 2019/20 to 2023/24 inclusive) subject to the conditions and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office by 19 March 2019 for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

Conditions

- (i) that the programme learning outcome maps be updated to ensure that all learning outcomes are addressed at the programme level;
- (ii) that the Work Based Learning modules be reviewed to better reflect how the module will be delivered;
- (iii) that the regulatory and standards matters identified by the Academic Office be addressed (appendix).

Recommendations

- (i) that consideration be given to the integration of a greater amount of content around 'health and well-being' to better reflect progression to further study and industry requirements;
- (ii) that formative assessment be more clearly articulated in the documentation.

APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked all the members of the Panel and in particular, the external members, for their valuable contributions to the revalidation exercise.