ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
11 March 2021   Agenda Item 5.4.8

COVER SHEET

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

Unit 16Ai: Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems (PG)

Presenter: Professor M Keenan

To consider a proposal for a one-year extension to the period of approval for MSc Data Science.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION   **Form CA6b)**
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SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST
FACULTY: Computing Engineering and the Built Environment

SCHOOL: School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems

REVALIDATION UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: 16Aiii Data Science (pg)

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: 2021/22

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED: One year, 2022/23
(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

COURSE(S): 16Aiii
(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

REASON FOR REQUEST:
Postgraduate computing programmes within the School are currently listed on the revalidation schedule under two units: 16Aiii for which a period of extension is being sought and 16Ai Computing (ME/pg).

This request seeks to remove the unit 16Aiii from the revalidation listing and alternatively seeks to add the Data Science provision within the unit to the main 16Ai Computing (ME/pg) unit which would be the natural home for provision currently within 16Aiii. This move seeks a period of extension taking the provision within 16Aiii Data Science (pg) from 2021-22 into 2022-23 where the main postgraduate computing provision (16Ai) is scheduled to be revalidated.

This move will consolidate the revalidation of the suite of postgraduate computing programmes within the School into one revalidation unit and allow synergies between programmes that have been developed to be considered simultaneously within the revalidation process. For example, the recent Department for the Economy Skills funding rounds saw the development of a Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Software Development (Data Science). This provision then lent itself to the development of a data science pathway through the existing MSc Professional Software Development programme; however, under the current revalidation schedule these programmes would be considered within differing units and one year apart. The proposal therefore consolidates provision within the postgraduate space bringing together provision with clear synergies for consideration at the same juncture.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:
(Please confirm that the curriculum remains current and valid and provide evidence of this (eg extract from most recent external examiner reports and those of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body)

The 16A iii Data Science provision remains current as evidenced through the most recent 2019-20 External Examiners report:

> *Programmes at master's degree level should have an emphasis on student development, skills acquisition and the ability to critique, review and apply knowledge in real world settings. This is particularly true in data science. As DS is such a fast changing field, it is important that students have a firm grasp of fundamentals as well as the practical skills to be able to translate this knowledge into useful software, insights, services and actions. The structure of the course reflects these concerns very well and this balance extends itself into the modules themselves which in many cases are very well designed in terms of challenging students across all these aspects of knowledge. It is clear in many cases that the modules and particularly the project work reflects both research-informed and practise-informed staff input and this is creating a curriculum that is unique to the staff profile at Ulster and a pedagogy that reflects best practise.*

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:
(Please confirm that quality is high and there are no concerns. Provide evidence of this through external examiner reports and annual monitoring datasets and reports)

There are no concerns in relation to standards and quality, as evidence please see extract below from the most recent (2019-20) External Examiners report:

> *I believe the methods of assessment, marking and classification appear to be entirely appropriate to the specified learning outcomes of the modules and overall, the programmes. … The assessment and associated marking schemes as well as the final classification are set appropriately. ...I was delighted to see the use of marking rubrics, guidelines and breakdowns all applied rigorously and consistently across modules and all types of assessment. The moderation process comprising internal review, sign off and if necessary changes to assessment appears very effective and it was reassuring to see opportunities for improvement were identified in certain cases by the internal moderator and steps taken to improve an initial assessment approach. This is not a negative but a sign of a process that is actually used to improve the modules.*

PSRB (if applicable):
(Please confirm that any deferral will be accommodated by the PSRB and that accreditation will be ongoing for the full duration of the deferral)

DEMAND: Demand is significant and growing in this area, including in relation to interest from the international market.

FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only):

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:

SIGNED: _____ DATE: ___1.03.2021_____
            Associate Dean (Education)

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.
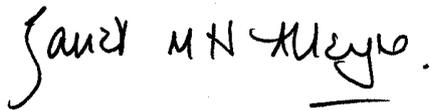
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SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

The revalidation of the MSc Data Science was scheduled for 2021/22 and the request seeks an extension to approval until 2022/23 (one year). The programme was approved for a September 2017 intake and the request for a one year extension to approval would align with the revalidation schedule for unit 16Ai, comprising postgraduate computing programmes, and would facilitate consolidation of the two revalidation units into a single unit. The external examiner reports indicate no issues in relation to quality and standards and that appropriate measures were taken in relation to the pandemic. The Academic Office supports the proposed consolidation of revalidation units.

SIGNED: _Gary Kendall_   DATE: _1.3.21_____
       Academic Policy and Standards Manager

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SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)

James M H Allegro. 4 March 2021

SIGNED: _____   DATE: _____
       Head of Quality Enhancement

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SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE (delegated authority from Senate)

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Chair on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: _____   DATE: _____
      Chair ASQEC

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office
July 2019