

ULSTER UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL FOR UNIT 5LAI MARKETING (UG/PG)

30 November 2018

PRESENT:

Dr Neale Blair, Associate Head of School of the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment, Ulster University (Chair)

Dr Lorna Stevens, Snr Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Marketing, School of Management, University of Bath

Professor Christopher Teller, Chair in Retailing and Marketing and Head of Department of Marketing and Retail Management, University of Surrey

Mr Arnold Cochrane, Lecturer in Optometry, School of Biomedical Sciences, Ulster University

Mr Owen McCloskey, Ulster University Students' Union

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Troy, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office, Ulster University

1 BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

The panel was convened to consider the following provision.

MSc Marketing (with PgCert and PgDip exit awards) (JN) (FT/PT)

MSc Marketing (with GradCert, PgCert and PgDip exit awards) (extended Master's) (JN) (FT)

BSc Hons Marketing (with CertHE and AB exit awards) (JN) (FT/PT)

The courses are offered at the Jordanstown campus by the Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing within the Ulster University Business School (UUBS).

2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

1. Course submission;
2. Guidelines for Evaluation and Revalidation Panels;
3. QAA subject benchmark statements for Business and Management (2015) and Business and Management (Master's) (2015);
4. Preliminary comments from Panel members.

3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

3.1 Background and Rationale

The Senior Team provided the Panel with some background information in relation to the provision and its position with the Ulster University Business School (UUBS) portfolio. The UUBS was striving to become the leading centre for entrepreneurship by 2021. This innovation and creativity was evident in these long-established suite of programmes which had been made more relevant to the vision of the Department and the University's Five & Fifty strategic plan, and in particular, in relation to digital literacy and skills. The review was informed by the views of students, alumni and the business community who played a key part

of programme development. Employability was embedded throughout all programmes, with the aim of producing work ready graduates. This was also clearly aligned to the University's strategy in respect of civic and economic contribution.

As a Faculty, these programmes fitted very well within the overall portfolio and in particular, the international strategy. The extended Master's, delivered at Ulster and at QAHE London and Birmingham campuses, was an important offering for growing international student numbers with other partners.

This provision was the first full pilot for the new curriculum design framework and the Team had worked with the Centre for Higher Education and Research Practice (CHERP) in this regard.

3.2 Programme distinctiveness

The Panel noted the complementarity with other courses, but queried what made this provision unique and distinct from the competition and suggested that there was more opportunity to promote the latter. The Senior Team advised that students were taught along with MSc Management and Sports Management Students, all of whom were from non-cognate backgrounds, and feedback had been very positive in this regard. Some modules were also taught with Business Development Innovation students and such opportunities facilitated cross-fertilisation of disciplines as well as opening up a wide range of networks to all students. Currently, groups were in the region of 60 students, however, if numbers were to increase significantly, resources would be reconsidered whilst ensuring that they continued to provide students with a similar experience. Double teaching would be an option to facilitate this.

The School had also been working with the Global Engagement Department in relation to growing international student numbers. To this aim, the Advancing Pathway option had been introduced the previous year to cater for the international market.

The Panel was of the view that the creativity, innovation and reflective elements of the programmes could be brought more to the forefront within module descriptions as this was evident from discussions. This would be discussed further with the Course Team.

3.3 Postgraduate Placement

The Panel sought views of businesses from the Team, given that the placement was for a shorter fifteen-week period. The Senior Team advised that the purpose of this placement was to address a business problem and was framed as a consultancy project. This approach was welcomed by businesses. The Department was fortunate to have an extensive database of SMEs who were keen to take students to undertake a piece of consultancy work over the fifteen-week period. The Team already had significant experience at undergraduate level of developing shorter-term internships and to date these had worked well.

3.4 Relocation to Belfast

The impact of the move to the new Belfast campus was raised by the Panel. The Senior Team advised that the move would only improve the courses' appeal both regionally and internationally by being in the vibrancy of the city centre as well as having new, modern and innovative facilities.

The move to Belfast had been considered during the preparation for revalidation in terms of learning spaces and pedagogy and it was the aim to make the move as seamless as possible for both staff and students. To this end, a number of pilot projects had been running this year,

including room sequencing and timetabling in order to make more flexible and creative use of resources.

3.5 Demand

Whilst recognising the intention to grow international student numbers, the low intake to the Master's programme was noted. The Panel queried the numbers in terms of viability and student experience. The Senior Team advised that part-time and full-time students were co-taught so there were no issues in respect of resource or experience at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. The only difference between the two modes of study was the pace.

When asked to confirm the minimum and maximum intakes for each course, the Senior Team confirmed that this would be 15 for postgraduate and within MasN for undergraduate (but normally 15 for Level 6 modules).

3.6 Resources

The Senior Team provided assurance that all resources to deliver and support the programmes were in place – this included the skill set and expertise of the staff team. Staff were due to undertake a number of digital workshops to ensure that they had the skills for delivery of these elements of the new curriculum. There was also an extensive group of specialist guest speakers which were utilised and which enriched the student experience, as well as part-time lecturers, which could be drawn upon as required.

4 MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel met with a four students from across the provision. The student group was very positive about the programmes and the Course Team. During discussions, the following was noted:

Cohort identity

- Students generally felt that there was a good sense of belonging and cohort identity.
- They had a good relationship with the lecturers.
- The Marketing Society, which was well supported by staff, involved mainly undergraduate students, comprised a good mix of students from across all years and provided opportunities to engage with each other and to socialise, not only with marketing students but also with other business students. It was suggested that the Society be opened up and communicated further to postgraduate students.

Student Support

- All students commended the level of support provided by lecturers or other central University departments.
- Staff were approachable and flexible and responded to issues in a timely manner.
- The lecturers were experts in their field and this nurtured the students' enthusiasm for all aspects of marketing – through their own industry experience, research and use of live case studies.
- The Career Development Centre provided excellent support in terms of interview and CV preparation, placement and graduate job opportunities.
- Students were aware of 'Mind Your Mood' which was well publicised and the other support available for both academic and personal issues.

Assessment and Feedback

- There was a good balance of group and individual assessment.
- The use of peer assessment in group tasks worked well and was viewed as a fair way to assign marks. Any issues within a group would be flagged up early and resolved by the lecturer.
- Students recognised the benefits of group work in developing the softer skills and in preparing them for the workplace.
- The diversity of assessment methods was excellent, in particular, their relevance to current issues and the use of live projects.
- Some had found the accounting modules challenging but excellent support was provided as required. The usefulness of these modules became evident later in the course and resulted in a well-rounded marketer.
- Feedback was generally good.
- The spread of assessment throughout the year was manageable and no issues were raised in this regard.

Student Representation

- Students were aware and availed of the class representative system and knew that issues would be progressed and dealt with accordingly.
- Issues raised in relation to the course were generally raised directly with the relevant lecturer, with student representatives generally dealing with the wider issues, for example longer library opening hours.

Placement

- No students had any issues with placement with regard to finding placement or support during or after.
- Placement opportunities were well communicated and a good range resources available to support students.
- All students were very aware of the benefits of placement, not least in terms of employability but the exposure that it provided to a wide range of experiences and networking opportunities.
- Students recognised that although paid placement was encouraged and preferred, some could be unpaid. The students were of the view that the benefits that placement would bring if it was in an area in which they had a key interest, that payment was secondary to the experience.
- Some felt that study abroad opportunities were not as well publicised but noted that the uptake for this was generally low. It was important that students were made explicitly aware of international opportunities such as Study USA or Study China.
- The 'Go Global' week this year, had really helped raise the profile of international opportunities for students.
- All those who had undertaken placement stated that it had been really relevant to their course and allowed them to put theory and learning into practice. Each had enjoyed a very well rounded experience across a range of areas and had prepared them well for final year of the degree programme.

General Issues

- The delay by two weeks to the start of the Master's programme to facilitate a number of late applicants was highlighted. It was the view that this should not have occurred and that the content then had to be covered over a shorter timeframe than what was expected.

- Induction was not revisited for postgraduate students. There were no issues in relation to induction or re-induction at undergraduate level.
- The Marketing Society was not communicated to postgraduate students.
- Digital aspects should receive more coverage in the courses – students were aware that this issue had already been addressed in the reviewed provision and strongly welcomed the new modules.

The Panel thanked the students for their enthusiasm and speaking openly and honestly about their experiences - they were excellent advocates for the marketing programmes and the University. They wished them well for their studies and future careers.

5 MEETING WITH COURSE TEAMS

5.1 Revalidation

The Panel asked the Course Team to outline how they had approached the revalidation process and reviewed the curriculum. They advised that the Marketing team had been a pilot for the new curriculum design framework and this had enabled them to develop a course philosophy and a robust curriculum informed by extensive stakeholder engagement. The CHERP representative set out what this had involved and how the series of workshops had assisted the Team with the revalidation process. The Course Team followed on by setting out the main changes to the curriculum and the rationale for the changes.

5.2 Creativity, innovation and reflection

The Panel raised the issue of creativity, innovation and reflection and noted that these elements did not come through explicitly in the module descriptions, although it was evident from discussions that this was what happened in practice. The Team advised that these elements were at the forefront from early in the programmes. This was evident in the academic skills module in year 1 and in other modules as the student progressed through the programme. The course also provided students with the opportunity to graduate with a tangible e-portfolio and this was invaluable in seeking employment.

It was suggested that the areas of creativity and reflection could be more explicit in module learning outcomes. Furthermore, the assessment schedule did not reflect the range and diversity of assessments that were actually being utilised. The assessment strategy was a key focus of course review and this diversity a key selling point of the undergraduate programme. The Panel was assured and confident that the content was well covered, albeit not visible in the documentation.

5.3 Curriculum Design Principles

The curriculum design principles stated that modules should normally have no more than two pieces of assessment but that each item could be comprised of more than one component. The Course Team explained that many of the assessments did in fact comprise more than one element and a mix of group and individual assessment to ensure that all learning outcomes were being met.

The Team's assessment strategy was based on the nature of the subject and was the reason for the extensive use of live projects. They also adhered to the University's Policy on Group Work and the assigning of individual marks, in particular for modules which contributed to the final classification.

In relation to the use of coursework and examination weighting, this related to how best to assess the curriculum and meet all learning outcomes in the most appropriate way. The

subject lent itself more favourably to coursework. Employers sought students who were experienced in working in teams and in finding solutions to problems and coursework ensured that students were provided with opportunities to develop and demonstrate these skills. The programmes used innovative and creative approaches to learning and teaching and pedagogy with students having to apply learning to a range of tasks. It was also expected that students were proficient digitally prior to going out onto placement and this was also well covered in the revised curriculum.

5.4 Distinctiveness of the programmes

The Panel enquired as to what the Team viewed as the unique selling point of the programmes for the home and international markets. The Team advised that they had considered other marketing provision across the UK and the Ulster provision was comparable in many ways. The undergraduate provision recruited well and the demand was evident as it had been delivered since 2002. The focus for this revalidation was on embedding employability and digital literacy and to have an authentic enquiry based approach. The Ulster Team enjoyed extensive links with business and employers and the provision had an excellent reputation within the market.

The situation was very similar at postgraduate level. A key strategy was to increase international student numbers and the Three Nations project in which students worked in virtual teams across three different countries was unique to this course as was the entrepreneurial focus. The extended Master's course was also unique in that it provided a route for international students in particular who did not meet the entry standard to study at that level. Furthermore, none of the competition offered an Advanced Practice Pathway.

The Course Team advised that their curriculum and teaching was very much informed by their own and other key research in the area. They had an excellent working relationship with their students and were proactive in listening to and addressing students' views and issues. Another unique aspect was that they had supported a number of self-employed placements.

The Course Team confirmed that numbers at undergraduate level were capped but were generally in the region of 80 – 90 students. Postgraduate student numbers sat between 25 and 30 students. It was important that the course philosophy and student experience were maintained. Student satisfaction in the NSS was excellent and the courses' reputational capital continued to grow.

5.5 Creativity, innovation and reflection

The Panel stated that the areas of creativity, innovation and reflection were key to the subject area and it was clear from discussions that they were embedded in the curriculum, however, could be set out more explicitly in the module descriptions, for example, Creativity in Communications.

The Course Team explained that the environment in which they operated, was very fast moving and it was essential that they endeavoured to stay current. Provision was in place to make quick curriculum revisions but changes in relation to technology for example, did not require formal approval and could be implemented immediately.

5.6 Greater Belfast Development

The Panel asked the Course Team to set out what impact the move to the new campus in Belfast City Centre would have on the courses – the move would take place before the next revalidation in five years' time. The Team advised that they had tried to impact where possible on the new facilities and had been involved in the development of the kind of spaces needed

for their students. They already used the 'flipped' classroom and electronic coursework submission and feedback. The move was viewed as a positive and the provision lent itself perfectly to the new spaces and the city centre location.

5.7 Induction

The Course Team informed the Panel that a clear induction process was in place for all courses. It commenced with induction at the start of semester 1 for new incoming students and continued on a rolling basis for each module into the second semester. Returning inductions for second and final year students were also held to ensure that all students were prepared for the year ahead. An induction was also held for the January intake as well as a very well established placement induction.

5.8 Course coherence

The Panel asked if the linkages between modules were clear to students and was assured by the Team that this was the case. Staff undertook brief recaps of previous modules at the start of follow on modules. All staff were aware of each other's module content and assessments and frequently co-taught and collaborated. Everyone had a very holistic view of the programmes.

5.9 Dissertation

The Panel was surprised by and questioned the removal of the traditional dissertation from the Master's course. They were of the view that this removed an academic research career pathway for students. The Course Team advised that the removal of the dissertation was a purposeful direction for the Department with the addition of an applied research consultancy project instead and, in fact, the dissertation had been removed from undergraduate programmes a number of years previously. They were not of the view that anyone wishing to undertake a research career would adversely affected in that the applied project did not preclude students from progressing to PhD study.

The applied project was more appropriate to the course identity and the Department and Faculty vision. Furthermore, uptake of the dissertation historically had been low.

5.10 New degree algorithm

The Panel asked how students would be supported in the introduction of the new degree algorithm in which 30% of Level 5 would now contribute to the final degree classification. For new students, they would know no different and existing students had been reassured that no-one would be disadvantaged. This would be further emphasised during induction.

5.11 Programme Learning Outcomes

The Panel queried the BSc Hons Marketing programme learning outcome map and the fact that all or almost all learning outcomes were met in two modules. The Team advised that MTK512 the Digital and Marketing Nexus and MKT545 Marketing Consultancy were capstone modules which brought all the learning together. They confirmed that the mapping was correct.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The Panel commended the programmes on the following:

- i) The level of support provided to students and the positive engagement between staff and students;
- ii) The innovation demonstrated through the course design process;
- iii) The extensive business links and how these are translated in learning and teaching;
- iv) The unique offering of the programmes;
- v) The innovation in terms of diversity and types of assessment;
- vi) The co-operation between staff in respect of content and delivery of the curriculum;
- vii) The employability journey through the courses and how students are supported through it.

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the programmes be approved for a period of 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 28 February 2019** for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

Conditions

- i) That all issues identified by the Academic Office and detailed in the appendix to the panel report are addressed;

Recommendations

- i) That the distinctiveness of the course, in particular in relation to entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, is more clearly articulated both within the courses but also in marketing and publicity material (sections 3.2 and 5.4 refer);
- ii) That the existence of the Marketing Society is better communicated, in particular to postgraduate students at induction with a view to building a stronger overall student community identity (section 4 refers);
- iii) To continue to develop the international marketing of the programmes (sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5 and 5.4 refer).

7 APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked the Panel, in particular, the external members, and the Course Teams for their valuable contribution to the revalidation process.

DT 04.12.18