

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/1g)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

13 March 2019

Agenda Item 4.5

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Access Diploma Southern Regional College: Adult Learning with Pathways

COVER SHEET

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To consider a request from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for a one-year extension of approval.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

FACULTY: Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

SCHOOL: Applied Social and Policy Sciences

SUBJECT UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: 30B2 Access Diploma in Adult Learning with Pathways - Social Sciences and Humanities/Science/Combined Studies/Community Development with Cert in Adult Learning Exit Award. Southern Regional College.

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: Academic Years 2019/20

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED:
(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

One year to include September 2019 intake until academic year 2020/21.
Faculty recommendation in terms of rescheduling semester 1 October to December 2020.

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

Pathways as follows:

Social Sciences and Humanities – Armagh, Newry, Portadown
Science – Armagh, Newry, Portadown
Combined Studies – Armagh, Newry, Portadown
Community Development – Armagh, Newry (pathway suspended).

REASON FOR REQUEST:

The Associate Dean for Education on behalf of the Faculty is requesting the one year extension. The school of ASPS have four Access Diplomas within their collaborative provision. By granting the one year extension all four courses will be revalidated in the same academic year. This will provide the opportunity for the course teams to engage with the new curriculum design principles and to avail of workshop and inputs from CHERP. The Faculty via the Faculty Partnership Manager and the School via the AHOS.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:

The programme has a lengthy history at SRC and the southern region for over thirty years. It is a vital component of the College's agenda to widen participation and engage with the local community. The course offers returning adult learners the opportunity to reskill and obtain progression routes into Higher Education. In the last EE Report (June 18) it was stated that "*The standards of the course and its assessment, and of student performance, are comparable with those at other institutions which I am familiar with. Standards are consistent across all campuses.*" Furthermore, the programme was commended for "*...quality of the candidates and their achievements was good and on a par with programmes I have seen in other institutions.*" The Course Team have attended University organised

ED events in order to prepare for the revalidation cycle and are confident in undertaking the task of redesigning the programme and ensuring it is fit for purpose. In the SPM report issued in August 18 it was noted that *“Ulster QA processes have been followed diligently and the Deputy Head of School and Programme Coordinators ensured that all necessary documentation was provided when requested.”* The SPM further commented that *the “...External Examiner has commented very positively in her report on the setting of the assessment criteria, marking schemes and classification at an appropriate level, students across all campuses being aware of the assessment schemes and marking criteria and assessments being linked to learning outcomes and University assessment criteria.”*

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

School management undertook the decision to place the programme under new leadership this year in order to ensure that Quality Assurance targets (internally set) are adhered to and that the team can prepare for the revalidation cycle. The programme has seen changes in its recent recruitment profile and this issue was commented upon by the SPM *“The Access Diploma is such that students do take leave of absences and return to study at a later date. The programmes are recruiting below their numbers across all programmes. Demand will vary from year to year.”* Over the last three years a total of 1106 learners enrolled across the three sites. The Programme underwent the College’s internal Quality Assurance process last year (PEP) and a number of recommendations in an Action Plan are being worked through in the current academic year. The SPM commenting upon current Attrition and Success rates noted *“...reflects the complex nature of the personal circumstances of Adult Learners returning to education. The course teams provide excellent pastoral and academic support to students and track attendance rigorously”* The team feel that by undertaking this extension they will produce a fit for purpose programme going forward that will reflect local economic needs and provide a sustained route for adult learners into Higher education.

PSRB (if applicable): Not 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:

As stated in the standards and quality section above, demand varies from year to year. The range of pathways on offer are recruiting below their target numbers for each cohort. Nevertheless as stated previously, in the last three years 1106 students enrolled across the programmes. There are sufficient student numbers to continue the delivery of the Access programmes which contributes significantly with widening participation strategies, enhancing access to HE for a diverse range of Adult Learners in the local communities.

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

The Faculty Partnership Manager (FPM) is fully supportive of the Faculty plan to extend the revalidation time frame by one year to include the 2019 intake (proposed new time frame semester October to December 2020).

The staff in the partner college involved in the delivery of the Access Programmes continue to engage very positively with the FPM and Ulster as they have done for many years. In addition, staff engaged very positively with the previous External Examiner and took on board and actioned any feedback she gave in terms of enhancing the provision. Staff are building a positive relationship with the new external examiner (one year into her tenure) and she is supportive of the plan to extend the revalidation period by one year.

As stated in the above section on standards and quality by Henry McCloy, Deputy Head of School at SRC, the team have a new very experienced academic leader with experience of Ulster’s revalidation processes in place. The team are very well versed in the revalidation process and this will be the second cycle that they will have undertaken with the current FPM. The team have attended the

introductory session on the new curriculum design process and the new Academic lead has attended the revalidation seminar facilitated by the academic office at Ulster.

There are no concerns regarding the quality of learning and teaching, the curriculum, assessment or the educational oversight of the provision. The External Examiner has commented positively on the provision in her report received for the last academic year. See summary of comments extracted from the report below.

Marking and feedback

“The feedback provided on all the scripts I saw was good with evidence of feed forward. At the meeting I had with students they confirmed that the feedback they had received was both useful and helpful.”

“I can confirm that the internal marking was conducted rigorously and impartially and the schemes of marking and classification being consistently applied.”

Assessment

“The methods of assessment and marking are appropriate to the aims, intended learning outcomes, structure and content of the course and are applied at all centres.”

“When I met with the students at all centres they were able to confirm that they were aware of the assessment scheme and marking criteria.”

“The assessment criteria, marking schemes and classifications are set at the appropriate level in accordance with the University of Ulster’s regulations.”

“The programme has a good mix of assessments and examinations which assesses a number of practical and key skills such as team working communication and independent learning.”

Curriculum, structure and content of the course

“Both the structure and content of the modules are coherent and appropriate to the level of qualification, the subject area and the aims of the course.”

Student learning and quality of student work

“The quality of the candidates and their achievements was good and on a par with other programmes I have seen in other institutions.....I saw a good spread of good marks with evidence that students are beginning to engage with higher level thinking skills.”

“From speaking to the students it is evident that there is a well-established student voice and representative system in place and that any issues that arise are dealt with expeditiously. “

Standards

‘It is evident throughout the course documentation that Ulster University academic standards and regulations are fundamental to the course design, delivery and to the assessment principles and practice.’

“The exam board was effectively chairedprocedures were all followed”

In addition, there were no issues of concern raised at the recent Annual course review meeting. The team are energised for the next revalidation phase. They are highly committed to their students and are looking forward to future proofing the programme for the next five years. They provide excellent pastoral care to students with very personal and complex issues.

The team continue to monitor early leavers, progression, attrition on an ongoing basis. The revalidation will give the opportunity to revisit the various pathways on offer and to enhance provision moving forward.

I have no hesitation on supporting the one year extension based on the external examiner feedback, annual course review feedback and my experience of working with the team over the last five years.

Susannah McCall
FPM

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:



SIGNED: _____
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 28 February 2019 _____

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

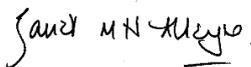
External examiner reports indicate adequate assurance of quality and standards for the course and therefore the Academic Office endorses the proposal for a one-year extension to period of approval.



SIGNED: _____
Academic Policy and Standards Manager or Head of Academic Office

DATE: 4 March 2019 _____

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



SIGNED: _____ DATE: 5 March 2019 _____
Head of Quality Enhancement

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 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: _____
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)

DATE: _____

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office
July 2018