

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/13

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

Agenda Item 10

CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (COLL. PROVISION)
ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

COVER SHEET

To consider a paper.

CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (COLL. PROVISION)
ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

1. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 17 June 2019 the Committee agreed that a pilot Continuous Assurance of Quality Enhancement (CAQE): Collaborative Provision process for the 2018/19 academic year be approved.

The pilot version of CAQE (Collaborative Provision) aimed to:

- enhance Faculty oversight of quality assurance processes;
- reduce the administrative workload with more concise forms and use of benchmarks and metrics;
- enable targeted enhancement activity and action planning;
- monitor articulation to Ulster programmes.

The pilot did not employ the three categories used for internal provision but was based on whether or not courses met or failed to meet identified benchmarks.

2. OUTCOMES FROM THE 2018/19 CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (COLL. PROVISION) REVIEW

During October 2019 Quality Enhancement (QE) provided Faculties with enrolments, success and progression data for each approved programme of study. Faculties scrutinized the data and where additional information was required, or where the Faculty had concerns about a programme, Course Teams in partner institutions were required to complete an Action Plan.

Completed Action Plans, which were signed off by senior management within the partner institution, were reviewed by Faculties with follow-up action taken as required. No follow-up meetings were required.

Summarized below, by Faculty, are the outcomes from the review.

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)

AHSS has partnerships with all 6 Regional Colleges, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and the Health and Social Care Leadership Centre/Western Trust.

In 2018/19 the Faculty had a total of 2242 students studying on validated programmes across the 6 Regional Colleges. A further 833 students were studying on programmes in the NIPS and the PSNI. The numbers of students undertaking

the PGD Health and Social Care Management programme at the Health and Social Care Leadership Centre/Western Trust is just under 40 with no issues around attrition or success 1 or 2. Around 1/3 of successful students' progress to the MPA at Ulster.

No specific interventions were recommended for any of the programmes within the Faculty.

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

The Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment is the largest Faculty in terms of the extent of regional validated provision alongside the highest rate of articulation to linked courses in 2018/19.

The Faculty validates provision in all 6 partner Colleges in Northern Ireland with a total of 1,480 students enrolled in 2018/19. Articulation from Foundation degrees to linked provision at Ulster remains important to the Faculty in relation to the academic plan. Three hundred and nineteen students articulated to the Faculty in September 2018.

A total of 28 Action Plans were requested from 63 courses, or 45% of all provision. Some plans had multiple issues. Of these, 4 action plans related to low intakes and cohort size, 21 to attrition, 15 to progression, and 2 to academic matters raised in the confidence statements from the FPM report. Further information was requested for 8 of the action plans submitted, but no formal follow-up meetings were required.

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences

The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences has partnership provision with 7 Colleges, including CAFRE. The majority of the collaborative provision in the Faculty relates to 3 key programmes, the FdSc Applied & Medical Sciences, FdSc Sport, Exercise & Fitness and FdSc Health & Social Care. These 3 programmes are delivered as Subject Networks/Consortiums across the majority of the Colleges. CAFRE provision focuses on the Food & Nutrition, Agriculture and Equine Management subject areas.

A total of 99 students progressed to Ulster University from approved validated programmes in partner institutions onto Year 2 or Year 3 of programmes within the Faculty.

One Action Plan was requested and the College provided an Intervention Plan which addressed the issues raised. The Faculty would propose that all programmes continue as planned on the revalidation cycle and that no programmes should have an earlier revalidation or suspend intake.

Ulster University Business School (UUBS)

UUBS has partnerships with all 6 Regional Colleges, with 529 registered students in 2018/19, across 18 distinct programmes, including CertHE and FdSc. Provision is generally split between general Business programmes, Accountancy/Finance

and Hospitality/Travel & Tourism subject areas. Within the Hospitality/Travel & Tourism subject area the School has validated, and operates, a 5 College subject network, which is currently being led by BMET, who hold the Hospitality Curriculum Hub.

Articulation to Ulster degrees from the College partners continues to make an important contribution towards the School's academic plan, with 135 FdSc students joining an Ulster programme in 2018/19, of which 36 joined PT provision and 99 joined FT programmes.

Action Plans were requested from 18 programmes. All were approved with no interventions required. These programmes will be monitored closely by the FPM.

3. KEY FINDING FROM CONTINUOUS ASSURANCE OF QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (COLL. PROVISION)

As well as reviewing data pertaining to student enrolments, attrition, success and progression the CAQE (Coll. Provision) process required Faculties to look strategically at collaborative activity in terms of finance, progression and the Faculty academic plan and the contribution this activity makes to the University's 5&50 strategic plan.

The following summarizes the key finding from the review:

- **Increased competition:** There are increasing examples of active competition from Higher Education institutions across the water and in the Republic of Ireland. Examples include the validation of provision at SWC by the Open University, English Institutions such as LMJU, Scottish Institutions such as Edinburgh Napier and Republic of Ireland Institutions such as Dundalk Institute of Technology. The latter is a new arrangement but one that could have potential implications for full-time and part-time articulation.
- **Develop an Ulster HLA Fd:** Consideration should be given to the University developing an HLA Fd model in partnership with local Colleges which would achieve an excellent student experience whilst assuring apprenticeship standards. The model could be used as a further basis to redesign and develop further HLAs within the partner institutions to provide a seamless progression route to the linked programmes at Ulster.
- **Review current funding model:** There is an urgent need to review the current Ulster funding model which caps the fee payable by partner institutions regardless of the number of students enrolled on the course. Consideration should also be given to a setting a different fee for HLA provision. There is also concern that the full fees are not being collected by the University with the current model not being fully implemented.
- **Part-time Fees:** There is a significant shift in provision from full-time to part-time HLA delivery in some Colleges. Consideration should be given to the implications for Ulster should this move bring displacement from full-time to part-time articulation.

- **Preferred partners:** There is an opportunity to work with preferred partners and seek to develop a model where articulation to Ulster is agreed as the preferred partner. Strengthened partnerships, or exclusive tie-ins/lock-ins, with our strongest partners (preferred partner status) to support articulation and further curriculum development.
- **Move to HNDs:** With recent moves in some Colleges to shift from Fd delivery to HND it is important that Ulster actively underscores that we are open for business in this area also. The articulation arrangements from HND programmes can be established quite quickly and as a mechanism to assure the maximisation of articulation to our programmes.
- **Decreasing demographic:** The decreasing demographic increases competition between Ulster and our collaborative partners for the shrinking number of 18-year-old's and the tensions this creates e.g.: maintaining entry standards and the accusations of student poaching.

These issues, and other matters relating to collaborative activity, will be discussed on an ongoing basis at the regular meetings between the Associate Deans (Education) and the Interim Dean of Learning Enhancement.

4. RECOMMENDATION

That the outcomes from the 2018/19 Continuous Assurance of Quality Enhancement (Coll. Provision) be approved and the process be retained for the 2019/20 academic year.