

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/21a)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

22 October 2020

Agenda Item 8.1

DEPARTURES AND VARIATIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK:

PLACEMENT CONTINGENCY – ALL FACULTY PROVISION

COVER SHEET

*Presenter: Ms A Scanlon*

To consider an exceptional request for support of 15 weeks minimum requirement for Diploma in Professional Practice (DPP and on placement learning) where it follows a Civic and Economic Recovery Pathway.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

22 October 2020

## **PLACEMENT CONTINGENCY – ALL FACULTY PROVISION**

To request support for the contingency developed in relation to extended placement options during and through the mitigating circumstances of the Covid-19 crisis.

Seeking explicit support through ASQEC for the following :

1. Where students successfully complete the CER (20 credits) along with a minimum of a 15 week placement they will be eligible for completion, submission and award of the Diploma in Professional Practice (DPP) 60 credits.

It is acknowledged that a 15 weeks + placed aspect is a substantive change from the normally applied and typical 48-week placement and the minimum norm of 25 weeks (as stated in the regulations). This is a unique request that supports the student experience and learning in the context of the regional economy during the global pandemic Covid-19.

In July 2020 almost 350 students had secured placement for 2020/21. This was a substantive reduction on the previous year of around 1600 and was noted as a severe risk on the risk register by the University Recovery Workstream for Teaching. The development of the CER pathway with DPP will support a further 282 students with an opportunity to explore real world learning and work-related practice.

Recognition by the Department for the Economy who are offering extended support (including the normally applied placement funding through block grant) for the proposal where the CER pathway follows on to include a further 15 week minimum placement and potential completion of the DPP, helps to provide further confidence for the regional importance with which this interim solution is valued. The additional pathway is potentially securing a further 1.5m in fee income and funding (282 students).

### **Civic and Economic Recovery Module – 20 credits (Level 5)**

The newly approved Civic and Economic Recovery module (CER) will be offered as a standalone short course at Level 5 and will sit outside the Certificate of PPD framework. For the duration of semester one this will serve as an extended onboarding, where focused development of professional skills and behaviours will include areas such as advance digital competencies and enabling student readiness for remote and virtual working along with the corresponding readiness from NI Employers to be in a position to offer placement opportunity.

### **Work Based & Placement Learning at Ulster University**

The many rewarding placement partnerships we enjoy with local employers add so much to the rich student experience at Ulster University. We recognise that employers across all sectors have and will continue to make adjustments in response to the unprecedented nature of COVID-19. Our students can continue to make a valuable contribution to local businesses

during these challenging times, we are proud of the impact our students have made in supporting all sectors of our economy deal with the unprecedented nature of COVID-19.

Much, but not all, of the University's Placement provision works on the sandwich year model, with a full year out in placement often from June / July for one year. The placement requirement for DPP is normally one full year with a 'normal' minimum of 25 weeks as per the regulations. To support an enhanced flexible offering for placement which enables the wider civic and economic recovery of NI (post COVID 19) an exceptional adjustment which allows the placement requirement to consist of a modular delivery for semester one with a strong industry focus followed by a minimum of 15 weeks 'placement' would enable enhanced access and onboarding for a number of Ulster students who are seeking a placement experience. The Department for the Economy are supporting Ulster University in Semester one delivery of this industry focused module in conjunction with a minimum of 15 weeks + of uniquely employer supervised experience to meet the 24 week block funding threshold requirement (a maximum of 9 weeks of the CER module is considered against the funding requirement).

The circumstances of COVID-19 required us to consider how flexible the University can be in alternative placement models that still bring the rich benefits of applied learning through problem-based learning and placement for Students and Employers.

This module will support a flexible placement option for those students who have been unable to secure a traditional placement prior to the start of the semester.

This experience allows students to develop an informed response to a current civic or economic challenge within the context of a regional economy. The curated solution will contribute to the development and or recovery plans for a range of external organisations.

AS/UMcT