

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/33a)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3 December 2020

Agenda Item 10.1

COVER SHEET

CAMPUS CO-ORDINATING GROUPS -  
ANNUAL REPORTS FOR THE COMBINED STUDIES PROGRAMME 2019/20  
COLERAINE, MAGEE AND JORDANSTOWN

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To receive the reports.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

CAMPUS CO-ORDINATING GROUP (Coleraine)

### Enrolment

At the census date of 25/11/20, 216 students had enrolled on combined modular courses at the start of the academic year 2020-21. While, the number of combining courses has fallen over recent years (due to the relocation or closure of courses such as Business, computing and languages). The teach out period of these courses has now been completed resulting in a considerable drop in last year's enrolment by 242 students on combined courses. However, combination programmes continue to be highly marketable at Coleraine. The largest combinations at Coleraine are with Education Minor combinations, such as, History with Education (30), English with Education (29) followed by Journalism with English (17). The relocation of courses from Coleraine, particularly to the Magee campus has seen an increase in combination numbers on that campus. As many of the combining subjects with Education (such as Business, Irish, and Computing) moved to Magee, an expansion of Education to the Magee campus has begun in Sept 2020.

### Combination Changes

The past academic year saw the campus respond to the delivery and facilitation of learning and teaching during the global pandemic. Strategic development of the combined programme offering at Coleraine has been impacted in this response. Initial explorations of Journalism as a Minor with History and English Major subjects have however taken place. Future campus discussions in regard to combined programmes development will centre around the reforming of the campus identity and in particular addressing trends towards re-establishing a gender balance on campus.

### Exit Awards

All combining courses have exit awards in place. However, those students exiting with a lower award of an AB or a Cert HE continues to be a small number. In the past academic year only six Associate Bachelor Degrees were awarded. Only four students were awarded a Certificate in Higher Education.

### External Examiner Report

The June 2020 Campus Progress & Award Board was attended by the Chief External Examiner for the Coleraine Campus, Professor Jeremy Smith, University of Glasgow who, commented very favourably on proceedings stating:

*I can report with complete confidence that the whole Board was conducted with rigour, impartiality and propriety, and in accordance with regulations. Chairing was impeccable, and the lead for the Board (David Barr) was clearly in full command of the proceedings. I was especially impressed by how the dedicated administrator, Jane Boylan, handled not only the very complex spreadsheets, which brought together disciplines across the university, but did so in the context of the current emergency. Ms Boylan is in my view to be commended for outstanding professionalism.*

The report continued to explore the nature of decision making in degree classifications and inter-course liaison on borderline cases.

*The Board, I noted with pleasure, was scrupulous in observing degree classifications; I was impressed by the considerable care taken with those tricky borderline places. I also like the custom of Dean's Lists for non-finalists, which seems to me a lovely touch that my own institution could profitably adopt.*

It is with great sadness that the combined campus board bids farewell to Professor Smith who has been a great asset in ensuring the highest quality of standards are upheld. However, we are honoured to have in place the Registrar from NUI Galway Professor Pol O'Dochartaigh appointed as the new external examiner for the combined subjects at the Coleraine Campus from 2020-2021.

Plans for 2019-20

Key objectives for 2020-21 will be discussed and agreed at the next meeting of the Coleraine Campus Coordinating Committee in January. On the Coleraine campus the largest number of combining courses are drawn from the faculty of AHSS. It is hoped to expand combinations in other faculties, and indeed across faculties. It is perhaps worthy to note that the University of Oxford's Jenner Institute's Covid-19 vaccine was developed through interdisciplinary work. Combined programmes are fertile ground for innovation and development both within and outside of traditional academic silos.

The Campus Co-ordinating Group (Coleraine) will continue to oversee the enrolment process, induction, timetabling issues, retention and pastoral support of these combining students. It is anticipated that new developments in provision will be explored to replace the relocated courses from the Coleraine campus.

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

### CAMPUS CO-ORDINATING GROUP (Magee)

#### Enrolment

193 students had enrolled on combined modular courses for 2019/20. This is an increase from 153 students enrolled in 2018/19. Enrolments are based on the official programmes results sheet- programme year breakdown that drives the Combined Progress Award Board (CPAB).

There were twenty-six combined programmes overseen by the Magee Campus Coordinating Group in 2019/20. The largest combining subject is Business with Computing which currently had 52 students enrolled in 2019/20. Other popular combinations are Accounting and Marketing (28 students), Law with Marketing (13 students) and Law with Accounting (13 students).

#### External Examiner Report

The July 2020 Campus Progress & Award Board was attended by the Chief External Examiner for the Magee Campus, Dr Gill Waugh, University of Bolton who wrote a highly favourable report, commenting very positively on the procedures and conduct of the Board and the range of subject combinations provided.

*“The range of subject combinations provided in these joint honours degree is worthy of note. The range of programmes offers students opportunity to study areas that are not always available in university and helps to support opportunities into a range of employment.”*

#### Plans for 2020/21

There are ten courses in their last year of teaching in 2020/21. A new education minor has been introduced. This has resulted in five new combinations being offered in 2020/21 through clearing; Irish with Education, Drama with Education, Music with Education, Computing with Education and Business with Education. These courses had added 11 students to the combined courses in 2020/21. The key objective for 2020/21 is to explore further new proposals for combinations and promote further the existing combinations

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

### CAMPUS CO-ORDINATING GROUP (Jordanstown)

#### Introduction

The combined programmes in Jordanstown continue to run smoothly.

#### Enrolments

Enrolments are based on the official Programme Results Sheet – Programme Year Breakdown that drives the Combined Progress and Award Board (CPAB).

#### Jordanstown

In 2019/20 the total number of students enrolled at Jordanstown for combined programmes was 421 (344 ASPS + 77 UBS) with 391 (314 AHSS+ 77 UBS) full time and 30 part time students (compared to 318 in 18/19 and 161 in 17/18) across 14 (11AHSS + 3 UBS) subject combinations. Sociology with Criminology continues to be the most popular combination (115FT and 4PT) followed by and Law with Criminology (73FT and 13PT) and “Business Economics with” combinations (74FT), which UBS has withdrawn, with the final cohort of students entering their final year in 2020/21. The view of the Business School is that the modular provision adds an extra layer of administrative complexity compared to a Single Honours provision when the same modules in Marketing & Accounting (for Business Economics) & Finance (for Economics) can be offered as part of a suite of options with the Business Economics or Economics options as appropriate.

#### Subject Combinations

The increase in total enrolments (421) in 19/20, compared to 318 in 18/19, highlights the popularity of these courses, especially Criminology combinations. As stated the “Business Economics with” combinations are entering their final academic year with only 30 students over the 3 courses registered to complete.

#### Chief External Examiner’s Report

Professor Stephen Sinclair from Glasgow Caledonian University, who was appointed for the four-year period from 2016/17, has agreed to stay on for a further year. He attended the Progress and Award Board held on-line in June. He particularly noted the ‘high academic standards’ of the students and that the improvements in performance among students was a ‘testimony to the support which staff provided’.

#### Activities

The Campus Coordinating Group at Jordanstown via the AHSS Faculty Education committee will continue to monitor application rates to different combinations and to review the pattern of transfers from part-time to full-time study to inform University admissions practice and asking grades. Concern continues to be noted through this committee of the decreased promotion of the combination course portfolio and this concern is being brought to the attention of the University Market Engagement Team.