

ULSTER UNIVERSITY
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM
23 September 2015

Minutes of the Collaborative Partnerships Forum held on 23rd September 2015 at Coleraine.

Present: Mrs J Alleyne, Mr J Curran, Mr L Curran, Mrs V Darragh, Ms L Ervine (for Mrs C Davison), Dr M Keenan, Mr D McDowell, Mr J Marley, Mrs H Millar, Prof R Millar, Mrs M Paris (Chair), Mr Peoples (for Mrs D McElwee), Mr P Quinn, Ms C Reid, Mrs A Scanlon for (Dr B Murphy), Mr Alan Serplus (for Mrs L Lavery).

Apologies: Mrs C Davison, Dr P Irving, Ms S Kennedy, Mrs L Lavery, Mrs S McCall, Mrs D McElwee, Professor D McAlister, M Sowney.

In Attendance: Mrs A Gaston, Mrs C McIntyre.

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Carol Reid and Mr Jerome Marley to the Forum in their role as Subject Partnership Managers for Business & Hospitality and Biomedical & Environmental Sciences.

The Chair also wished Mr Hugh Deighan well on his return to QMAU.

MINUTES

15.37 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2015 were confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

15.38 Fitness for Professional Practice Protocol

The Chair reported that Colleges had responded to the email in May regarding Fitness for Professional Practice Protocol, as follows:

Belfast Met	Policy will be ratified and in place for 2015/16.
NWRC	Approval will be in place by September 2015.
NRC	Being equality screened and will soon be available.
SWC	Confirmed in place.
SERC	Agreed and will be in place for September.
SRC	Approved.

It was concluded that the action from the Fitness for Professional Practice Protocol is finished.

CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

15.39 Collaborative Courses Unit

The Chair informed members that the Collaborative Courses Unit had been awarded the Distinguished Service Team Award and will be presented with the award by the Vice Chancellor in December. Congratulations were expressed to the Unit.

15.40 Affiliate Staff Status

The Chair asked Cathy McIntyre to outline the changes to the Affiliate Staff protocol. It was explained that the system is now more automated but applications were still to be forwarded in the first instance to Cathy McIntyre at QMAU who will authorise and process the applications, forwarding them to Partnership Managers for further processing, or make the relevant changes in the case of renewal or cancellation. This activity is to be updated annually, with the deadline of 31 October each year. Inactive accounts had already been closed; account holders who might wish to renew their status had been contacted.

HE Co-ordinators were requested to help identify appropriate nominees, as affiliate staff status is only for those actively teaching on validated courses. The new automated process will speed up the turnaround of applications considerably.

15.41 Foundation Degree Stakeholders' Forum

The Chair reported on the post-project review of DEL's media marketing campaign to raise awareness of Foundation Degrees (FDs) among employers, and those looking to upskill or reskill. All objectives had been met: there was an increased awareness of FDs among the campaign target audiences; FDs and their potential benefits were more widely understood; and the status of FDs had improved, making them a viable option for school leavers, mature students and adult returners.

15.42 HE Big Conversation

The Chair reported that DEL had launched its Higher Education 'Big Conversation' about the sustainability of higher education in Northern Ireland. Members were encouraged to participate through the DEL 'Big Conversation' website at:

<http://hebigconversation.delni.gov.uk/>

15.43 Partnership Handbook

The Academic Office published the latest edition in July 2015, in electronic copy only since there are no major changes. The Chair drew the Forum's attention to the introduction of a new form for course suspension. The Chair undertook to check

with Finance regarding the implications of courses that do not recruit for partner institutions

It was requested that the University should review how this action affects finances.

AGREED: That the Chair would seek confirmation from Finance in relation to the implications of the Course Suspension form.

15.44 Changes at Ulster University

The Chair outlined the changes to Ulster campuses in relation to realigning and consolidating activity in response to budget cuts. Some courses will be closing, while other courses will now be based on one campus rather than over numerous sites.

SPMs commented on those linked courses most likely to be affected from 2016.

AGREED: That SPMs would liaise with Partner Institutions to identify all affected courses, implement appropriate actions, and resolve any unforeseen consequences. Formal reports would be presented at the next Forum meeting, and each SPM should refer to Faculty HFAs for planning purposes, and the Academic Office for modification of formal agreements.

15.45 League Tables

It was noted that Ulster University had risen to 57th place in the Sunday Times Good University Guide, up from 69th last year. It was noted that excellent National Student Survey results aided this improvement.

TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP

15.46 Members considered paper CPF/15/17 on the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Forum. It was noted that there were a couple of changes to the Partnership Managers.

The paper was noted, amended and approved.

DATES OF MEETING 2015/16

15.47 Members received paper CPF/15/18 detailing the dates and venues for meetings for the 2015/16 academic year.

It was also noted that the Staff Development Event at CAFRE will be held on Friday 16th October and the annual training course on Management of the Annual Cycle & Boards of Examiners would be held on either the 12th or 13th May 2016.

Partnership Institution representatives were asked to encourage attendance, especially for newly appointed staff, and to note that Chairs of Boards of Examiners must have attended training before chairing an Exam Board.

SUPPLEMENTARY BOARDS OF EXAMINERS & THE UCAS CYCLE

15.48 Supplementary Boards of Examiners and the UCAS Cycle

The Examinations Office's annual calendar for partner institutions with key dates was noted, and it was emphasised that it was essential that these dates were adhered to. There was discussion of the timing of supplementary boards of examiners and the implications for students holding offers of University places and hoping to progress to Ulster University, but depending on the outcome of a first sit or resit assessment in August. It was further noted that all applicants were required to satisfy the terms of their UCAS offer by 31st August at the latest, while the UCAS automatic rejection date was 7th September

It was emphasised that the dates listed on the annual calendar are not flexible and therefore must be followed strictly.

In relation to the supplementary boards, Valerie Darrah reminded everyone that all course results sheets had to be accompanied by official forms acknowledging the external examiners' involvement. This was especially important for auditing purposes. It was further noted that all marks are unofficial until confirmed by the Board and submitted together with the forms, and that inaccuracies on the course results sheets must be clearly signalled. Given the timing of the return of marks and decisions, together with external examiner approval, it was decided that the SPMs would be the primary information source for their Faculties as well as answering queries from other Faculties, especially in relation to overall percentages which are not recorded on the University's system.

Professor Millar stipulated that the deadline of 31st August would be implemented rigorously and Michaela Keenan reminded the Forum that Supplementary Boards and Fast Track Boards of Examiners could not be held at the same time, as this would delay communication of decisions to the University.

Carol Reid noted that courses run at out-centres now have an online registration facility, and Valerie Darrah agreed to discuss this possibility for validated provision with Norma Cameron.

- AGREED:
- i. Subject Partnership Managers are to communicate to Colleges that it is essential the dates outlined in the examinations and associated activities calendar for Partner Institutions are strictly adhered to.
 - ii. Valerie Darrah is to seek advice from Norma Cameron regarding the possibility of online registration for Foundation Degree and Access students.

15.49 Fast Track Part Time Foundation Degrees

It was noted that more and more accelerated fast track part-time Boards of Examiners were recording failures of 40 credits on Course Results Sheets for individual year 1 students. The regulations stipulate that such students can only progress with a maximum of 20 failed credits. The Forum was reminded that fast track part-time FDs were targeted at what might be considered academic high flyers

in relevant employment, and that the message might need to be reinforced concerning who and what these courses are suitable for. Some SPMs had concerns in relation to progression and retention on fast track FDs.

It was suggested that a small group be set up to survey 2015/16 entrance requirements for fast track part-time FDs to ensure they align with the original intention of the provision.

AGREED: That a small group consisting of Michaela Keenan, Jerome Marley, Carol Reid and Maeve Paris meet to survey 2015/16 fast track part-time FD entry requirements.

UPDATE OF TABLE OF EQUIVALENCES

15.50 The Chair presented an update to the review of the Table of Equivalences paper, tracking the progress of students at the end of the first year of progression from foundation degrees to University. For the courses reviewed by the Faculty of Computing and Engineering, the UCAS tariff was set at 300 points (BBC), which equated to 70% in an Access course, or 55% in the level 5 modules of the linked foundation degree.

From a total of 14 progressing students on G600, 8 progressed cleanly to final year or optional placement, 3 failed outright, and 2 progressed to final year carrying supplementary work. The main difficulties were students who progressed from the 55-59 and 60-64% bands. Almost all students on G400 (21 of 22) progressed either to final year or to optional placement, with one early leaver and two requiring supplementary work in final year.

In the Faculty of Arts, the Creative Technologies degree set a tariff of 240 UCAS points, equating to 40% in level 5 foundation degree modules. 11 students progressed in 2013/14, with 6 of the 11 students progressing to final year.

The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences required AAB at A level, equating to a tariff of 340 UCAS points for progression to Sports Theory and Practice, and Sports and Exercise Science degrees, which translated into 65% in the current table. All but 2 students progressed cleanly to placement year or final year, indicating that the Faculty was largely satisfied with the table.

In total, the progress of 56 students was considered for this exercise: 79% progressed cleanly, 9% were carrying some resits, 4% were on LOA, and 5% were coded U1: failed and withdrawn.

The Forum agreed that based on these findings the equivalence table could be judged fit for purpose.

Janet Alleyne suggested that where Faculties required refinement of selection processes, attention could be paid to performance on particular modules, provided students were informed in advance. The Chair noted for the Faculty of Computing and Engineering that performance on FD and Access mathematics modules formed part of the entry requirements for some courses in addition to the overall level 5 average.

UPDATE ON MODELS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

15.51 A review of the models of work-based learning was carried out in the light of difficulties reported in securing suitable placements to enable the achievement of WBL learning outcomes. A survey was undertaken focussing on placements in 2013/14 to establish whether students were unplaced, which subjects presented challenges in securing placements, and whether there were geographical differences in play. The Chair presented the working group's update to the survey, with additional information from business-related subjects.

The summary findings were based on an amalgamation of 10 subject areas and revealed that 96% of eligible students were actively engaged in work-based learning, 3% of students were unplaced or registered on leave of absence and 2% exited with CertHE (percentages rounded).

Of those engaged in WBL (844 in total), 64% of students were full-time, with 36% working part-time. For all WBL placements, 33% were paid, 9% received expenses, and the majority, 59%, were on unpaid WBL. Computing was the subject area with the highest demand for WBL, followed by counselling, then subjects related to hospitality, travel, tourism and events, and then agricultural and related studies.

The subject area with the highest number of students on leave of absence or unplaced was counselling, with 14% of the 149 eligible to be on WBL; a further 5% exited with a CertHE.

It was felt that some of the perceived difficulties in finding WBL placements related to the economic downturn and that as we did not have the same difficulties of five years ago certain practices should no longer be observed; in particular, the use of leave of absence in built environment-related FDs should have been discontinued after 2011. Michaela Keenan reported that she had been working with the CCU to resolve the remaining few cases of students who were still on the books.

The Working Group is currently engaged on a survey of work-based learning modules across courses, comparing the number of credits and distribution of hours and activities. Two faculties noted high marks on the WBL modules, and the Chair reported that two external examiners for STEM courses observed marks bunching around 70%. The Working Group agreed to consider performance on WBL modules in 2014/15, to ascertain whether this was indeed the case.

- AGREED:
- i. That the relevant Partnership Managers should confirm with Colleges that the practice of progression without work-based learning through leave of absence was a temporary measure and no longer applied.
 - ii. That the Working Group continue their review of Work-Based Learning modules, looking at the size and distribution of activities across FDs, as well as cohort performance on WBL by mode of delivery in 2014/15.

TRANSITION PROJECT

- 15.52 The Chair described the context and plans for the Transition Project, the Forum's contribution to the University's Organisational Development Change Management programme.

The purpose of the Forum's project is to prepare a strategy for the smooth transition of HE in FE to the Greater Belfast Campus; to develop effective continuity between the University and Partner Institutions to meet the learning needs of Associate Students; and, to identify and create shared resources with Affiliate Staff, with a view to strengthening progression, and forging a closer identity of collaborative partners with the University community.

Part of the project involves the creation of an HE in FE hub on the new site for Affiliate Staff and Associate Students. The progress of the project will be reported through the Collaborative Partnerships Forum. Professor Millar said that the hub would enable us to engage with the Community, and give new opportunities and new ways to work together. The model would be capable of being replicated on other campuses.

The project team (comprising all the Partnership Managers) will report back regularly to the Collaborative Partnerships Forum.

AGREED: That the Project Group meet to work through the action plan, beginning with the identification of internal and external collaborative partners who will be affected by the move, and all linked courses which will articulate to Belfast rather than Jordanstown.

MARKETING WORKING GROUP

- 15.53 Associate Student Guide

Paul Quinn reported that the new Associate Student Guide will be online and the website should be live within a month. The University's brand rollout was progressing.

- 15.54 Articulation Routes (Min 15.14)

The Chair reminded Subject Partnership Managers to forward details of articulation routes from Foundation degrees to Honours degree programmes to Mr Quinn. The Chair offered to circulate a copy of hers to everyone to use as a guideline. It was noted these should now be updated to reflect 2015/16 routes. Paul Quinn and his team have planned a series of visits to all Partner Institutions to publicise progression, following on from the successful series last year.

- 15.55 Event Electronic Registration

Registration for all Staff Development Events will now be done electronically following the pilot registration for the Annual Staff Training in May. The Chair thanked Paul Quinn and QMAU for setting this up, trialling it, and adjusting it

appropriately. Registration for the Annual Conference will be entirely online and all material will also be available for download, resulting in major efficiencies.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

15.56 Annual Staff Conference

The Chair outlined the programme for the Annual Staff Conference at CAFRE which will be held on Friday 16th October 2015. The theme is 'Developing an HE in FE Ethos' with speakers from the University, Students' Union, the NUS-USE President, The Higher Education Academy, and Southern Regional College. The final speaker will be Dr John Lea, Director HEFCE/AoC College HE Scholarship Project who has written extensively on developing HE-ness.

15.57 Higher Level Apprenticeship Event

Angela Scanlon announced details of a University event organised by Flexible and Continuing Education to explore Higher Level Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland, aimed at employers, policy makers, and staff from HE and FE. It will be held on Friday 13th November 2015 in the Stormont Hotel from 9.30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m.

MATTERS ARISING FROM INFORMATION PAPERS

15.58 Members received information papers from Subject Partnership Managers and HE Co-ordinators on matters relating to collaborative activity.

As there was no further action these papers were taken as read.

Duration: 2 hours

ACTION SHEET

	MINUTE	ACTION	ACTION BY	DEADLINE
1	15.43	The Chair would seek confirmation from Finance in relation to the implications of the Course Suspension form.	Maeve Paris	
2	15.44	SPMs would liaise with Partner Institutions to identify all affected courses, implement appropriate actions, and resolve any unforeseen consequences. Formal reports would be presented at the next Forum meeting, and each SPM should refer to Faculty HFAs for planning purposes, and the Academic Office for modification of formal agreements.	Subject Partnership Managers	
3	15.48	i) Subject Partnership Managers are to communicate to Colleges that it is essential the dates outlined in the examinations and associated activities calendar for Partner Institutions are strictly adhered to. ii) Valerie Darrah is to seek advice from Norma Cameron regarding the possibility of online registration for Foundation Degree and Access students.	Subject Partnership Managers Collaborative Courses Unit	
4	15.49	A small group consisting of Michaela Keenan, Jerome Marley, Carol Reid and Maeve Paris meet to survey 2015/16 fast track part-time FD entry requirements.	Michaela Keenan, Jerome Marley, Carol Reid and Maeve Paris	
5	15.51	i. That the relevant Partnership Managers should confirm with Colleges that the practice of progression without work-based learning through leave of absence	Michaela Keenan Collaborative Courses Unit	

6	15.52	<p>was a temporary measure and no longer applied.</p> <p>ii. The Working Group continue their review of Work Based Learning modules, looking at the size and distribution of activities across FDs, as well as cohort performance on WBL by mode of delivery in 2014/15.</p> <p>The Project Group meet to work through the action plan, beginning with the identification of internal and external collaborative partners who will be affected by the move, and all linked courses which will articulate to Belfast rather than Jordanstown.</p>	<p>Subject Partnership Managers</p> <p>Subject Partnership Managers</p>	
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