ULSTER UNIVERSITY
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM
27 January 2016

Minutes of the Collaborative Partnerships Forum held on 27th January 2016 at Jordanstown.

Present: Mr J Curran, Mrs V Darrah, Ms L Ervine (for Mrs C Davison),
                               Dr P Irving, Mrs S Kennedy, Dr M Keenan, Mrs L Lavery,
                               Mr D McDowell, Prof R Millar, Mr J Moss (for Mr L Curran), Mrs
                               M Paris (Chair), Mr P Quinn, Ms C Reid, Mrs M Sowney.

Apologies: Mrs J Alleyne, Mr L Curran, Mrs C Davison, Dr B Murphy,
                               Professor D McAlister, Mrs S McCall, Mrs D McElwee,
                               Mr J Marley, Mrs H Miller.

In Attendance: Mrs N Cameron (16.03), Mr H Deighan, Mrs C McIntyre,
                               Ms T Millar.

THANKS

The Chair thanked Mrs S Kennedy for her invaluable contributions to the work of the Forum since its inception in 2012 and wished her well in the future.
Ms Tara Millar will replace Mrs Kennedy as the representative for Northern Regional College.

MINUTES

16.01 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2015 were confirmed.

MATTERS ARISING

16.02 Course Suspension Form (Min 15.43)

The Chair reminded members of the new CA5b Form (Course Suspension). The following procedure was agreed: when a course is suspended, but not withdrawn, a CA5b Form should be submitted to the Academic Office. The Academic Office will then forward a copy to both the Collaborative Courses Unit (CCU) and Finance.

A course can only be suspended for 3 academic years after which it will be deemed withdrawn.

16.03 Supplementary Boards of Examiners and the UCAS Cycle (Min 15.48)

All partner institutions have now been informed that it is essential that the dates outlined in the examinations and associated activities calendar are strictly adhered to. Mrs Cameron (Student Registration) informed members that a business case

would have to be made to the University before an online registration system could be introduced for Associate Students. If such an online system were to be introduced, it would have significant implications for the University and partner institutions in terms of validation/revalidation timeframes, accuracy of module information, late enrolment fees, etc.

Members suggested that consideration be given to the feasibility of lifting registration data from Colleges' own registration systems onto the University's registration system; however, all Colleges have different registration systems and processes. It was proposed that a pilot University-based registration exercise might be carried out with a nominated foundation degree, where students were brought to a University campus for registration.

Professor Millar said the University is currently developing a CRM System and could look at incorporating an online registration process onto this system.

AGREED: that a Working Group of relevant stakeholders be set up to consider all aspects of an online registration system for Associate Students.

16.04 Progression without Work-Based Learning (WBL) (Min 15.51)

Members were advised that the practice of progression without WBL through leave of absence was no longer an issue.

CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

16.05 Distinguished Service Team Award

The Chair congratulated the CCU on winning the University's Distinguished Service Team Award. The award was well deserved in recognition of the high quality of work undertaken within the Unit.

16.06 Sharepoint

The Chair informed that the Quality Management and Audit Unit (QMAU) was piloting putting papers for the Forum on Sharepoint. All members had been registered to access the site, and they were to contact the Chair if they experienced problems accessing their papers.

16.07 Skype for Business

Members were informed that the University is currently introducing Skype for Business across all of its campuses. When this is fully operational this facility will allow for enhanced communication channels between the University and partner institutions, including the ability to video-conference. HE Co-ordinators were asked to liaise with their network managers to ensure that the Ulster domain ulster.ac.uk is added to their Skype servers.

16.08 <u>Collaborative Courses Register</u> (CCR)

The Chair advised that the member of staff in the office for Digital Learning who had been developing the new register had left his post over the summer and the work on the CCR had stopped. There is currently no resource within the Office to progress this work.

A meeting is to be arranged with the Director of the Office for Digital Learning to see how this matter can be taken forward.

16.09 <u>Articulation Routes</u>

Members were reminded to furnish Mr Quinn with a full list of articulation routes to be used at forthcoming marketing events. This information will also be made available on the Associate Student website.

The Chair advised of a Careers Conference on 27 February 2016 and asked if anyone wished to give a talk at the event on Access courses or Foundation degrees, they were to contact Mr Quinn.

16.10 <u>Higher Education Academy</u> (HEA)

Dr K Hack is now the academic lead for STEM subjects at the HEA. Members were encouraged to contact her directly should they want HEA support in developing new STEM related programmes or initiatives.

FAST TRACK PART-TIME FOUNDATION DEGREES

16.11 The Working Group is still working on the survey of 2015/16 fast track part-time Foundation degree entrants and will present a full report to the next meeting of the Forum.

UPDATES ON MODELS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

16.12 The Working Group will report to the next meeting of the Forum.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FROM THE 2014/15 ANNUAL COURSE REVIEW

16.13 Members considered paper CPF/16/01 on the outcomes from the 2014/15 annual course review.

The Sub-Group reviewing the annual course review submissions noted two outstanding issues from the 2013/14 review:

i)   In some institutions the Institutional Overview Report is still not being signed off by the Head of the Institution;
ii)   Clarity needs to be provided with regard to access to electronic resources at Ulster University.

The Sub-Group noted in general a continuing improvement in the quality and completeness of the SERs and in the supporting material provided by course teams.

It was noted that there were a significant number of new courses this year, with some course directors engaging with the annual course review process for the first time. The Sub-Group asked that consideration be given to the staff development needs of new course directors and course teams.

It was agreed that timing and content for annual staff training should be modified, with a staff development event to be held in September each year looking at the management of the annual cycle, and a further, shorter event being held in May which would cover Chairing of Boards of Examiners.

External examiners were generally satisfied that standards were being met and that the assessment and moderation process in place were very good with exemplary procedures on some programmes. It was noted that a number of course teams were still not providing the actual written response to the external examiner report. The Sub-Group asked that this be addressed.

The Sub-Group noted that for a small number of programmes there was still a delay by the course team in taking action on issues identified, as the programme was due to be revalidated. Revalidation should not be used as a reason for not taking timely and effective action to address issues, as this could impact adversely on the student learning experience.

A number of Colleges expressed concern regarding an increase in the number of external examiner reports received late. All Colleges were affected by this and the problem had occurred across a number of different programmes. Subject Partnership Managers were reminded that it was their responsibility to ensure external examiner reports were received on time.

The Sub-Group noted that not all partners have a plagiarism policy and where there is a policy it is not consistently applied across all HE programmes. They asked that all partners be asked to provide a copy of their College Plagiarism Policy. Where such a policy is not in place, they should adopt the Ulster University Plagiarism Policy.

In a small number of courses student names and personal details were still being minuted. The Sub-Group asked that College HE Co-ordinators be reminded that personal details about a student should not be included in the minutes of meetings.

The Sub-Group were pleased to see that all Colleges have arrangements in place to share the external examiner report with students. However, it was evident that while students have access to the report there was little evidence of meaningful discussion on matters reported within it.

The Sub-Group were disappointed that a number of course teams across a number of partner organisations were still not fully engaging with the SPM before information was published. Partners appear to have arrangements in place within their own organisation for approving information but in some cases these arrangements did not include seeking approval from the SPM. The Sub-Group asked that HE Co-ordinators be reminded of the QAA Quality Code and the need

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for the University, as the awarding body, to approve all information prior to publication. They also asked that each College provide a contact within their institution who will have overall responsibility for ensuring that SPMs are provided with a draft copy of all information. This information must be signed off by the SPM before publication.

	Recommendation	Action
1.	That HE Co-ordinators be asked to nominate a main single contact within their institution that would have overall responsibility for communicating drafts and ensuring all information is approved prior to publication.	HE Co-ordinators be written to asking for a named contact within their institution.
2.	That the actual written response to the External Examiner and Subject Partnership Manager reports be provided with the annual course review submission.	This will be covered at an informal workshop.
3.	That External Examiners be reminded of the timeframe for submitting their report to the University.	SPMs to ensure that the external examiner report is received within 1 month of the Board of Examiners.
4.	That Heads of Institutions be reminded that they must sign off on the annual course review process.	QMAU to write to Heads of Institutions.
5.	That clarity and consistency be provided with regard to the rights and obligations of Associate Students particularly with regard to access to online material.	Library Services to be invited to the next meeting of the Forum. A consistent message regarding access to online resources will be provided on all published and online information sources across the University.
6	That staff development be provided on: • Good practice regarding retention and progression. • Embedding study skills. • Ensuring minutes of Committee meetings do not make specific reference to student names and personal information. • Ensuring the external examiner report and course team response is *discussed* with students.	Staff development will be provided at a number of events during the year.
7.	That HE Co-ordinators be asked to provide a copy of their College Plagiarism Policy, and in those Colleges where such a policy does not exist, they be asked to adopt Ulster University's Plagiarism Policy.	HE Co-ordinators to provide a copy of their Plagiarism Policy to the QMAU.

REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL COURSE REVIEW SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (SER)

16.14 The Sub-Group reviewing the annual course review submissions for 2014/15 noted that the SER is reviewed each year to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of partners, the University and external reviews. They asked that when the

review takes place this year consideration be given to removing the section in the main body of the report relating to ETI requirements. It was suggested that these sections could be included as an annex to the SER.

Members considered paper CPF/16/02, a revised SER taking account of the recommendation from the Sub-Group. The section relating to ETI requirements is now an annex at the back of the report which can be included with the annual course submission if partners choose to do so.

Members agreed to the revised SER being used for the 2015/16 annual course review, subject to a few minor changes.

REVIEW OF THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FOR SUBJECT NETWORKS

16.15 The Sub-Group reviewing the annual course review submissions for 2013/14 noted that with subject networks there were varying practices in how the annual course review submission for 2014/15 course teams responded to the external examiner report. In some cases the lead partner prepared a response on behalf of all partners within the network, whereas in other cases an individual response was provided by each partner. They also questioned the value of asking the external examiner to complete a supplementary report specific to each partner, and suggested that partner-specific comments should be included within the main body of the report. This was supported by communication from external examiners noting the repetition this form of reporting entailed.

Members considered paper CPF/16/03, the External Examiner Report for subject networks. The current reports asks the external examiner to provide a general report for the network and a separate report for each college in the network. External examiners felt this was extremely time consuming and did not add value to the process. On many programmes the report for individual Colleges was not completed.

AGREED: that the External Examiner report for subject networks be revised so that college-specific comments can be included in the main body of the report.

QAA PUBLICATIONS

16.16 Members received paper CPF/16/04 the QAA Characteristics Statement: Foundation degree (September 2015). The Chair noted that many of the proposals for amendments put forward by the Forum and the University have been incorporated into the document.

Members also received paper CPF/16/05 the QAA College Higher Education Toolkit: Engaging with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (May 2015). The toolkit is a useful guidance document which helps staff in higher education to align their internal quality assurance process with the Quality Code.

REVISIONS TO ADMISSIONS POLICY 2017/18

16.17 Members considered paper CPF/16/06 detailing changes to admissions from 2017/18 onwards.

Changes have been agreed to the table of equivalences. Changes to note include the removal of reference to tariff points, the alignment of NI Access courses with QUB's published requirements, and the addition of HNC/D and Foundation degree columns for the sake of transparency.

All applicants presenting with Level 3 qualifications and under must provide evidence of GCSE English C, which is a University entry requirement, the only exception to this being Access diplomas from Ulster University or QUB, which include a sufficient amount of English to be considered equivalent to the GCSE English Grade C . Level 2 Essential Skills in Communication remains an acceptable alternative to GCSE English.

For students progressing to Ulster University courses, BTEC Extended Diploma applicants will be required to present with GCSE English Grade C from 2017/18 onwards. Similarly, applicants with a combination of BTEC Diploma and BTEC Subsidiary Diploma will required to present with GCSE English Grade C from 2017/18 onwards.

For those applicants presenting with Level 4 qualifications and over it will be assumed that their higher qualification will have contained sufficient English to be considered equivalent to the GCSE English grade C. This has implications for the registration of Foundation degree students in partner institutions.

GCSE English grade C (or approved equivalent) is a prerequisite for entry to the Foundation degree. 2016 Admissions Policy states that 'applicants will be required to produce original certificates or other original documentary evidence of examination results or proof of Entry Requirement qualifications provided by the student, School or College last attended, Awarding Body or relevant Educational Authority prior to registration.'

The proposal being considered is that this documentary evidence be attached to each student's registration form, which will then be returned to the CCU. Where entry is via APEL the signed approval sheet must be attached. The CCU will register students on receipt of the form and the evidence of meeting the GCSE English requirement. SPMs will sample forms on submission.

Members noted that some employers still look for GCSE English even if the student has a degree or equivalent, and students should be made aware of this.

Further work is still required to formalise the process for dealing with this new arrangement, and a protocol will be brought to the Forum in due course.

FEEDBACK FROM THE ANNUAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT EVENT AT CAFRE

16.18 Members received paper CPF/16/07 on feedback from the annual staff development event at CAFRE.

Approximately 30% of attendees left feedback, most of which was submitted electronically. This was a much higher level of feedback than in previous years. In addition, the feedback submitted was thoughtful and detailed, which is of great benefit to the organisers.

We asked what attendees found to be *most useful*: many commented on the theme for the event, *Developing an HE in FE Ethos*. There was general appreciation for all speakers.

The format came under scrutiny, as some felt there was too much content and little opportunity for discussion, with too many speakers. A slower-paced programme with fewer participants was suggested. Greater opportunities for discussion were requested.

Based on the feedback there will have a less packed programme next year, and The Forum will continue to encourage **all** Colleges to disseminate work. We invite input throughout the year from partner institutions in relation to themes and speakers.

MARKETING WORKING GROUP

16.19   Members were provided with an update of some of the marketing activity being undertaken by the University. Activities include:

- The integration of all Associate Student information under the Ulster Life section on the web.
- Video content will be uploaded onto this site shortly.
- Access provision/Foundation degrees will now be promoted at the conference for careers teachers.
- The University is providing Marketing Departments in partner institutions with access to Edlink.
- At the parents' evening in Belfast on 16 April 2016 information will be provided on Foundation degrees and articulation to Ulster.

PROGRESSION TO ULSTER

16.20   Members received paper CPF/16/08 providing a breakdown of progression to Ulster University in 2015/16. Estimates show that 527 students progressed from linked courses to Ulster University in 2015/16. 177 students progressed from Access Diplomas and 311 from Foundation degrees. This was spread across all campuses and all Faculties.

AGREED: i)   SPMs to provide the Chair with the percentages of final year students progressing to Ulster University at the programme level;

ii)   A composite report to be provided to the PVC (Academic Planning Partnerships and International Affairs) by the Chair showing the percentage of eligible students progressing by College.

COLLABORATIVE COURSES UNIT

16.21 Members received a verbal report from the CCU.

There are almost 6,000 students enrolled on 229 approved programmes of study. Over 500 parchments and transcripts have been forwarded to partner institutions. Members were reminded that parchments and transcripts must be held in a secure location indefinitely.

Course Results Sheets were sent to Course Directors in the first week in January and these should have been checked and modified if necessary before the Progress Boards meet.

TRANSITION PROJECT

16.22 Now that the exercise on course closures and consolidations has been complete, SPMs will meet to finalise the list of programmes which will be impacted upon by the relocation of course provision to the new campus at Belfast.

A report will be provided to the next meeting of the Forum.

COURSE CONSOLIDATIONS

16.23 Members received paper CPF/16/09 detailing the impact on articulation of course closures and consolidations at Ulster University.

In total two programmes in the Ulster Business School and one programme in the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment are affected by course closures and consolidation.

These programmes still have progression to Year 2 next academic year and UCAS will be re-opened for these programmes next year to allow students to progress:

AGREED: the Chair will write to the PVC (Learning Teaching and Student Experience) regarding those articulation routes affected by course consolidation.

MATTERS ARISING FROM INFORMATION PAPERS

16.24 Members received paper CPF/16/10 information papers form SPMs 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 10 mins

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ACTION SHEET

	MINUTE	ACTION	ACTION BY	DEADLINE
1	16.03	It was agreed that a Working Group of relevant stakeholders be set up to consider all aspects of an online registration system for Associate Students.	Members of W/G	31/3/16
2	16.13	Action outcomes from the 2014/15 annual course review.	CPF/QMAU	Ongoing
3	16.15	The External Examiner report for subject networks be revised so that College specific comments can be included in the main body of the report.	Chair	26/2/16
4	16.20	i) SPMs to provide the Chair with the percentages of final year students progressing to Ulster University at the programme level; ii) A composite report to be provided to the PVC (Academic Planning Partnerships and International Affairs) by the Chair showing the percentage of eligible students progressing by Colleges.	SPMs	26/2/16
5	16.23	Chair will write to the PVC (Learning Teaching and Student Experience) regarding those articulation routes affected by course consolidation.	Chair	26/2/16