

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/8e)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

Agenda Item 5.4.2

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

COVER SHEET

Life and Health Sciences

Unit 30D: Access Diploma in Science (NWRC)

To note that Chair's action has been taken on behalf of ASQEC to approve a request for a one-year extension to the period of approval.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

4 June 2020

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

FACULTY: **Life and Health Sciences**

SCHOOL: **Biomedical Sciences**

REVALIDATION UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: **30D Access (Scs) (NWRC)**

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: **September 2020**

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED: **One year, to include the September 2020 intake.**
(eg one year to include the September 2018 intake)

COURSE(S): **Access Diploma in Science**
(Identify specific courses unless the whole unit)

REASON FOR REQUEST:

Present challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are being experienced by all. The team at NWRC have met with the FPM already and have been working through the requirements for revalidation. However, at present, as with other teams across Northern Ireland HE, they are occupied with the adjusted teaching and assessment related to this programme [and others] and this is very time consuming. The Course Director has discussed the present challenges with her colleagues in the small teaching team and they have requested an extension of current provision and delay in the revalidation process. In common with all partner colleges, the demands now being felt by this team are experienced not just in relation to this programme or indeed related to HE provision in general, but it must be considered that these teams are also dealing with the adjustment requirements for their FE provision also. The various teaching teams are being stretched enormously and great demands are made on them to preserve the learning experience of current students across their provision. This is especially so for Access students, who often have additional needs such as less access to IT to support learning at a distance and also related to increased social caring responsibilities and thus require additional mechanisms of assistance to be created. These reasons in and of themselves would warrant a reasonable basis upon which to request extension. Additionally, however, if as is anticipated there is a spike in infection rates in the weeks and months ahead, then it is virtually inevitable that members of this team, all of whom have delegated responsibilities for composing sections of the Course Document, will fall ill and this will then compromise the ability of a document being made ready on time. Given the demands each member has, it is not reasonable to assume that other members will easily be able to take on the work of someone who becomes ill within this team as they will already have been asked to do this within their own college. Although a very efficient teaching team, it is nevertheless a small team with one member potentially within the vulnerable category for isolation. Summer vacation provision within the College exacerbates this situation further.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:

(Please confirm that the curriculum remains current and valid and provide evidence of this (eg extract from most recent external examiner reports and those of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body)

This very successful and well evaluated Access programme remains both current and valid. The EE Dr Chris Finlay, in his Report for the past academic year offers some views that support this claim:

“As in previous years the course content is well placed in the context of the access courses academic level. There is robust assessment of the course aims and clear student support and guidance throughout. The assessments were detailed and at an appropriate level for these courses. This all falls within the correct NQF banding for level 3 with the aim of progressing to undergraduate studies in Higher Education. As in previous reports I continue to be very impressed with the staff engagement with their courses and their students. This is clearly visible to the students who all voiced their appreciation for the hard work the staff put in. It is worth pointing out that this past academic session has seen staffing levels drop due to staff illness. This has placed a lot of work on a very small team and it to their credit that the courses have run as well as they clearly have. Students were also aware of these pressures and continued to feel supported throughout. The balance between knowledge delivery and practical skills is well designed and gives an appropriate preparatory experience for Higher Education.”

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

(Please confirm that quality is high and there are no concerns. Provide evidence of this through external examiner reports and annual monitoring datasets and reports)

There are no concerns regarding the standards and quality of this provision. The comments of the EE noted above and below also speak to this element. As can be seen the EE is certainly content that the standards are high and equitable with the institution, as noted when the EE comments:

*“I have worked on similar programmes in several universities:
I am also subject moderator for the Glasgow International College
I review the programmes of study provided through the Scottish Widening Access Partnership (SWAP).
I am external examiner for the access courses at the University of Surrey*

I find all the courses under review comparable to similar courses at the same academic level of study.”

PSRB (if applicable):

(Please confirm that any deferral will be accommodated by the PSRB and that accreditation will be ongoing for the full duration of the deferral)

There are no PSRB requirements associated with this programme.

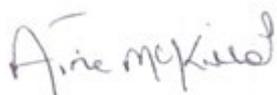
DEMAND: Demand for this programme remains high and satisfaction expressed by both the students and the EE with the provision offered is equally high. The team note that this programme is a very important one for the college.

FACULTY PARTNERSHIP MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT (for partner institutions only):

Jerome Marley, FPM, Life and Health Sciences:

The comments above have been compiled by myself, and I very strongly advocate that this provision and the upcoming revalidation is extended for a year as requested.

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:



SIGNED: _____
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 30 March 2020

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

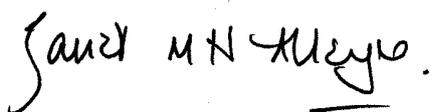
This course was first approved in 2005/6 and is scheduled for revalidation in 2020/21. The Faculty has requested a one year extension of approval to 2021/22 (to include a 2020 intake). As the Faculty has outlined above, the two most recent external examiner reports clearly endorse the quality and standards of the course and although he raises some improvements suggested by students those do not pose a fundamental risk to quality and standards and can be viewed as part of ongoing quality enhancement (the student concerns regarding the transition to an increase in student workload in semester 2 should be monitored as they have been raised in both external examiner reports). Given that the external examiner reports indicate that satisfactory quality and standards are being maintained and the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak the Academic Office endorses the request for an extension of approval.



SIGNED: _____
Academic Policy and Standards Manager

DATE: 31 March 2020

SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)



SIGNED: _____
Head of Quality Enhancement

30 March 2020

DATE: _____

**SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
(delegated authority from Senate)**

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING: Chair's Action

DECISION: Approve (Yes)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Chair on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes)

SIGNED: _____
pp Chair ASQEC

DATE: 31st March, 2020

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC: