

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REPORT OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL MEETING FOR SUBJECT UNIT 5R: FDSC BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE AT NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE (NWRC)

10 February 2020

PANEL:

Professor P McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Ulster University (Chair)

Mrs M Crossan, Assistant Professor, School of Strategy and Leadership, Coventry Business School, Coventry University

Mr A Gibb, HE Programme Coordinator and Lecturer, Solihull College and University Centre, Birmingham

Dr E O'Connor, Senior Lecturer, School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University

Dr S Moffett, Acting Head of Department of Global Business and Enterprise, Ulster University

Mr J Kane, Student Representative, North West Regional College

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms C Reid, Faculty Partnership Manager, Ulster University Business School

Mrs K McCafferty, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office, Ulster University

1 INTRODUCTION

The Panel met to consider the revalidation of the Foundation Degree in Business and Enterprise (with CertHE in Business and Enterprise exit award) offered at North West Regional College. The FdSc in Business and Enterprise is a two-year, full-time or three-year, part-time programme. All modules are compulsory and worth 20 credit points. Work-based learning equates to 40 credit points and starts in semester 1 of the second year of the programme. Graduates from the FdSc Business and Enterprise programme can progress on to the BSc Hons Business Studies with Specialisms programme at Ulster University by following the 2 + bridging + 1 model.

The Panel met with Senior Staff from the college to discuss such matters as demand, progression opportunities, staffing and other resources. The Panel then met with a group of students currently studying on the programme and one recent graduate. Finally, the Panel met with the Course Team to discuss the programme in more detail.

2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

- Revalidation Document
- Guidelines for Revalidation Panels
- QAA benchmark statement for Business and Management (2019)
- QAA Characteristics Statement, Foundation Degree (September 2015)
- External Examiners' Reports for the past two years
- Statement from the Faculty Partnership Manager (CA4)
- Preliminary comments from Panel members (CA7)
- Assessment rubrics for modules

3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

3.1 Staff Resources

The Panel asked if there were any contingency plans in place should a member of staff be off sick as the document indicated that some staff members were responsible for more than one module. The Senior Team informed the Panel that there were structures in place and that the college had access to a bank of suitably qualified people they could call upon. The Panel noted the use of guest speakers and the many opportunities to share with students what was happening in the sector. The Senior Team explained that some of the teaching staff had worked or were currently working closely with businesses in the surrounding area and that this helped inform teaching and ensured the content of the programme remained current.

3.2 Retention

The Senior Team explained that many discussions had taken place to help identify the reasons why students left the programme with the main reason being due to personal circumstances. The Senior Team also informed the Panel that some students had left after the first year with the CertHE to study in England. Other factors which accounted for students leaving the programmes included instances when an offer from a university came through shortly after the individual had started college. The Senior Team explained that the college had to work hard to promote the foundation degree brand and identify innovative ways of reaching out to the local schools to promote the programme and attract more students to choose a foundation degree.

3.3 Progression

The Senior Team explained that they marketed the Foundation Degree in Business and Enterprise as an individual qualification and not as a pathway to university. The Panel noted that a high percentage of students did choose to progress to Ulster University but that the college also felt there were attractive opportunities for students to articulate to professional qualifications.

The Panel felt that the documentation did not truly reflect the many positive aspects of the foundation degree and the overall student experience at the college. The Panel encouraged the college to highlight the excellent opportunities available to students when they choose to study the foundation degree. For example, the Panel felt that the types of work-based learning placements and evidence of where graduates ended up working should be shared to attract potential applicants. The high level of pastoral care provided to students was also any area the Panel felt should be emphasised.

4 MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel met with a group of students currently studying on the Foundation Degree in Business and Enterprise and one recent graduate from the programme. Overall the students were complimentary of the staff and the provision. The following points were noted.

Induction and Student Support

- Students found the course/college induction to be very informative
- The induction pack was useful and included timetables and information about the modules and assignment deadlines

- The students felt the guidance and support from tutors was good
- There were excellent student support systems in place for students

Placement

- Students were encouraged to find their own placements, but support was available for those unable to get suitable placement
- First year students were currently sourcing potential placements

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

- Students were content with group work and generally there were no issues
- Students liked the small class sizes and felt comfortable in their learning environment
- The students enjoyed the interaction in seminars and felt they were gaining confidence and appropriate skills
- The students enjoyed doing presentations but there was less enthusiasm for examinations
- Feedback was considered good and useful moving forward
- There was access to different technological tools, eg, cloud, Moodle, group boards

Progression

- Students understood the bridging requirements to progress onto related degree programmes at Ulster University
- Many of the students stated they wished to progress to university

5 MEETING WITH COURSE TEAM

5.1 Programme Content

The Panel heard that ethics was a strong theme across the whole programme and that students were made aware of its importance in the business world. The Course Team gave examples of ethics regarding customer confidentiality and explained how this was covered in the 'Principles of Marketing' module. The Panel also heard how the Course Team emphasised the importance of ethics in the 'Professional Skills' module when it came to social media posts.

The Course Team explained to the Panel the increased focus on digitisation and the many tools they used to enhance the programme and the student experience. The Panel acknowledged the skills students were being provided and asked that the revised document reflect these innovative areas of learning and teaching.

5.2 Work-Based Learning

The Panel noted that students were encouraged to find their own placements. If students were unable to find a suitable position the college stepped in to help provide a suitable work-based learning experience within the college. The Panel heard that the work-based learning commenced in November of the second year of the programme. Students were in work two days per week. The Course Team explained that this model suited many of the employers. The Panel noted that students were visited twice by staff during their placement and worked on live projects. The Panel heard that feedback from employers was good.

The Panel enquired about equity of experience for all students on placement and noted that the Course Team met with employers to explain what was expected both from the employer and the student.

Students were required to keep a reflective diary and complete this on a weekly basis. If a placement was not working out the Course Team stepped in. The Panel noted that employers were required to keep the college informed of any issues and if a difficulty could not be resolved the student could be moved to another placement.

The Course Team emphasised the need for students to understand the importance of the work-based learning and were advised if they were unable to get into work that they should email the employer. The Course Team explained that students needed to be aware that they were working in the real world and what the employers' expectations were.

The Panel was impressed with the opportunities available to students and the skills they were learning and felt that this should be highlighted in the revised document.

5.3 Group Work

The Panel noted that students self-selected their groups and asked if this might isolate some individuals.

The Course Team explained that in the world of work students would have to work alongside different personalities. The Panel noted that the Ulster University group work policy was followed and that students were required to complete a reflective exercise afterwards to show how they had contributed to the group exercise.

5.4 Learning Outcomes

The Panel felt that some of the module learning outcomes were not written at the correct level. In particular, the Panel felt that the module learning outcomes at Level 4 were written at a much higher level than would be expected. The Course Team was asked to review the learning outcomes to ensure appropriate for the different learning levels.

5.5 Guest Speakers

The Panel noted that guest speakers were invited to come in and speak with the students. These individuals reflected where the potential jobs were for graduates. The Panel noted that the student groups were asked to prepare questions in advance to ensure the opportunity was as informative as possible. The Panel was impressed with the opportunity for students to hear what was currently happening in the business sector.

6 CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel commended the Course Team on the following:

- The course team dynamics and enthusiasm for the programme
- The strong pastoral care and support provided to students
- The work-based element of the programme and the civic engagement and contributions of the college
- The comprehensive documentation provided to the panel

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the provision be approved for a further five years (intakes 2020/21 to

2024/25 inclusive) subject to the conditions and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office by **23 March 2020** for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

Minimum and maximum student intakes:

- Minimum 15 students
- Maximum 25 students

Condition

that the regulatory and standards matters identified by the Academic Office be addressed (appendix).

Recommendations

- (i) Review Section A with respect to demand and articulate more fully how the proposed numbers will be met and how this is supported through the College's marketing interventions;
- (ii) Include more information in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment section of the revised document about the use of guest speakers and how their contributions help enhance the student experience;
- (iii) Review the learning outcomes for all modules to ensure they are written at the correct level;
- (iv) Clarify in the revised documentation that the college follows the University's group work policy;
- (v) Articulate more clearly in the revised documentation the Course Team's approach to digitisation.

APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked all the members of the Panel, and in particular, the external members, for their valuable contribution to the revalidation exercise.