

## UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

### LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 5 June 2017 by video-conference

#### PRESENT

Professor P Bartholomew (Chair), Dr L Bradley, Dr D Brown, Ms H Bruce, Dr C Carruthers, Professor H Farley, Dr S Floyd (for Professor D Hazlett), Professor N McClenaghan (for Professor A McKillop), Ms S McCloy (for Mr D McGivern), Professor U McMahon-Beattie, Ms J McMinn, Mr K McStravock, Professor I Montgomery, Dr R Moreland (for Professor R Fee), Professor B Murphy, Mrs J Peden, Mr M Quigg, Professor C Turner

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs C G Avery, Mr A G Faulkner

#### APOLOGIES

Professor R Fee, Professor D Hazlett, Dr M Keenan, Mr D McGivern, Professor A McKillop

#### 17.29 MINUTES

The confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2017 were signed by the Chair.

#### MATTERS ARISING

#### 17.30 Curriculum Development (Min 17.7)

Professor Bartholomew reported that additional modelling was to take place on the proposed new degree algorithm following discussion and feedback at the Campus Conversation events held in April 2017, where preference for a fixed rather than dynamic arrangement had emerged.

The Conversations had given broad support to the proposals to reduce to four the standard number of learning outcomes in modules and to remove the distinct KIPT headings. The Information Services Department was liaising with the external developer of the Curriculum Management System to ensure that the required changes to the system would be completed by August 2017. Pending implementation, staff who were intending to reduce learning outcomes should record all under the 'K' heading.

The Committee noted that a number of Staff Development staff had recently formally relocated to CHERP and, with other new appointments, they would provide dedicated support for course teams. A 'rough guide' to curriculum design would also be produced. Engagement with employers and the Library would be expectations of the new curriculum design process. The topic of globalisation in the curriculum was being considered by the Chair with Professor Montgomery.

Professor Bartholomew confirmed that in the immediate transitional period there would be some flexibility in the timeframe for addressing the new design principles as

those teams who were already well advanced for evaluation/revalidation of courses in 2017/18 might not be able to adopt all the proposals. Subject areas whose revalidation had been brought forward as a result of issues identified through annual monitoring would, however, be expected to adopt the new principles.

The Chair reported that consideration was being given to removing restrictions on the involvement of PhD students in the assessment of level 6 modules, with appropriate safeguards to assure standards and quality.

17.31 Invigilation of Examinations (Min 17.9)

The Committee had supported a review of current invigilation arrangements and referred this matter to the Student Administration Department to prepare a paper, in consultation with Student Support, for consideration by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC).

The Chair reported that ASQEC, at its February meeting, had agreed that Associate Deans consult within their Faculties for further discussion in June.

17.32 Missing Examination Scripts (Min 17.10)

The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences had been asked to forward to the Chair a report on recent incidents and Student Administration was to review and report on current arrangements. ASQEC had suspended discussion pending receipt of the Faculty report. This had now been received and the matter would be discussed at the June meeting of ASQEC.

17.33 Extenuating Circumstances: Fitness to Study (Min 17.11)

Professor Bartholomew reported that the review of the Extenuating Circumstances procedures would be considered by ASQEC. He had discussed with the Interim Director of Campus Life the proposed Fitness to Study Policy and other developments. That Policy and the Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy would now both be received at the October 2017 meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee.

17.34 Online Assessment and Feedback (Min 17.17)

The Committee noted that flow charts had been drawn up by the Office for Digital Learning to guide staff on contacts and equipment needs in relation to online assessment and were included in Appendices 3 and 4 of paper LTC/17/9a (agenda item 6).

17.35 Student Support: Procedures in the Event of Student Death (Min 17.28)

On behalf of Professor Fee, Dr Moreland asked for the web address of the University's procedures in the event of student death [Note: Office of University Secretary site: [https://www.ulster.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/138323/Student-Death-or-Serious-Accident.pdf](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/138323/Student-Death-or-Serious-Accident.pdf)]

Professor Bartholomew advised that he would be meeting with Ms Shoebridge and Ms McMinn to review the current Procedures on Sudden Death or Serious Accident and that a paper would come to the Committee's first meeting of the next session. Any members wishing to contribute to this review should forward their comments to Ms Shoebridge (copied to Ms McMinn).

## CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### 17.36 Sub-Optimal Teaching

Professor Bartholomew reported that aspects of the quality of teaching and its impact on the student learning experience had been raised as an issue through the Annual Monitoring exercise. Associate Deans (Education), with representation from CHERP and the Human Resources Department, would join a working group to consider the identification of warning signs and a developmental framework to support staff. Professor Bartholomew confirmed that such development would be designed to help staff who were encountering difficulties in their practice and this should not be viewed as performance management. It was suggested that the University's expectations for peer review could also be more robust in line with practices elsewhere in the HE sector.

Ms Peden advised that Library staff would also be keen to avail of any opportunities to enhance their related practice.

### 17.37 FACULTY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

The Chair invited faculty representatives to raise any learning and teaching matters for discussion.

### 17.38 Life and Health Sciences

Professor McClenaghan raised the adoption of the proposed curriculum design principles in the context of the ongoing need to meet professional body requirements, in particular the headline expectations for reductions in the number of module learning outcomes to four and their assessment components to two. While the Campus Conversations had heard that departures with a sound rationale (including PSRB requirements) would be supported and endorsed, these had not been attended by all academic staff and he was concerned that some staff might adopt a mechanistic approach, potentially stifling innovation or jeopardising accreditation.

Professor Bartholomew asked faculty representatives to ensure that the curriculum design principles were an item for discussion at relevant faculty, school and course committees and to emphasise that, while they would function as strong guidelines, the module assessment strategy, including the number of components, should be designed appropriately to test achievement of the module's learning outcomes and the over-arching programme objectives, and any professional body requirements should continue to be met. A high assessment load above the new norm would need to be justified with a sound rationale, which would be scrutinised at the point of approval.

Members recognised that a culture change was needed, from both staff and student perspectives, in terms of the approach to the use of formative assessment. Professor Bartholomew noted that the enhanced CHERP staff resource would

support faculties as they progressed the assessment aspect of curriculum development.

#### 17.39 Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr Moreland reported that the new Faculty Transitional Implementation Team aimed to have new structures in place by the end of June 2017.

#### 17.40 EMPLOYABILITY SUB-COMMITTEE

Ms Shauna McCloy presented, on behalf of Mr McGivern, proposed revised terms of reference and composition for the Employability Sub-Committee (Paper No LTC/17/8).

The Committee noted that the terms of reference had been re-focussed to reflect the University's new Strategic Plan and included *inter alia*:

- to provide oversight and support for student employability learning gain;
- to work collaboratively with Research and Impact to engage students as researchers to enhance employability skills;
- to maintain a strategic overview of outward work placement mobility;
- to provide oversight and direction for the University's engagement with the University Officer Training Corps.

Although a Chair had not been identified, Professor Bartholomew confirmed that it would be appropriate for the Director of Employability to continue in this role, rather than to appoint one from the academic community.

Ms McMinn asked that Student Support be represented on the Sub-Committee to help address inclusivity matters.

AGREED: that the proposed terms of reference and membership be approved, subject to explicit reference to 'global context' at term 6 (outward work placement mobility) and the inclusion of a representative from Student Support.

#### 17.41 DIGITAL LEARNING SUB-COMMITTEE

Professor Brian Murphy presented the report from the meeting held on 16 May 2017 (Paper No LTC/17/9a).

#### 17.42 Lecture Capture/Streaming Server (Item 2)

The Sub-Committee had asked the Committee to discuss the appropriate technology adoption for lecture capture/streaming which would complement and assist good pedagogy and enhance the face-to-face interaction between staff and students in the classroom. The procurement cycle for the current technological solutions made the current review timely. A detailed paper was provided as Paper No LTC/17/9b) and five questions for discussion were noted.

The Committee noted that the Information Services Department, in collaboration with the Office for Digital Learning, currently supported a video creation system that enabled staff to record content for later access by students. After processing, the

content could be copied to the ShareStream streaming server and linked from Blackboard Learn, or shared publicly or embedded in a website. Following consultation on the new Belfast campus development through the Academic Spaces and Technologies Advisory Group, ISD had produced a final specification report, which proposed that lecture-capture hardware (live audio and video capture with tracking camera) would be available in the two large lecture theatres. Software would be made available in other teaching rooms to support other devices.

It was noted that most universities had recently reviewed lecture capture and investment, or planned to do so. There was evidence (including at Ulster) to suggest that students generally regarded access to lecture recordings positively, although there were some concerns in the sector about negative pedagogic impact, IP rights, permissions risks, and lecturer anxieties.

The Committee discussed the challenges with the current environment as detailed in the paper. It was noted that the current process was not considered very intuitive for first-time users and integration between technologies could be improved. The Committee noted that more integrated services were being used in other institutions, typically with Blackboard Learn.

The Chair and other members saw benefits from the facility as an additional resource to support flipped-classroom delivery but recognised that not all members of staff would use lecture capture in this context. The pedagogic benefits of a general flipped-classroom approach outweighed those from simple recording of a class. It was thought that giving staff a choice in the use of lecture capture was likely to be more appropriate than to make it mandatory. The University would, however, need to continue to invest in lecture capture to support staff in flipped-classroom pedagogy.

Professor McClenaghan commented that, although students might be content for staff to be recorded, some students did not themselves wish to be recorded in interactive lectures. In addition, the appetite for the technology might be low if staff believed that it could discourage attendance and class participation. When lecture capture was actively planned and used for a particular purpose, it would be a useful resource. Professor Bartholomew noted that lectures should offer more than the transfer of information.

The student representatives shared the view that lecture capture could be valuable for reflection and revision. It should be done well and consistently across modules to complement a flipped-classroom approach. They stressed that it should not replace interactive classes, which would detract from a sense of campus community.

Professor Montgomery considered that increased flexibility in delivery methods would benefit the University in the development of global educational partnerships and other opportunities.

Dr Moreland emphasised the importance both of training in the technology and staff development on pedagogy associated with lecture capture.

**AGREED:** that the Associate Deans (Education) consult on the five questions contained in the paper and provide Faculty comments to Professor Murphy for discussion at the next meeting of the Digital Learning Sub-Committee.

#### 17.43 Digital Learning Highlight Report (Item 3)

It was noted that the incorrect Appendix 1 had been attached to the report. An audit of live modules in Blackboard with no academic staff identified had been undertaken. All such anomalies had been investigated and resolved satisfactorily.

Professor Montgomery raised the matter of the accuracy of information for Key Information Sets, in relation to scheduled contact through online classes, and whether this had been accurately recorded by faculties in the population of modules in CMS. Professor Turner also mentioned the disparity of one-hour lecture slots in practice lasting 50 minutes, but it was noted that this convention was well understood in the sector.

AGREED: that the Office for Digital Learning undertake a sample audit of modules to check whether Blackboard scheduled activities were accurately reflected in the Hours allocations in module descriptions in CMS.

#### 17.44 Sub-Committee Composition (Item 4)

The Committee noted that the composition of the Sub-Committee had been referred to the Committee in light of faculty restructuring with a view to including representation from Associate Deans (Education).

AGREED that:

- i) faculty representation be revised to include all Associate Deans (Education) or nominee;
- ii) two student representatives be retained, the Student Engagement Manager and a SU Officer;
- iii) a member of the Office for Digital Learning be identified to liaise with the SU Officer and provide guidance on technical and other matters.

#### 17.45 Assessment and Feedback Policy (Item 10)

The Electronic Management of Assessment Policy had a target of 100% electronic submission of written assignments by semester 2, 2016/17 but, in recognition of practical reasons which might make online submission unsuitable, allowed for exceptions, to be considered through the Sub-Committee.

The Committee noted that the Sub-Committee had approved seven exceptions in the School of Sport but that reasons for three modules had not been included (Appendix 2 to the paper). Members stated that they would have expected more requests for exemption to have been received. Professor Murphy confirmed that faculties did not need to apply for approval for types of coursework, such as presentations, which were not in written form.

Professor McClenaghan reported that some students were asking for more opportunities to write assignments in order to maintain their handwriting skills and to help prepare them for examinations.

The Committee also received the Electronic Management of Assessment flow charts for health and safety and technology choice (Appendices 3 and 4 of the paper), which had been drawn up at the request of the Committee (min 17.17 refers).

AGREED that:

- i) the Office for Digital Learning clarify the reasons for granting three exemptions;
- ii) ODL liaise with faculties to confirm that all exception requests for 2016/17 had been considered by the Sub-Committee, and set appropriate deadlines for consideration of future exemptions.

#### 17.46 Lynda.Com (Item 12)

The Committee noted that, following ISD's review of the service available from the online learning platform 'Lynda.Com' in 2016, the University had progressed to procurement for staff development IT training courses. This was now an opportunity to consider expanding the contract to all students and integrating the service with Blackboard.

The Committee noted the cost of £65,000 and considered that further information was needed, such as the scope for use of the platform across different subject areas, the materials included in the package, the added value for students and the experience of its use in other institutions.

AGREED: that the Sub-Committee consider the proposal further in the light of additional information, and identify the appropriate cost centre.

#### 17.47 PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no items had been starred for discussion in the report from the meeting held on 25 April 2017 (Paper No LTC/17/10a).

This report would be the last from the Sub-Committee as a recommendation had been made to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) that it merge with the Accredited Professional Development Management Board. Both bodies considered distributed education in partnership with faculties and the new Board would report to Senate and convey any relevant business to the Committee.

#### 17.48 EXTENDING FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK PROVISION

At the last meeting the Committee had approved the exploration of the expansion of the current frameworks through levels 5 and 6 (min 17.21 refers). A meeting had been held with Associate Deans (Education) in May.

Professor Murphy presented paper LTC/17/10b), which provided an update and made four recommendations for:

- i) a review of the current level 4 CPPD provision with a view to highlighting pathways to part-time degrees;
- ii) development of a level 5 'modular bundle' with faculties to identify modules which were transdisciplinary and attractive to both individuals and employers;

- iii) development of a level 6 framework in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences incorporating subject-specific, pre-validated and experiential learning (shell) modules;
- iv) exploration by the Centre for Flexible and Continuing Education of the development of a small number of modules, which would enable adult learners to package and substantiate work-based learning and experience.

The Committee noted that the term 'shell' was not an acronym, but referred to modules which, when validated, could be easily and quickly re-purposed in different professional areas. It was noted that recommendation iii) involved one faculty only.

Professor McClenaghan confirmed his Faculty's view that related professions were well served through its established professional development course provision, which included modules developed in collaboration with other faculties. Dr Moreland noted that the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences believed that there would be benefits in exploring an extension of the framework due to demand from a number of employers, such as the Police Service and the Prison Service, for a more interdisciplinary approach, which could also incorporate employer training.

AGREED: that the recommendations be endorsed.

#### 17.49 WIDENING ACCESS AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Dr Bradley presented the report from the meeting held on 3 April 2017 (Paper No LTC/17/11).

#### 17.50 Frequency of Meetings (Item 2)

The Committee endorsed the recommendation for two meetings each year on the understanding that the use of *ad hoc* working groups and Chair's Action would ensure that specific work streams would be completed and signed off in a timely manner.

#### 17.51 Next Steps Project (Item 4)

The Committee noted that the Next Steps Project was a major longitudinal, collaborative project between ADDL and Professor Sam McCready and Ms Susan Morgan from the School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies, aimed at raising the educational attainment of young males.

The project would involve over 500 boys from the age of 15 years and would follow their progress through secondary education. The participants would engage in several interventions linked to the University's Discovery Framework along with others designed in partnership with community workers and care workers. Professors Murphy and McCready had consulted the Education Authority, the Education and Training Inspectorate and the youth and community sector, which had resulted in positive feedback and suggestions as to which schools would most benefit from participation.

## 17.52 Widening Access and Participation Data Project (Items 5 and 6)

The Sub-Committee had received a detailed presentation on key datasets for educational attainment and progression to HE (including the profile for the University's students) (Item 5) and information on the related suite of eight Cognos reports (Item 6). The informed use of data was key to ensuring evidence-based strategic direction, targeting of effort and resources and the evaluation of impact. The data had confirmed the priority areas for the University, which were already well known, but could now be quantified. Professor Murphy stressed the value of data analytics and the overarching need for staff to be aware of student profiles by University, Campus, Faculty and School for the purpose of focused interventions. The Committee noted that the new Cognos reports were more user-friendly. Professor Murphy advised that key metrics would be presented in different Infographics to suit a range of stakeholders. He would ensure that the Development and Alumni Relations Office was included.

Professor Bartholomew confirmed the general importance of the collation of data in a digestible format for staff at various levels and not just in support of the widening participation agenda. There was a growing expectation for academic staff to reflect on the data available to them and to take responsibility for changing practice, where needed, informed by the evidence from the data. This approach was adopted in the annual monitoring process and Associate Deans (Education) and others in the faculties were expected to ensure that data analysis was core to their enhancement work.

Ms McMinn considered that there could be a role for Student Support in helping groups who were at risk of not succeeding for personal, psychological or academic reasons. It was noted that at present course teams might approach Student Support for assistance on an individual basis and there could be a need to consider scalability issues. Nevertheless, it was considered valuable to involve Student Support in discussions.

AGREED: that Professor Murphy, Dr Bradley and Ms McMinn meet on a regular basis with a view to optimising the contribution from Student Support.

## 17.53 PENALTIES FOR EXCEEDING PRESCRIBED WORD LIMITS

The last meeting had decided to review penalties for exceeding word limits (min 17.12 refers). The Committee received Paper No LTC/17/12 setting out current faculty arrangements in light of the 2004 policy and their future proposals. The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences had agreed its own guidelines in April 2016, effective from September 2016. The other faculties had drawn up a common protocol and set of penalties.

It was noted that the two schema set slightly different boundaries; that while both applied no penalty up to and including 9% (LHS) or 10% (others) they applied different deductions within subsequent bands; and that the combined protocol recorded a fail for a word count over 20% while Life and Health Sciences maintained stepped penalties.

The Committee agreed that different approaches should not be allowed and that a University-wide policy should be adopted.

Professor Bartholomew stated a preference for a fixed scale but with a limit to the marks which might be deducted; a mark of zero for exceeding the word limit by more than 20% was overly punitive from a pedagogic perspective, particularly if the student had otherwise demonstrated achievement of the intended learning outcomes in the work. Where a word limit (as opposed to a guideline) was set, for example because of the importance of concise writing skills, the assessment rubric and marking scheme should reflect this.

AGREED that:

- i) the Associate Deans (Education) and the Students' Union President-elect each identify an individual to join the Chair in a small working group on this topic;
- ii) a draft proposal be considered by the Committee at its first meeting in the next session; the policy would then be subject to wider consultation in faculties with a view to confirmation at the following meeting and application from 2018/19.

#### 17.54 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Professor Bartholomew advised members of his intention to raise at the next meeting of ASQEC the receipt of retrospective requests for approval of non-attendance of external examiners at Boards; oversight and monitoring of ongoing non-attendance or failure to submit reports; and an apparent lack of understanding by some staff of the role of external examiners and the University's criteria for appointment in regard to pedagogic expertise and experience including curriculum development and assessment design.

#### 17.55 MEMBERSHIP

Professor Bartholomew thanked Mr Mickey Quigg, Students' Union Officer, for his contributions at this and other committees, at course approval events and in his broader role in support of the student body in the last three years and expressed the Committee's good wishes for the future. Appreciation was also extended to other members who would no longer be serving on the Committee in the next academic year.

Duration 2½ hours

26 June 2017

AGF/CA/lh