

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

23 October 2017

Agenda Item 5.1

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP (27.09.17)

PRESENT

Professor P Bartholomew (Chair), Dr S Crothers, Mr A G Faulkner, Mr A Jaffrey (for Professor B Murphy), Dr M Keenan (for Professor L Maguire), Mr D McGivern, Mrs J Peden, Mrs T Purdy, Mrs E Thompson

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Advisory Group received its terms of reference and membership. The Chair welcomed Mrs Emer Thompson as a new representative from the Finance Department.

It was noted that a recommendation would be made to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) that the Advisory Group report to it, rather than Senate, and that ASQEC's terms of reference be revised accordingly.

The Chair also reported that the Advisory Group would be replaced by an Academic Programmes Business Development Committee. The focus of this new Sub-Committee of ASQEC would be the development and viability of new provision and it would be informed by the monitoring activities of, and reports received by, its parent committee.

2 COURSE PLANNING

Business Cases and Course Costings

The Advisory Group noted the general improvement in the quality of business cases and welcomed the assistance of Mrs Thompson in explaining the standard course costing pro forma and interpreting the data presented. Faculty Accountants worked with the responsible academic and other staff in the Faculty in preparing the costings.

The Advisory Group noted some inconsistencies between the costings received for this meeting and also between them and the information given on projected intakes in some course proposal forms. Mrs Thompson stated that she would work with her colleagues to ensure a consistent approach.

The Advisory Group noted that the documentation was important as it confirmed that the Faculty had conducted financial due diligence and was fully aware of implications. It recognised that there may be strategic reasons to support proposals which did not project a surplus.

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Proposed MA Product Design (FT/PT) (BT/DL)

The Advisory Group received a proposal and business case to offer a new course from September 2018. It noted that:

- the proposal was part of the Faculty's strategic plan and that there was currently no other such MA in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland; it would provide a progression route from the related undergraduate degree and also appeal to graduates of other disciplines;
- the course would be offered initially in full and part-time modes, and the distance-learning version would be developed for 2019, with the international market in mind;
- no additional staff resources were required at this time as these were covered by new strategic-investment posts;
- the information (Library) resources for campus-based and e-learning provision would be very different and it would be important to think through these requirements. In addition, the School should liaise closely with the Office for Digital Learning to prepare for teaching fully online;
- a key concern for the School for campus-based delivery generally was the apparent lack of space for new programmes on the Belfast campus, as all bookable rooms were already block-booked for existing programmes; it was noted that redundant room bookings were currently being removed from the system and a space audit was expected to be carried out; the pressure on space should be alleviated on completion of the new Belfast campus.

AGREED that:

- (i) the issue of availability of suitable accommodation for the programme be revisited with the evaluation panel and that the Faculty would be expected to make a decision on recruitment in light of known capacity;
- (ii) the School should consider carefully whether to bring forward both the campus-based and distance learning provision or just the campus-based programme at the time of evaluation; evidence of viability of the distance-learning mode and well developed arrangements for successful fully online delivery would be expected.

RECOMMENDED: that the proposal be approved to proceed to planning and evaluation for a September 2018 start.

Proposed MSc Art Therapy (FT/PT) (BT)

The Advisory Group received a revised course proposal and costings for the MSc Art Therapy from September 2018. It noted that:

- the proposal had been recommended to proceed to planning and evaluation at the April meeting of the Advisory Group, when a transparent costing which identified the break-even point for the programme had been requested; this had now been received, although for a three-year rather than standard five-year period;

- the programme had originally been proposed as MSc Art Therapies with two pathways: Art Therapy and Music Therapy, but the Music Therapy pathway was not being progressed at this time.

AGREED: that, notwithstanding some anomalies in the costings, there was sufficient assurance that the Faculty had fully considered the cost implications.

Proposed MSc Fashion and Textile Retail Management (FT/PT) (BT)

The Advisory Group received a proposal and business case to offer a new programme from September 2018. It noted that:

- a proposal for MSc Fashion Design Management had been made to the June meeting but it had been agreed that no formal recommendation regarding planning be made at that time and that the proposal would be considered further with the business case;
- the programme addressed the priorities of Belfast City Council's strategic economic development plan and was also part of the new Faculty's strategic plan to be launched in Autumn 2017 in the general area of creative industry;
- discussions were ongoing with the Ulster University Business School around the provision of customised management material.

AGREED: that, if customised contributions from the Business School were not forthcoming, written evidence of its confirmation of the appropriateness of 'management' learning outcomes and content should be provided to the evaluation panel (as had been required for MSc Sport Management).

RECOMMENDED: that the proposal be approved to proceed to planning and evaluation for a September 2018 start.

FACULTY OF COMPUTING, ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Proposed FdSc Graphic and Digital Design (FT/PT) at North West Regional College (Strand Road campus)

It was noted that the proposal had not been approved by the evaluation panel in June 2017 and that the College did not intend to bring forward a revised proposal at this time.

The Chair confirmed the expectation that new course proposals from partner institutions should be sponsored by an associated Faculty to ensure Faculty engagement and strategic planning.

FdSc Interactive Multimedia at Southern Regional College (Armagh campus)

The Advisory Group received a course revision proposal to relocate the course to another of the College campuses in Armagh (Lisanally Building) during the reconstruction of the Lonsdale Road/College Hill site in 2017 – 2020.

RECOMMENDED: that the temporary relocation of the course at Armagh be approved.

FdSc Construction Engineering with Surveying at South West College (Dungannon and Enniskillen campuses)

The Advisory Group received a course revision proposal to offer the programme in full-time mode at Dungannon and in two-year, three-semester part-time mode at Enniskillen for 2017/18 intake. It noted that:

- the College had confirmed student demand at Dungannon as follows: six potential applicants for the proposed full-time mode alongside six for the approved two-year, three-semester part-time mode, and five potential applicants for the two-year, three-semester part-time mode alongside six for the approved full-time mode at Enniskillen;
- the Faculty had confirmed that, as both new modes sat alongside other modes and the numbers of anticipated students were relatively low, existing resources at each campus were suitable;
- the external examiner supported the proposal;
- the Faculty supported the proposal for the 2017 intake only and intended to undertake a strategic review during 2017/18;
- the Enniskillen proposal was not in accordance with the Principles for the Management of Two-Year Three-Semester Part-time Foundation Degrees approved by the Collaborative Partnerships Forum in May 2017 as, inter alia, there was no standard three-year, two-semester part-time mode offered at the Enniskillen campus and a specific business case, weekly timetable and resource plan for semester 3 had not been provided;
- Dr Keenan stated that the Faculty had started a conversation to lead the College to a strategic approach in its collaborative provision and she confirmed that students had not been registered for the proposed new modes;
- a QAA review of Higher Education in Further Education would take place in Spring 2018.

RECOMMENDED: that, given the proposal was supported by the Faculty for one intake only, the new modes be approved for 2017 intake.

AGREED: that the College make clear to Enniskillen students that there was no standard part-time mode available at that campus and that they would not be obliged to switch mode or campus during their studies.

FACULTY OF LIFE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Proposed MBBS Medicine (FT) (ME)

The Advisory Group received a proposal to introduce a medical degree (MBBS) from August 2019. It noted that:

- a strategic decision had already been taken by the University to establish a Graduate Entry Medical School, which aligned to regional needs;
- there were substantial resource implications; the proposal was subject to funding from the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for the Economy (DfE);
- Stages 1 and 2 of the General Medical Council's (GMC) accreditation process had been submitted and a Steering Group was currently working towards the

submission of Stage 3 in November; the programme could not be publicised until Stage 3 had been completed;

- St George's University of London had been identified as a contingency partner, which was a requirement of GMC; a contract had been agreed between the two institutions whereby Ulster would purchase St George's curriculum and assessments; a member of staff from St George's would be seconded to the University to develop materials;
- some changes could be made to the curriculum in terms of regional context and there would be much more emphasis on primary care with 27% of placement being undertaken in this field; the University would also be able to offer its own choice of student selectable components;
- the schedule for the provision of curriculum materials under the terms of the contract with St George's meant that Years 3 and 4 of the curriculum would not have been received at the time of the University evaluation in April 2019;
- the Office for Digital Learning had held discussions about the VLE. As St George's curriculum was built around Canvas and there would not be sufficient time between receipt of materials and delivery to students to convert material to Blackboard, the University would have to procure a hosted-managed contract for Canvas; costs were currently being explored;
- the University's Library had undertaken considerable preliminary work to identify resource requirements;
- Mrs Thompson confirmed that, if approved by Government, the course would have its own funding stream and MaSN.

AGREED: that, as the curriculum would reflect that of a GMC-approach provider, the evaluation panel should be confident in its standards and would therefore be expected to focus in detail on how it would be delivered in practice and the resources available to support it.

RECOMMENDED: that the proposal be approved to proceed to planning and evaluation for an August 2019 start (subject to Government funding decision).

Proposed FdSc Paramedic Practice

The Advisory Group was informed that the University was bidding to become the validating partner of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) for a FdSc Paramedic Practice to start in September 2018. The Chair reported that, as the deadline for submission of bids was 6 October, he had authorised this proposal to proceed to planning and evaluation subject to:

- the Senior Leadership Team's decision on whether the Ambulance Service should be considered for institutional approval as a new partner in light of an Institutional Strategic Assessment;
- the outcome of the tendering process.

[Note: the Faculty has now advised that the bid has been successful.]

ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

MSc Applied Finance

The Advisory Group received a course revision proposal and business case to offer six modules from the programme in part-time mode at Hong Kong University School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) as an outcentre from March 2018. It noted that:

- HKU SPACE delivered a number of finance-related courses to PgDip level and sought an international partner to provide progression to MSc;
- a mapping exercise had been carried out between the PgDip modules at HKU and the MSc Applied Finance modules which had identified exemption from 60 credits: students would then complete four 15 credit point taught modules and a 60 credit point work-based project or dissertation to achieve the MSc;
- Hong Kong students would have access to online materials via Blackboard as well as to HKU SPACE's learning and resource centre; the Faculty had also confirmed that HKU had an excellent library and online resource to support the programme and could cater for all the required texts and journals; the Business and Management Librarian had been in contact with HKU SPACE;
- confirmation of the overall fee was needed as deviation from set fees required approval by the Finance Department;
- the same costing model had been used as that for the MSc Management and Corporate Governance and the minimum cohort size was 15 students with a break-even point of around eight students;
- given the status of HKU SPACE and the in-market promotional benefits of this relationship, the Faculty was content that the financial implications of the proposal were acceptable.

AGREED: that Mrs Thompson confirm that the proposed fee was in line with the University's set fees.

RECOMMENDED: that the proposal be approved for a March 2018 start.

FOR INFORMATION [noted by the Academic Planning Advisory Group]

(a) CHANGES TO COHORT SIZES AT PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

2017/18 intake

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

FdEng Civil Engineering at Belfast Metropolitan College (Millfield campus) – increase in intake to the full-time mode from 10 to 16 students.

From 2017/18

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences

FdSc Health and Social Care at North West Regional College (Strand Road campus) – increase in annual intake to the full-time mode from 32 to 54 students;

FdSc Sport and Exercise at Northern Regional College (Coleraine campus) – increase in annual intake to the full-time mode from 18 to 26 students.

(b) PROGRAMME SUSPENSIONS AT PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

Suspended for 2017/18 intakes:

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

South Eastern Regional College

FdSc Architectural Technology at Bangor campus (FT);

FdSc Construction Engineering with Surveying at Bangor campus (FT).

Northern Regional College

FdEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering (two-year three-semester PT) [Higher Level Apprenticeship moving to three-year PT] at Farm Lodge campus, Ballymena;

FdEng Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering (two-year three-semester PT) [Higher Level Apprenticeship moving to three-year PT] at Farm Lodge campus, Ballymena.

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences

South Eastern Regional College

FdSc Applied and Medical Sciences at Bangor (PT) and Downpatrick (FT/PT) campuses;

FdSc Applied and Medical Sciences at Newry campus (PT);

FdSc Health and Social Care at Newtownards campus (FT).

Ulster University Business School

Southern Regional College

FdSc International Travel and Tourism at Newry campus (FT/PT).

(c) **PROGRAMME WITHDRAWALS**

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences

Last intake 2016/17

PgCert/PgDip/MSc Nutraceuticals, Functional Foods and Supplements (DL).

Last intake 2017/18

MSc Physical Activity and Public Health (JN).

Ulster University Business School

Last intake 2017/18

Undergraduate Hons Subject: Advertising (Single Hons/Major/Main/Minor) (ME);

Undergraduate Hons Subject: Human Resource Management (Main/Minor) (ME);

BSc Hons Business Administration (ME).

Last intake January 2018

MSc Management (ME).