

ULSTER UNIVERSITY  
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM  
4 October 2017

Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at Coleraine Campus.

Present: Ms N Cameron, Mr J Curran, Mr L Curran, Mrs C Davison, Mrs L Lavery, Mrs S McCall, Mrs D McElwee, Mr J Marley, Mrs T Millar, Mrs H Miller, Mrs P Morrison, Dr A Moorhead, Mrs M Paris (Chair), Ms C Reid, Dr G Stevenson (for Mr D McDowell).

Apologies: Mrs J Alleyne, Professor P Bartholomew, Mr D McDowell, Dr B Murphy, Mr P Quinn, Mrs M Sowney.

In Attendance: Mr H Deighan, Mrs C McIntyre.

#### THANKS AND WELCOME

The Chair thanked Dr N Blair for the professional manner in which he carried out his duties as Subject Partnership Manager for the Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment.

#### MINUTES

17.39 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2017 were approved.

#### MATTERS ARISING

17.40 Associate Colleges (Min 17.26)

The Chair informed the Forum that the recommendation to remove the title Associate College from Ordinance XVIII had been approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC).

17.41 Principles for Fast Track Part-time Foundation Degrees (Min 17.33)

The Chair informed the Forum that the *Principles for two-year three-semester part-time Foundation degrees* are now included in the Partnership Handbook 2017.

An anomaly had been noticed in the working of Clause 2 of the Principles which should now read 'The two-year, three-semester part-time course offer standard for entry must be the same as, or no less than one grade below, that for normal year 1 undergraduate entry to the related Honours degree'.

The term 'fast track' part-time Foundation degree will no longer be used. In future, the title of this mode of delivery will be '2 year, 3 semester', part-time Foundation degree (abbreviated to 2Y3S).

## CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### 17.42 External Examiner Induction

The Chair put on record her gratitude to the large number of College Course Directors who attended the External Examiner induction on 16 September 2017.

### 17.43 Annual Course Review 2016/17

The majority of partner institutions have forwarded their annual course review submissions to the Quality Management and Audit Unit (QMAU) within the agreed timeframe.

### 17.44 Review of the Collaborative Strategy

The Chair informed the Forum that the University is currently reviewing Collaborative Provision and developing a strategy. It is anticipated that the new Strategy will be agreed by June 2018.

The new Strategy will be closely aligned to the University's 5&50 priorities and will place a greater focus on fully costed business plans and risk assessments. It is now the case that Faculties bring forward new course proposals based on Faculty strategic priorities and portfolio development.

The University is also reviewing the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

### 17.45 Revised CA4 Form

The Chair reminded colleagues that the Academic Office has revised the CA4 Form which is completed by SPMs at revalidations and evaluations. The revisions are minor and make clearer the information required prior to an evaluation or revalidation event.

One area of change is that additional information is now sought in line with the Principles for 2Y3S programmes. SPMs will now be asked to comment on the rationale for the adoption of the 2Y3S model in favour of the preferred normal part-time model and whether it complies with the Principles and is supported by the Faculty.

### 17.46 Online Admissions Pilot

Mrs Cameron provided members with an update on the online admissions pilot for all first year students at NWRC, and the initial pilot courses from 16/17.

The online admissions process appears to have worked well with only a small number of minor issues. Online admissions opened on 29 August 2017 and closed on 29 September 2017. Enrolment forms were printed on 29 September and sent to the Course Directors. They also received enrolment forms for those who had commenced but who had not completed an OLA for the specific programme.

The process will be reviewed when all the completed enrolment forms have been returned to the University.

The Chair reminded partner institutions that the late enrolment fee applies to those applications submitted after 14 October 2017.

It is hoped to roll out online admissions to all first year students in all partner institutions from the 2018/19 academic year.

#### NEW FACULTY STRUCTURES WITHIN ULSTER UNIVERSITY

17.47 The Chair provided an update on the new Faculty and School structure within the University. The former six Faculties have been reduced to four with a number of schools amalgamated.

There are no changes at present to SPMs with the exception of the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment where Mrs M Paris is the sole SPM.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

17.48 Members received paper CPF/17/15, a revised Terms of Reference and Membership.

It was noted that the fifth Term of Reference has been revised to reflect the University's 5&50 Strategic Plan.

It was noted that not all collaborative partners are members of the Forum, and are perhaps out of the loop in terms of having an input into the development and monitoring of policies and procedures.

RECOMMENDED: that all partner institutions be invited to be members of the Forum.

AGREED   i)       that the Terms of Reference and membership be approved;  
          ii)       that only one representative be nominated from each partner institution.

#### DATES OF MEETING 2017/18

17.49 Members received paper CPF/17/16 detailing dates and venues of meetings in the 2017/18 academic year.

The meeting scheduled for 24 January 2018 will have to be rearranged as it clashes with External Examiner induction.

It was noted that the Chiring of Boards of Examiners event will be held on 3 May 2018 in Jordanstown.

#### APEL AUDIT

17.50 Members considered paper CPF/17/17 on the findings from the audit of APEL for admissions for year 1 Foundation degree entry in 2016/17.

The Annual Course Review Sub-Group raised the issue of APEL, and concerns that some students at partner institutions were being registered on a course by APEL, that the SPMs were not informed of this, nor was it disclosed in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) (Minute 1717 refers). Course Teams must provide details in the SER of how they select students who do not meet the course entry requirements. They must also consult SPMs where candidates are under consideration for APEL before offers are made.

A three-stage APEL audit was undertaken by SPMs.

#### Stage 1: Review of APEL policies

Colleges were requested to submit their APEL policies for review. The University's expectation is that these should align with the regional APEL policy, a DEL initiative to which all partners contributed.

In the main, Colleges aligned with the University's and the Regional APEL policy, with some observations detailed in the Annex of the Paper. Colleges are requested to address these issues and report back through the Forum.

#### Stage 2: Audit of APEL admissions for 2016/17

Colleges were asked to provide information on APEL admissions for each Foundation degree for 2016/17.

The SPMs undertook a formal audit of these returns on a course-by-course basis. The information returned did not align with SPMs' experience/ involvement, nor did it tally with experience from previous Annual Course Review submissions, where each Self-Evaluation Report is required to account for the basis of admission to each course. In some cases, SPMs had been sent larger numbers of APEL candidates, but this was *after* the candidates had already enrolled on the course. In other cases, SPMs had rejected candidates but they were admitted despite this. In quite a few cases, the College had not involved the SPM at all, and the SPM had been unaware that the candidates had been admitted on that basis.

The audit findings included non-submission of portfolios with the APEL form; inadequately constituted APEL panels; incomplete alignment with entry requirements, especially where candidates were claiming APEL for GCSE English and Maths (which is not permitted by all Faculties); inadequate personal statements; no annotation of decisions; no indication of scrutiny or evidence of decisions made. There was inadequate reporting of the extent of APEL at the course level and by extension at the college level.

The SPMs were also concerned that in a few instances there were insufficient grounds to justify awarding APEL on the basis of level 3 equivalence; some offers were not deemed to be valid according to the policy and expectations. In some cases, evidence of the decision-making process and outcomes was poor, and it was unclear who had oversight of the process and the resulting decisions.

The audit also revealed that some candidates did not fulfil the level 2 entry requirements, but no APEL process was in place; instead the students were made

to sign a waiver. This practice should never have been adopted and is of grave concern.

As a consequence of inconsistencies in the documentation and misalignment with SPMs' expectations, a full investigation of admissions decisions for 2016/17 was required.

### Stage 3: Full audit of level 3 entry requirements 2016/17

All colleges were asked to complete a spreadsheet detailing UCAS tariff/ educational attainment for each new Foundation Degree student in 2016/17. These returns were then crosschecked. Each SPM was asked to check the total of APEL admissions identified by the colleges for each course, then the UCAS tariff/ entry requirements for each candidate to ensure they aligned with the offer standard. Where a candidate presented with lower than agreed tariff, this was identified as a candidate who should have gone through the APEL process. The SPMs were also asked to identify where details were missing. In such cases, the assumption would be that these were cases which should have gone through the APEL process. Finally, SPMs were asked to note EU and International applicants, which should normally be referred to the University.

The audit found that in general APEL was not implemented appropriately, and that there are concerns over the application of offer standards across the board. Where details were missing, these mainly concerned part-time students on certain courses. It is to be assumed these should have been put through the APEL process.

It was noted that for SRC the total identified as unauthorized APEL should read '0'.

- AGREED:
- i) That in the interests of fairness and equity for all applicants across Northern Ireland, Colleges will comply in full with the agreed regional policy and procedure on APEL;
  - ii) No applicant may be admitted through APEL without following the agreed procedure;
  - iii) No offers may be made to any applicant until the SPM has endorsed the offer based on the portfolio and documentation, which must be completed in full;
  - iv) This process must be completed before the published start of semester 1;
  - v) No retrospective endorsement of unapproved APEL admissions will be permitted;
  - vi) All EU/International applicants must be referred to the SPMs to verify against the University's equivalence list;
  - vii) SPMs will create a simple proforma to close the loop on APEL applications.

### STUDENT RETENTION

17.51 Members considered paper CPF/17/18 on student retention in the 2016/17 academic year as at 28 July 2017.

At the meeting of the Forum on 21 September 2016 members considered a paper on retention and progression data (CPF/16/28). This paper was prompted by new reporting arrangements within the University and the potential for monitoring and reporting under the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

At the meeting members agreed that a benchmark of 10% attrition be set for HE programmes, with a 20% attrition benchmark for Access provision (Minute 16.60 refers). The higher attrition rate for Access provision takes account of the profile and background of students enrolling on these programmes.

The data this year showed that with the exception of CAFRE no College met the agreed benchmarks for either full-time or part-time provision. No College met the benchmark for full-time Access provision with only two Colleges meeting the benchmark for part-time programmes.

It was noted that full-time HE attrition rates were markedly worse in all Colleges than in 2015/16, with only one College showing a small improvement in part-time HE attrition. Likewise, attrition for full-time Access courses was significantly worse than last year, with two Colleges showing an improvement in retention for part-time programmes.

## 17.52 STUDENT SUCCESS

Members considered paper CPF/17/19 on student success in the 2016/17 academic year as at 28 July 2017, which relates to the paper on student retention.

Members were reminded that the University has two success measurements:

Success 1:  $(\text{Proceed} + \text{Award}) / (\text{Total} - (\text{Early Leavers} + \text{LOA} + \text{Non-Returners}))$   
Success 2:  $(\text{Proceed} + \text{Award}) / (\text{Total})$

What this means is that all students who engage with the course, regardless of how well they get on, are classified as Success 1. Success 2 refers to those students who enrolled onto the course irrespective of whether they engaged with the programme or not. In practice, therefore, it is the Success 1 data which gives a truer reflection of student success.

The data for both success measurements for 2016/17 for HE and Access programmes is generally poor. While it is recognised that the success data will significantly improve after the summer resits it is still a major concern that so many students, across all years of a programme, are failing at the first attempt. On some programmes more than 50% of students are failing first time round.

Of concern to the University is the fact that there appears to be only limited analysis of progression and success data after the June Boards of Examiners. It would seem that this data is only considered after the summer resits. The resit information is used by Colleges for the University's annual course review purposes.

While it is accepted that the College MIS systems are not set up to collect and store data relating to HE programmes course teams should be aware of success information at the June Boards of Examiners. As such they should be in a position

to reflect on performance and report on the outcome of their review through the annual course review process.

- AGREED:
- i) that a benchmark of 75% be set for Success 1 in Year 1 and 80% in Year 2, as at the June Boards;
  - ii) that the QMAU provide HE Co-ordinators with course-specific data on retention and success as at 28 July 2017;
  - iii) that HE Co-ordinators be provided with an explanation to the codes used by the University;
  - iv) that a simple, easy to understand explanation be provided on what the University means by Success 1 and Success 2;
  - v) that the SER used in annual course review be revised to include a section on a critical analysis of retention and success data at the June Boards of Examiners;
  - vi) that resit data be considered at the next meeting of the Forum; and,
  - vii) that success measures for 2Y3S courses be considered at the January Forum meeting, since these boards are only held in mid-September.

#### QAA QUALITY REVIEW

17.53 Members considered a draft paper CPF/17/20 on the Provider/Awarding Body responsibilities for the forthcoming QAA Quality Review Audits.

As well as agreeing the responsibilities checklist members were also asked to advise QMAU of any staff development they would like the University to provide. The University is happy to support Colleges in preparation for the audit.

Members also asked if an updated list of duties for HE Co-ordinators could be provided:

- AGREED:
- i) that the responsibilities checklist be agreed for all Colleges;
  - ii) that HE Co-ordinators provide QMAU with details of any staff development they would like;
  - iii) that the duties of HE Co-ordinators be updated.

#### PART-TIME FOUNDATION DEGREES

17.54 At the last meeting of the Forum SPMs were asked to ensure that if an existing programme is offered in 2Y3S mode only, that a normal part-time route be developed (min.17.33).

The Chair provided an update on programmes where a CA3 is required to offer a traditional part-time mode of delivery. CA3s should be submitted by the end of October at the latest.

#### STAFF DEVELOPMENT

17.55 Members received paper CPF/17/21, a draft agenda for the annual staff development conference at CAFRE on 20 October 2017.

The theme for this year is 'Curriculum Design' and the keynote speaker will be Professor Bartholomew, PVC, Education, Ulster University. Other sessions include outcomes from the APEL audit, retention/success, improving student attendance and retention, student engagement in FE and HE, industry-enhanced learning and student engagement.

#### VISITOR ACCESS TO WiFi IN COLLEGES

- 17.56 The University is moving to SharePoint for the sharing of papers with validation panels. Confirmation was sought from partner organisations on access to WiFi for validation events held in Colleges.

All Colleges confirmed their arrangements for visitor access to WiFi.

#### MARKETING ACTIVITIES

- 17.57 Members received paper CPF/17/22 on current marketing activities.

All colleges were sent, and included in, communications regarding Open Days across campuses. Over 450 students (only includes those who registered) from further education colleges attended Open Days with further communication provided to students who had registered including subject related information. Communication will also be sent regarding subject specific information events.

Students will be invited by text, email and hard copy postcard, where applicable, to a range of applicant information events. This information will be circulated to colleges and included on a dedicated landing page ([www.ulster.ac.uk/informationevents](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/informationevents)).

Members of the Student Recruitment Team will give presentations to both 1st and 2nd year students at the beginning of semester 1 to promote progression to the University and the key factors these students need to consider.

#### MATTERS ARISING FROM INFORMATION PAPERS

- 17.58 Members received information papers from SPMs and HE Co-ordinators on matters relating to collaborative activity.

The papers were taken as read.

Duration: 2 hr 15 mins

ULSTER UNIVERSITY  
 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM  
 4 OCTOBER 2017

ACTION SHEET

	MINUTE	ACTION	ACTION BY	DEADLINE
1	17.48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) that the Terms of Reference and membership be approved;</li> <li>ii) that one representative be nominated from each partner institution.</li> </ul>	Mr H Deighan	31/10/17
2	17.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) That in the interests of fairness and equity for all across Northern Ireland, Colleges will comply in full with the agreed regional policy and procedure on APEL;</li> <li>ii) No applicant may be admitted through APEL without following the agreed procedure;</li> <li>iii) No offers may be made to any applicant until the SPM has endorsed the offer based on the portfolio and documentation, which must be completed in full;</li> <li>iv) This process must be completed before the published start of semester 1;</li> <li>v) No retrospective endorsement of unapproved APEL admissions will be permitted;</li> <li>vi) All EU/International applicants must be referred to the SPMs to verify against the University's equivalence list;</li> <li>vii) SPMs will create a simple proforma to close the loop on APEL applications.</li> </ul>	<p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>Mrs M Paris</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>31/10/17</p>
3	17.52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) that a benchmark of 75% be set for Success 1 in Year 1 and 80% in Year 2.</li> <li>ii) that the QMAU provide HE Co-ordinators with course specific data on retention and success as at 28 July 2017;</li> <li>iii) that HE Co-ordinators be provided with an explanation to</li> </ul>	<p>Mr H Deighan</p> <p>Mr H Deighan</p> <p>Mr H Deighan</p>	<p>31/10/17</p> <p>31/10/17</p> <p>31/10/17</p>

		<p>the codes used by the University;</p> <p>iv) that a simple, easy to understand explanation be provided on what the University means by Success 1 and Success 2;</p> <p>v) that the SER used in annual course review be revised to include a section on a critical analysis of retention and success data at the June Boards of Examiners;</p> <p>vi) that resit data be considered at the next meeting of the Forum;</p> <p>vii) that success measures for 2Y3S courses be considered at the January Forum meeting since these boards are only held in mid-September</p>	<p>Mr H Deighan</p> <p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>QMAU</p> <p>QMAU</p>	<p>31/10/17</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>23/1/18</p> <p>23/1/18</p>
4	17.53	<p>i) that the responsibilities checklist be agreed for all Colleges'</p> <p>ii) that HE Co-ordinators provide QMAU with details of any staff development they would like.</p> <p>iii) that the duties of HE Co-ordinators be updated.</p>	<p>HE Co-ordinators</p> <p>Mrs M Paris</p>	<p>29/9/17</p> <p>31/10/17</p>