

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/32a)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

22 October 2019

Agenda Item 9.1

REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS
FORUM (2 October 2019)

COVER SHEET

Presenter: Ms C Reid

No action is required of the Committee.

REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS
FORUM (2 October 2019)

1. ONLINE ADMISSIONS

The Chair informed that a total of 1,295 online admissions were received. 163 (13%) queries were identified mostly of a very minor nature. Course Directors were very quick to respond to the request to resolve the issues identified. Unsolicited applications were referred back to the College.

Colleges asked that consideration be given to opening the OLA process on the same day as 'A' level results come out so that students could register and upload their GCSE evidence on that day.

A new EBS system is being introduced across all Colleges this year which will allow students to upload and save their examination results electronically. HE Co-ordinators said they would investigate with the EBS Implementation Working Group if the information on their system could be shared with the University's OLA system.

Currently the OLA system only asks for evidence of GCSE English and Maths or equivalent. The University will consider adding a third upload button to include evidence of the Level 3 qualification or APEL portfolio. HE Co-ordinators were reminded that all APEL applications must be approved by the FPM before the student is registered. FPM's must be given at least one week to review and approve the APEL application.

HE Co-ordinators were reminded that no student should be accepted onto the programme after week 2.

Mrs McEvoy said it had been brought to her attention that some Colleges believed the University was poaching some of their students who had applied to University through the OLA process. She informed HE Co-ordinators that the OLA system is completely separate from the University's admissions systems. Admission staff within the University are not aware of information contained within the OLA system, nor do they look at it when making offers.

With regard to the two week cooling off period, HE Co-ordinators were informed that this starts from the first day of class, not the date on which the student registers. It was noted that students in partner institutions start one week earlier than students at Ulster University.

It was agreed that : i) the University give consideration to opening OLA from the date 'A' level results come out;

- ii) the University give consideration to providing a dropbox for level 3 qualifications;
- iii) the University give consideration to introducing an online enrolments process from next academic year.

2. APPLICATION OF THE NEW DEGREE ALGORITHM TO FOUNDATION DEGREES

At the last meeting of the Forum HE Co-ordinators agreed that after the Supplementary Board, Course Directors would model the overall cohort performance based on 30% at level 4 and 70% at level 5 and report back on the outcome of the modelling exercise.

HE Co-ordinators reported that there was no real difference in the outcome. For the vast majority of students the outcome remained the same with a few students better off and some with a few marks less.

It was accepted that the modelling exercise looked at historical data and did not take account of the fact that students may have performed better had they known that level 4 assessments contributed to the final award.

NWRC had also surveyed students and found that 76% of students felt that the new Fd algorithm would be a good idea.

- It was agreed that:
- i) NWRC share their survey questionnaire with other partners;
 - ii) the results of the modelling exercise be forwarded to Quality Enhancement.

3. FITNESS TO PRACTISE

Members were informed that the University is currently developing a new Fitness to Study Policy which will be shared with partner institutions when it is ready.

Members were informed that the University's Ordinance on Fitness for Professional Practice has been amended as follows:

- Change in title from 'Fitness for Professional Practice' to 'Fitness to Practise' to align with the professional regulators' current terminology.
- The use of the term 'practice learning' to replace 'placement'.
- Amendments to the anonymous disclosure paragraph to encourage disclosure by complainants.
- Clarity on the steps for investigation including timelines, and referral to the regulatory procedures for the relevant profession.

It was noted that the University does not support mandatory disclosure of health issues.

Members discussed a number of issues concerning Access NI requirements including, in particular, whether the check is required as part of the admissions process or only when the student is about to go on placement.

There was concern that if a student is admitted onto the programme without the Access NI check being undertaken and then subsequently that student was unable to go on placement because of an adverse outcome from an Access NI check the partner institution could be held liable for allowing the student on the course.

Mrs McEvoy said that the University has a standard statement and waiver which could be provided to applicants.

It was agreed that:

- i) a Working Group, chaired by Mr J Marley, with representatives from partner institutions, be established to consider the issues surrounding Access NI;
- ii) the statement and waiver used by the University be circulated to partner institutions.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Members considered a draft programme for the annual conference at CAFRE on 11 October 2019.

The title for the Conference this year is 'Developing Quality in the New Era'. The keynote speaker is Mrs Caroline Turnbull from the Nations and Europe Team at the QAA.

5. STUDENTS CODED U1

Members considered a paper looking at the issue of students coded U1 who apply to another College for a place on the same programme within a 12 month period.

Mrs Brogan informed that a small number of students on Counselling programmes had been coded U1 at one College and then applied to do a similar course at another College within a 12 month period. This is breaching University regulations.

Currently the University does not have mechanisms in place to pick this up.

The rationale behind the U1 code is to allow students to take a year out as they are not at that time ready to engage with that programme. However, it was noted that no pastoral support is provided to these students. Under the current U1 code it states that "Fail and required to withdraw from the course

and not eligible to apply for readmission to the same/similar or part-time version of the course in the next academic year.”

It was agreed that: the Chair speak to the Head of the Academic Office regarding the currency of the U1 coded particularly in relation to collaborative activity.

6. MARKETING ACTIVITY

Members received a report on current marketing activity. They were informed that the Marketing and Communications Department continues to work on a range of initiatives to support college engagement activities.

Last year the University ran Applicant Events across several Saturdays and these proved to be a huge success and will be continued this year.

The University also launched a new initiative to help increase awareness and applications to Engineering and Computing courses. The ‘Visiting lecture Series’ aims to support the teaching of STEM-related subjects – whilst highlighting higher education progress and career pathways.

Requests for presentations to both 1st and 2nd year students are welcomed by the Student Recruitment Team. These are generally delivered at the beginning of semester 1 to promote progression to University and the key factors these students need to consider.

The Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment are running 3 Open Days on 14, 16 and 17 October for students on linked Foundation degrees.