EXTRACT FROM LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE MINUTES: 1.4.15

15.14Work Experience (Item 3i)

The Committee at its December meeting had advised that the Sub-Committee would provide further guidance on models of compulsory work-based learning in all Honours (including integrated Master’s) degrees (min 14.101 refers.) The Committee noted that the Work Experience Working Group had concentrated on providing guidance on achieving a compulsory component but planned to look at the monitoring of placement and to update University work experience guidelines.

The Committee was asked to consider five proposed Guiding Principles to help course teams in the development of proposals to meet the requirement. The term ‘compulsory work-based learning’ was to be used rather than ‘placement’ to avoid potential confusion with the sandwich year. Professor McMullan emphasised that there was no requirement to introduce a sandwich year and the guidance was not prescriptive in terms of duration. Examples of innovative practice had been provided to assist faculties and best practice would need to be widely disseminated. It was noted that the working group still had to consider and provide advice on other issues related to the introduction of work-based learning such as indemnity insurance.

The Committee noted that the projected increase in the required number of work-based learning opportunities was taking place at a time when there was increased competition for limited places and that there was a need to explore opportunities outside Northern Ireland. It was recognised that it might not be possible to secure subject-related work-based learning in some subject areas but that their students could still be provided with appropriate opportunities to develop their employability skills. It was therefore suggested that ‘to the subject area’ should be removed from Principle 1. Also, given that work-based learning settings would differ, it was suggested that not all students would have ‘mentors’ and that this expectation should be removed from Principle 3.

The Chair clarified that, although compliance with the Guiding Principles was not a University requirement, they should be viewed as being University expectations which were the appropriate considerations for course teams to take into account in developing compulsory work-based learning opportunities.

The Committee noted that in certain circumstances study abroad might be considered as meeting the University requirement for work-based learning in accordance with the P rinciples, but there were potential difficulties in designing into the curriculum such a work-based learning activity that the full cohort could be expected to undertake. The Working Group would wish to consider this matter further.

AGREED: that, taking account of the suggested amendments, the Principles be endorsed as follows:

* Work-based learning opportunities should be relevant and provide an authentic and meaningful context for experiential learning[[1]](#footnote-1).
* Work-based learning should support student learning and provide an awareness of the current graduate market place.
* Work-based learning opportunities should provide a supportive environment with access to a network of experienced colleagues.
* Work-based learning opportunities should provide a context for students to practise and reflect on real issues leading to applicable learning and critical thinking[[2]](#footnote-2).
* Work-based learning and assessment should be integrated in a valid and reliable way; and linked to the development of relevant employability skills and the Ulster graduate qualities.

1. Association of Business Schools (ABS), Chartered Institute if Management (CMI) (2014) available from: <http://www.associationofbusinessschools.org/sites/default/files/21st_century_leaders_june2014_-_final_report.pdf> (Accessed 20 January 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. QAA Scotland (2010) Available from: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/AboutUs/Documents/WBL_Guidelines.pdf> (Accessed 20 January 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)