UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER CA1 Supplement

Course Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

GUIDANCE FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSORS OF PROPOSALS FOR NEW COURSES (for which the Faculty has sought approval without consideration by a University validation panel)

Background

The University normally requires new course, or subject strand, proposals to be considered through a formal evaluation process which involves the submission of a course document for discussion with an evaluation panel comprising internal University representatives and at least two external subject experts. A Faculty may recommend that a new proposal, which derives substantially from currently approved provision, be introduced without full evaluation. In such cases the Faculty provides any new or revised module descriptions, a set of course regulations, and information on resource needs and CVs for any staff not already approved. The learning and teaching and assessment strategies, and support for students will follow the arrangements for the related approved provision.

The Faculty is also required to provide its own supporting statement, and a statement of external endorsement of the proposal. The latter should provide, in the context of the existing approval of related provision, the same assurance of standards and quality that the University achieves through the validation process.

The University, therefore, would appreciate your views on the course proposal named above.

Information enclosed [some of which may be provided through the CA1 form]

* Summary statement about existing course(s) and rationale for proposed development
* Programme Specification
* Course structure diagram
* New and revised module descriptions
* Relationship to existing course(s) and other module descriptions, unless know to external
* Statement of staff resources: overall profile and CVs for staff new to course team
* Statement of specialised resource to support the course
* Relevant subject benchmark statement

You may also find helpful the University’s Guidelines for evaluation and revalidation panels, together with a set of prompt questions, based on those provided to these panels.

Report

The University would particularly welcome your comments on the appropriateness of:

* the academic structure and content of the proposal with regard to its integration and coherence;
* the standards for the course in terms of its qualification and credit levels;
* the resources identified to support delivery.

GUIDANCE FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSORS (CA1 Supplement)

Programme Specification

Is this clearly and fully presented? Is there a clear relationship between the intended learning outcomes and the aims of the course/subject strand (including for any proposed pre-final exit awards)? Are the programme learning outcomes written at the final level of the award? Are they appropriately mapped in the learning outcome map?

Is the summary information on course structure consistent with that in the rest of the documentation?

Progression, Coherence, Choice (within the programme), Structure Diagram

Is there coherence within the course/strand? Are the choice of modules and their level and sequence appropriate? Is academic progression and integration between and within levels in the programme evident? Is there sufficient underpinning? Are adequate and meaningful opportunities for choice provided? Are the expectations for any exit points adequately addressed? Do they represent coherent programmes of study?

Are modules located in the appropriate semester and year?

Are modules appropriately designated as compulsory or optional? Taking account of module sizes, is the overall structure and workload balanced and reasonable?

Standards

Does the programme meet the relevant subject benchmark standards?

Does the course meet the specification for its associated award in the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications?

Are the relevant PSRB requirements addressed? If applicable, is fitness to practise achieved?

If appropriate, have the reasons for particular entry standards, requirements or competences been explained?

Modules (For each new or revised module)

Does the module title adequately reflect the content? Is the credit level properly assigned?

Do the modules meet the University’s acceptable sizes (any multiples of 5 from 10 credit points, a normal minimum size of 20 is encouraged)?

Do the credit points accord with the notional student effort hours (10 hours = 1 credit point)?

Do the hours give an adequate breakdown between the different forms of teaching used?

Is there a clear relationship between the module and course rationale, aims and learning outcomes?

Are the design and organisation of the curriculum effective in promoting student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes?

For undergraduate courses, does the first year curriculum support the development of academic skills including learning to learn in higher education?

Are the learning and teaching and assessment methods appropriate to the intended learning outcomes at the level of the module?

Is the syllabus content appropriate for the objectives of the module and course? Will it encourage the achievement of the knowledge, understanding, skills and other qualities identified? Is it current and relevant? Is it informed by current research and scholarship (including the research interests of staff), the subject benchmarks, and any changes in the relevant occupational or professional requirements?

In an Honours degree, are there a period of work-based learning and a sustained project or dissertation module? Are the arrangements for project/dissertation supervision adequate? Is the suggested word-length appropriate?

Is sufficient information provided about the forms of assessment (eg duration and format of examination, length of assignment)? Are they appropriate for their diagnostic, formative and/or summative purposes? Are assessment loads equitable and consistent? Is the assessment weighting appropriate?

Are the reading lists and other sources of information appropriate? Are the texts current editions? Are the texts appropriately identified as required or recommended reading? Is the amount of reading realistic?

Staff Resources

Are the staff sufficiently qualified and experienced to deliver the course successfully at its qualification level? Are the staff numbers adequate? What is the balance between full-time and part-time staff? Will part-time contracts allow sufficient time to undertake expected duties? Is adequate support provided for postgraduate teaching assistants, demonstrators and part-time lecturers and recognised teachers and their integration into the team?

Is there sound leadership in the course/subject and module teams? Are you confident that the staff can work together as an effective team?

Is there adequate technical, administrative and other support staff?

Is there a staff development plan? Will it contribute to the enhancement of teaching? Have staff undertaken the University’s Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (or its predecessor), or are they otherwise qualified in teaching in higher education? Is there evidence of participation in curriculum development?

Physical Resources

Are the available physical resources (general and specialist accommodation, laboratory equipment, library, IT) sufficient to ensure the successful deliver of the course(s), for the cohort size?

Is there a renewal/updating policy for equipment?

Academic Office

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