

LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE



Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2011

- Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor T.B. Ward) (in the Chair), the Director of Taught Programmes (Professor G. Moore), the Director of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes (Professor R. Gray), LTC Director of Staff Development (Mr P. Levy), the Dean of Students (Dr A. Grant), Associate Deans (LTQC) (Mr I. Farr, Dr S. Connolly, Dr B. Milner and Dr N. Spalding), the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students (Ms R. Handforth)** and a representative of the Graduate Students' Association (Mr D. Youngman) ** (except for business marked**).
- With: The Head of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office (Ms A.E. Rhodes), the Director of Taught Programmes designate (Dr A. Longcroft), the Director of Admissions (Dr R. Harvey), the Head of Marketing and Admissions Services, (Mrs S. Gook), the CAMS Manager (Mr A. Watson), the Assistant Registrars (Ms E. Roberts, Mrs J. Jones and Mrs L. Ward) and Administrative Officers (Miss H. Coman).
- Secretary: Ms Claudia Gray (Assistant Registrar)
- Apologies: The Deputy Registrar and Secretary (Mr R. Evans), the Director of Partnerships (Ms E. Towner), the Director of Faculty Administration, SSF (Dr A. Blanchflower), the Library Director (Mr N. Lewis), the CCEN rep (Ms A. Jolly), the UCS rep (Mrs C. Dobson), the Assistant Registrars (Dr J. Ashman and Mrs M. Steele) and the Student Member nominated by the Union of UEA Students (Mr D. Smith)

59. MINUTES

Confirmed
the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2011.

60. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR

The Chair reported:

- (1) that the term of office of the Chair of the Senate Student Discipline Committee, Professor Nigel Norris, had been extended until the end of the academic year 2012/13;
- (2) that the Final Report of the Review of External Examining by Universities UK and GuildHE had been received and will be considered at the next LTC meeting on 18 May 2011

61. BACKGROUND TO NEW ACADEMIC MODEL

- Received
- (1) an overview of the external and internal drivers which underpinned the development of the new academic model (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D060)

- (2) a confidential report by Professor Graham Gibbs following his visit to UEA (this report was tabled and collected at the meeting) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D061)

(Members noted that Professor Gibbs advised UEA to consider whether student recruitment was crucially dependent on the perceived wide choice of modules available to prospective students. Information presented from the UEA Admissions Service at the meeting would not sustain such a premise as surveys conducted of prospective students do not mention choice of a wide range of modules as the deciding factor for choosing to study at UEA. Students were found to focus more on the University's reputation rather than a wide range of choice of modules.)

- (3) a report from TPPG concerning development of a UEA assessment compact (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D062)
- (4) a paper on the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D063)

This was for information only for the 27th April meeting of LTC. LTC would consider the steps UEA needs to take in order to implement the HEAR at a later meeting this session.

62. FEATURES OF THE NEW ACADEMIC MODEL

Received

- (1) A summary of responses to the consultation paper on the principles of the new academic model from Schools and the Union of UEA students (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D064)
- (2) Features for LTC to discuss (listed below) (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D065)

Endorsed

The following set of features relating to the Undergraduate assessment regulations for the new academic model:

- (i) all modules need to be passed. (Members of the Committee noted that teaching strategies and course design would need to be changed considerably in some Schools of Study to enable students to pass all modules as otherwise such a change could result in an undesirable increase of failing students.);
- (ii) there will be no automatic right to reassessment. (Members of the Committee noted that although there will be no automatic right to reassessment, it is expected that reassessment will be offered to some students for which easily understood, fair and clear criteria which convey an entitlement to reassessment, will be worked out.);
- (iii) the May/June exam period to be of no more than four weeks duration. (Members of the Committee noted that this will only be achieved if the volume of summative assessment items will decline substantially and details of how this can be achieved will be worked out at a future LTC meeting. Further discussions on how to use the remaining two weeks for purposeful activities for students also need to take place at a future LTC meeting.);

- (iv) Free choice to be replaced by defined choice in course profiles. (Members of the Committee noted that the defined choice of modules will be decided by the relevant course director when a course profile is defined at the outset. More work was needed to flesh out the details of how choices will be defined and appropriate credit volumes of these choices. Special care needed to be taken when thinking about defined choices as part of joint honours courses covering subjects from two different Schools of Study. It was agreed that a joint course will have an assigned course director from one School of Study and an assigned assistant course director from another School of Study to ensure proper defined choices of modules and effective communication between both Schools.);
- (v) Modules to follow a clear progression hierarchy from UEA levels 1 to 2 to 3;
- (vi) each BA/BSc (Hon) degree should consist of at least 360 credits with 90 credits being at UEA level 3 to comply with the Higher education credit framework for England;
- (vii) Programme level outcomes, and their assessment, to be clear for all courses. (Members of the Committee noted that in some instances professional accreditation was dependent on module level outcomes and therefore in these instances the focus needed to be on the module level outcome);
- (viii) more algorithmic degree classifications leading to a reduction in the discretion of the Board of Examiners. (Members noted that Boards of Examiners should have very limited discretion which should mainly centre on extenuating circumstances when considering students at borderlines.);
- (ix) degree weightings between years (e.g. years 2 & 3 for a 3 year BA/BSc) to be harmonised across all subjects and to take account of exit velocity, the split for three year degree programmes to be used will be 40% for year 2 and 60% for year 3 to take account of the student as an improving learner. Further work was needed to decide on appropriate weightings for four year degree programmes. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D066);
- (x) straight SITS output to be used for Board of Examiners paperwork and abandonment of Discoverer reports;
- (xi) ensuring wherever possible that reassessments should be of the item failed. Members of the Committee agreed that this principle should be adopted, although they were aware that complexities needed to be further explored and teased out to ensure that this would not result in unreasonable administrative overheads for academic staff and support staff. In addition, functionality of SITS to cope with in-year reassessment also needed to be explored further as currently SITS does not support in-year reassessment;
- (xii) setting a minimum module size of 20 credits;
- (xiii) whether UEA should adopt the level descriptors in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and discontinue the current UEA level 0, 1, 2, 3, and M-level descriptors (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D067). Members of the Committee agreed that the level descriptors in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications should be adopted as long as the cost of doing so was not prohibitive. Further discussions needed to take place with the Head of the Planning Office in relation to HESA issues);
- (xiv) item and module assessment marks to be recorded as integers and year and degree aggregates to one decimal point.

Considered and not endorsed

The following proposals:

- (xv) introducing a regulation to open to all Schools the practice in the School of Nursing and Midwifery regarding students who have failed their first assessments and reassessments in a module. (Members of the Committee noted that all assessment items in the School of Nursing and Midwifery needed to be passed with 40% and if a student narrowly fails reassessment with a mark of just below 40%, students are given an oral examination. Success in the oral examination moves the module/item mark to 40% and failure in the oral examinations leads to the student being withdrawn from the degree programme.) Members of the Committee decided that this practice in the School of Nursing and Midwifery should not be formalised as part of the new academic model and agreed that once a mark had been confirmed at assessment and reassessment the mark was unchangeable;
- (xvi) whether the new academic model should be introduced with a “big bang” and a no detriment clause to ensure students on the existing CCS regulations will not be disadvantaged. Members of the Committee agreed that the new academic model should be phased in for all first year students starting in the academic year 2013/14 and that continuing students would finish their degree programme according to the old CCS regulations. Continuing students would be reminded that they ought to apply themselves and ought to strive to pass all modules as this would feature favourably on their Diploma Supplements;
- (xvii) the assessment load of a module to be linked to its credit. Members of the Committee agreed that this was a difficult concept to implement and therefore no formal linkage of the assessment load to credit should be established. However, guidance on general principles on assessment loads should be issued to Schools of Study as this would be much appreciated;
- (xviii) adopting a limited number of course profile templates. Members of the Committee decided that course profile templates would be too inflexible to operate and therefore rejected to introduce standard course profile templates. Members of the Committee agreed that a narrative should be issued as guidance to construct course profiles to ensure harmonisation of programme level outcomes and to formalise requirements on the number of examinations in view of the proposed reduction in the number of three hour examinations. This issue should be reviewed in a few years’ time once datasets were available to compare student performance and to form a considered decision whether student performance was dependent on course profiles;
- (xi) whether additional marks schemes to the current pass/fail and 0-100 numerical schemes should be adopted (e.g. banding of marks). It was agreed that the two mark schemes of pass/fail and the numerical mark scheme should be sufficient to grade students’ assessment items and that no third mark scheme of banding marks should be introduced.

63. NEW ACADEMIC MODEL AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MASTERS DEGREES (PGT AND IM)

Considered

the implications of decisions reached in A2 for masters degrees (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D068)

Endorsed

the establishment of a Working Group chaired by the Director of Taught Programmes to report to LTC this semester on recommendations regarding the IM and PGT degree regulations

64. UEA POLICY ON MARKING AND DEALING WITH OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Received

the UEA policy on marking and dealing with offensive material. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC10D069)

65. ITEMS FOR REPORT

(1) QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY

Noted that

- (i) the revised arrangements for institutional review have been announced (these may be consulted at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalreview/>

- (ii) these arrangements will be considered at the meeting of the committee on 18 May, 2011

- (iii) Mrs Mel Steele, Assistant Registrar, (PGR, LTQO) will be attending a briefing meeting on 4 May, 2011

(2) UNIVERSITIES UK AND GUILDHE: REVIEW OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING ARRANGEMENTS

Noted that

the final report on the above has been published and may be consulted at:

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/QualityAssurance/HowTheSystemWorks/Documents/Review%20of%20External%20Examining%20Final%20Report.pdf>

The report's recommendations will be considered at the meeting of the Committee on 18 May, 2011