

SEN09D008

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The following items were considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting on 28 October 2009 and are presented for the Senate's information.

**(For all documents referred to within this report, please refer to the LTC agenda 07/10/09 and 28/10/09 – see page below – at:**

<https://intranet.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/lc/lc0910/071009> and  
<https://intranet.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/lc/lc0910/281009>)

## **1. Statements by the Chair**

### **1.1 National Teaching Fellowship**

The Chair was pleased to report that Dr Annie Grant, the Dean of Students, had won a National Teaching Fellowship, and congratulated her on winning such an award.

### **1.2 House of Commons: Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee: Students and Universities (11<sup>th</sup> report, 2008-09)**

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the final report of the House of Commons, Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee on Students and Universities and recommended that members take note of this document. The report addresses the current state of affairs of UK Higher Education covering entry and admissions, academic standards and quality of teaching, and the student's experience through to graduation. It contains recommendations to Government, including more clarity of roles and responsibilities in Higher Education, publication of a range of information such as contact hours and class/lecture/seminar group sizes which students can expect while at University and data on graduates' destinations, It also covers issues around the future role of the Quality Assurance Agency and the role of the external examiners' system in the UK concerning maintenance of academic standards.

The report may be consulted at:

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmdius/170/170i.pdf>) .

The QAA has published a response: [www.qaa.ac.uk/news/media/IUSSresponse.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/media/IUSSresponse.pdf) as has Universities UK at: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/UniversitiesUK%E2%80%98disappointed%E2%80%99byInnovation,Universities,ScienceandSkillsCommitteefinalreport.AspX>.

### **1.3 HEFCE Sub-Committee for Teaching, Quality and the Student Experience**

The Chair also mentioned the report of the HEFCE Sub-Committee for Teaching, Quality and the Student Experience which can be found at: [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_40/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_40/). This report focuses on the quality and

standards of UK degrees and calls for a revision of the QAA, the external examiners' system, more accessible public information on quality, standards and the wider student experience.

#### **1.4 Learning and Teaching Day**

The fourth annual Learning and Teaching Day will be held on Friday 16 April 2010. Advance publicity will be circulated as soon as possible.

### **2. Confirmation of Chair's action**

2.1 Members have confirmed Chair's action taken since the last meeting of the Committee, as set out in **Document LTC09D010**, including: 1. a new Partnerships Guidance note setting out different types of partnership arrangement and the level of involvement of the Partnerships Office (**Appendix A**); 2. new/revised Prize regulations (members also welcomed the launch of a new University web site for University prizes under the auspices of the Development and Campaigns Office); 3. an update of the current position regarding the provision of admissions statistics for Regular programme review and; 4. a revised timetable slotting system to aid understanding and communication with staff and students (**Appendix B**) which a sub-group of LTC will monitor to ensure continued development and implementation; and 5. revision of the advising system to include guidance on what to do if a student requests a change of adviser. The relevant website has been updated.

2.2 In addition, the Committee confirmed Chair's action in approving revised Fitness to Practise procedures in the School of Medicine, Health, Policy and Practice as set out in **Document LTC09D011**.

2.3 Approval of a revised Code of Practice for the External Examiner System for Awards (Taught Programmes) was also confirmed as was a new award of MSci (Master of Sciences) for a range of programmes in the Faculty of Science including in Environmental Sciences and Biological Sciences.

### **3. QAA Institutional Audit**

The Committee received the final QAA report detailing findings of the QAA Institutional Audit Visit in March 2009 (**Document LTC09D012**) and accepted the action plan for UEA. (**Document LTC09D013**).

### **4. Student Surveys 2009**

#### **4.1 National Student Survey 2009**

As in previous sessions, the outcomes of the National Student Survey, 2009, have been considered by the Committee (**Document LTC09D014**). Members have been very pleased to note that, once again, the University has continued to perform exceptionally well in comparison with other mainstream Universities. The analysis has been circulated to members of the Executive Team and to Heads of Schools. In addition, under the UEA Code of Practice on Student Representation and Staff:Student Liaison (SSL) it was noted that the NSS must be an item for consideration at SSLC meetings with a report to the relevant School Board/Teaching Committee. The LTC's Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG) will also give attention to the outcomes. It was agreed that NSS comments regarding the incompatibility of anonymous marking with good feedback to students needed to be addressed by TPPG.

The Chair highlighted a positive development in the School of Computing Sciences (CMP) in its consideration of the outcomes of the NSS. The School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality had investigated correlations between student module feedback questionnaires and the National Student Survey which had helped CMP identify weaknesses in teaching which were now being addressed.

#### **4.2 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2009**

This survey had been conducted for the first time in 2009 nationally and took place via e-mail between April and June 2009. The timing of the survey therefore meant that postgraduate

taught students were unable to comment on their experience regarding their final preparations for and writing up of, their dissertations. The response rate was 12.8% which was slightly disappointing and called the validity of the survey into question. It was therefore not appropriate to seek responses from individual Schools. Members of the Committee agreed that the survey needed to be better publicised in future via e-mail reminders and/or via Broadview. The duration of the survey may need to be extended into the summer to improve the response rate. A forum within the Schools/Faculties which is appropriate for postgraduate taught students should be identified to disseminate the outcomes.

**(Document LTC09D015 refers)**

#### **4.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2009**

Members have welcomed the University's participation in this survey for the second time in 2008-09. The response rate from UEA students was low (at c28%) – just below that of the national average of 29% – which has tempered the outcomes of the survey. Bearing in mind the low response rate, UEA is not allowed to publish the figures, as a response rate of at least 30% is required before official reference can be made to the figures. Nearly four out of five students (79%) rated their overall experience as having met or exceeded their expectations, a small increase compared with the 2008 outcome (77%). Members have noted that students commented positively on their experience of supervision but less so on infrastructure and the research environment. Students with disabilities reported that they are less likely to improve their skills compared with students who do not have a disability. These outcomes have been reported to Faculties and Schools. Efforts will be made to promote a higher response rate in the next survey which is expected to commence in March 2010.

**(Document LTC09D016 refers).**

#### **5. LTC Priorities 2009-10**

The Committee has approved the priorities that will guide its work during this session. Members agreed that considerable groundwork had been undertaken by a number of LTC members and members of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office to identify such a concise list of priorities for 2009/10 and welcomed the list which focussed on the most important priorities for LTC. Members also suggested that, in future, if possible (recognising the fast-changing environment), a five year LTC priority list might be agreed.

**(Document LTC09D017 refers).**

#### **6. Learning Enhancement Team**

The Committee considered a document from Dr Helen Webster on the Learning Enhancement Service for 2008/09. The Dean of Students' Office has improved its efficiency in providing significant support to students via a new appointments software system. The demand for learning enhancement services continues to grow. There has been a higher take-up of the services offered by the Learning Enhancement Team by females than males. Students are especially keen to get advice on essay writing and essay planning. The Learning Enhancement Team has also held workshops in Schools which has resulted in the embedding of its service. The Chair of the Committee congratulated the School of International Development (DEV) in particular for its collaborative relationship with the Learning Enhancement Team and encouraged other Schools to learn from this model (interested colleagues may contact Dr Colette Harris in DEV to find out more). For international students, writing in English posed a major challenge. One way in which this challenge could be addressed was by Schools giving out more information on the conventions of academic writing in the particular School of Study.

**(Document LTC09D018 refers).**

#### **7. Management Information**

The Committee has again discussed analyses of academic appeals, academic complaints, academic discipline and professional misconduct and/or unsuitability cases for 2008-09. The data on academic appeals and complaints was once again accompanied by equal opportunities monitoring data, based on the returns voluntarily submitted by students. The Committee has noted that the majority of students completing the returns were classified as

'mature' students (ie 21 and over). Further refinement of these data will be considered in conjunction with the University's Equality and Diversity Manager.

Members have noted that the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 undergraduate academic and postgraduate taught appeals has slightly increased compared with the previous session. This may be due to a variety of factors, including increased student numbers, greater awareness of and willingness to use the procedures. The number of academic complaints remains fairly static, at a relatively low level.

There has been another increase in the number of academic discipline cases. A number of factors may be in play here, including the effect of the separation of academic progress matters from course regulations, the readiness of Schools to have recourse to the formal discipline procedures and the operation of other procedures such as that concerning plagiarism and collusion. In addition, there were a total of 16 cases before the Senate Discipline Committee arising from allegations of use of unfair means in examinations, six of these students being registered on a programme in INTO UEA.

The Committee has also received data on the number and outcomes of complaints by UEA students/recent graduates submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). It was pleasing that these figures showed a decrease in comparison with previous sessions.

There has also been a significant increase in cases referred to the Professional Misconduct and/or Unsuitability (PMU) Committee in comparison with the previous session.

Members have noted that there is an ongoing review of the disciplinary (including PMU) procedures and revised proposals and draft regulations will be considered as part of the forthcoming review of the disciplinary procedures and brought back to the Committee.

**Documents: LTC09D019 (academic appeals), LTC09D020 (academic complaints), LTC09D021 (academic discipline), LTC09D022 (professional misconduct and/or unsuitability cases), LTC09D023 (equal opportunities monitoring feedback), LTC09D024 (complaints to the OIA), refer.**

## **8. LTC Reviews**

### **8.1 Review of CCS**

The Director of Taught Programmes (DTP) reported that the first CCS Review meeting had taken place on 7 October 2009. At the end of the academic year, members of the Review Group agreed that agreement in principle had been reached on increasing the academic requirements for progression to the next Stage of study. Details are now currently being worked on to establish what a narrow fail means and when students should be entitled to be referred to reassessment. A sub-group comprising the DTP and members of LTQO staff will work on draft 'top-level' regulations with a view to circulating these to the Review Group for its consideration and with the expectation that key features of the revised regulations should be presented to this Committee in March, 2010.

**Document LTC09D025 refers.**

## **9. Minutes from the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees**

Minutes of the most recent meetings of the Faculty, Teaching, Learning and Quality Committees have been received.

**Document LTC09D026 (HUM), Document LTC09D027 (SCI), Document LTC09D028 (SSF), Document LTC09D29 (FOH), refers.**

## **10. Director of Taught Programmes' report**

The Committee has welcomed the continuation of a number of academic practice events, via the Centre for Staff and Educational Development, which promote training in new and existing LTC policies and procedures.

**Document LTC09D030 refers.**

## **11. Taught Programmes Policy Group**

The Director of Taught Programmes has reported on the most recent discussions of the Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG) in June and October, 2009. TPPG is an advisory group to the Director of Taught Programmes to assist with a number of both urgent and routine policy matters.

In June, the Group considered a draft Code of Conduct from the School of Literature and Creative Writing in response to a case where a student had breached acceptable standards of behaviour in the content of a piece of written work submitted for assessment. The Policy group noted that it would be helpful for Schools to have a clear disciplinary route to follow and the issues raised by the Code would be fed into the Review of Discipline by the Director and the Dean of Students.

The Policy Group also received a report from the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students on issues arising from a discussion forum involving taught postgraduate students. Main themes discussed in this forum were reasons why students registered for taught postgraduate programmes (e.g. employability and research degrees), support during the dissertation period, teaching and assessment strategies, study skills, marking criteria and plagiarism. The Policy Group welcomed this report and the proposal that such a forum become an annual event.

The Policy Group also received feedback from its consultations in respect of the usefulness of published marking criteria, noting that feedback based on marking criteria was seen as helpful by students. The Policy Group was mindful that provision of feedback to students was one of its priorities for 2009/10.

A recommendation from the Policy Group was also made to LTC that students on the MSc in Midwifery be permitted to be awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery following successful completion of 120 credits worth of study whilst still continuing on the Master's programme. Such an approach was necessary if students were to practise as midwives before completing the dissertation element of the MSc. A similar approach had been followed in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning where students had been allowed to complete a PCGE before the MA in Education with Qualified Teacher Status. **LTC approved this recommendation.**

The Policy Group also considered a report on the on-line evaluation of modules by students which had been piloted in several Schools. A major benefit of the tool was that data could be processed quickly without drawing heavily on staff time and information could be shared rapidly with staff and students. It was hoped that further development of this tool during 2009/10 would allow more Schools to participate.

A summary of Stage 2 Academic Appeals received in 08/09 setting out the grounds for appeals was also noted by the Policy Group. The majority of appeals were made against degree classifications, decisions to withdraw students following academic failure or decisions to award an exit award. The most common grounds for appeals were that students alleged that their extenuating circumstances had not been fully considered by the Board of Examiners. During the current session, LTQO will clarify the supporting evidence required from students in support of claims of extenuating circumstances and on encouraging students to report extenuating circumstances as and when they arise by promoting the pro-forma for reporting circumstances affecting study pro-forma.

**(Document LTC09D031 refers)**

For 2009/10 the Policy Group has agreed an agenda of priorities. The Director also reported that the Policy Group had spent a considerable time debating a number of options regarding undergraduate semester dates for 2011/12 and agreed these subject to confirmation by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic). **(Document LTC09D32).**\* It was agreed that a more refined process to agree these dates for future years had to be established to include all interested parties as soon as possible in the consultation.

\* **(Note:** approval has been granted. The semester dates for 2011/12 will be presented to Senate under Section B of the agenda for its meeting on 15 November, 2009)

## **12. Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group**

The Committee received an oral report from the Director of Research Degree Programmes regarding the outcomes of the 'Roberts' funding for UEA for the academic year 2009/10. The Executive Team had approved the provisional allocation of 'Roberts' funding to the four I Faculties and details of these allocations would be reported to a future meeting of LTC. The Policy Group had also considered the extensive postgraduate research student training which covered all postgraduate research students registered at UEA and not just 'Roberts'- funded postgraduate research students.

It was further reported that admissions criteria across UEA for all postgraduate research students needed to become more consistent especially in respect of English Language entry qualifications for international students. The Committee shared the view that it was imperative that UEA quickly develop an on-line application form for postgraduate research students to support a more coherent and efficient admissions process. It was agreed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) should take up this proposal with the Web Steering Committee.

The outcomes of the Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey conducted under the auspices of the Higher Education Academy had been discussed by the Policy Group (see also section 4.3 above). The Policy Group has recommended that all supervisors of new PhD students should receive training on supervision.

Finally, it was noted that challenging student number recruitment targets had been accepted by the Policy Group for 2010/11 as proposed by the Deans of Faculty. This meant that 160 additional good quality students could be recruited which would have resource implications for UEA.

## **13. Other items for report**

Members have received reports on:

- (1) Student Experience Committee **(Document LTC09D033 refers);**
- (2) Partnerships **(Document LTC09D033 refers);**
- (3) Concessions and Approvals **(Document LTC09D034 refers);**
- (4) New Course Proposals (including the total number of new course proposals in 2008-09 compared with previous sessions) **(Document LTC09D35 refers);**
- (5) UEA's response to the QAA's draft Master's Degree Characteristics Reference Point **(Document LTC 09D036).**

Members' attention was also drawn to the QAA's revised handbook for institutional audit, three outcome papers from Institutional Audit papers (the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications), a UUK seminar report on Universities Europe and an ECTS user guide published by the European Commission.