

SEN10D009

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Report of the Meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee of Senate on 27 October 2010

The following items were considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee of Senate on 27 October 2010 and are here presented for the Senate's information.

(For all documents referred to within this report, please refer to the LTC agendas at

1. Statements by the Chair

- 1.1 The British Accreditation Council (BAC) inspected INTO UEA in Norwich and London in July, 2010 and reconfirmed accreditation. Quality management was highlighted as an area of strength
- 1.2 the Audit by the Quality Assurance Agency of Collaborative Provision at the University of Essex, which included a review of arrangements at University Campus Suffolk had been undertaken. The draft report was not yet available, but early indications were that there were no issues of concern
- 1.3 there had been a successful outcome of the second and final stage of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (the Summative Review) of City College, Norwich by the Quality Assurance Agency in June 2010. The public report expressed an outcome of Confidence and made just four recommendations in respect of how provision could be enhanced, whilst identifying nine areas of good practice. The areas identified for action had already been on the Colleges plan of work and were already underway. As in previous exercises of this nature, the constructive and cooperative relationship between UEA and the college had been identified as a strength
- 1.4 Academic staff had been asked to give consideration to the inclusion of employability within curricula and also to publish information on the breakdown of study within modules (the volume of time devoted to teaching, individual study etc.). There were examples of very good quality and discipline-specific initiatives around the University and there was no desire to minimise these by imposing a University-level programme, but there was also a need to encourage some Schools.
- 1.5 the Browne Review of Student fees and the Comprehensive Spending Review presaged a rapid change in the Higher Education landscape.
 - The Chair outlined the extent of the cuts set out in the CSR and considered some of the ways in which the Government's proposals might impact on the

University, noting that a reduction in funding did not appear to correspond to a reduction in external regulation and monitoring.

- Colleagues needed to be alert to the need for prospectuses and other marketing materials to begin to embed both the fees issue and the New Academic Model, to at least forewarn future students that there would be changes that would affect the 2011 cohort.
- Colleagues also needed to remain alert to the need to be able to explain to potential applicants in two years' time why it was worth spending £7,000 per year to study at UEA.

1.6 sincere thanks were extended to Ms L Morton for her phenomenal work on the UEA London Project, which had done so much to shape the Project.

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 LTC10D001, including 1. Approval in principle of new course proposals for an MSc in Forensic Archaeology and Provenancing Studies) and an MSc in Industrial Pharmacy (PHA); 2. Approval in principle of new course proposals for an MA in International Diplomacy and an MA in International Business and Diplomacy (INTO UEA London); 3. Fitness to Practice Procedures for the School of Pharmacy; 4. Approval of a policy on Plagiarism and Collusion for INTO UEA; 5. Approval of a revised intercalation procedure for City College Norwich; 6. Approval for a pilot of de-anonymised marking of coursework for taught postgraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities; 7. Approval of various prizes and scholarships.

Document LTC10D001 refers.

3. Academic Strategy

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair setting out priorities for 2010/11, these included

- (1) The New Academic Model
- (2) Management Information
- (3) Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students
- (4) The Timetabling Project

In the light of planned revisions to the regulations governing taught awards to be implemented in September 2013 and the imminence of the deadline for publication of the prospectus for students who would be entering the University in September 2013, the University, Schools and course teams needed to give careful thought to what our courses might look like under the New Academic Model. The combination of the redesign of the regulations with a drive to reduce the volume of assessment had led to the project being named the New Academic Model rather than "new CCS". The Director of Taught Programmes would shortly begin a process of communication and consultation with colleagues across the University to explain the new model and flesh out the details of the new regulations.

Work was continuing on the creation of a brief report on each School of Study which it was intended would be presented to Council on an annual basis including key information on aspects of the School, such as contact hours and volume and timing of assessment, among other things.

The Director of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes would be prioritising supervision again during 2010/11, focusing efforts ensuring that all supervisors offered high quality supervision and kept appropriate records.

The Chair noted that notwithstanding the considerable issues that had emerged with the new timetabling system prior to the start of the academic year, students had shown remarkable forbearance and understanding of the situation. It was acknowledged that the difficulties around implementation had placed a considerable burden on Teaching Offices and caused inconvenience to academic staff. The difficulties had also led to considerable inconvenience for students, particularly those who needed to arrange employment or care of dependents around teaching and who had been unable to confirm these arrangements in good time. The Chair was confident that actions were in place to prevent similar difficulties occurring with the Spring semester timetable and that the timetable would be available in good time.

Enhancing the Student Experience

3.1 Student Surveys

As in previous sessions, the Committee received overview reports on the National Student Survey 2010 and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2010 (Documents LTC10D002 and LTC10D003). Schools and Faculties had received detailed data arising from both surveys and were giving the outcomes active consideration. The overview reports identified issues emerging from the surveys which might merit further investigation. The Dean of Students confirmed that she had already initiated further work on apparent areas of lower satisfaction among disabled and dyslexic students in order to better understand what the issues were. The Committee also heard that there had been pleasing improvements in student satisfaction with Library provision following swift action taken by the Library in response to weaker results in previous years and learned that this work was ongoing. Members of Library staff regularly attended Staff:Student Liaison fora to discuss student concerns with the Library and met annually with Heads of School. The Committee noted that notwithstanding considerable investment in this aspect of the student experience, satisfaction with feedback had not significantly improved at institutional level, whilst acknowledging that there were some examples of improved satisfaction within individual Schools. The Committee reflected that this was as much an issue about managing student expectations (as highlighted by the research undertaken by Harriet Jones BIO) as of improving the quality and timing of feedback to students.

3.2 Library Enhancements 2010

The Committee received a report from the Library Director (LTC10D004) on projects that had been undertaken in the Library using Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS) funds. The funding had been used primarily to enhance learning resources, focussing especially on the provision of additional specialist equipment and facilities for student with disabilities.

3.3 Learning and Teaching Day 2011

The focus of the Learning and Teaching Day on 3 May 2011 would be upon Employability. Members were asked to identify innovative practice which could be shared with colleagues through the event.

4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The Committee considered proposals from the Quality Assurance Agency in respect of a revised methodology for monitoring academic standards and quality in higher education institutions to replace the current Institutional Audit methodology.

Full details of the consultation can be found at

http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation/OD_Full2010.pdf

In discussion the Committee noted that the future of the Quality Assurance Agency itself was yet to be determined.

The Committee were very strongly opposed to the proposal that outcomes of Institutional Review should be graded beyond the current expression of "Confidence" or "Limited confidence" or "No confidence" on the basis that any grading system would only serve to fuel league tables. The committee recalled that the numerical "score" awarded to subject areas under TQA had resulted in significant and long-lasting inequities on the basis that those reviews which had been undertaken early in the cycle had tended to be scored less generously than those undertaken later in the cycle.

The Committee noted that some of the assumptions underpinning the consultation were questionable, in that it was doubtful whether prospective students would consult QAA reports in the same way as prospective parents might consult Ofsted reports and that TQA and Institutional Audit had not identified major problems with Higher Education in the UK. What was needed was a mechanism for identifying and responding to causes for concern, which left the rest of the sector largely unburdened by unnecessary activity. It was recognised that there were benefits in a process of peer review by critical friends who could help an institution identify areas for action or assist in devising appropriate responses to issues identified for action. LTC Reviews

The Committee received oral updates from the Review Group looking at the processes of annual course update and periodic programme review, which would be bringing recommendations to the Committee next summer, and from a Review Group looking at peer observation of teaching, which would bring recommendations to the Committee after Christmas.

5. UEA London

The Committee considered new course proposals from the Norwich Business School for an MSc in Marketing, MSc in Marketing and Management, an MSc in Finance and Management and for a BSc in International Business Management. Whilst in general satisfied with the proposals there remained a number of general issues which were being addressed by the Institutional Approval Sub-group. (Documents LTC10D006, LTC10D007 and LTC10D009 refer).

6. Faculty Associate Deans (Learning, Teaching and Quality)

The Committee received the minutes of the most recent Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (LTC10D010, LTC10D012 and LTC10D013).

The Committee also considered issues raised by the Associate Deans in respect of the convention of 50 minutes of teaching per hour embedded in the new timetabling system, the need for more flexible timetable slots to accommodate extended seminar sessions (90 minutes) which might address concerns over contact time and also might support greater student participation and engagement.

The Associate Dean (LTQ) for the Faculty of Health also updated colleagues on the new requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework operated by the Strategic Health Authority. In particular, the Committee noted the link between funding and successful outcomes and that the funding body also appeared to be charged with reaching conclusions on quality assurance that informed the level of funding.

7. Taught Programmes Policy Group

The Committee received an oral report on the meeting of the Policy Group on 20 October. The Policy Group reported on its plan of work for 2010/11, which focused on completing a number of projects and items already underway and which recognised that there was likely to be substantial discussion required around how to map regulations, policies and procedures to the new support structures available as a result of the Integration of University Services project.

The Policy Group had recommended the amendment or clarification of policy relating to granting of approved absences, absences from course tests, procedures for dealing with assessed work that contained offensive material and the awarding of marks for engagement in response to issues that had arisen. Further work was being undertaken on appropriate evidence for approving absences from course tests on the basis that the number of missed course tests had resulted not only in a high level of work for Faculty and Central Offices, but also for the University Medical Centre, at significant cost to the University. The Policy Group had been unable to reach agreement on the standardisation of the taught postgraduate academic year following consultation with Schools and taking into consideration a number of issues such as UKBA visa arrangements and the availability of University accommodation. This matter would therefore be referred to the review of the Common Masters Framework.

The Policy Group did not consider the outcomes of the National student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, beyond noting that the Dean of Students would be pursuing the issues identified in respect of students with disabilities and dyslexia, but would return to the surveys when considering responses from Schools and Faculties in the New Year.

8. Bologna

The committee received a consultation document from the UKHE Europe Unit regarding a new "Youth on the Move" initiative, relating to the European Commission consultation on the next generation of European mobility programmes (Document LTC10D015 refers)

9. New Course Proposals

The following new course proposals have received approval in principle from the Committee:

City College Norwich

FdA in Retailing – noting that this proposal arose from engagement with national retailers

Mountview Academic of Theatre Arts

MA in Theatre Directing

Documents LTC10D016 and LTC10D017 refer

10. Other Items for Report

Members have received reports on

- Partnerships Office activity (Documents LTC10D018 and LTC10D020 refer)
- Concessions and approvals (Document LTC10D021 refers)
- New course approvals (Document LTC10D022 refers)
- A discussion paper from Universities UK on the future of external examining arrangements (Document LTC10D023)
- The publication of a UKHE Europe Unit note (which may be consulted at http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/e_newsletter/index.cfm)
- A review of the principles (known as the Salzburg Principles) adopted by the European University Association Council for Doctoral Education (for further information please see http://www.eua.be/News/10-09-30/Success_in_doctoral_education_EUA-CDE_prepares_new_recommendations_on_reform.aspx)

11. Reserved Agenda

The Committee were also asked to confirm Chair's Action in respect of a posthumous award.