

Centre for Alternative Technology

Academic Council Meeting 11th January 2018

Minutes of the meeting of 11th January 2018 held at 2pm at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

Present: Adrian Ramsay (AR, CEO) (Chair), Alun Thomas (AT, Head of School), John Carter (JC), Jane Fisher (LA, Lead Academic), Frances Hill (FH)*, Tim Coleridge (TC)*

* attended via Skype

In Attendance: Martin Skelton (MS, minutes)

Apologies: Alex Apeageyi (AA, UEL Link Tutor), Elaine Hemers (EH, LJMU Representative), Harriet Smith (HS, CAT Student Representative)

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

1.1. AR welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1. The draft minutes of the September meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record. **Action: MS to add the September minutes to the GSE website.**

3. Matters Arising

(NB: References are from previous minutes)

(9.5) AT understands that students attending supervised study visits are covered by our existing insurance policy, however further clarification is needed. **Action: AT to confirm insurance provisions, including for study visits.**

(10.5) Action complete. It was agreed that we should keep the number of student surveys to a minimum whilst ensuring appropriate feedback is sought on the key aspects of the student journey.

(5.8) Action complete. AT confirmed that a meeting to discuss potential new courses has taken place with Marketing. LA advised that initial proposals ideally need to be presented to the awarding university by April 2018, for the introduction of new courses in September 2019.

(6.7) AT apologised for overlooking this action. **Action: AT to remind tutors of their responsibility to ensure all instances of student interactions are recorded.**

(6.8) Following Mike Sparks' departure MS is progressing this via the interim IT manager and IT operational staff. **Action: MS to provide an update at the next meeting and share other IT objectives with AR in the interim.**

(8.2) Action complete.

(9.1) Action complete.

- 3.1. Further to the measures discussed at the previous meeting, TC informed the meeting that additional discussions around 'Research Methods' are being introduced to address concerns about the relatively low numbers of students progressing to dissertation stage (see September 2017 meeting minutes, item 6.6).

4. HERAP Update

- 4.1. AT advised we have received the QAA Key Findings letter following the assessment visit in December 2017 and anticipate receiving the draft report later this month.
- 4.2. AT noted that the HERAP review has proved to be a valuable process for GSE and we have demonstrated that both the quality of our students' learning opportunities and our efforts to continue to improve them are to be commended.
- 4.3. AR thanked all GSE staff involved in the HERAP visit for their hard work and congratulated them on a successful outcome.
- 4.4. TC acknowledged the contributions from the student representatives, and in particular the Lead Student Representative (LSR), towards the HERAP assessment in December. AT has already thanked those concerned and agreed to formally thank the LSR in writing on behalf of CAT.
Action: AT to formally thank the LSR for their input to the HERAP assessment process.
- 4.5. Council **noted** the QAA Key Findings Letter and specifically the areas where our work and support for students is commended.

5. Academic Standards

- 5.1. AT introduced this item and noted that it is important that Council ensures that its terms of reference are fully covered and that its defined responsibilities are all comprehensively met. Council must review all Terms of Reference documents regularly and AT suggested this should occur at least every three years.
- 5.2. AT noted that the terms of reference for Academic Council include the Council having responsibility for academic standards, and in light of the QAA Key Findings letter it is safe to conclude that Council is meeting its responsibility for academic standards.
- 5.3. Council **noted** that its responsibility for academic standards is being met.

6. LJMU / UEL Policies and Procedures (Significant Differences)

- 6.1. Council **noted** that it is important to recognise some important differences between the policies and procedures of our partner universities, and in particular between those relating to extensions / extenuation and the capping of component marks.
- 6.2. These differences have been summarised by TC and LA and communicated to the Student Support team. It was noted that despite a rigorous induction process and comprehensive Programme Handbooks, confusion can arise when students registered with different partner universities discuss procedures between themselves. **Action: TC and JF to complete their analysis of differences in policies and procedures between our two validating partners.**

7. University Partner Updates

- 7.1. AT reported that apologies have been received from both representatives on this occasion. It was noted that the LJMU representative intends to attend the next meeting in April.

7.2. Council **noted** this will be a standing agenda item for future meetings.

8. CAT / GSE Leaver Destinations Survey

- 8.1. MS introduced this agenda item and said that GSE knows, through contacts and alumni, where the many of its students have gone after graduation. However, it has no comprehensive set of data. A graduate survey, similar to the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education survey carried out by universities, was introduced for the first time in the 2016/17 academic year.
- 8.2. MS noted that our survey was issued to 55 leavers in July 2017. Eight responses were received representing a 14.5% response rate. Of those that responded all had secured employment since leaving CAT, with three-quarters stating their qualification was a formal requirement of the job. All were employed in the construction or engineering sectors.
- 8.3. The majority (90%) of respondents felt that, overall, a number of key skills had improved as a result of studying at CAT, and the greatest enhancements were related to team-working and critical analysis of data. The survey data suggests that placing greater emphasis on developing decision making skills could further enhance the employability of CAT graduates.
- 8.4. AR asked what opportunities currently exist within the programmes to showcase employment opportunities for graduates. TC advised that a session was run last June on Business Development, but acknowledged there is room for improvement and agreed to consider this further. **Action: TC to further consider how students can be informed about career and business opportunities.**
- 8.5. Given the low number of responses it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the survey responses however Council **noted** the findings and **agreed** that future surveys will be issued annually, approximately six months after the June Assessment Board.
- 8.6. During the subsequent discussion it was **agreed** to issue the survey on behalf of the Programme Leaders as this might improve response rates, and incentives may be considered if this is deemed necessary. It was also **agreed** that data on leaver destinations in the longer term would be collected via the Alumni network.
- 8.7. The Academic Council **noted** the findings of the survey and **agreed** the format and frequency of future surveys, including longitudinal follow-up. **Action: MS to send future Leaver surveys on behalf of Programme Leads annually.**

9. Minutes of Programme Committee Meetings

- 9.1. SA Programme Committee meetings from June were circulated prior to the meeting and TC advised that minutes from the most recent meeting, held on 10th January, will be circulated shortly.
- 9.2. JC advised that available MArch minutes have been circulated and the next meeting is scheduled to take place later this month.
- 9.3. The final REBE Programme Committee meeting was held in July 2017.

10. Change to Membership of Council

- 10.1. AT introduced this item. Following the setting up of a validation agreement with Liverpool John Moore's University it is appropriate to have a LJMU representative on Council.

- 10.2. AT reminded members that this has discussed and agreed with existing Council members (including the UEL representative) via an email exchange in October 2017.
- 10.3. Council **noted** its amended membership.

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1. AT confirmed the dates of the next two meetings as 12th April 2018 and 28th June 2018.

12. Date of Next Meeting

- 12.1. 2pm, 12th April 2018