

Centre for Alternative Technology

Academic Council Meeting 13th April 2017, 2 - 4pm, Garden Room

Minutes of the meeting of 13th April 2017 held at 2pm at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

Present: Adrian Ramsay (AR, CEO, Chair), Alun Thomas (AT), John Carter (JC), Tim Coleridge (TC), Frances Hill (FH), Tom Barker (LA), Richard Freeman (RF, UEL Rep), Harriet Smith (HS, Student Rep)

In Attendance: Sarah Everitt (Minutes)

Apologies: None

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

AR welcomed those present to the meeting. This was HS's first Council meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1 These were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 TC is, using learning outcomes, mapping out the potential modules that might be APEL'd from REBE to SA. In practice though, this will need to be effected on a student-by-student basis and in agreement with FH. This might prove an attractive option to former REBE students who left without completing the course. **Action:** TC and FH to highlight possible APEL routes to former REBE students who have left without completing the MSc.

3.4 Completed.

3.8 Ongoing. **Action:** JC, PS, TC to complete.

3.10 This is in effect the same as 3.1 above.

4.1 On today's agenda

4.3 As the collaborative review and the two validations were able to take place at the same time this issue did not arise.

5.1 Completed

7.2 Completed

- 8.2 Completed
- 9.2 Completed
- 10.1 Ongoing. See 12.4 below.
- 10.2 Completed
- 12.2 This is an operational issue and should be delegated to the Programme operational team meetings to resolve.
- 12.3 Completed
- 12.4 It was generally accepted that provision of sufficient high quality reaching space at peak times remains an issue. The Green Classroom only provided enough space for seven or eight Prof Dip students and is anyway earmarked for the new food course.
Action: AT to put this issue on the next PLs meeting and invite John Challen to attend. **Done**
- 13.2 Completed
- 13.3 Completed

4. Update on UEL Collaborative Review (oral)

- 4.1 Collaborative Review – TC reported that the review was very positive with several good commendations.
- 4.2 MArch course – JC noted that We can now market the new MArch course and take applications with the caveat that it still needs to be shown as “subject to validation“.
- 4.1 MSc SEPDM course – TB stated that we can now market the new SEPDM course and take applications with the caveat that it still needs to be shown as “subject to validation“.

5. Sudden and Severe Change of Circumstances Form

- 5.1 TC queried whether the form could cover both financial circumstances and also circumstances such as requesting to take the dissertation module early. AT clarified that the former circumstance is governed by our tuition fees policy and that the latter is a matter of academic judgement.
- 5.2 The Council **agreed** that the Chief Executive be given authority to finalise the Policy taking into account comments made at today’s meeting.

6. Annual Quality Report

AT explained that the Annual Quality Report is mainly based upon the UEL REP returns but brings all of that information into one place. Progress against the Action Plan will be monitored by Council and, where appropriate, by Programme Committees.

- 6.1 AT will add an extra column into the Action Plan for “Evidence”. **Action:** AT **Done**
- 6.2 FH requested a change to p23 – amend “key staff” to “key staff of each programme”. **Action:** AT to make the minor changes **Done**
- 6.3 The Council **agreed** that the Chief Executive be given authority to finalise the Report taking into account comments made at today’s meeting.

7. Enhancement Strategy

- 7.1.0 AT explained that failure to have a robust and comprehensive approach to the enhancement of students’ learning experiences has proved to be a major cause of alternative providers especially failing HERAP. This strategy has been written to help ensure we avoid this problem.
- 7.2 FH raised that the PC meetings have not seen the document. RF highlighted the importance that UEL places on student consultation, and UEL uses student consultation extensively. **Action:** AT to send revised strategy to PLs for consultation with students at Committee meetings and to amend statement about degree of consultation. **Done**
- 7.3 The Council **agreed** that the Chief Executive be given authority to finalise the Strategy taking into account comments made at today’s meeting.

8. GSE Strategic Plan (discussion paper, circulated later)

- 8.1 AT introduced this item as giving members the opportunity to discuss the structure and key themes of the GSE strategic plan.
- 8.1 AT said that GSE needed a strategic plan to be in place before the HERAP review, so the final version is to be presented to October Council. **Action:** AT to present fuller draft at next meeting. **Will mention under AoB**
- 8.2 AR said that the plan should set out our intentions for future course development. He said that there is a need to look at the whole offer, including the financial and resourcing implications.
- 8.3 JC raised the issue of planning for teaching space requirements.
- 8.4 FH pointed out that when the GSE had larger numbers it also had a larger teaching team to look after the number of students.

- 8.5 TC also highlighted the importance of accommodation, and considering students with welfare needs. AR suggested looking to the example of larger universities.
- 8.6 AR highlighted the need to consider future potential for further courses.
- 8.7 JC added that we may have two years before the affordability of the MArch course becomes an issue. A part time course may be worth considering at that stage. HS agreed and added that the only other part time options in the sector are 'Part 2 in practice' via distance learning. TC suggested that the currently validated modules might be offered part time, and the Student Rep agreed. LA raised the issue of students 'cooling down' between modules. JC would need more staff for Skype tutorials and more regional groups. AR replied that this could be considered if the economy of scale accommodated this.
- 8.8 LA has been discussing with Short Courses the possibility of one week short courses for Architecture students over the summer, on the "softer" elements of sustainability. JC suggested this could tag onto the Prof Dip Summer School. AR raised the potential of UEL to run one of its summer school weeks at CAT, which he had previously discussed with the Dean of ACE. JC suggested the successful (worldwide) format of the two week master class run in Australia.
- 8.9 TC suggested that other universities such as UCL also target school leavers for summer schools as an effective way of recruitment. HS said that the chance to do things hands on and meet other like-minded people is very appealing to potential students, for example the Studio in the Woods.
- 8.10 AR asked whether there were other professions that could benefit from a greater understanding of the environment. LA has been talking to Short Courses about a Corporate Away Day. FH suggested an event to gather together people from different universities from relevant departments to enhance their CPD. RF said that there may be interest if marketed in the right way to appeal to the mainstream.
- 8.11 TC noted that dissertation students have expressed an interest in behaviour change and the social sciences, with many choosing topics in those areas, so this suggests that an MA in this area might prove attractive. LA pointed out that the previous idea of having a sustainability MBA has not been forgotten and is still on the back burner.
- 8.12 TC suggested that there is the opportunity to link SA and Short Courses, creating "hands on" short courses, building with different materials, and then joining the courses together to make a more practical MSc with coursework in between. LA added that this could include understanding architectural drawings etc. AR agreed that this appeared worth pursuing.
- 8.13 AR highlighted we are aware that CPD is an area of increasing interest and that there is a need for sustainability knowledge in the house building sector. There was also

potential for us to have a key role in upskilling e.g. at a recent presentation of CAT's work Welsh Assembly members expressed that there was a need.

8.14 TC said that there is a Bill currently going through Parliament that would allow small institutions to have taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) in subject areas. AR said that the Board of Trustees thought that it is not the right time to seek TDAP, but that we should wait to see how it takes off and look at the success of other small degree providers. AT highlighted the issue of costs.

8.15 **Action:** AT to present fuller draft at next meeting taking into account comments made at today's meeting. **Under AoB**

9. Minutes of Programme Committee Meeting

9.1 Members noted that the minutes have been received and committees are functioning well.

10. AoB

10.1 JC raised that there is a strong desire for a database of student, staff and alumni areas of expertise. AR said that alumni are something that we are keen to develop and make use of. FH said a good starting point is a list of tutors on the GSE website and this needs to be kept up to date. **Action:** AT to ask academics to review their staff's profiles, and arrange an update of the website with Marketing. **Done**

10.2 HS said that food at CAT was felt by many students to be expensive, especially when compared with going through the restaurant separately. AR said that prices have not risen in several years. HS noted that Student Reps are surveying what students spend on food when they don't buy food at CAT. AR said that any feedback will be welcome and he clarified there is no problem with students catering for themselves and CAT is happy that it can provide facilities for both. He highlighted that CAT is now going to separate out domestic and catering feedback from the academic feedback.

10.3 HS highlighted that students have expressed they are grateful to have the opportunity to cater for themselves in the Eco Cabins, and also appreciate the seclusion that the Cabins offer from the rest of the site. Regarding catering it is primarily an issue of cost. HS noted that the food is very good here so it is not an issue of its quality. AR said that it is much appreciated that students do a good job of cleaning up after themselves at the end of the module week.

10.4 TC suggested having more info on the footprinting of the food used in the café etc., which would encourage interest and appreciation. AR said that funding is being sought for a project to showcase the food side of CAT's operations.

11. Date of next meeting

13th July 2017 at 14:00