

Centre for Alternative Technology

Academic Council Meeting 19th January 2017, 2 - 4pm, Alder Room

Minutes of the meeting of 19th January 2017 held at 2pm at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

Present: Alun Thomas (AT, Head of School, Acting Chair), John Carter (JC), Tim Coleridge (TC), Frances Hill (FH), Jane Fisher (LA)

In Attendance: Martin Skelton (Minutes)

Apologies: Student Representative, UEL Representative, Adrian Ramsay (AR, CEO, Chair), Paola Sassi (PS)

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

1.1. AT welcomed those present to the meeting and apologies were noted. In the Chair's absence he would act as chair for today's meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

With the exception of the following, the minutes were accepted.

- 2.1. External Examiners (Item 2, Minutes of the Previous Meeting): AT advised that the minutes were a true record of the discussion, but were not factually correct. AT confirmed the arrangements i.e. UEL appoints external examiners and pays their expenses but we can liaise with them (it was changed for 2016/17). The rules have changed for validations where we are now responsible for all costs, but even here it's a matter of UEL presenting us with a bill and not us paying individuals.
- 2.2. Item 12 (AOB, bullet point 3) should have been 'Action AT, AR'

3. Matters Arising

- 3.1. Potential for modules to be APEL'd from REBE to SA (TC, FH): There is potential for a maximum 60 credits to be APEL'd, according to a student's particular portfolio of modules. In progress. **Action: TC and FH (ongoing)**
- 3.2. Separate teaching weeks (PL's, AT, AR): it has been agreed that there will be separate teaching weeks for the Prof Dip and MSc SA courses in September and November.
- 3.3. Open Day dates (PL's, Marketing): dates have been agreed.
- 3.4. External Examiner for Prof Dip (JC): JC has contacted Solomon Alexis and awaits his response. **JC to give an update at next meeting**
- 3.5. Industry consultation (LA): LA confirmed this has been fully considered.
- 3.6. Gate 1 & 2 forms (LA): LA confirmed these have been submitted
- 3.7. Additional student feedback on MArch (JC, PS): JC confirmed this has been completed.
- 3.8. Potential transfer between CAT courses (JC, PS, TC): TC advised this is on-going and cannot be settled until the MArch curriculum is finalised. **Action: JC, PS, TC (on-going)**
- 3.9. New MArch degree (JC, PS): JC confirmed the title of the architecture course will be 'Master of Sustainable Architecture'

- 3.10. Module mapping for transitioning REBE students (TC, FH): TC advised that the need for module mapping does not exist at the moment as no REBE students have requested to transfer. However, FH advised there are 2 students with significant health issues that may prevent them from completing the MSc REBE and may therefore need to transfer credits. **Action: TC, FH, LA to consider this outside of the meeting.**
- 3.11. QAA: submission of papers and invitations to student representatives (AT): actions completed
- 3.12. Recruitment of new student representative (TC, JC): TC reported a lot of interest from students and a selection process has been necessary, with existing student reps having the majority vote. It is anticipated the final appointment will be confirmed shortly and there will be two on-site and two international reps.
- 3.13. CAT Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) (AT): AT advised that the manual had been circulated to the PLs and that final amendments were being made before approval by the Chief Executive.
- 3.14. Draft Student Charter (AT): AT advised of some changes since the last meeting e.g. inclusion of Health & Safety information, and that the charter is currently with AR awaiting approval. The charter states that e-mails and phone calls should be responded to as soon as possible, and within 5 working days. It was agreed this is reasonable but noted that there will be rare occasions where academic staff in particular will struggle to achieve this.
- 3.15. Date of next meeting not agreed with student reps (TC): TC confirmed this had been completed.
- 3.16. Draft REP reports (TC, JC, PS, FH): AT confirmed these were finalised and submitted as required.
- 3.17. Professional Doctorate (AT/AR): AT advised this has been considered but it has been decided not to progress further at this time.
- 3.18. UEL's MSc in Sustainability: LA advised that discussions with Daryl Newport have taken place, however it hadn't been possible to agree a way of working together.

4. Update on New Courses (oral)

- 4.1. LA confirmed the new energy degree course will be titled 'MSc Sustainability in Energy Provision and Demand Management (SEPDM)'. Draft documentation is agreed and work is underway to finalise them prior to submission by 10th February. **Action: LA to continue working on documentation / provide update on new courses at next meeting**
- 4.2. JC advised documentation for the MArch course was submitted to UEL before Xmas and feedback is awaited.
- 4.3. In the UEL Collaborative Review meeting (item 6 below) it was suggested by UEL that it would be preferable to hold both the collaborative review and both validations (MSc SEPDM and MArch) on the same day (March 16th). However, JC thought that the MArch papers would not be ready by the submission date of 10th February and that validation of the MArch would require a separate, later date. However, this would incur extra costs **Action: AT to confirm costs**

5. QAA AM Review December 2016 Update (oral)

- 5.1. AT felt the QAA inspection went well and judging by feedback received on the day a positive outcome is anticipated. **Action: AT to circulate draft report once received.**

6. UEL Collaborative Review 2017 Update (oral)

- 6.1. TC attended the review meeting via Skype, and confirmed Solomon Alexis, Jo Molyneux, Vikki Manning and Neil Herrington (?) were present for UEL. UEL were complimentary about the quality of evidence submitted in December for both the Critical Appraisal Commentary, (CAC) and the validation documents for the MSc SEPDM
- 6.2. LA reported that with the exception of occasional typo errors the documentation relating to the new energy degree was fine. This will be finalised and submitted along with examples of teaching materials for one of the module in February. FH has prepared an audio introduction and it was agreed this would be welcomed by students.
- 6.3. There was a useful discussion about external examiners and it was agreed that a minimum of two external examiners is required, three if both validations were held at the same time.

7. Teaching and Learning Strategy FINAL

- 7.1. LA presented the final draft of the Teaching and Learning Strategy which was first developed in 2015. JC requested that 'dissertation' be changed to 'dissertation/major design project' in order to apply to Prof Dip students.
- 7.2. Subject to the above amendment being made, the document was approved. **Action: LA to make amendment**

8. Student Admissions Policy DRAFT

- 8.1. AT introduced the draft policy, which draws heavily on the equivalent UEL policy, is consistent with the UK Quality Code (Chapter B2), and reflects current practice.
- 8.2. The policy was accepted and will be presented to the CEO for approval. **Action: AT**

9. Head of School Annual Quality Report

- 9.1. AT introduced the document advising there is a need for an annual quality report (AQR) that covers all aspects of CAT's HE provision and underpins the development and implementation of evidence-based action plans for the future.
- 9.2. The document will be brought back to the Academic Council in April and AT invited amendments and additions in the interim. **Action: PL's to review and feedback to AT**
- 9.3. TC suggested 'student feedback' could be expanded to Programme Committee and Staff Student Liaison Committee and asked if we need to refer to external data sources e.g. DLHE. AT agreed and felt that wherever possible we should benchmark our performance against comparable national and international data.

10. UEL Review and Enhancement Report Forms

- 10.1. TC provided the following comments on the SA REP:
 - **Section 2:** Successful completion of the AEES transitional arrangements, praise for all involved.
 - **Section 4:** Video lecture capture and audio recording Skype seminars: grateful for support from IT, SSOs and Paul Williams. TC feels the increasing use of, and dependence on, audio visual equipment highlights a need to consider learning technologist role.
 - **Section 5:** Acoustics in the Sheppard are much improved; Acoustics in the restaurant extension though remain poor when large numbers of students are present. JC suggested that displays of student work could be used to improve acoustics and all agreed this would add to visitor experience. **Action: AT to discuss options with John Challen;** Graduation / Science Symposium,

move from Nov to spring? LA agreed the timing of graduation ceremony could be improved but felt the focus should be on income generation at the moment.

- **Section 6:** see iii below re data collection
- **Section 8:** External examiner 2015-16 report was very positive.
- **Section 10:** Uncertainty over UEL Link tutor, and comments for section 10 awaited.
- **Action Plan:** Delays receiving student numbers, student cards and student entitlements including Moodle and Athens access from UEL: AT advised that AR has raised these issues with UEL, and UEL have given assurances that they intend to improve their performance.
 - i) Professional accreditation fees; AT agreed this was worth evaluating given the relatively modest fees involved and felt it might assist with our student enhancement strategy.
 - ii) EV7111-113 minor modification
 - iii) REP data, availability and accuracy of data for REP report and need for analysis of data against external benchmarks. MS advised that it is unlikely a new, dedicated student database will be purchased, however improvements are being made to the existing FileMaker Pro database.

10.2. FH felt it was important for CAT to have working examples of renewable energy sources on site given that we are teaching students about these. AT confirmed that work has been scheduled to provide a working hydroelectric system by Spring. Action: **MS to circulate Estates work schedule to PL's**

10.3. JC did not have any comments in relation to the REP report.

11. Minor Amendments to Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures

11.1. The revised and previously agreed EC policy has been combined with the EC application form and requires final agreement. By combining these documents each application can be considered alongside the policy version that was in use at the time, and further information is available for applicants. TC felt students would find this helpful. The revised EC policy/application form was approved.

12. Minutes of Programme Committee Meetings

12.1. TC advised there was nothing specific arising from their meetings that needed to be discussed at this meeting.

12.2. FH highlighted the problems associated with calculating word counts when students submit work via Turnitin using programs other than MS Word e.g. Linux, pdf's. TC said SSO's had in the past calculated word counts using 'cut and paste' techniques but acknowledged this would be a significant undertaking for large numbers of students. AT suggested students should be limited to using MS Word or, if submitting in another format, informed that declared word counts would be subject to random audit. **Actions: PL's to consider this further**

12.3. FH informed the meeting that one of the students, who is resident in Germany, had offered to represent the new courses at the Expo in Cologne in June. It was agreed this should be discussed with Catriona Toms in Marketing. **Action: FH to discuss with Marketing.**

12.4. JC reported that students were grateful for the additional studio space from using the Green Classroom, and advised that the lack of studio space is likely to be problematical again in

October. It is not possible to consider off-site rooms, however the BT room would be suitable if available. **Action: AT to discuss options with John Challen.**

13. AOB

- 13.1. TC reported an incident during December module week where a group of students were distressed by opinions expressed by a fellow student. AT advised that as no complaint had been made it was not possible to apply the complaints procedure or take any formal action. Whilst many would find the comments made offensive / insensitive, students have a right to free speech and it would be unlikely that any formal action could be taken against them even if a formal complaint was submitted. It was agreed and understood that this is being dealt with informally.
- 13.2. AT and MS informed the meeting that the graduate survey this year will be closely aligned to the DLHE survey which will allow our data to be compared with national statistics (acknowledging that the DLHE survey is for undergraduates). FH asked to be involved in question design and expressed an interest in student employability. MS agreed to include a link to the draft questionnaire in these minutes (<http://www.123contactform.com/form-2427885/Test-MS-0117-GSE>) **Action: MS, FH, AT to finalise 2017 graduate destination survey**
- 13.3. Also on the subject of student feedback, MS noted that minutes of face to face feedback meetings held during module week do not always 'close the loop' in terms of feeding back updates to students on matters raised during previous meetings. It was agreed that this chiefly applies to catering and accommodation issues: the benefit of the Catering and Accommodation department collecting and responding to student feedback directly was discussed and MS agreed to review provision. **Action: MS to review with the Student Support and Catering/Accommodation teams**