

Centre for Alternative Technology

Academic Council Meeting 15 September 2016, 2pm, BT Room

Minutes of the meeting of 15th September 2016 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), Paola Sassi (PS), Tim Coleridge (TC), Frances Hill (FH), Jane Fisher (LA), Ian Lemon (IL, UEL Representative)

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Everitt (Minutes)

APOLOGIES: Student Representative

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

AR welcomed those present to the meeting, and accepted apologies. Introductions were made.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

With regard to item 13, External Examiners (EE), IL clarified that CAT is responsible for liaising with external examiners, as in our signed agreement. With regards to arranging transport and hotels if attending CAT, CAT needs to make the arrangements and to meet any expenses. Subject to this amendment, the minutes of the 14 July 2016 meeting were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

- Potential for modules to be APELd from REBE to SA: There is potential for max 50-60 credits to be APELd. This would vary according to a student's particular portfolio of modules. **Action: TC and FH to continue to investigate**
- Minor modifications: Consolidation of the June modules is on-going. The outcome will be confirmed in March 2017.
- A workshop on a possible behaviour change module has taken place during the September module week.
- Separate teaching weeks: given the success of recruitment this year, PLs are considering, in anticipation of stronger recruitment in 2017/18, the need to run two teaching weeks per month, especially at the peak times of September and November. **Action: PLs.** In order to give students the maximum notice a decision is needed before the end of this calendar year. **Action AR, AT**
- New March degree: There will be a consultation on the MArch title in due course. **Action JC, PS**
- Open Day: The earlier the dates can be confirmed the better. Aim to publish final dates in October. **Action: Programme Leaders, Marketing**

- Policy amendments: These have been implemented. One further change to one policy, Student Disciplinary policy, is later on the agenda.
- External Examiner for Prof Dip: IL recommended that the dates be agreed with Solomon Alexis first. **Action JC**
- Collaborative Assessment Board dates: Dates agreed
- Memorandum of Collaboration: Discussions with UEL regarding review of Memorandum of Collaboration are to be held in June 2017.

4. Update on New Courses

LA went briefly through the main actions since the last meeting. There has been extensive consultation with CAT staff, CAT students and externals, including employers. There was a good, positive level of response supporting both new courses. The LA has amended the courses in response to these various inputs.

External experts Tim Lang and Colin Tudge have both provided comments toward the consultation for the new SA courses. Both have agreed to speak during a GSE module and Tim Lang has agreed to do an evening event. This links well to enhancing engagement and also enhances the offer on the courses. IL noted that, at UEL, consultants frequently provided support lectures and assisted in marking. Accreditation bodies like to see this as it makes the courses more employment-relevant.

Proposed MSc Sustainable Energy

Industry consultation: Companies have agreed with the drafts and flagged many desired industry needs, including both industry knowledge such as energy conservation and saving, and transferable skills such as data analysis and report writing. It was suggested by the Council to consider consulting more energy companies. **Action LA**

Student consultation: 12 students replied. All had been positive about there being a need for a renewable energy degree. They had been particularly pleased about the proposed marine module. They noted the importance of including technical elements and generic skills like report writing.

Working titles: The suggestions for the working title have come from various companies including OfGem, and then student input:

- MSc Applied Sustainable Energy
- MSc Sustainable Energy Management.

The CAT Marketing Department is researching how well each title may market. The aim was for the Marketing Department to start advertising in October with a title and brief description.

Gate 1 and 2 forms: A draft is to be sent this week to Peter Board. **Action LA**

Proposed MSc Sustainable Futures

Industry consultation on this course is still ongoing. Employers who have responded thus far have included National Resources Wales, Wildlife Trusts, Welsh Government and Woodland Trust all of whom gave valuable feedback and supported the need for a course like this one. There was a general feeling that it is a fast moving sector, for example, there may need to re-write legislation due to Britain's exit from the EU. Due to this there will be gaps in the employment market. Skills requested by employers included: behaviour change, subsidies, environmental management, environmental resilience, and generic skills like mapping, report writing.

Student consultation: There had been 11 responses, all welcoming the new course. Including a permaculture element was a popular suggestion.

Working titles: The suggestions for the working title have come from various companies including those named above, and then a student vote:

- Sustainable Futures
- Sustainable Food and Natural Resources.

The Marketing Department had advised that the latter, Sustainable Food and Natural Resources, would best highlight the nature of the course and would fit with what Natural Resources Wales would like to develop.

MArch

The validation of the new course was timetabled for April, and the outcome should be known in May. There was a need to seek further student feedback. **Action: JC, PS**

The potential for transferring from one CAT course to another had been discussed, but needs to be agreed and finalised. **Action JC, PS, TC**

There was a need to finalise the title and this should be done by the end of October. UEL needs to agree the title. **Action JC, PS**

Conclusion

Academic Council noted the progress being made with these new programmes and that the further results of the consultations will be presented at the next Academic Council meeting on 19 January 2017

5. Progress with REBE Planning for Final Year of Course

FH went through this agenda item giving brief details of progress since the last Council meeting. Overall the process is going smoothly.

All students have been informed of course closure and options for completing modules. Student numbers are low in September and October. One extra student is returning to the course to give 13 students in total needing to complete their taught modules and go onto

the dissertation to complete the course. 15 students are in their dissertation stage to complete in Jan 2018.

Module mapping: has been laid out in a document that shows REBE students what their options are. Need to agree this transitional arrangement document with UEL. TC and FH to speak to Peter Board. **Action TC, FH**

Conclusion

Council noted the progress being made to underpin a smooth closure of the REBE course that maximises students' chances to complete their course; and that a new course featuring renewable energy as an important component is being developed

6. Recruitment 2016/17

As of 9th September 2016 there were 76 new students on SA courses and 26 new students on Prof Dip. Thanks made to all involved, especially marketing team for arranging open days and such.

Conclusion

Council noted the current buoyant student recruitment position for the CAT Graduate School of the Environment.

7. QAA Annual Monitoring Review 13th December 2016

Update on progress: Still on track to submit all papers to QAA on Oct 18th, though significant work still needs to be done. AT predicted that QAA will be interested in the management of the REBE course closure. **Action AT**

13th December date for meeting with QAA at CAT: QAA are likely to want to meet with AR, AT, PLs and senior academics and students. Need to invite student reps in advance. **Action AT**

PLs are recruiting new student representatives from the new intake. **Action TC, JC**

Conclusion

Council noted the continuing progress towards achieving a successful QAA Annual Monitoring Review and that there will be an oral update on the Review at its January meeting

8. Draft CAT Quality Assurance Manual

AT introduced this item. The CAT Quality Assurance Manual (QAM) is a key document that should underpin all of our teaching. There are still gaps to fill. AT will send it out to academics for feedback once more. **Actions AT**

Conclusion

Council discussed the draft Quality Assurance Manual and agreed to give the Chief Executive the authority to approve the final version.

9. Student Charter

AT introduced this agenda item and noted that this document defines the relationship between CAT and students, and it is needed as part of CAT's assurance mechanisms. It sets out what students can expect from CAT and what CAT expects from students.

There was a discussion about the response times stated in the charter. It states that staff will endeavour to reply to email and phone messages within five days. However, it was clarified that five days is an upper limit and we would aspire to be quicker than that. If a response within five days was not possible, for example because of the absence of key staff, a holding email noting this would be sent. There was a need to communicate the expectations to staff. **Action AT**

The draft document will go to Programme Committee meetings for consultation with students. Academic Council then needs to agree it possibly by email and it needs to be signed off by the Chief Executive.

Conclusion

Council discussed the draft Charter and agreed that the Chief Executive be given authority to finalise the Charter taking into account comments made at today's meeting and from consultation with students.

10. Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures

AT introduced this item. Given the potential impact of excluding a student it was critical that authority to do so should rest at the highest level within CAT.

Conclusion

Council agreed that the Chief Executive be given sole responsibility for suspending or expelling any student and noted the final student disciplinary policy and procedures

11. Minutes of Programme Committee Meetings

SA: Next meeting date not yet set with student reps.

Action TC

Prof Dip: Meeting is today.

REBE: 29th September by Skype with reps who no longer attend onsite due to dissertation.

The circulated minutes were noted.

12. Any Other Business

IL updated the meeting on various improvements being made by UEL to strengthen its relationship with CAT:

- Late enrolment of students by UEL: The problems stemmed from the fact that UEL Central Services had just the one mailbox that became overloaded. To resolve this there is now a mailbox just for collaborative partnerships. The situation regarding missing student numbers was resolved by 15th September. It was noted that there is progress from enrolment last year. UEL are taking steps to improve to expected standards.
- REP reports: These should be drafted by now. IL gave a warning not to be late. Data is due to be sent out by UEL on 4th November; REPs due to be submitted to UEL on 16th November. **Action TC, JC, PS, FH**
- Professional Doctorate: The IL queried whether the GSE would re-introduce the Professional Doctorate that had been validated by UEL some time ago. This could be considered as follow on offerings from new programmes. **Action AL, AR**
- IL commented on the very high value for money the GSE provides regarding the high level of contact provided to students. LA clarified that the intake is so diverse that the new students need a lot of input to bring them to a solid grounding in the subject.
- Gate 1 and 2 forms: These are to be copied to Richard Freeman.
- UEL's MSc in Sustainability: is in incubation. The Dean encouraged CAT to renew interest through Daryl Newport. **Action LA**
- UEL staffing:
 - Richard Freeman Collaborations Champion: had retired but has now returned to manage collaborations from now on, replacing Ian Lemon.
 - Solomon Alexis is now Director of Collaborations.
 - Daryl Newport is a new connection in sustainability research at UEL and has recently been awarded a chair.

13. Date of next meeting

19 January 2017, 2-4pm, CAT