

## Centre for Alternative Technology

### Academic Council Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018

#### **Minutes of the meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018 held at 2pm at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)**

**Present:** Adrian Ramsay (AR, CEO) (Chair), Adrian Watson (AW, Head of School), John Carter\* (JC), Tim Coleridge (TC)\*, Colm Bowe\* (CB, LJMU Representative); Melea Menzinger (MM, Student Rep – LJMU); Nathanael Froud\* (NF, Student Rep – UEL)

\* attended via Skype

**In Attendance:** Martin Skelton (MS, minutes)

**Apologies:** Ian Lemon (AC, UEL Link Tutor); Jane Fisher (JF)

#### **1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies**

1.1. AR welcomed those present to the meeting and noted apologies received. It was **noted** that Ian Lemon has taken over as our UEL Link Tutor, a position that he has held previously.

#### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

2.1. The draft minutes of the June meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record. **Action: MS to publish minutes of the June 2018 Academic Council meeting on the GSE website.**

#### **3. Matters Arising**

(NB: References are from the previous meeting's minutes)

(2.1) Action complete.

(9.5) AW advised that he has discussed this further with CB and Paul Booth, CAT Finance and Operations Director, and whilst some progress has been made this remains ongoing.

**Action: AW to provide further updates regarding insurance cover at the next meeting.**

(6.2) Action complete.

(8.4) Action complete. TC will update future Council meetings with any further progress that is made towards creating additional careers opportunities for students. With regard to the development of an Alumni network, AW advised that Christina Jackson, Graduate School Marketing Officer, will be attending the Graduation event in November.

(4.4) Action complete. AW confirmed that facilities in the Straw Bale Theatre have been completed, including the installation of additional Panopto recording facilities.

(6.6) Action complete. A Librarian from LJMU attended our student induction session in September and this is also available on Panopto. There were some initial teething problems associated with the new audio equipment in the Sheppard Theatre however these were quickly resolved.

- (6.8) Ongoing: AW and Louise Halestrap have developed a draft procedure, which is being trialled with a small number of students who have declared additional needs. JC reported that some students have been able to access Local Authority funding. **Action: AW to report of the effectiveness of the new arrangements.**
- (8.1) JC confirmed that he has submitted the required documentation to ARB, and this will be forwarded to the European Commission in due course. **Action: JC to update Council when ARB prescription of the MArch programme has been recognised by the European Commission.**
- (9.4) Ongoing: TC advised that work is ongoing towards the development of a risk assessment policy. **Action: TC to continue working with John Challen towards the development of a Risk Assessment policy.**
- (4.1; 5.2) Actions Complete. MS confirmed that the updated Terms of Reference and Action Plan has been added to the GSE website.
- (6.3) Action complete. AR advised that gardening volunteer opportunities have been filled. MM advised that some students may not receive notifications sent via Canvas/Moodle, depending on their preferences, and suggested using all-student email as an alternative in future and this was **noted**.
- (6.4) Action complete. CB said that LJMU's Foundation for Citizenship is not yet at the stage of feeding down to student level and said that he will provide updates as and when they become relevant to CAT students.
- (6.6) Action complete. CB confirmed that he has sent information relating to these services to AW and JF.
- (7.4) Action complete.
- (7.5) Action complete. AW advised that this would be kept under review and acknowledged there can be flexibility around the scheduling of Extenuation panel meetings, where necessary.
- (9.1) Action complete.
- (9.2) Action complete. CB advised that existing arrangements for annual monitoring and reporting are being replaced by a continuous monitoring system, and further details on this have been sent to JF.
- (10.2) Action complete.
- (11.1) Action complete: AW said that the Marketing team intend to consult with students during the October module week.

#### **4. Progression of MSc Students**

- 4.1. AW thanked MS for providing data relating to student progression and was pleased to report that there are promising signs that student progression, retention and completion rates are improving.
- 4.2. It was noted that rates of Withdrawal and Intermission for the 2017/18 intake are lower than in previous years, and this is particularly notable given that there has been an increase in cohort size.

- 4.3. AW **noted** the efforts made by the academic staff in achieving these improvements, for example the work JF and Ruth Stevenson have made towards increasing the number of students progressing to the research phase. TC felt that the increased contact between tutors and students has resulted in improved levels of engagement. .
- 4.4. It was **noted** that the flexibility we offer to students to change programmes creates some additional difficulties in obtaining accurate progression data.
- 4.5. AR welcomed the apparent reduction in attrition and intermission and said that it will be important to consolidate and further improve upon this. **Action MS and AW continue to monitor attrition rates throughout academic year.**

## **5. Leaver Destinations Survey, March 2018**

- 5.1. MS introduced the findings of the most recent survey of leavers, conducted in March 2018. As was the case for our inaugural survey in July 2017, there was a very disappointing response to this survey, with only five responses from 42 leaver surveyed (12% participation).
- 5.2. MM suggested that response rates might be improved if leavers were approached by their personal tutors rather than by the Student Support team. MS said that the latest survey was sent on behalf of the Programme Leaders, as agreed after the July 2017 survey. AW agreed to consider this further but said we need to be cautious about maintaining contacts with students once they have completed their studies. AR agreed and added that we need to be mindful of our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulations.
- 5.3. Whilst acknowledging that it might not be available for post graduate students, CB asked if Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data could replace the leaver survey in future. AR said that although this would be helpful we are particularly interested to learn about the roles our graduates move into and how they are able to help CAT to achieve its wider ambitions.
- 5.4. AW said that the establishment of an Alumni network will help us towards obtaining useful data on leaver destinations. **Action: AW and MS to consider how participation in Leaver surveys can be improved, and consider additional options for obtaining destinations data.**

## **6. QAA Annual Monitoring Return**

- 6.1. AW advised that we are required to provide QAA with an update on progress against our Annual Plan and other quality measures in October.
- 6.2. AW outlined summarised the progress that has been made towards meeting the objectives stated in the 2018-19 Action Plan and invited comments or questions. MM said that she had not had sufficient time to study the paper in detail and AW apologised for the late circulation.
- 6.3. AR thanked AW for providing Council with an update on progress against the Plan and for preparing the documentation for QAA. **Action: AW to submit monitoring data to QAA by the stated deadline.**

## **7. New Course Development / Validation**

- 7.1. AW reported on progress that has been made towards the introduction of new MSc courses for 2019/20. It is anticipated that the proposed Green Building programme will be validated by March 2019 (UEL) and the planned Sustainable Ecology and Behaviour Change programmes (LJMU) will be validated by the end of January 2019.

- 7.2. A proposal to offer the existing MArch programme via part-time study is also being pursued, and JC has submitted the required documentation to UEL. It is anticipated that the part time option will be of interest to students who are in employment, or those wishing to undertake the course over a longer period.
- 7.3. AW outlined his intention to further consultation with our current students over the next few months. Approval has been given by UEL and LJMU for us to market the proposed new courses, subject to validation.
- 7.4. MM asked if academic staffing resources would be increased if the Graduate School achieves its plan to grow student numbers. AW confirmed that this would be the case, and gave an overview of recent staffing changes and new appointments. NF said that students would be concerned if the current level of staff / student interaction reduced and JC replied that contact time would not be adversely affected by increases in student numbers or the introduction of the part time MArch programme. **Action: AW to provide Council with an update on the development of new courses at the next meeting.**

## **8. University Partner Updates**

- 8.1. CB confirmed that the appointment of a new member of teaching staff to the MSc SFNR programme has been approved by the Quality Committee at LJMU, and reported that the applications from students wishing to transfer to LJMU from UEL will be considered at the Faculty Recognition Group meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November.

## **9. Minutes of Programme Committee Meetings**

- 9.1. AR invited Programme Leaders to highlight any issues arising from the most recent Programme Committee meetings. JC said he wanted to avoid irregular gaps between MArch modules during the next academic year and was concerned about the possible impact of accommodating new courses into the academic year calendar. AW thanked JC for raising this and agreed it would be useful to give this early consideration.
- 9.2. NF said that the architecture students would like to have a materials library at CAT similar to the one they saw during their trip to Scotland earlier in the year. JC said that this has been discussed and will be considered further in due course. AR added that JC has previously made him aware of this and agreed it would be a very useful addition to our teaching resources.
- 9.3. TC did not have anything specific to raise and advised that the next Programme Committee meeting for the MSc SA courses will be held in December.
- 9.4. In response to a question from MM about access to student feedback TC summarised how this currently operates and advised that discussions are taking place about creating a centralised repository for feedback. CB said that at LJMU Programme Leaders are required to respond to student feedback and identify any actions that will be taken. **Action: MS and TC to consider how the communication of feedback to students can be improved.**

## **10. Graduation 2018**

- 10.1. MS confirmed that this year's Graduation ceremony will be held at 5.30pm on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November. Our keynote speaker is Agamemnon Otero, ex-CAT student and co-founder of Repowering London.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- 11.1. AW **noted** that our Memorandum of Cooperation with UEL is being review, and is expected to be signed off once the necessary legal checks have been completed.
- 11.2. TC referred to an email received from IL regarding the timely provision of sample work for external examiners prior to Boards. AW confirmed that our current practice is supply sample scripts by the Web Mark Entry deadline, which is normally two weeks ahead of the Board.  
**Action: IL to discuss further with AW if current practice is ineffective.**
- 11.3. TC highlighted the pressures on teaching spaces and the availability of accommodation that can occur as a result of external events coinciding with our teaching weeks. AW agreed this was occasionally problematical and suggested that improved communications between GSE and the Engagement team would help to avoid this occurring in future.
- 11.4. JC noted that UEL asked for our 2018/19 Student Handbooks to be submitted to them by the end of August, however their Academic Regulations are not revised until September. MS said that he has made the Academic Partnership Office at UEL aware of this difficulty. **Action: IL asked to note the challenging timescale we face in submitting Student Handbook revisions.**

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

- 12.1. The next meeting will be held at **2pm on Friday 18th January 2019** (Quarry Room, WISE Building)