

## Centre for Alternative Technology

### Academic Council Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019

#### **Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019 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); Jane Fisher\* (JF)

\* attended via Skype

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

**Apologies:** Ian Lemon (IL, UEL Link Tutor); Colm Bowe (CB, LJMU Representative); Kim Polgreen (KP, CAT Trustee)

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

1.1. AR welcomed those present to the meeting and noted apologies received. It was **noted** that new Student Representatives are currently being recruited and will be invited to attend future meetings.

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

2.1. The draft minutes of the October meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record. It was **agreed** that we will continue to publish minutes of these meetings on the new CAT website, which is expected to go live within the next few weeks. **Action: MS to publish minutes of the October 2018 Academic Council meeting on the GSE website.**

2.2. In response to a question from TC it was **agreed** a draft copy of the minutes will be circulated as soon as possible after each Council meeting. **Action: MS to circulate a draft copy of the minutes from these meetings.**

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

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

(2.1) Action complete.

(9.5) Action complete. AW reported that Paul Booth, CAT Finance and Operations Director, has sought clarification on this issue from our insurers, and they have advised that project-related insurance needs of particular students can be considered and added to our standard cover as and when required.

(6.8) AW said that the draft procedure is being trialled with a particular student and has been effective to date. TC reported that our designated tutor for supporting students with additional needs has raised concerns about the workload associated with the role and the difficulty in managing students with complex needs. AW said that he is aware of their concerns and has arranged to discuss this further with them. **Action: AW to discuss future arrangements for supporting students with additional needs with the designated tutor, and provide an update on policy development at the next meeting.**

- (8.1) JC advised that we are still awaiting a decision. **Action: JC to update Council when ARB prescription of the MArch programme has been recognised by the European Commission.**
- (9.4) TC advised that work is ongoing towards the development of a risk assessment policy and a further meeting has been held with John Challen. AW added that more formalised procedures for reviewing risk assessments and ethics forms will be introduced this year. MS said that he would be happy to assist with this. **Action: TC and AW to continue working towards the development of a Risk Assessment policy and formal procedures for reviewing risk assessments.**
- (4.5) Action complete. AW confirmed that measures are in place to assist us in monitoring attrition rates throughout the academic year.
- (5.4) Action complete. The next Leaver Survey will be issued in March. AW and MS have agreed to shorten the survey in an attempt to improve response rates. TC and JC felt it would also be useful to engage with Graduands and alumni at CAT events such as Graduation and Reunions etc.
- (6.3) Action complete. AW confirmed that monitoring data was submitted on time and advised that QAA do not intend to carry out a further physical inspection. AR **noted** his thanks to everyone involved in achieving our favourable QAA outcome.
- (9.4) Ongoing: MS and TC have discussed this further and agree that a central repository for student feedback would be beneficial. MS is exploring the possibility of creating a database for this purpose, and this would permit tailored reports to be produced for sharing feedback with students and tutors. **Action: MS to explore the feasibility of creating a database for recording student feedback.**
- (11.2) Action complete: AW reported that IL has not been in contact to discuss this further and it is therefore assumed that current practice is effective. AW added that he will ensure IL is aware of the challenging timescales associated with producing revised Student Handbooks. TC informed the meeting that Dr Julie Gwilliam from Cardiff University has been appointed as our new External Examiner for the MSc SA, SABE, SAP and SEPDM shared modules, and this was **noted**.

#### **4. New Courses: Development & Validation Update**

- 4.1. AW advised that the LJMU course validation event was held on 8<sup>th</sup> January and we have since received confirmation that the 'Sustainability and Ecology' and 'Sustainability and Behaviour Change' courses will be validated subject to a small number of conditions being met. AW said that revised paperwork will be submitted to LJMU before 5<sup>th</sup> February. **Action: AW to submit revised documents to LJMU in respect of new courses validation.**
- 4.2. It was **noted** that following the validation event LJMU recommended that CAT should consider reviewing its general approach to the assessment of students, and offering a separate Research Methods module. **Action: AW and Programme Leaders to consider LJMU recommendations further.**
- 4.3. AW advised that 6<sup>th</sup> May has been provisionally agreed with UEL to hold a validation meeting in respect of the proposed Green Building programme, and that work is underway to complete the required documentation.

- 4.4. JC asked if the planned validation meeting in May would also consider the proposed part-time MArch and AW said that this option has already been approved and the website will be updated accordingly. AW confirmed that we can now accept part-time application for the MArch programme. **Action: MS to update the MArch Application Form accordingly.** JC asked AW to send him written confirmation of this for the purpose of notifying ARB. **Action: AW to provide JC with confirmation that the part-time MArch option has been validated by UEL.**

## **5. Course Designation Update**

- 5.1. AW reported on progress towards achieving course designation with HEFCW and OfS, following the submission of documentation in December. The designation processes are slightly different for England and Wales. The provided information included details of our proposed new degrees where forms and process allowed for this. We expect some response from OfS / HEFCW in the next few weeks. Designation for Northern Ireland typically follows acceptance by the OfS. CAT has previously applied for designation in Scotland but been refused.
- 5.2. AW confirmed that in England the MArch is designated for undergraduate and postgraduate loans, however in Wales the course is only designated for undergraduate loans.

## **6. Extension & Extenuation Policy and Procedures**

- 6.1. MS reported that students have found using the combined (LJMU & UEL) Extension and Extenuation Application Form to be confusing, and a number of inappropriate applications have been received. Following a discussion with AW and consideration of the feedback received from students affected by this, it is proposed that we should return to using separate application forms for LJMU and UEL students.
- 6.2. MS introduced revised application forms which were circulated in advance of the meeting, and advised that no procedural changes have been made. It was **agreed** that the combined form should be superseded by separate forms for LJMU and UEL students. AW said he was happy with the revised form but asked for the reference to the MSc SFNR programme to be removed, in anticipation of the new degrees validated by LJMU becoming available from September.
- 6.3. JF noted that LJMU students are required to remove any drafts submitted electronically if they are applying for extenuation, and asked if this also applied to UEL students. MS confirmed that if UEL students submit work by the published deadline, or within 24 hours of the published deadline, they are not able to apply for extenuation. **Action: MS to amend both forms accordingly and ensure that the revised forms are made available to students.**
- 6.4. MS said that he is exploring the possibility of using 123 Form Builder, which is currently used for programme applications, to provide a number of other application forms to students e.g. extension, extenuation, intermission & withdrawal. This will be more convenient for students and Student Support Officers and will reduce the risk of students using incorrect forms, however GDPR issues will need to be considered very carefully. TC welcomed this and said that the current system can present an additional burden to students already facing difficult situations. **Action: MS to report on progress towards developing online application forms at the next meeting.**

## **7. LJMU / UEL Policies and Procedures: Significant Differences**

- 7.1. AW said that should the new courses recruit as expected we are likely have similar numbers of LJMU and UEL students studying at CAT in future, and it is important that our policies and procedures accommodate the needs of all students. Historically our policies have been geared towards supporting UEL students however this has been under review following our more recent partnership with LJMU, and AW thanked TC and JF for their work on this to date.
- 7.2. AW said that CAT's Appeals and Academic Integrity policies are examples of documents that require further work in order to make them more suitable for students of both partner universities. AW advised that where significant differences exist between LJMU and UEL policies and procedures, CAT policies will be updated accordingly and brought to Council for approval.  
**Action: AW to review CAT policies as needed.**

## **8. University Partner Updates**

- 8.1. In the absence of IL and CB, AR asked if there were any items to raise on behalf of our Partners. MS said that IL had asked if the dates of future Academic Council meeting could be notified further in advance, as this would assist him in attending regularly. This was **noted** and AW said that he had some proposed dates for the next two meetings (see Item 11).

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

- 9.1. TC confirmed that no Programme Committee meetings for the MSc programmes had been held since the previous Academic Council meeting, and advised that the next meeting would be held before the February module week. TC briefly described the more transparent process that had recently been used to appoint new student representatives, in response to feedback from students at the November Programme Committee meeting.
- 9.2. JC said that minutes from the last MArch Programme Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 had been circulated and confirmed there were no matters arising to be discussed at this meeting. AR asked for these to be circulated with the minutes of this meeting. JC said that Julia Munro and William Webb had been appointed as new 4<sup>th</sup> Year MArch Student Representatives. AW asked JC to thank the previous MArch reps for their contributions to Academic Council meetings.  
**Action: MS to circulate minutes of the MArch Programme Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December and liaise with JC regarding MArch Student Representation at Academic Council meetings.**

## **10. Any Other Business**

- 10.1. MS said that he had reviewed GSE content on the new website, which is expected to be launched in February. MS reported that some factual inaccuracies had been noticed and said that feedback had been given to Catriona Toms. MS said that he felt it would be useful for Programme Leaders to carefully review the new website content for their programmes, and AR confirmed that a link to the new website had recently been circulated to all staff. **Action: Programme Leaders to review GSE courses content on the new website.**
- 10.2. AW said that an Ethics meeting had recently been held and twenty student submission had been considered. AW said that the current process is robust and that revised Terms of Reference for the Ethics meetings will be brought to the next Council meeting for approval. **Action: AW to present Ethics meeting ToR at the next Council meeting.**

- 10.3. AW said that the 2019/20 academic calendar has been finalised and thanked Frances Hill for assisting with this. Draft calendars for 2020/21/22 have also been circulated to assist other departments within CAT with their activity planning.
- 10.4. AR informed the meeting that a Marketing specialist has been selected to look at the market provision of Higher Education sustainability courses, with a view towards us having a better understanding of how we should develop our course provision. AW said that this work would be taken forward by AW and Kim Polgreen, Trustee and interim CEO, following his departure from CAT. **Action: AW to report findings from external Marketing specialist to Council when available.**
- 10.5. On behalf of the Academic Council, AW thanked AR for all his hard work both as a lecturer and CEO at CAT and for his support towards GSE during some very challenging times, and wished him well in his new venture.

## **11. Date of Next Meeting**

- 11.1. AW proposed provisional dates for the next two Council meetings, and said he would conduct a poll to ascertain which dates would be most suitable following the meeting. Dates for the next two meetings were subsequently confirmed as:  
**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (10am – 12 noon)**  
**Thursday 4th July 2019 (10am – 12 noon)**
- 11.2. AR advised that Kim Polgreen is likely to be in post as interim CEO of CAT for at least six months and will attend the next two meetings. **Action: MS to book suitable meeting rooms for above meeting dates.**