



Centre for Alternative Technology

Minutes of Academic Council Meeting 17th April 2020

Minutes of the meeting held on 17th April at 10am

(minutes of previous Academic Council meetings are available from the [Quality Assurance](#) section of the GSE website)

Present: N/A this meeting was conducted using Zoom due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions

Attending via Zoom: Adrian Watson (AW, Head of School) (Chair); Jane Fisher (JF) Colm Bowe (CB, LIMU Representative); Tim Coleridge (TC); Peter Tyldesley (PT, CAT CEO); Aran Yardley (AY, Student Rep); Julia Munro (JM, Student Rep)

In Attendance: N/A

Apologies: John Carter (JC); Ian Lemon (IL, UEL Link Tutor); Martin Skelton (MS); Anna Crowder (AC, Student Rep); Josie Fitzgibbon (JF, Student Rep); Olivia Harrison (OH, Student Rep)

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

1.1. AW welcomed those attending the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1. The draft minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 17th January 2020 were accepted as an accurate record. **Action: MS to publish minutes of the January Academic Council meeting on the GSE website.**

3. Matters Arising

(NB: bracketed references are from previous minutes)

(2.1) Action complete: AW advised that minutes of the September 2019 Academic Council meeting were amended as agreed and have been published on the GSE website.

(8.1) Ongoing: JC said that we are still waiting to hear if the part-time M.Arch will be listed in Annex V to the EU Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC). **Action: JC to confirm if the part-time MArch programme will be listed in Annex V to Directive 2005/36/EC.**

(5.2) Ongoing: AW confirmed that all requested course information was submitted ahead of the required deadline. AW said that going forward the OfS will designate courses in accordance with HEFCW designations and noted that this will help to streamline the process. AW will be attending a conference call meeting with HEFCW and other alternative providers on 1st May. **Action: AW to provide an update on course designation at the next meeting.**

- (11.1) Action complete: TC said that the four existing student representatives, comprising two UEL and two LJMU students, have all indicated that they are happy to continue, and recruitment of new representatives is not needed at this time.
- (12.1) Action complete: AW said that CAT is working towards introducing Office 365 prior to the September enrolment, however it would be advantageous to bring this forward in order to improve distance learning delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic e.g. the use of Microsoft Teams. AW reported that UEL use MS Teams and CB confirmed that LJMU do too. JF commented that LJMU's Assessment Board in July will be conducted using MS Teams, and it was noted that our engagement will still be possible if we do not have CAT accounts set up in by then.
- (4.2) Action complete: AW advised that due to the Covid-19 pandemic it will not be possible to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the WISE building at CAT during the summer. AW said that the idea of creating a CAT Alumni Network has received a mixed response from students, and in light of this, it will be given further consideration. AW said that Council would be informed of any developments.
- (5.6) Action complete: AW advised that Student Protection Plan has been published on the GSE website.
- (6.5) Action complete: MS was not present at the meeting to provide an update, however following the January meeting IL has confirmed that our revised Progression Rules are acceptable to UEL.
- (6.6) Action complete: the Student Progression Rules presented to the January Academic Council meeting have been published on the GSE website without further amendment.
- (7.4) Action complete: LJMU students have been advised of the revised Extension Request form, and the online form has been updated accordingly.
- (8.2) Action complete: a revised (draft) Complaints Policy has been circulated (see agenda item 6).
- (10.1) Ongoing: JC was not present to advise if a response has been received from UEL in regard to the MArch REP Report for the 2016/17 academic year period. TC added that nothing has been received from UEL in respect of the draft 2018/19 REP Report for MSc programmes. **Action: TC to liaise with UEL regarding outstanding REP Report audit and feedback.**
- (10.2) Action complete: AW advised that he had discussed the provision of onsite library facilities with John Challen and it has been agreed to convert the Garden Room annexe into a suitable space. In response to a question from TC, AW said it is envisaged there will be sufficient space to accommodate the architecture books a CAT supporter would like to donate. It was noted that work on this has been necessarily suspended due to the current circumstances.
- (11.1) Action complete: an alternative date was not available to hold Graduation during the summer, and in light of current travel restrictions, this is unfortunate. JM asked if Graduation for MArch students will be held on the same day as for MSc students and AW confirmed that it would, on Saturday 14th November.
- JM asked if the Graduation date could be shared with 5th year MArch students, with appropriate caveats, and AW confirmed that it could be. JF asked if Graduation next year could be held during summer and AW said that was our intention.

Action: MS to discuss potential dates for Graduation 2021 with Ed Parsons.

- (11.2) Ongoing: Copyright regulations. AW advised that he is continuing to work on a guidance document for staff and students. **Action: AW to ensure staff and students are aware of copyright regulations and the appropriate usage of copyrighted materials.**
- (11.3) Action complete: in the absence of MS, CB confirmed that LJMU students taking a leave of absence do not retain access to IT or library facilities.

4. Covid-19

- 4.1. AW summarised the actions taken by CAT in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's subsequent 'lockdown'. Onsite teaching was suspended at CAT from 17th March 2020 and all teaching was moved to a distance learning delivery mode. A return to on-site teaching is unlikely until July at the earliest and will remain under review. Safety of students and staff are the main priority.
- 4.2. AW said that based on a limited amount of student feedback he has seen the online delivery appears to be going well to date, and he invited the student representatives to give their insights. JM said that although there had been some initial problems the current situation is not too far removed from how things normally operate, and thanked John, Pat and Gwyn for the additional support they have been able to give. JM added that the unforeseen disruption to the March teaching week resulted in the loss of some teaching from external sources, and asked if by way of compensation MArch students could be offer some alternative e.g. a short course at CAT. AW said he would be happy to consider this further and asked JM to coordinate a joint communication from the MArch students affected. AW said that it might be possible to postpone some teaching activities until later in the academic year, however it is not possible to plan this with any certainty at the moment. AY said he did not have any recent feedback from students regarding distance learning delivery, and noted that previous concerns raised about the quality of audio recordings have been resolved.
- 4.3. AW thanked the programme and module leaders for ensuring that modules were largely delivered as originally timetabled and noted the support that CAT has received from UEL and LJMU during this very challenging period. AW said that with the support of our partners we have been able to offer students additional flexibility around assessment deadlines e.g. for Dissertation students, and relaxed our usual requirements for evidence to support applications extenuating circumstances. AW said he intended to consult Stuart Borthwick, LJMU Registrar, at LJMU regarding allowing our LMJU students to progress to their research module on gaining 105 credits rather than the usual 120 credits and noted that this is currently allowed by UEL. JF added that a number of students wish to take their final taught module onsite due to the practical content and are prepared to postpone until next year if necessary. **Action: AW to discuss progression of LJMU students to Dissertation with Stuart Borthwick.**
- 4.4. TC said that some slightly different approaches had been adopted by module leaders since March and this has provided additional insights towards planning of the summer modules, and the delivery of distance learning teaching more generally.
- 4.5. In response to a question from JM, AW said that some early discussions have taken place about additional flexibilities for MArch students nearing completion of the programme, and added that intermission and switching to part-time route are existing, established options.

- 4.6. JF asked if a decision has been taken regarding delivery mode of teaching for the June and July modules, and AW said it was expected that no further onsite teaching would take place for MSc students for the remainder of this academic year. TC said that to date students have been advised that teaching will be offered by distance learning only until the end of June, and AW said a further communication would be circulated once the Government's position becomes clearer. CB added that LJMU teaching staff have been asked to think about contingency plans for teaching should the lockdown restrictions impact the start of the next academic year.
- 4.7. In response to a question from TC, JF said it should be possible to plan for a standard onsite and distance delivery of the July food module at relatively short notice compared to the May and June modules. However it was noted that whether Aberystwyth University would be able to host a visit from our students in July would be an important factor.
- 4.8. PT thanked everyone involved at GSE for maintaining the delivery of teaching during the CAT site closure.

5. Terms of Reference & Membership (ToR)

Academic Council ToR

- 5.1. AW introduced a draft revision of the Academic Council ToR document and noted some routine updates that had been made since the previous revision.
- 5.2. The latest revision states the minimum attendance at meetings in order for them to be considered quorate, and AW summarised the requirements.
- 5.3. There were no further comments and the revised Academic Council ToR were **approved**.

Programme Committee ToR

- 5.4. AW advised that the Programme Committee ToR had been revised in line with the Academic Council ToR above, including the addition of a quoracy clause.
- 5.5. TC and JF agreed it would be useful to involve the wider teaching team in Programme Committee meetings and supported the revised Programme Committee ToR.
- 5.6. TC and AW agreed that a Student Support Officer should attend Programme Committee meetings and should be included in the quoracy requirements. **Action: MS to amend the ToR such that Student Support Officer is required to attend for the meetings to be quorate.**
- 5.7. There were no further comments and the revised Academic Council ToR were approved subject to the above amendment being made: **Action: MS to publish the finalised Terms of Reference documents on the GSE website.**

6. Complaints Policy

- 6.1. AW introduced a draft Complaints Policy which has been updated to reflect our academic relationships with UEL and LJMU, and to align our internal procedures with their respective procedures.
- 6.2. AW noted that we receive very few complaints and went on to summarise the main aspects of the revised policy, including the options for review by the awarding university and the Office for Independent Adjudication (OIA) should it not be possible to resolve a complaint internally at CAT.
- 6.3. The revised policy includes a complaint form which can be completed manually or electronically, and an online form has been created for greater convenience.

- 6.4. The draft policy was circulated in advance of the meeting and AW invited comments from those in attendance. TC said he welcomed the greater clarity around the review stages, and AY said he was pleased to see an emphasis on resolving complaints informally wherever possible.
- 6.5. In response to an observation from TC, AW clarified the reporting of complaints internally and externally.
- 6.6. There were no further comments and the revised Complaints Policy was approved. **Action: MS to publish the updated Complaints Policy documents on the GSE website.**

7. University Partner Updates

LJMU Updates

- 7.1. CB advised that LJMU academic staff have been working remotely since 17th March, and LJMU facilities were closed the following week.
- 7.2. CB confirmed that the revalidation of the MSc SFNR programme, originally scheduled to take place on 22nd April, has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and advised that LJMU are considering how programme reviews will proceed in the interim.
- 7.3. AW thanked CB and advised he is liaising with Vicky Jones about the MSc SFNR revalidation and other programme amendments.
- 7.4. TC advised that UEL undertake a collaborative partner review on a quinquennial basis, and asked CB to explain the LJMU process. CB said new collaborative programmes are initially reviewed after three years, and every five years thereafter. AW added that we are expecting to harmonise the review of all LJMU programmes as soon as possible. CB confirmed that revalidation is done at a programme level, and not at provider level.

UEL Updates

- 7.5. None

8. Programme Leader Reports

MArch Sustainable Architecture Programme

- 8.1. No report

LJMU MSc Programmes

- 8.2. JF summarised the purpose of the Enhancement and Development Plan (EDP) in the wider context of the Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement system operated by LJMU and explained how this links to student feedback and programme development.
- 8.3. JF highlighted some examples from the EDP (diversity of lecturing staff; quality of PowerPoint presentations and Panopto recordings) and outlined the measures that are being taken to make improvements in these areas e.g. the appointment of a new IT support technician at CAT.
- 8.4. AW thanked JF and the content of the EDP was **noted**.

UEL MSc Programmes

- 8.5. TC briefly explained how the Review and Enhancement Process (REP) is used to identify and deliver improvements to our UEL programmes, and advised that this is up to date. TC thanked JF for her valuable assistance with preparing the most recent REP report.
- 8.6. TC advised that the MSc Programme Committee meeting was held on 31st March and gave a verbal report on the issues that had been discussed. TC noted that students have shown

appreciative of the compensatory measures taken by CAT in addressing the impacts of Covid-19 on teaching and assessment.

- 8.7. TC advised that any relevant proposed LJMU programme modifications e.g. a part-time Dissertation module option would be pursued with UEL if approved during the rescheduled MSc SFNR revalidation event.
- 8.8. TC advised that GSE is liaising with the National Library of Wales (NLW) in Aberystwyth to see if our students can be granted access to their electronic resources. AW advised that discussions with NLW are at an early stage, and have unfortunately been interrupted by Covid-19, however this will be actively pursued. **Action: AW to report on GSE access to NLW electronic resources at the next meeting.**

Academic Misconduct Hearings (all programmes)

- 8.9. AW confirmed that no academic misconduct hearings have been held since the last Academic Council meeting in January 2020.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1. AW advised that changes to marking and feedback deadlines that have been agreed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic have been communicated to the students affected.
- 9.2. JM welcomed the initiative to improve links with NLW and said that this would be of great benefit to 4th year MArch students.
- 9.3. JM raised concern about the timescales involved for considering applications for extenuating circumstances and asked if applications could be considered on a more regular basis. AW said that the Extenuation Panel meets in advance of our partner university Boards and agreed to take a closer look at scheduling. **Action: AW to review the frequency of internal Extenuating Circumstances Panel meetings.**
- 9.4. AW noted the sad death of Sir John Houghton, a dedicated CAT supporter and funder of a GSE student bursary that takes his name.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- 10.1. The next meeting will be at 2pm on 24th June 2020.

[End]