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without amendments:	

Academic Planning Committee

minutes

date: 17 November 2005
time: 9.30am
location: Main Boardroom, High Wycombe

05.24 Minutes of the Last Meeting (26 May 2005)

The minutes of the meetings of 26 May 2005 were accepted as a true and accurate record by the Committee.

05.25 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

a 05.14 (a): Decision Making Process *document APC05.18*

The Committee were advised that Senate had set up two working groups on Annual Review and Evaluation (AR&E) and on Validations. The group looking at Validations had decided that the process needed to be streamlined and proposed that Validation Panels would no longer look at resourcing issues or at the possible demand for the course. The suggestion was that either a member of the Directorate or the Academic Planning Committee (APC) should explore these issues for each outline proposal. This was discussed at the last meeting of Senate on 4 November 2005 and accepted, with the caveat that these issues should be looked at by a Committee rather than an individual. APC had therefore been nominated to undertake this task.

It had been suggested at last meeting of APC in May 2005 that if Faculty Plans clearly indicated course developments and resourcing implications, then APC would not need to look at each individual proposal. What it would wish to examine were proposals in new subject or curriculum areas or areas where they were significant resource implications. The issue now was how to filter proposals meeting these criteria to APC.

The following points were raised in a general discussion:

- It was suggested that if this were to be the case then Faculty Plans would have to become Business Plans with more details on the curriculum areas proposed for development. It was also suggested that there should be some independent input from the Planning Unit, who would review these curriculum proposals and directly comment to APC on how valid in terms of market demand it considered they were. This would mean that there would be two views on the broad areas proposed for future development and, if the two did not coincide, there would then need to be some further discussion.
- Faculty Business Plans would have to be scrutinised in detail by Faculty Board and APC, with an input from the Planning Unit and Marketing.
- It was questioned how the Faculties would feel about having their Business Plans, and pro-formas for any new courses outside of these, independently reviewed to verify information supporting the existence of market demand.
- Some Higher Education Institutions have a marketing person within each faculty to ensure that market research is conducted effectively. The Committee felt that this was something to aspire to and could possibly be achieved if there were fewer faculties than at present. In the short term it was suggested that Marketing might be

able to support the faculties in this task.

The following points were agreed in principle and the Chair advised that these would be formed into working proposals which would then come back to the Committee for further discussion:

- A Business Plan would be needed for each faculty setting out proposed developments in their curriculum over the next 3 years but also including some new elements that do not currently appear in the existing format of current faculty plans, e.g. marketing, curriculum development, resourcing etc.
- Any developments detailed in the Business Plan would not need to be further scrutinised by APC, once the Business Plan had been formally approved. The only subsequent proposals to come to the Committee would be those developed outside the framework of the approved Business Plan. This would still provide flexibility and the ability to react quickly to new areas of course development.
- A pro-forma for the Business Plan would need to be developed and brought back to a subsequent meeting of APC for discussion along with a proposed timescale to match in with the next University College Strategic Plan.

These proposals received broad agreement in principle from all the Faculty Representatives present, which comprised the Business School, Leisure and Tourism, Technology, Health Studies and SCPE.

It was then questioned how APC would deal with the marketing and resource issues of any course development that happened outside of the approved Faculty Business Plans. The attention of the Committee was drawn to paper APC05.18 which was a proposed draft pro-forma to use in such cases.

The following comments were made:

- The pro-forma would be useful for focusing on marketing issues and providing a clear rationale for the proposed development.
- It was felt that some courses were developed for political or strategic reasons and that care would need to be taken not to discount these. It was felt that these were catered for within the design of the form.
- Health Studies had a concern about the actual design of the form. It was felt that flexibility in interpretation would be needed as, in the case of Health Studies, market share was not always applicable. The Faculty could be commissioned by a Strategic Health Authority to develop a programme and therefore there was no need for further market research. It was felt that the form needed to be flexible enough to cater for diversity.
- It was felt that it needed to include which benchmark the proposed course would be mapped to and any industrial liaison or links with sector bodies who would support the course.
- It was felt that the form needed to be as succinct as possible for people to use it effectively.
- It was also felt that Planning Unit could assist in providing some of the information needed.
- The timeline and impact on recruitment of such a pro-forma would also need to be considered as sometimes there was a need to act quickly.
- The Representatives from the Business School, Leisure and Tourism, Technology, SCPE and Technology all agreed with the form in principle.

The Committee were advised that a small group had met on 16 November 2005 to review the form. Concerns had been expressed as to whether the faculties would support its use and that the workload it would create for the staff completing it should be further assessed. The Committee were advised that the form would only need to be completed for developments proposed outside of the framework of the approved Faculty Business Plans and its use would therefore be limited to new initiatives set in this context. The Faculty of Leisure and Tourism volunteered to pilot the form within the next few weeks and would report back on the process.

ACTION: Leisure & Tourism

The following points were then raised in discussion:

- The Committee felt that the timeline and details would need to be worked on and that mechanisms for providing information on new courses to the central service departments, whether developed inside or outside the Faculty Business Plans, would need to be further explored.
- It was felt that information would need to flow from Faculty Boards to the Academic Registry.
- It was felt that there needed to be explicit detail within the Faculty Business Plans so that developments made within its scope could be clearly cross-referenced back.
- Potential student demand should be established early on in the development process to avoid wasting effort and resources.
- The Committee were advised that if the University College chose this route then it would not be out of line with the sector as Bath Spa, Central Lancashire, Oxford Brookes and De Montfort all had a similar system.
- It was felt that the first stage of the form was to establish whether there was a evidence of prima-facie demand for the proposal, and then further investigation of resource issues would be needed at the second stage in order to develop a sound business case.

The Committee **agreed to progress this issue** and supported the proposal for the draft Business Plan pro-forma to come to a subsequent meeting along with the revised pro-forma for courses developed outside of the framework of approved Faculty Business Plans. The original form will nevertheless be piloted by Leisure and Tourism in the interim.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary

b 05.14 (d): Bratislava and Singapore - Update

Verbal Report

The Committee were advised that this was not currently being actively progressed by the Business School. If there was any change in this status it would need to be reported to APC.

c 05.18: Curriculum Management System (CMS)

Verbal Report

The Committee were advised that this software package had been purchased by the University College to effectively handle curriculum management. For various reasons the development and implementation of the system had not been progressed. There were now initiatives through the Blackboard system to generate information that could also be used by QLS. As the two systems do not interface it was suggested that it may now be unnecessary or inefficient to develop both.

It was felt by the Committee that a conversation needed to take place between the Academic Registry, Learning and Information Services, Management Information Systems and the Directorate to decide which avenue should be progressed. It was requested that some representation from Teaching and Learning Committee be included as changes to Blackboard might impact on teaching and learning. This was **agreed**.

ACTION: Academic Registry, Learning and Information Services, Management Information Systems, Teaching and Learning Committee and the Directorate

05.26 **Committee Remit (membership, terms of reference, timing)**

Document APC05.19

The Chair advised that Planning Board had asked the Committee to consider this issue and highlighted the proposed changes, which were detailed in document APC05.19.

The following points were noted regarding the proposed membership:

- SCPE and Student Services might not need to be represented at every meeting but should be invited if there were agenda items that involved them. They would continue to be sent the Committee papers for information. This was **agreed** by the Committee.
- It was felt that it would be beneficial for the Head of Learning and Information Services to sit on APC to provide insight into the resource issues that the Committee discussed. This was **supported** by the Committee.
- For similar reasons it was proposed that a member of the Planning Unit should also act as an officer to the Committee, either as a co-opted member or on an "in attendance" basis. This was **supported** by the Committee.
- It was also proposed to invite the Head of Recruitment Services to attend on an ad hoc basis similar to that of SCPE and Student Services. This was **supported** by the Committee.

With regard to the proposed revised Terms of Reference, these were discussed at length by the Committee who **supported them in principle**. Point 4 of the terms of reference was revised further after discussion and the Chair advised that a draft would be circulated after the meeting to all Committee members.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary

The Committee were advised that hopefully the draft revisions would go to Senate in December.

05.27 **Report on Full Time, Undergraduate Applications for 2006 Entry**

document APC05.24

The attention of the Committee was drawn to document APC05.24. APC had asked for regular updates on the status of applications to the University College, but it was felt by the Committee that it was probably too early in the academic year for the figures to be meaningful as the cut off for applications was not until 15 January 2006. It was noted that there was a 3% increase in applications when compared to the same time last year and the figures for the individual faculties were also briefly discussed.

It was felt that final recruitment information for the last academic year (2005) would be more useful at this juncture rather than incomplete information of initial applications for the next year (2006). The workload schedule would need to be amended to reflect this.

ACTION: Secretary

It was reported to the Committee that 53% of clearing offers had been converted in 2005 which was viewed as a strong performance.

05.28 **Institutional Academic Plan including Developments in Part Time Education**

document APC05.23

A four page summary of document APC05.23 was tabled and the Professor of Portfolio Development talked to the shorter paper.

The following points were raised in general discussion:

- The Committee felt that some further detail was needed regarding what the target

volume of full time undergraduate students would be in three to five years.

- With regard to increasing full time undergraduate applications, it was queried how this would fit in with the agenda for social inclusion. It was felt that if there was a clear articulation of Foundation Degrees and Higher National Diplomas to Honours Degrees then this should not become an issue.
- It was suggested that marginal candidates who applied late and tended to withdraw early, often after lots of input and support from staff, was a concern that needed to be addressed. Feedback from students suggests that tutor groups are unstable and lose some value if some students start late in the term.
- The University College encompasses a very broad ability span and catering for the lowest common denominator makes the pace too slow for the higher achieving students. Balancing the two was a difficult task.
- If further attractive courses can be successfully developed across the portfolio generally, then the University College could be more selective.
- Cross faculty collaboration and the further development of joint awards was inhibited by factors such as income stream allocation and student numbers. The different curriculum structure in different faculties was also seen as a barrier.
- There were low numbers of part time students on degree courses and it was felt that this needed to be increased, possibly by offering courses at weekends. It was felt that there was a big gap in provision in this area.
- Employers were less willing to offer students day release or partial day release in the current economic climate. More independent learning was needed with less actual attendance at the University College. It was suggested that there might be room for a three year Honours Degree, structured like a Foundation Degree, with students completing 120 credits per year and this could in time also lead to a work based Masters Degree.
- It was felt that the University College could be flexible on fees for work based students as there was no obligation to charge the maximum £3000.
- Government support for part time students had increased significantly over recent years.
- It was felt that the Institution needed a range of combined awards at degree level as nationally applications for such combined awards are 10% of the total made through UCAS.
- If this area were to be developed it would have implications for faculty co-operation and the University College regulations.
- Transparent mechanisms were needed to support portfolio development.
- Significant new opportunities for curriculum developments lie between, and not just within, faculties but proper co-ordination, commitment and co-operation was needed to develop them.
- It was suggested that, from an external perspective, the University College could at times look like collegiate institution, with each Faculty appearing as an entity in itself with a different profile and degree of corporate emphasis. It needed to strengthen the presentation of a more consistent corporate image to all external stakeholders.
- The key role of Academic Planning Committee was to ensure that developments were in line with the Strategic Plan.
- Part time postgraduate students had declined in numbers by 41%, mainly due to the withdrawal from international collaboration. The aim of the University College should be to increase numbers on existing part time post graduate courses, but also to develop new ones such as Law, Social Work, Psychology, Business and Management which were recognised as growth areas within the UK sector.
- Regarding undergraduate courses, a 60 credit University Certificate and a 120 credit Diploma were suggested as a good route for allowing new students access to the Institution and increasing its profile.
- It was felt that the University College should drive this forward, rather than the Partner Colleges.
- With regard to full time undergraduate courses the market was felt to be volatile and rapidly changing.
- It was considered that the market for Foundation Degrees was currently immature and growth was therefore unpredictable.

The Committee **supported** all the changes proposed to the document.

It was agreed that before the final document on the Institutional Academic Plan was sent to Planning Board, and then on to Senate, that the format of the substantial paper could be changed so that it included a restatement of the agreed aims and a summary of the main proposals, with the data and supporting information in an appendix. It was further agreed that the Professor of Portfolio Development would liaise with the Secretary to amend the document accordingly. .

ACTION: Professor of Portfolio Development and Secretary

The Committee **supported and approved** the paper for onward transmission to Planning Board, and from there to Senate, in the Spring of 2006.

05.29 Consideration of Initial and Outline Proposals (2004-2005)

document APC05.22

a Faculty of ASSH

i) MA East Asian Cinema (Full Time and Part Time modes) - Initial Proposals

The Committee felt that there was insufficient market research given that the awards were in a very narrow and specialised area. The Committee were of the opinion that it might not recruit well and felt that staff should undertake more market research to provide evidence of demand, particularly for the part time mode. The Committee decided to refer the proposals back to the faculty with a request that they contact the Planning Unit and Marketing Department for further assistance and input. It was felt that this might be an interesting strand in a more general Film Studies MA.

These proposals were referred back to the Faculty.

ii) BSc (Hons) Forensic Psychology and Police Studies

Initial Proposal Approved.

iii) BSc (Hons) Police Studies and Citizenship

Initial Proposal Approved with some reservations about the real potential demand for Citizenship as a Minor.

iv) BSc (Hons) Police Studies and Criminal Investigation

Initial Proposal Approved.

v) FD in Community Development (Work Based, Part Time, Route B)

The Committee felt that the thorough and considered development of this course was a model of good practice. Additional information was provided to the Committee about the engagement of the course team with the sector.

Outline Proposal Approved.

b Faculty of Leisure and Tourism

vi) FD in Spa and Therapy Management (Work Based, Part Time, Route B)

The Committee were advised that the start date for this award had been revised to September 2006. It had been rigorously developed with major employers both nationally and internationally. Further clarification on the start date was requested from the faculty.

ACTION: Leisure and Tourism

Outline Proposal Approved.

vii) FDA Protective Security Management (Part Time, Distance Learning, Route B)

This had been developed in consultation with industry with a stand alone module for Door Security.

Outline Proposal Approved.

viii) FD Hospitality Management (Route A or B)

To be taught initially at Aylesbury College. The Committee were advised that this was a niche area with a proven skills deficit that had been identified by Aim Higher. It was initially being developed by Aylesbury College, but in association with Amersham & Wycombe College and Uxbridge College, with a view to it being rolled out to these Colleges in due course.

Outline Proposal Approved.

c Faculty of Technology

ix) MSc Building Conservation

This was returning to the Committee for consideration after further development. As the numbers of listed buildings are increasing it was felt that there was a market for this course.

Initial Proposal Approved.

x) MEng Mechanical Engineering Design

This was returning to the Committee for consideration after further development. It was a top up to the existing BEng and would enable students to obtain Chartered Engineer status.

Initial Proposal Approved.

xi) BSc (Hons) Audio Technology

This is in addition to the Music Technology course and would hopefully tap into the niche market for the moving image and animation. It was asked whether the faculty had considered changing the course title to include the word animation as this might strengthen interest and result in increased enquiries and applications.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

Initial Proposal Approved.

xii) BSc (Hons) Games Design and Development

It was reported that the faculty have engaged with industry on this proposal (including Microsoft) and it should prove a very popular course.

Initial Proposal Approved.

xiii) BSc (Hons) Mobile Computing

This is a very current topic, including M-Wallets, WiFi, Laptops etc.

Initial Proposal Approved.

xiv) BSc (Hons) Medical Technology

The faculty had consulted with two hospitals and industry on this proposal. The faculty felt that they were slightly deficient in resources on the mechanical side but that this could be rectified. They were requested to consult with the Health Studies Faculty about this award and the Committee felt that there was also a potential for a part time award.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

The Committee referred this proposal back to the faculty for further clarification about resourcing and the potential demand for the full time mode.

Proposal Referred Back to Faculty

xv) BSc (Hons) Sustainable Technology

Another current area, as it would include recycling and the reuse of materials. Some questions were asked about the market and expected numbers of students for this course, but it was felt that it could start with low numbers and build later. It was reported that BCA were also developing courses in this area which could act as feeders.

Initial Proposal Approved.

xvi) Foundation (Year 0) Design Technology

This had been developed to underpin the Product Design Course. The Committee felt that the Faculty of Design might raise an issue with regard to the course title and that it might need to be amended.

Initial Proposal Approved.

xvii) HNC Network Support

This was developed to build on the success of the Cisco short courses. It was noted that there are also some staff currently working within BCUC who would benefit from this course. It would also fit with a full time Network course, not currently running, and may enable this to be offered again.

Initial Proposal Approved.

The Faculty of Technology were asked to provide the Outline Proposals for any Initial Proposals due to start in September 2006 at the next full meeting of the Committee in February in order that the validation deadline of the 31st April 2006 may be met.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

d School of Continuing and Professional Education

xviii) Post Graduate Certificate in Blended Learning

This had already been piloted with the Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The programme had been written and it was ready to go forward to validation, probably early in the new year. This was an in service training programme and was seen as opening the door on this area for future developments. SCPE were asked for the outline proposal.

ACTION: SCPE

Initial Proposal Approved.

ixx) Post Graduate Certificate in E-Learning in Higher Education

This course was more technology based, in the first instance for the staff of BCUC and the Partner Colleges, but eventually to be rolled out to include schools in this area. It was reported that the title might be amended to include FE Colleges and Schools and the Committee encouraged this. It was currently at the consultation stage and an Outline proposal would come to the next meeting of APC in February 2006.

Initial Proposal Approved.

Some other late proposals had been tabled but the Chair advised that he would only exceptionally take these at the end of the meeting if time allowed.

05.30

Report from the Foundation Degree Review and Development Group (24 October 2005)

document APC05.20

It was reported that the Foundation Degree Review and Development Group had made a recommendation that Foundation Degree awards be graded so that employers could distinguish high achieving students. This had been returned to the Group by Senate for further discussion. The Group still considered that the current system did not recognise high levels of achievement and commitment by some students and that there needed to be more adequate recognition of levels of achievement. It was felt by APC that this could usefully be discussed by Teaching and Learning Committee and linked to a wider discussion on grading and marking.

ACTION: Teaching and Learning Committee

The Group have also asked the Marketing Department to look at a marketing strategy for Foundation Degrees and this was coming back to the next meeting of the Group for discussion. APC was advised that it will be kept updated on this issue.

05.31 Workload Schedule

document APC05.21

This had come to the Committee for note so that members could see what needed to be discussed and so that forward planning for the major business of the Committee could be undertaken i.e. standard reports from the Planning Unit. It was advised that it would be a standing agenda item and would be continuously developed. A further draft would be circulated for comment before the next meeting.

ACTION: Secretary

Tabled Papers

At the point the Chair advised the Committee that the additional late proposals that had been tabled would need to be taken at the next meeting of the Committee because of time constraints. If they were urgent they could be dealt with in the interim by convening a small sub committee of APC to discuss them. He asked that if there were any issues they should be raised with him via the Secretary.

ACTION: Faculty Representatives

05.32 Date of the Next Meeting

Proposed dates for the next meeting of the Committee are:

Thursday 9 February 2006
Thursday 16 February 2006

Members were asked to contact the Secretary to advise which date would be most convenient for them to attend.

prepared by: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance]
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