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without amendments:	

# Academic Planning Committee

## minutes

date: 9 February 2006  
time: 9.30am  
location: Main Boardroom, High Wycombe

### 06.01 Minutes of the Last Meeting (17 November 2005 and 13 December 2005)

The minutes of the meetings of 17 November 2005 and 13 December 2005 were accepted as a true and accurate record by the Committee.

### 06.02 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

#### a 05.25(c): Curriculum Management System (CMS) *verbal report*

The Chair reported that the debate that had occurred at the meeting on 17 November 2005 had unfortunately not been fully furnished with the facts due to the unavoidable absence of the Head of MIS. He reported that the systems do not overlap, but could in the future be complementary. Blackboard generally enhances the student experience, and the CMS is more academic in nature. In the long term Blackboard could possibly draw information from the CMS.

The Head of LIS reported that the Blackboard Content System could be a useful place in which to develop store documents.

It was suggested that the Heads of LIS and MIS should meet outside of the meeting to discuss how the systems could be developed in tandem. The Academic Registrar requested that he also be involved in any discussions.

**ACTION: Heads of LIS and MIS and the Academic Registrar**

#### b 05.26: Committee Remit document APC06.01

It was reported to the Committee that this paper was presented to Senate on 16 December 2005. It was approved in principle with two caveats:

1) That the link between Academic Planning Committee (APC), Academic Audit Committee (AAC) and Validation should be mentioned in the Terms of Reference. The Chair of AAC (who was also a member of APC) stated that his Committee needed to have confidence that the initial financial, marketing and resource issues had been dealt with at APC as this all tied into the validation process. It needed to be clear where various responsibilities lay. It was felt that the relationship between committee functions and executive actions needed to be examined in the long term if changes were to be made. It was suggested that the Chairs of APC and AAC should meet outside of the meeting to discuss this.

**ACTION: Chair of APC and Chair of AAC**

2) The question of student representation on the Committee. The Chair asked for questions and comments from members on this issue. A lengthy discussion ensued about the appropriateness of student representation on APC given that the Committee was moving towards executive action which might not necessarily be in harmony with the Student's Union. After detailed discussion it was proposed that a

member of the Student Union should be invited to attend the Committee as a co-opted member or on an "in attendance" basis. This was **supported** by the Committee.

At the point the Assistant Director Regional Development observed that the Committee also lacked representation from the Partner Colleges. The Committee felt that more clarity was needed regarding strategy and planning in the relationship with the Partners, and it was suggested that the Strategic Management Group be asked to nominate a representative to attend the Committee as a co-opted member or on an "in attendance" basis. This was **supported** by the Committee.

**ACTION: Chair**

The Committee were advised that the recommendations regarding membership and the terms of reference would now go to Senate for approval.

**c 05.30: Grading of Foundation Degrees**

verbal report

The Committee were advised that this had recently been revisited by the Foundation Degree Review and Development Group, who were very much in support of the principle. The issue had since been referred to Teaching and Learning Committee where it was currently under consideration along with grade descriptors. When discussions were complete the views of Teaching and Learning Committee would be passed to Senate for consideration. The Committee were also advised that there was a parallel development in that transcripts were moving towards Bologna and it might become necessary to grade Foundation Degrees in this context.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The Foundation Degree Review and Development Group was of the opinion that grading results would be very useful to employers and that it might confer a market advantage to the University College.
- Practice on this issue was currently varied within the HE sector.
- Employers wanted and expected a grading system.
- It was suggested that the transcript could give this information, rather than the creation of a new grading structure. HND and HNC qualifications had never been graded.
- Grading might facilitate articulation to other BCUC awards.

It was decided to place this matter on hold until Teaching and Learning Committee had reported back to Senate with their views on the issue.

**d Review of Action Sheets from 17 November 2005 and 13 December 2005**

attached to minutes

17 November 2005

05.29 b vi – FD Spa and Therapy Management. Start date confirmed as September 2007

05.29 c xi – BSc Audio Technology. This had been discussed by the Faculty and contained no animation elements at all, so the title was to remain unchanged.

05.29 C xiv – BSc (Hons) Medical Technology. After discussion this proposed award had been put on hold.

13 December 2005

05.34 a i – PGCE Professional Practice. Full Outline Proposal had now been received.

05.34 a iv – BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance. After discussion in the Faculty the start date was still to be September 2006. The Committee were advised that no professionally qualified staff had yet been recruited, although there were some PTVLs with professional qualifications. The course was being advertised in UCAS for 2006 entry. A meeting to discuss the award was being held on Friday 10 February. The Committee wanted assurance of a positive outcome, and asked for a progress report to

come to the next meeting.

**ACTION: Business School Representative**

05.34 c – FDS Sc Engineering. The full Outline Proposal had now been received.

**06.03 Business Plan Pro-Forma**

*document APC06.02*

The Committee were advised that consultation paper APC06.02 had already been to Planning Board on 16 January 2006. The new Director had already had discussions with Planning Board regarding strategic aims and performance indicators, and business plans might also be included in this in the future. Further meetings on this subject were scheduled to take place over the next 2-3 weeks and the draft business plan pro-forma might get overtaken by events. It was agreed to defer any further discussion until a clearer framework emerged from parallel processes initiated from Planning Board.

**06.04 Outline Proposal Process**

**a Report from Technology re: piloting the new form**  
verbal report

The Committee were advised that the form had been piloted in both Leisure and Tourism in the Tourism area and Technology for the FDS Sc in Engineering. The Technology Faculty Representative reported back on the ease of use. The Faculty had not extensively contacted the Planning Unit for assistance during this process:

- Social and economic demand had not been easy to answer and help would be needed from the Planning Unit.
- Market size would also require Planning Unit assistance, as would market share and HE trends.
- Information on skills shortages would be of use.
- Competitor information had been researched by the Faculty, although input from the Planning Unit would have been useful. It was noted that Faculties could best compare Programme Specifications from different institutions to gauge whether they were in direct competition.
- The Faculty had found the competitive advantage section useful, but felt that it might need to be moved within the form so that it could be tied in to other relevant sections.
- The Planning Unit advised that some further questions had now been added to the form.

In summary, the Faculty of Technology advised that they felt the form was very useful, not too arduous and easier than the current initial and outline proposal process.

**b Process and draft pro-forma**  
*document APC06.03*

The Committee were advised that this process was intended to tie in with Faculty Business Plans and be used exceptionally for developments outside of those plans. The members were asked whether they supported the introduction of such a process. The following points were made:

- Health Studies fully supported the process, but asked what resources were available for the timely sign off and the support and guidance on some questions. They were also concerned as to the length of time that the process would take. Additionally, they felt that it was too early in the planning stage for the teams to include module names and that an outline was more important.
- It was agreed that the pro-forma still needed work in some areas.
- Proposals needed greater consideration at an early stage regarding the viability of

the programme and the resources needed. It was reiterated that the process would be used for exceptions only.

- It was felt that the process could help to ensure that work undertaken by staff came to fruition.
- The Faculty of ASSH felt that it would be a useful tool. They queried whether the complete form would be considered or whether it would be examined in stages through the development of the course.
- The Marketing Manager advised that marketing information had been asked for at an early stage in order that the marketing process could commence as soon as possible. The information given on the form would be used for UCAS profiles, the web site and the prospectus, and would therefore save the faculties time.
- It was felt that Marketing should work closely with the faculties and provide training support on the marketing information required for the completion of the form.
- The process of approval would be through APC and AAC and would encompass resources, academic coherence, plausibility and market position. Planning needed to be a complete process.
- It was felt that there was a need to prioritise the order of resolution of the planning process.
- It was suggested that the form could be used to ensure that ongoing courses met all the required criteria.
- It was felt that more clarity was needed concerning what was being signed off at each stage of the process. More discussion was needed on this area.
- SCPE supported the process in principle, but were concerned that their courses would not fit comfortably into the process as they were developed for strategic, political or policy reasons. Whilst noting these concerns, it was nevertheless felt that SCPE courses could still be accommodated within the process.
- Leisure and Tourism had also trialled the process and reported that due to the form, the initial ideas about the proposed programmes had changed entirely once the market research had been conducted, and a new title had been identified together with changes to the entire new programme area. Proposals for Masters courses had been sent back to the course teams because information was missing – getting staff to complete the form fully had been an issue. Staff had been forced to do more research which made the process slower, but improved the quality of the proposal.
- It was suggested the amount and sources of assistance available to complete the process should be advertised more fully.
- It was also suggested that as the process was so beneficial that it should be used in some degree for all new proposals, not just exceptions.
- It was felt that the Faculties should be prepared before contacting the Planning Unit for assistance and information.
- The form was thought to be very useful as an aide-memoire with an inbuilt approval mechanism. It was also important as an information gathering process.
- It was suggested that Foundation Degrees might need an amended version of the form, as in a lot of cases the expertise on the subject area was outside of the faculty. In these cases the form would need to show links with industry and other outside expertise. It was agreed that an additional section would be drafted for Foundation Degrees.

The Chair asked that any further comments be passed back to Marketing, the Planning Unit and the Professor of Portfolio Development.

In summary, the Committee was in favour of the process. They were mindful of the potential workload but also the potential benefits.

The Working Group were asked to report back to the next meeting of APC after further final amendments had been made to the form.

**ACTION: Working Group**

## 06.05 Sector Skills Councils

*verbal report*

The Dean of Leisure and Tourism and the Assistant Director Regional Development apologised to the Committee for the lack of a paper.

The Committee were advised that they had approached the four Sector Skills Councils with which they worked most closely. However, due to a reorganisation of Skillset, the body with which the Skills Councils work, everything was currently in a state of flux.

It was suggested that two representatives from the Sector Skills Councils should be invited to the meeting to talk to the Committee about the subject in detail. The Committee were happy to accept this suggestion.

**ACTION: Dean of Leisure and Tourism and the Assistant Director Regional Development**

It was reported that Centres for Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) were related to Sector Skills Councils, but were different in nature.

## 06.06 Partner Colleges HE Plan

*document APC06.05*

The Committee were advised that this was the first time that the Partner Colleges had submitted a strategic HE Plan, and were appraised of some of the background by the Chair and the Assistant Director Regional Development. Committee members were asked for their comments on the documents. The following points were raised:

- It was asked how the plans were approved, agreed and resourced. The Assistant Director Regional Development hoped that the Faculties had been consulted during the drafting process so that they had endorsed them.
- It was enquired whether the plans would be formally endorsed. This was thought to be difficult as the University College was not the owner of the plans and the Partner Colleges had no representation on the Committee.
- The Health Studies Representative reported that as far as she was aware, no consultation had taken place with her faculty, particularly with regard to Foundation Degrees.
- It was felt that discussions should have occurred at Faculty Board, with the draft plans distributed there as it had a significant impact on the faculties. It was suggested that there was a need to have better communication between the Partners and Faculties to avoid confusion on new course development proposals.
- It was suggested that the plans were vague in relation to strategic content which was not helpful to the faculties. They needed to be more specific regarding possible future developments and areas being investigated.
- Possible developments that had not been discussed with the faculties, did appear in the Partners strategic plan.
- The areas that the University College needed to be assured about were:
  - 1) Resources
  - 2) Strategic Developments
  - 3) The student experience
- It was felt that there ought to be a point where the plans were endorsed and approved. This would be taken up outside the meeting.
- The Design Faculty Representative then circulated a paper regarding course developments planned within their Faculty by Amersham and Wycombe. He reported that discussion had been appropriate and helpful. However, the development of new areas and the assessment of viability of existing areas had a lack of clarity eg Textiles. The continuance of support in minority areas also needed further investigation.
- It was felt that apart from Amersham and Wycombe, the Strategic Partners did not

consistently attend the Committee structure at University College or Faculty level. This could lead to a breakdown in communication between the partners and Faculties about areas to develop in the future. It was suggested that the introduction of a Regional Plan might assist with this.

- The plans were a work in progress but it did seem that there would need to be changes to the processes, particularly at a strategic level.
- It was felt that there needed to be a forum for discussion of courses that might otherwise fall between two separate faculties.
- It was pointed out to the Committee that each Partner had listed proposed provision, and that Faculties now needed to discuss this with the Partners before the formal planning meeting.
- It was felt that although the Partners had possibly not consulted fully with the Faculties, the plans were useful documents and had significantly moved the institution forward. However, the strategic direction needed to be more clearly articulated.

In summary, the Committee welcomed the move to strategic plans. It was felt that they would provide greater clarity of the direction of the long-term relationship with the varying partners in the future. It had however highlighted some inconsistencies between the view of the Partners and the Faculties.

## **06.07 Faculty Annual Operating Statements**

*document APC06.06*

It was reported that the documentation from Health Studies had yet to be received.

### **a Review of Objectives 2004-2005**

These had come to the Committee for note only.

### **b New Objectives 2005-2006**

Each Faculty representative was asked to talk to their Annual Operating Statement (AOS) and indicate a number of key objectives for 2005-2006:

#### **ASSH**

- The Annual Operating Statement reflected an ongoing process.
- The Masters programme in East Asian Cinema had been postponed for a year
- The FD in Community Development was going to validation in March 2006. This would be the first FD in ASSH
- The FD in Stage Make-up being developed with Aylesbury College was progressing.
- A top-up degree and bridging course was being developed in Person-Centred Counselling.
- Academic Tutoring and Skills Support were being reviewed throughout the faculty.

#### **Business School**

- Student recruitment and numbers - marketing, new programme development and a range of postgraduate awards
- Retention – the faculty retention strategy would be reviewed and revised.
- Student Satisfaction – particularly in terms of the campus
- International Recruitment

#### **Design**

- The same format had been used this year as last year to aid consistency.
- The five year faculty plan and marketing issues were critical. The withdrawal from the Hughenden Project would have a major impact.
- The Capital Investment Programme
- The research strategy, which amounted to 10% of the faculty budget

- The link to Marketing
- Academic regulation and administration
- Staff development and the link to Peer Observation.

### **Health Studies**

Not available

### **Leisure & Tourism**

- Achievement of student numbers
- The validation of four Foundation Degrees
- Increased liaison with local schools. The faculty was looking to widen its local market
- Feedback forms, standardisation of approach and teaching hours across the faculty
- Reduce Staff: Student ratios from 1:29 to 1:25
- Preparation for the RAE in 2008
- Implementation of the attendance support policy
- Better IT support and service in the faculty.

### **Technology**

- Visits and activity in local schools to be increased by 50%
- Retention is an important issue
- Many other key areas were the same as those noted by other faculties

### **SCPE**

- Different from the faculties due to the different nature of the work of the school
- It was reported that the school was currently in an area where a number of initiatives had ended, and others were awaited.
- A five year plan would be developed
- SCPE was currently not targeted for student numbers, although this might change.

It was noted that many of the faculties seemed to have similar issues. It was also felt that the linkage between Central Service Departments and faculty AOS was currently weak and could be enhanced into a two way process with better team working. The following improvements to the process were suggested for the next academic year:

- That each AOS should have a brief introduction that listed key points.
- That a 'risk if not achieved column' should be included as it helped to focus attention.
- That reports should be subdivided in a similar way to that from Leisure and Tourism

It was felt that the process of bringing the Faculty AOS to APC was less than satisfactory and needed to be moved forward to a new process in due course.

## **06.08**

### **Report on Applications and Turnaround**

*document APC06.07*

The figures presented to the Committee were based on internal data only as at 30 January 2006, and it was reported that applications were 16% down on the same time in 2005. The UCAS deadline had been the 15 January 2006, but they were having system problems, causing delay in data processing, so the picture might not yet be complete. A further update was now expected the following week with the publication of the first UCAS Management Digest on applications for 2006 entry.

On analysis of the internal data, the position regarding Foundation Degrees looked positive, but applications across the whole area of full time undergraduate degrees were significantly lower. This was felt to be a concern, and it was reported that it would be discussed at the Dean's Meeting later in the day. The possibility of asking for Institutional data to be withheld from the UCAS Management Digest was mentioned, and would be investigated further outside the meeting.

It was felt that the increased use of data at the meeting was very helpful. A request was made to distinguish between home UK, EC and International students in future.

**ACTION: Planning Unit/Marketing and Student Recruitment**

#### **06.09 Numbers of Students on Modules**

*document APC06.08*

A more detailed replacement paper was circulated to the meeting. This item had been requested at the previous APC meeting in November and had been pulled off the QL system. It suggested that 25% of full time undergraduate modules were running with less than 10 students, and a further 15% had less than 15 students enrolled on them. This meant that a total of 40% of modules across the institution had less than 15 students. However, only 9% of student enrolments were on modules in that category.

The Chair asked that the information presented be reviewed by the Faculties with the assistance of the Planning Unit, and that the findings be reported back to the next substantive meeting of APC on 25 May 2006.

**ACTION: Faculty Representatives**

A brief discussion followed and the some points were raised:

- Most of the Faculties had some issues to be resolved with the data. The Planning Unit offered assistance with this.
- Some courses that were being discontinued presented modules with low numbers.
- It was asked at what date the sample was taken, and this was confirmed as November 2005.
- It was agreed that normally modules with low numbers would require a comprehensive rationale if they were to continue running.

#### **06.10 Consideration of Initial and Outline Proposals (2004-2006)**

*document APC06.09*

##### **Faculty of Health Studies**

##### **Post Graduate Certificate – Community Matron – Outline Proposal**

The Faculty Representative reported that this course had been commissioned by the North West London Health Authority, who had asked for tenders in December 2005. If they were successful there would be a pilot in March and the course would run from September 2006. **The Committee approved the Outline proposal**, and wished the Faculty every success in the tendering process.

Due to time constraints the rest of this item was deferred until it could be dealt with by convening a further meeting of APC to discuss them, along with some additional papers tabled by the Faculty of Technology. This was agreed by the Committee. The Secretary would contact members electronically to identify an appropriate date and time.

**ACTION: Secretary**

#### **06.11 Workload Schedule**

*document APC06.10*

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.

**06.12 Date of Next Meeting**

The next substantive meeting would be Thursday 25 May 2006 at 9.30am in the Boardroom. An Ad Hoc Meeting would be arranged as soon as possible to consider the outstanding initial and outline proposals. Dates for this would be circulated electronically.

**ACTION: Secretary**

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prepared by: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)]  
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