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confirmed by chair:	
confirmed by committee	24/11/2006
with/without amendments:	

Academic Planning Committee

minutes

date: 25 May 2006
time: 9.30am
location: Main Boardroom, High Wycombe

06.17 Minutes of the Last Meeting (9 February 2006 and 14 March 2006)

The minutes of the meetings of 9 February 2006 and 14 March 2006 were accepted as true and accurate records by the Committee and were signed by the Chair.

06.18 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

a 06.02 (a): Curriculum Management System (CMS) *verbal report*

It was reported that discussions had taken place between MIS and LIS and it had been agreed the CMS would be used for course development and storage of electronic documents rather than the Blackboard Contents System. These systems did not conflict but would complement each other.

b 06.02 (b): Committee Remit document APC06.11

This had been brought for the Committee to note and had been agreed at Senate on 7 April 2006.

c 06.07: Health Studies Annual Operating Statement document APC06.13

This had come to APC to note as it was unavailable at the last substantive meeting.

d 06.15 (e): Cross Faculty Collaboration *verbal report*

It was reported that the University College was making efforts to facilitate cross faculty co-operation. It was felt that the impending Faculty restructure would also assist with this, with the substructure emerging over the next two to three weeks. There would be a Planning Workshop on 7 June 2006, which would look into this issue. Cross faculty working would also need to be promulgated between the three new faculties once they were in place.

e Review of Action Sheet from 9 February 2006 Attached to minutes

The Committee were advised that there were no outstanding items from this action sheet.

f Review of Action Sheet from 14 March 2006 attached to minutes

06.14 i) – BSc (Hons) Police Studies with Forensic Psychology - Dealt with at Validation

- 06.15 a iii) – BSc (Hons) Sustainable Design - Dealt with at Validation
- 06.15 b i) – PG Cert in Blended Learning – Dealt with at Validation
- 06.15 b iii) – BA (Hons) Post Compulsory Education – This was a new top up with no link to the PGCE
- 06.15 d iv) – FDA Early Years – This would be based in the Health Studies Faculty

The Committee considered that queries such as this could be dealt with more efficiently by a note to the Chair of the relevant Validation Panel rather than coming back to APC for resolution. It was felt that the new outline proposal pro-forma would assist with this issue, and that next year links between APC and the validation process should be formalised to make communication easier.

06.19 Sector Skills Councils

The Chair welcomed the Head of Standards Development from the Sector Skill Council for the Security Industry, **Skills for Security**, to the meeting. He then gave a comprehensive presentation to members on Sector Skills Councils, the major points of which were as follows:

- Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Sector Skills Bodies (SSBs) had similar roles but were recognised differently by the Government. SSCs were licensed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. SSBs were recognised by the Sector Skills Development Agency.
- Both are employer led and have common goals:
 - Reduce skills gaps and shortages
 - Improve productivity, business and public service performance
 - Increase opportunities to boost skills and productivity in everybody in the sector workforce
 - Improve learning supply from apprenticeship to higher education
 - Develop and promote National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- SSCs receive core funding and individual project funding and have a centrally set agenda. Currently there are 25 SSCs in operation and this number is the maximum
- SSBs receive only project funding and have more freedom in their activities. There are currently 26 in total and there is no upper limit on numbers.
- There are also Sector Liaison Groups which are very important.
- The main activities of SSCs and SSBs are:
 - Labour market intelligence – between 600,000 and 750,000 people are currently working in the security industry
 - Skills foresight analysis – looking into the future
 - National Occupational Standards (NOS)
 - Apprenticeships
 - Sector qualifications strategy
 - Qualifications frameworks
 - To influence vocational education programme, including higher levels
 - Represent its sector
- National Occupational Standards
 - Specifications for competence in employment
 - Specify criteria for knowledge and understanding, skills and scope of competence
- Have various uses
 - Recruitment and selection
 - Appraisal
 - Educational and training programme design
 - Employee development
 - Qualifications – all types and all levels.
- Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) will inform education and training programmes at all levels. Informs the 14-19 curriculum, apprenticeships, credit and qualifications framework, influencing education and training.
- Currently investigating four levels of apprenticeship (for 14-19 year olds)
- It is hoped that BCUC will assist with Graduate Apprenticeships and possibly Advanced Apprenticeships.
- Collaboration between HEIs and Sector Bodies is usually in the provision of

Foundation Degrees (eg Crowd and Safety Management and Protective Security Management with Leisure and Tourism). Also licensing qualifications for close protection officers.

- BCUC had supported the Sector Qualification Strategy.
- Benefits of collaboration between HEIs and Sector Bodies:
 - Enhanced access for HEIs to industry sectors
 - Joint qualification development and marketing
 - Contribution by and support of industry for HE programmes
 - More coherent provision of Vocational Educational Training including HE
 - Better understanding of respective roles
 - Helps Sector Bodies meet their objectives

The following points were raised in discussion:

- It was felt that this should provide good opportunities for cross faculty working
- The fact that the sector was approaching awarding bodies and driving qualifications was seen as positive.
- There was a need to contact Skills Bodies – not all were as proactive as Skills for Security. It was felt that a co-ordinated approach was needed, rather than a blanket strategy.
- University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) accreditation was crucial for Foundation Degrees
- Companies wanted qualifications with National Occupational Standards integral to them.
- Linkage to the main overarching bodies was seen as key and provided an advantage to HEIs.
- There was work to be done within the University College to persuade colleagues of the benefits of working with SSCs and SSBs.

The Chair thanked the representative of Skills for Security for coming to the meeting. The Committee were advised that a copy of his presentation would shortly be available on the BCUC web site.

06.20 Outline Proposals

document APC06.15

a Faculty of ASSH

i) MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

This had been represented without the clinical component which had caused too many issues. The outline proposal was brought to the Committee to flag the potential of the course, and would be represented in the new format during the next Academic Year. The following points were raised in discussion:

- It was reported that the lack of a placement did not devalue the award and that it was common practice.
- It was felt that the viability of the course needed to be costed if there were only 12 students
- No judgement about resourcing issues could be made by APC
- Market demand was discussed and it was felt that there was scope for a top up from BSc courses in this subject.

The Committee **supported the development of the proposal** and asked that it return to the next meeting in the new format

ACTION: Faculty of ASSH

There was a discussion regarding whether APC had a costing methodology to apply to proposals. It was reported that in Leisure and Tourism a costing form was available which could possibly be used as part of the proposal. It was agreed that this should be followed up outside of the meeting to establish what the status of the costing form was.

ACTION: Chair

b Faculty of Leisure and Tourism

ii) FDA Sports Coaching – Route B

It was reported that this had been two years in development and was a refocus of the existing FD in Sport and Leisure Management, which would be phased out. Students would have an individually tailored top up to an Honours degree, which would need to be explicit. Regarding the issue of costing, it was reported that some modules were shared with other FD programmes. It was felt that this also might need to be more explicitly stated. **The Committee supported this proposal.**

iii) Bachelor of Professional Studies

It was reported that this had been in development for 18 months, and would have a bracketed award name. It was a personally tailored third year top up for Foundation Degree students. The faculty had already received 36 letters of application for the course, which they felt could be adequately supported by the present Academic Tutoring system. The course was structured as a one year route B top up which would consist of 4 generic modules with a progression route to Masters level. The Committee felt that it had potential for application across the whole University College. The Faculty wished to validate the course in September 2006 for a start date of November 2006. It was thought that any start date would have to confirm to the policy endorsed at Planning Board on 22 May 2006 and that therefore the course might not be able to commence until later. **The Committee supported this proposal**, and thought that it had important implications for the new faculty structure.

iii) Generic MBA/MA/MSc/M Professional Development (Specialism)

This would have a start date of October 2008 and market research was currently ongoing. It was felt that as the University College already had an MBA in existence, it would probably not be offered as an MBA. The Committee were advised that it was a work in progress and would return during the next academic year on the new pro-forma. **The Committee supported the course in principle.**

ACTION: Faculty of Leisure and Tourism

c Faculty of Technology

iv) BSc (Hons) Audio Programming

This was mainly concerned with voice commands for computers, particularly for games programming, and it was hoped to start the course in 2007. The Committee noted the potential in this area but felt that evidence of the market demand needed development, possibly in conjunction with the relevant Sector Skills Council, Marketing and the Planning Unit. Furthermore, the faculty were asked to reflect whether this was an award in its own right, or a 'pathway' on the BA (Hons) Games Design and Development. **The Committee supported the course in principle**, and asked that the updated proposal return to the next meeting.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

v) FD Automotive Engineering

This course was to convert an IMI Level 4 into a Foundation Degree, utilising the faculty's links with BMW, and would be taught at East Berkshire College, who were already well resourced in this area. It was felt that this subject had good potential for strategic developments. **The Committee supported the proposal** but felt that the unique selling points of the course needed to be expressed more positively.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

vi) BSc (Hons) Medical Technology

This had already been approved in principle, and the Committee requested that it be represented on the new pro-forma to the next meeting of APC

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

vii) FD Building Maintenance

This proposal was not complete. The Committee referred this back to the faculty to come to the next meeting of APC with additional information.

ACTION: Faculty of Technology

06.21 **Planning Forum with Partner Colleges**

verbal report

A paper on this had been circulated to Committee members electronically before the meeting. The subject had arisen as a query from APC regarding the extent of how the planning processes at the Partner Colleges meshed with those of the University College.

The agreed process was explained by the HE Manager from Amersham and Wycombe College who was present at the meeting. APC were reassured that there were firm structures for planning in place. The following points were raised in discussion:

- The University College Strategy for Collaborative Provision might need revisiting in the light of the new strategic plan and Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER).
- Output for Strategic Review Meetings was needed.
- Members were advised that there was a three year rolling plan with set areas which had been discussed with the faculties and would be updated annually.
- The Collaborative Provision Strategy would come to APC each spring and would be discussed in detail at further planning meetings.
- When the faculty restructure was complete it was thought that a lead should be appointed from each faculty to co-ordinate relations with the Partner Colleges.
- It was felt that strategic planning in the Partners needed to be more integrated in the faculties and vice versa.

06.22 **Numbers of Students on Modules – Faculty Reports**

Verbal reports / document APC06.18

Comments were received from the faculties present on their provision.

Applied Social Sciences and Humanities

- A report on this issue was available.
- There were 14 dissertation modules in Arts and Media, many of which had less than 10 students.
- After the revalidation of all their courses last year there were a number of students retaking old modules as Associates. It was hard to distinguish these from modules with low numbers for other reasons.

Buckinghamshire Business School

- The faculty had noted the number of modules in Languages with less than 10 students.
- The number of modules had been significantly reduced recently.
- There was a need to look at modules in the context of their place on a programme – specialisms in Level 3 did have small numbers.
- There could also be commercially valid reasons to have modules with small numbers. Students who engage with their studies may be less likely to fail or drop out. Modules with small numbers could therefore help reduce attrition rates.
- The faculty felt that there were no real anomalies and that the data was basically correct.

Health Studies

- Many modules with small numbers were the result of core programmes with specialist pathways under contract to Regional Health Authorities. Therefore it is not possible to close them.

Leisure and Tourism

- Many modules with small numbers were for programmes that were being phased out.
- Some were Associate Students retaking old modules, as in ASSH
- The cross-faculty course with Health Studies had small numbers
- Dissertation areas were also included

- Some areas had now been restructured with some small modules taught together.

Technology

- Agreed with most of the comments above.
- The faculty had used the report to look at module options with a view to reducing them.
- The faculty felt that there were some anomalies due to the fact that part time students were not included in the calculations.

The Committee noted the comments received from the Faculty Representatives. It was felt that reports such as this could be utilised by the faculties to plan new teaching accommodation in North Block in due course. The Committee agreed that it had been a useful exercise to undertake. There would be more discussion about reports such as this with the Planning Unit and MIS outside of the meeting.

06.23

Planning / Operational Issues

a Outline Proposal Proforma

document APC06.16

The Committee were advised that the document had been amended further following input from the faculties. **The Committee endorsed and approved the pro-forma** for use from this point forward for all new course developments.

It was asked whether projections for growth should be included and it was agreed that this should be dealt with under costings. A resources section also needed to be appended to the form. It was felt that it would also need amendment for use in Partner Colleges, and that the name of the Lead Academic Sponsor for each new development should be added to the pro-forma. A new revised form would be published as soon as possible.

ACTION: Planning Unit

The Committee were advised that briefing sessions would be held for both Partner College and BCUC staff on how proposals should be developed.

b New Course Development Cycle

document APC06.12

Planning Board had requested a paper detailing the cycle of new course development. It had become apparent that a minimum timescale of one year was needed for development and validation. Planning Board had requested that APC consider these timescales with a view to developing a fast track approach for selected courses and also procedures for dealing with 'sunsetting' of courses (ie retirement of courses).

The following points were raised in discussion:

- It was suggested that dates of APC meetings for the next academic year should be moved to accommodate the new course development schedule, possibly to October, January, and April/May.
- Due to the deadlines for the prospectus and the UCAS handbook it was thought that the planning process for outline proposals should take two years rather than one. However there was a need to act faster than this if the need arose.
- Students tended to use the website rather than the prospectus and this was constantly evolving.
- The main UCAS applications cycle was currently October to 15 January each year. It was thought that if courses were not visible then they might struggle to recruit.
- Any course that entered a fast track process would have to have excellent quality and standards. It should be exceptional and have clear criteria linked to evidence for demand.
- Planning Board were in favour of a fast track process with APC making decisions about which courses would be eligible. For any course to enter a fast track process the potential to recruit must be proven.
- It was felt that different circumstances might be needed for different courses.

- It was suggested that fast track might apply to part time provision and courses identified by employers or sector bodies.
- A risk assessment tool could be employed to assist in identifying fast track courses.
- Mini brochures or supplements could be published in addition to the prospectus.
- The policy should be approval by APC in October at the latest for courses commencing the following September.
- It was felt that APC could not consider the fast track process in any detail, but that this should come back to the next meeting for a more substantive discussion on the exceptional criteria needed for entry

ACTION: Secretary

- When developing criteria for 'sunsetting' courses, it was felt that enrolments on awards over two consecutive years should be considered. This might give a chance to regenerate some courses.
- APC could only make recommendations about course closures
- It was suggested that revenue and costs could be used as criteria rather than simply student numbers, possibly with a trigger number of enrolments
- It was felt that some type of threshold needed to be identified.
- There was also a need to consider what would happen to students on courses that were closing
- After some discussion it was decided to take Chair's Action to write and circulate a discussion paper for either the October 2006 or January 2007 meeting of APC.

ACTION: Chair and Secretary

c Course Changes Mid Cycle

verbal report

This item was deferred until the next meeting due to the absence of the Committee member who was to speak to it.

06.24 Full Time Undergraduate Applications: 2006 Entry

document APC06.14

It was reported that these were down 15% overall with a variable pattern across the University College. Foundation Degrees were recruiting well, but were still lower than the national average. Conversion rates had marginally improved on a like for like basis. The Committee were advised that this issue had been discussed in depth at Planning Board on Monday 22 May 2006.

06.25 Workload Schedule

document APC06.17

This had come to the Committee for note.

06.26 Date of Next Meeting

To be advised.

prepared by: Senior Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance]
 file location: K:/Committees/APC/Minutes/2005-2006/Meeting 25 May 2006.doc