

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2012

PRESENT:	Mr M Andrews, Dr A Eadie, Prof D Greenhalgh, Prof V James, Mrs C Hulsén, Prof J Wilson, Prof M Mannion (Chair), Ms H Marshall, Prof D Smith, Mr I Stewart, Prof R Whittaker, Mr S Laing
APOLOGIES:	Prof B Steves, Mr S Ward
BY INVITATION:	Prof L Creanor (item A5), Mrs S McKinnon (item A6)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms J Malcolm (Secretary)

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the recently appointed Director of Marketing to his first meeting of the Academic Policy Committee of session 2011/12. As this meeting was also the Director of Quality's last APC meeting prior to leaving the University, members joined with the Chair in thanking Dr Eadie for his invaluable work with APC and its predecessor Committees over many years at GCU and wished him every success for the future.

MINUTES

11.151	Considered	The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Academic Policy Committee meeting held on 7 December 2011 (Doc APC11/38/1)
11.152	Resolved	<p>That the minutes be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:-</p> <p>Minute number 11.087, first and second bullet points be amended to read "the possible expansion"</p> <p>(Action: JKM)</p>
11.153	Reported	<p>By the Secretary that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">there had been an error in the agenda circulated for the meeting of 7 December in relation to item B1;this issue had been noted immediately after the meeting and the minutes of 7 December 2011 reflected the correct resolution.

MATTERS ARISING

London Register of Programmes (arising on 11.072)

- 11.154 Reported By the Secretary that
- i. it should be noted that in line with agreed procedure the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality would provide a University Register of Approved Programmes to APC on an annual basis;
 - ii. The Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality would review the information supplied by Schools as requested in minute APC 11.072 to ensure direct correlation with the centrally held register.
- (Action: JKM)**

- 11.155 Reported By the Director of Quality that proposals to offer any currently approved programmes at GCU London must follow the previously agreed process outlined in the terms of reference for the London Campus Approval visit which took place in August 2010.

Feedback Enhancement Implementation Group (arising on 11.074)

- 11.156 Reported By the Chair, that the work of the Group was ongoing and a report would be provided at the May meeting of APC.
- (Action: KG)**

Foreign Language Provision (arising on 11.089)

- 11.157 Reported By the Chair, that an interim paper would be considered shortly by the Executive Board with a view to seeking formal APC approval at its May meeting.
- (Action: BH)**

Student International Mobility Sub Committee (arising on 11.093)

- 11.158 Reported By the Chair, that
- i. the Sub Committee had now met for the first time with a second meeting scheduled in April;
 - ii. that minutes of both meetings would be considered at the May meeting of APC;
 - iii. that the Committee would be developing a Strategy for International Mobility which would come to the May meeting of APC.
- (Action: EMcF, DS)**

Learning Development Centres (arising on 11.097)

- 11.159 Reported By the Chair, that he had requested a more detailed report on LDC development (with student profile and usage statistics) be provided at the May meeting of APC.
- (Action: ES)**

Module Feedback (arising on 11.127)

- 11.160 Reported By the Director of Quality
- i. that he had attended a presentation by Electric Paper on an alternative module feedback software, Evasys. This software combines paper based and electronic surveys and is worthy of consideration for use at GCU;
 - ii. that a University-wide announcement would be made shortly regarding the use of GCU Learn as a module feedback tool.
(Action: ASE)

Academic Case: Collaboration between GCU and the University of Johannesburg , South Africa (BSc Railway Operations Management) (arising on 11.137)

- 11.161 Reported By the Chair that
- i. subsequent to the last meeting of APC, discussions had taken place with all parties involved in the development;
 - ii. he confirmed that Glasgow School *for* Business and Society had agreed to support the proposal to the next stage and, to this end, an approval event would be taking place in South Africa during the week of 19 March 2012;
 - iii. that a number of concerns regarding this proposal had been raised by both the Director of Quality and senior staff within GSBS and that these concerns would be addressed as part of the approval process;
 - iv. it was important to note that proposals of this nature must secure School involvement and approval at the earliest possible stage in their development and prior to consideration by APC.

Widening Participation and Progression at GCU: Proposal for Developing Research (11.088)

- 11.162 Reported By the co-Director of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, that
- i. assuming the availability of access to key data sets, planned timescales in relation to Study B may have to be adjusted;
 - ii. it was still hoped to bring a draft report to APC in May with a view to meeting with key stakeholders thereafter to review interim findings and identify the best method to take these forward.
(Action: DS)

National Student Survey (arising on 11.113)

- 11.163 Reported By the Director of Policy and Planning that
- i. the University had reached and exceeded its initial target of a 50% response rate to the NSS with a current response rate of 55%;
 - ii. to date 19 subject areas were publishable
 - iii. That the final response rate would be provided to members at the May meeting of APC.

LTSC ITEMS

11.164 Reported By the Chair, that at the LTSC meeting on 25 January 2012 a paper on Managing Student Placements had been considered and approved and would be further considered by APC under item A6.

KEY INFORMATION SETS

11.165 Considered A paper from the Director of Policy and Planning on Key Information Sets (Doc APC11/47/1)

11.166 Reported By the Director of Policy and Planning that:-

- i. the paper was intended to provide members with a summary of the background to the introduction of KIS and a progress report on work that has been carried out to date at GCU;
- ii. although there were a number of issues relating to the publication of KIS that were currently being addressed, the importance of KIS and the potential reputational damage to the individual programmes and to the University as a whole if the process is not managed carefully means that the implementation process requires to be top priority for the University over the next six months and is likely to be very resource intensive for Schools, Policy and Planning, IS-EIS, ISIS and Marketing;
- iii. Policy and Planning are currently working with colleagues across the University to develop an action plan for the implementation of KIS with the first stage being the review of the Register of Approved programmes to confirm the definitive list of programmes to be included and to define processes for reviewing and collecting the required information;
- iv. that it is the intention to establish a working group to oversee the process;
- v. That a further update will be provided at the May meeting of APC.

11.167 Discussion Members welcomed the paper and suggested to the Director of Policy and Planning that, in order to ensure that relevant staff across the University were fully aware of the purpose and implications of KIS the information presented to Committee should be used to prepare a short briefing paper which could be more widely circulated.

11.168 Resolved

- i. that the paper be noted;
- ii. that the Director of Policy and Planning prepare a briefing paper of KIS for wider University circulation;
- iii. that further updates on the progress of KIS be provided at the next meeting of APC.

(Action: CH)

BLENDED LEARNING REPORT

11.169 Considered A paper from GCU LEAD on Blended Learning (Doc APC11/52/1)

Secretary's note: this paper relates to APC minute number 11.067

11.170 Reported By Professor Creanor that the report provided an update on blended learning developments across the University and outlined future

priorities and made recommendations for further progress.

- 11.171 Discussion The paper was welcomed by Members and it was agreed that it was important to ensure that the key messages contained within it were promulgated throughout Schools. The issue of the increasing use of social media sites for the sharing of academic work was also discussed but it was agreed that the use of these sites did not reflect formal University VLE “tools” and therefore could not be endorsed in any way as resources to support learning and teaching.
- 11.172 Resolved That the Executive Deans ensure that the paper is circulated for information and discussion throughout the Schools.
(Action: Exec Deans)

MANAGING STUDENT PLACEMENTS

- 11.173 Considered A paper from GCU LEAD presenting the results of an investigation into the management of student placements (Doc APC11/54/1)
- 11.174 Reported By Mrs Sabine McKinnon, GCU LEAD, that
- i. the paper represented an investigation into the management of credit bearing placements at GCU, carried out at the request of the PVC (Learning and Teaching);
 - ii. that the paper was split into two distinct sections, the first being a research report on current practice involving 40 academic staff, across all schools, who had responsibility for the management of student placements and a second paper which made suggestions for a new university-wide approach to managing student placements;
 - iii. the key findings of the report included:-
 - a. some staff are unaware of the University’s regulations on placements (outlined in the QAE Handbook);
 - b. the organisation of placements places a heavy workload on staff;
 - c. there is no formal vetting process in place for most credit-bearing placements.
 - iv. A number of recommendations had now been drawn up to inform development of a formal placement policy which have been endorsed by the Learning and Teaching Sub Committee and APC was now being asked to formally approve these.
- 11.175 Discussion Members were of the view that the risk assessment form (Appendix A) recommended within the paper for use by Schools represented a significant burden on staff and that if this was to be fully effective the process would require to be streamlined significantly. After detailed discussion members shared the view that Schools should be able to use the Risk Assessment tool as guidance and implement it in the way that best suited their own internal resources and structures. On the basis that this was carried out systematically within Schools it would be prudent to conduct an audit of its implementation on a regular basis.
- It was also noted that in order to be implemented effectively, the use of the Risk Assessment tool required to be effectively communicated throughout the Schools and relevant support services.

- 11.176 Resolved
- i. That, subject to clarification that use of the Risk Assessment tool (Appendix A) should be used as a guide for approving placements, the paper be approved and progressed to Senate for further debate and final approval;
 - ii. That, once approved by Senate a communication strategy be developed to ensure all staff are aware of the need to refer to the Risk Assessment Guide when identifying and approving credit bearing placements;
 - iii. That the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality should include the new process in the rolling schedule of Thematic Audit.
(Action: SMcK/SL/JKM)

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT HANDBOOK

- 11.177 Considered The main amendments to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook Version 4, March 2012 (Doc APC11/43/1)
- 11.178 Reported By the Director of Quality that:-
- i. The changes highlighted in the paper were almost all related to the recent re-structuring and re-profiling of GCU;
 - ii. That some procedural and process issues have been amended in light of experience of operation and the recent ELIR of GCU.
- 11.179 Discussion Members supported the amendments in principle but it was noted that the role of Associate Dean Learning, Teaching and Quality in Schools would be pivotal in ensuring GCU was compliant with its own procedures.
- 11.180 Resolved That the proposed amendments to the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook be approved.
(Action: ASE)

21st CENTURY GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

- 11.181 Considered A paper from the Associate Dean Learning, Teaching and Quality (SoHLS) on progress towards implementation of 21st Century Graduate Attributes (Doc APC11/40/1)
- 11.182 Reported By the PVC Learning and Teaching that:-
- i. In line with the QAA Enhancement Themes 2009 – 2011 (Graduate Attributes for the 21st Century), the GCU Graduate Attributes were approved at Senate in June 2011;
 - ii. A Graduate Attribute implementation group has now been set up to oversee embedding of the GCU attributes into the wider curriculum;
 - iii. The attached paper outlines a progress report on the programme of work.
- 11.183 Resolved That the paper be noted and a further update provided at the next meeting of the Committee.
(Action: KT)

HEAR IMPLEMENTATION

- 11.184 Considered An update and detailed action plan to pilot HEAR for selected programmes for session 2012/13
- 11.185 Reported By the Director of Quality that:-
- i. The paper recommends that HEAR be adopted in a pilot form for 2012-13 and thereafter for the entire student population;
 - ii. The paper sets out mechanisms which enable information from students regarding their extracurricular activities to be included on the HEAR.
- 11.186 Discussion Members noted the paper with interest although there was confusion amongst those present as to the status of HEAR throughout the UK HEI sector.
- The Director of Quality reminded Members that the HEI sector in the UK was keen to ensure that HEAR was established as soon as possible and that its successful roll-out was also linked to the implementation of the European Diploma Supplement (EDS). To date, although GCU had been unable to meet the information requirements for publishing the EDS this did not mean that as a University we could choose to opt out from these processes and initiatives which were now commonly in place in most HEIs across the European Educational Area.
- Members believed the paper provided a helpful starting point but were concerned that the Terms of Reference for the HEAR Sub Committee (Appendix 4) were too far reaching and would be difficult to achieve. It was, therefore, suggested that the progress made in the pilot scheme should allow the HEAR Sub Committee to develop firmer proposals for the future implementation of HEAR at GCU.
- As the Director of Quality would be leaving the University shortly it had been agreed that Dr Nichola McLarnon, School of Health and Life Sciences would take on the role of Chair of the HEAR Sub Committee.
- 11.187 Resolved
- i. That the paper be noted;
 - ii. That the proposal to pilot the scheme within the SoHLS be approved;
 - iii. That the outcomes of the pilot scheme be reported to APC once available;
 - iv. That a robust set of proposals for the future implementation of HEAR at GCU be developed in light of the experiences garnered during the pilot scheme;
 - v. That a paper be brought forward to a future APC outlining the requirements for the European Diploma Supplement and how HEAR will inform this.
- (Action: ASE NMCL)**

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

- 11.188 Considered A paper and recommendations from the short life working group tasked with reviewing the University's assessment regulations (APC11/42/1)
- 11.189 Reported That the University Assessment Regulations had not been significantly altered since the mid 1990s and a review was required to ensure that they were fit for purpose and reflected sector wide practice.
- 11.190 Discussion Detailed discussion took place regarding the proposals with Members acknowledging the need for changes to be made to the current regulations so that they reflected best and fair practice whilst ensuring the integrity of academic standards. The Director of Quality explained that a survey of 50 HEIs across the UK had been carried out by the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality and it was apparent that GCU regulations deviated from current practice in a number of key areas namely:-
- Number of attempts permitted at failed modules
 - Postgraduate pass marks
 - Suspension of studies
 - Academic Appeals
 - Use of the viva voce at undergraduate level
- Members shared their views on the specific proposals laid out in the paper and noted there was no data presented which outlined the potential impact of the recommendations. There was also no detail supplied which indicated how the introduction of these changes would be managed.
- 11.191 Resolved
- i. That Appendix 1, Section 1.6 of the Assessment Regulations be amended to reflect the inclusion of Subject Leads in the pool of Assessment Board Chairs (who should not Chair an Assessment Board in their own Subject Area)
 - ii. That regulations about the acceptance of Academic Appeals and Special Factors be fully adhered to;
 - iii. That rules regarding double marking should be enforced;
 - iv. That a Working Group be established to consider and re- develop the University Assessment Regulations to reflect the recommendations within the paper ie,
 - a. that at the discretion of the Assessment Board, students may carry only one module into the next level of their academic study;
 - b. the pass mark for all postgraduate modules should be set at 50%;
 - c. the number of attempts at an undergraduate module should be reduced to two attempts (recognising that it may be appropriate to transition to three attempts before moving to two);
 - d. that subsequent attempts at failed modules should be "with attendance";
 - e. that the University Assessment Regulations be separated into Undergraduate Regulations and Postgraduate Regulations;
 - f. that the use of the *viva voce* should only be used in exceptional circumstances;

- g. that the maximum period of registration for any student should be based on the length of their programme plus two years;
 - h. a formal policy should be developed to cater for students who wish to suspend their studies;
 - i. that the Exceptions Committee be disbanded and future decisions relating to exceptions to the assessment regulations be made on the basis of precedent or via the programme approval process;
 - j. changes to Assessment Regulations which may require to be made whilst a programme is in its normal period of approval (currently 5 years) should be made directly to APC
 - k. the timing and frequency of Assessment Boards, the order in which modules are taken, the timing of the dissertation for students who enter in Trimester 2.
- (Action: ASE)**

Chair's note: subsequent to the meeting the Chair has requested that the original Working Group continue in order to address minute number 11.191 but that its membership and remit be augmented and broadened.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

11.192	Considered	A RPL update report from GCU LEAD (Doc APC11/55/1)
11.193	Reported	<p>By the Director GCU LEAD that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the report was intended to provide a brief update on Recognition of Prior Learning developments at GCU following the approval of the revised RPL policy by APC in May 2011, the recommendations made following the Flexible Entry Review and in light of a recent student complaint where the administration of an RPL claim was highlighted as an area of concern; ii. the update report recommended areas for development to enhance and embed the RPL process across the University following discussions with Schools and a web survey; iii. that the appendix accompanying the update report details the outcomes of the RPL web survey of current RPL usage and areas for development at GCU.
11.194	Discussion	Members noted the paper and welcomed the proposals which they believed would significantly streamline the processes associated with the assessment of RPL and RPiL claims.
11.195	Resolved	<p>That the recommendations within the RPL Update report be approved, namely:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. information on RPL should be more readily available to students and potential students, either on the GCU website or on GCU Learn. This could be linked to the development of an on-line initial enquiry tool for potential applicants;

- ii. greater awareness raising and CPD on RPL for staff across the University and enhancement of cross-university communication in relation to RPL;
- iii. streamlining the RPL process across the University through the greater use of technology as part of blended learning strategies;
- iv. agreement of a consistent university-wide fee policy on RPiL;
- v. agreement of approach to grading and classification of qualifications for which credit has been gained through RPL;
- vi. clear guidance provided for students and staff in relation to the route for pre-entry RPL claims (via SRAS) and post entry (via Schools);
- vii. further exploration of ways to offer claims against “learner-defined” outcomes, and SCQF level descriptors and a wider range of evidence gathering mechanisms, to ensure assessment processes for RPiL are “fit for purpose” and more manageable from the perspective of students and staff;
- viii. exploration of the ways in which RPL could be extended particularly within the context of the SFC regional coherence and workforce development agenda, linked to University agendas of increasing Business Academies and postgraduate provision;
- ix. the award of distinction for Masters programmes which may have up to 90 credits achieved through RPL should be included in the RPL Policy on the basis that this award would be based on credit achieved through GCU modules.

(Action: RW)

SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES: PROGRAMME PROPOSAL TO EXTEND RELATIONSHIP WITH FERGUSSON INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES, PUNE, INDIA

11.196	Considered	A paper from the Associate Dean, Learning, Teaching and Quality (SoHLS) outlining proposals to extend the existing academic relationship in relation to the MSc Programmes in Clinical Microbiology and Food Bioscience with FIAS (Doc APC11/56/1)
11.197	Reported	By the Director of Quality that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. this proposal should be considered as a Concept Paper in terms of the approval of new programmes at GCU; ii. currently, SoHLS have a relationship with FIAS in which students from Pune with a PgC can articulate into the second trimester of the above Masters programmes; iii. as the Association of Indian Universities does not recognise a one year Masters award, the School is proposing to develop a 20 month programme with a 6 month placement which can be taken in either India or at GCU; iv. the Committee is asked to note that fee information provided on page 5 of the paper is incorrect and should read £6,900 for the GCU element of the fee (not £6,700 as stated in the paper) and the GCU Scholarship amount for students who achieve 70% or above in their final year grades is £1350 (not £1500 as stated in the paper)
11.198	Resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. That the paper be approved as a Concept Paper in line with Section 3.1.1 Stage 2 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook ii. That the proposal should now move forward to an Approval

event facilitated by the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality.

(Action: DGAQ/KT)

SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT SUMMER SCHOOL

- 11.199 Considered
- i. A proposal for a credit bearing Forensic Summer School in Collaboration with the State University of California (Doc APC11/39/1)
 - ii. A proposal for a generic structure for 3 named Summer School programmes (Doc APC11/44/1)
- 11.200 Reported
- By the Director of Quality that
- i. the above proposals should be considered as Concept papers in line with Section 3.1.1 Stage 2 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook;
 - ii. if approved, the proposals should now move forward to an Approval event/s facilitated by the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality.
- 11.201 Discussion
- The Executive Dean of the School of Engineering and the Built Environment informed members that, whilst not explicit from the paperwork submitted, both proposals had the full support of the School Board and in the case of the second proposal (APC11/44/1), approval of a standard model for summer school provision would allow GCU to respond rapidly to market demand. Members noted that, in future, proposals of this nature must include evidence of School Board approval.
- 11.202 Resolved
- i. That the proposals should be considered as Concept papers in line with Section 3.1.1 Stage 2 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook;
 - ii. That the proposals should now move forward to an Approval event/s facilitated by the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality.
- (Action: DGAQ/ES)**

ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

- 11.203 Approved
- The Institutional Response to the 2011 Enhancement Led Institutional Review report (Doc APC11/49/1)

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUB COMMITTEE

- 11.204 Approved
- The confirmed minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Teaching Sub Committee held on 26 October 2011 (LTSC/36/1)

MSc COMPUTING AND ENGINEERING SUITE

- 11.205 Approved
- A proposal to amend the previously approved Academic Business Case (approved by APC in June 2011)(APC11/50/1)

COMPLAINT, MEDIATION AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

11.206 Received The amended Complaint, Mediation and Resolution Procedure taking account of comments made at the last APC regarding the scope of the policy (Doc APC11/17/2)

Secretary's note: the approved procedure has now been published on the University's internal and external web pages.

CHAIR'S ACTIONS

11.207 Reported That the following Chair's Actions had been taken since the last meeting:-

i. School of Engineering and Built Environment Generic Award Titles

A proposal from the school, to make the following generic award titles available:

Technology (Design)
Technology (Computing)
Technology (Built Environment)
Technology (Engineering)

The above awards will be available at the following levels dependent on the original award stream that the student had been registered on:

University Certificate
University Diploma
BA/BSc/BEng
BA (Hons)/BSc (Hons)/BEng (Hons)
(Doc APC11/48/1)

ii. Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy

The policy submitted to the December meeting of APC, now updated to take account of suggested amendments by the Chair. (Doc APC11/23/2)

AOCB

11.208 Reported Post Study Work Visa Application Deadline

By the Secretary that:-

- i. a recent complaint had been received from a student by the Directorate of Governance and Academic Quality relating to the deadline for the application for a Post Study Work Visa and the implications for that student of the University deadlines for re-submitted coursework (PSWV) (6 April 2012);
- ii. as the student required to re-submit their dissertation in order to achieve their Masters qualification, by the time the award was officially ratified by the Assessment Board (on the assumption the student passed the re-submitted dissertation), the deadline for submission of applications for PSWVs would have passed;
- iii. The formal notification of an award is required for application for

- a PSWV;
- iv. The student was, therefore, requesting that they be allowed to submit their dissertation early, thus allowing a decision on the final award to be taken via Chair's (of Assessment Board) Action;
- v. Consultation had taken place with the University's UKBA Compliance Office and guidance issued to Schools;
- vi. For the avoidance of doubt, it is not permitted to allow students early submissions or re-submission of courseworks or dissertations in order to meet the PSWV deadline as this would be in contravention of UKBA conditions on which the student's Tier 4 study visa was issued.

11.209 Reported

Regional Coherence/WARP

By the Head of GCU LEAD that an interim evaluation of the extent to which GCU is on target to meet the outcomes agreed in the Regional Coherence/WARP Outcomes Agreement; that following consultation with key staff in relation to Regional Coherence/WARP-funded activities, a report and recommendations will be submitted for consideration by APC at its May meeting.