

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Academic Policy & Regulations Committee

22 May 2008

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Members present:	Professor S C Shute, Law (in the Chair) Ms J E Broadfield, Health Sciences Ms J A Harris, Academic and Student Administration Ms C L McCauley, Academic and Student Administration Ms C M Pike, Legal Services Professor J Riddoch, Psychology Professor C Ryan, European Research Institute Ms L Sadler, Vice-President (Education and Access), Guild of Students Dr C R Twine, Academic and Student Administration
Apologies	Professor A J Randall, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic Quality and Students Dr S F Quigley, Engineering
In attendance	Ms M E Cannadine, Academic and Student Administration Mr P A Fantom, Academic and Student Administration (Secretary)
Papers	The Minute Book contains copies of all written papers or reports referred to below. Papers are also available from: http://www.studserv2.bham.ac.uk/bhamonly/Committees/APRC/index.htm

08/32 **Minutes**

Resolved:

That the minutes (APRC.08.05.01) of the meeting held on 10 April 2008 be approved.

08/33 **Matters arising**

(a) Academic Regulations Timeline (Minute 08/25 refers)

Noted:

That the following procedures would be amended in tandem with the revision of BIQAES, prior to their future consideration by APRC:

- Split Location Study
- Work Based Learning
- Programme Approval
- Collaborative Provision

(b) Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures (Minute 08/28 refers)

Noted:

That, following the approval of the Code of Practice on Senate Review, which had been amended to allow an additional ground of appeal in respect of the submission of new evidence, clause 3.6.6 of the Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures was now redundant and had been deleted.

(c) Code of Practice on The External Examiner System for Taught Programmes
(Minute 08/29 refers)

Noted:

That clause 5.10 had, in order to address the concerns raised at the last meeting, been revised to read as follows:

The views of an external examiner must be particularly influential in the case of disagreement on the mark to be awarded for a particular module or component of a module.

Resolved:

That, following further discussion of APRC's concerns regarding the potential for conflict between internal and external examiners on the determination of degree classification, the Code of Practice on the External Examiner System for Taught Programmes be amended to reflect that examination boards would resolve any such conflicts, and that module marks would be confirmed in advance of profiling.

08/34 **Report from Senate**

Received:

A report on the meeting of Senate held on 1 May 2008, at which the finalised Academic Regulations, the Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees and the Code of Practice on Senate Review had been approved.

It was also noted that a Code of Practice on Suspension of Students, a document setting out the definitions of key terms and a schedule of delegation were in preparation, and would be considered by APRC in due course.

08/35 **Reviews of Collaborative Provision Arrangements: Follow up and Action Plans**

Received:

A report for information on the actions required by the Programme Approval and Collaborations Section to ensure the full implementation of Section 3.9 of the *Collaborations' Reviews: Procedures*, together with appendices listing all the reviews undertaken since the last institutional review in 2004 and the reviews that are ongoing or due to be arranged (APRC.08.05.09).

Following the recent submission of seven review reports to QAEC and USMC, a number of activities were to be undertaken, including the preparation of a revised legal agreement and a timescale for action plans for approval by QAEC.

It was reported that QAEC had considered the oversight of the MBA Committee and had concluded that, in accordance with the views of AMBA, it should reside at University rather than College level during 2008/09.

08/36 **Guidance to Students on Outside Employment**

Considered:

A paper and supporting appendices from the Birmingham Guild of Students seeking an amendment to current guidance, the effect of which would be to increase the maximum number of hours recommended for outside employment in term time from 15 to 20 per week; the current guidance contained no restriction on outside employment during University vacations (APRC.08.05.02).

In considering the wider implications of the Guild's proposal, including the impact of the rising costs of studying in higher education, the advertisement of vacancies via the Job Zone and the anomaly identified in respect of international students, APRC were concerned to ensure that there was no dilution of the University's academic standards. Furthermore, as the analysis provided in the appendices did not feature institutions felt to be comparable to the University, it was recommended that this be updated to include universities from the Russell Group, whilst taking account of the specific circumstances of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Resolved:

That a revised Guidance to Student on Outside Employment be submitted to a future meeting of APRC prior to it being considered by the Senate.

08/37 **Guidance on Student Representation**

Considered:

A paper from the Birmingham Guild of Students, which was a revision of a paper previously considered by Senate, setting out guidance prepared by the University and the Guild, working in partnership to ensure that all students received effective representation (APRC.08.05.03).

A number of amendments were identified (deletions struck through, insertions underlined):

- (a) 2.2 *It is intended that this ~~Policy~~ will be used ~~by~~ to guide University staff and the Guild of Students to establish the relationship that both will operate within. This ~~Code~~ Guidance will also be made available to all student representatives.*
- (b) 6.2 *The guidelines are included in the ~~Code of Practice~~ Guidance because they are considered to represent good practice for student representation across the University. Although alternative approaches may be adopted, the core principles stated in Section 3 must be adhered to.*
- (c) 6.4.1 (a) *The College Head, or nominee (e.g. Head of Quality) will be responsible for:*
 - (i) *ensuring that academic staff members are allocated to act as the Staff-Liaison Contact (SLC) for the students in their college for an appropriate set of programmes.*
 - (ii) *ensuring members of support staff are allocated as appropriate to act as the Guild Liaison Contact (GLC). This post is responsible for providing the administrative support to the SRS at the programme level, and providing the first point of contact for the Guild of Students in Colleges and ~~Principle~~ Principal academic units.*
 - (iii) *agreeing the number of student reps required at each level for the appropriate programme level, and communicating this to the Student Representation ~~System~~ advisory Board.*
- (d) 6.4.1 (b) (vii) *Liaising with the Guild of Students with regards to student ~~representative~~ representation issues.*
- (e) 6.4.1 (c) *Each College will be responsible for ensuring that all staff new to the role of SLC or GLC will be provided with a thorough induction to the SRS and their role. The Guild of Students will be prepared to assist in this introduction if required, and will do so on request of a member of staff from the respective College. Assistance can be requested from support staff by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk.*
- (f) 6.5.5 (c) *SSCs will meet at least once per term, and at least three times per year, unless agreed otherwise by the SSC. Dates and times for scheduled meetings should be agreed with all attendees soon after the election of representatives, but not later than the conclusion of the first SSC meeting of the academic year. All scheduled meetings should be publicised to all representatives.*

- (g) 6.5.5 (d) *At least one meeting in the Summer term should be provided to discuss and agree the Committee's annual report to SRSAB, unless agreed otherwise by the SSC.*
- (h) 6.5.6 (b) *Possible facilities and resources should normally include:*
- (i) 6.7.5 *The Vice-President (Education & Access) will report on the Student Rep Scheme ~~will report to the Guild Council. through the Vice-President (Education and Access).~~*
- (j) A new clause is to be inserted to ensure that minutes of meetings are taken by the SLC.

On behalf of APRC, the Chair acknowledged the hard work of all the participants in this venture.

Resolved:

That the revised Guidance on Student Representation be submitted for Chair's approval, prior to it being forwarded for consideration by the Senate.

08/38 **Code of Practice on the Teaching of Undergraduate Students by Teaching Assistants and Demonstrators**

Considered:

The Code of Practice and a paper setting out the amendments to the Code made following the meeting of APRC on 26 February 2008 (Minute 08/20 (b)(ii) refers) and the comments of the Heads of Academic Programmes from their meeting of April 2008 (APRC.08.05.04).

Resolved:

- (a) That the title be amended to read 'Code of Practice on the Teaching of Undergraduate Students by Student Teaching Assistants and Student Demonstrators'.
- (b) That, having been identified as now being redundant, clause 8.1 be deleted.
- (c) That the Code of Practice be presented to the Heads of Academic Programmes, prior to its consideration by Senate.

08/39 **Code of Practice on Adjusted Regulations and Undergraduate Masters Degrees**

Considered:

The Code of Practice and a supporting paper outlining the background to the Code, which had been produced following the adoption of the proposed model at the last meeting of APRC (Minute 08/30 refers)(APRC.08.05.05).

Resolved:

That the Code of Practice on Adjusted Regulations and Undergraduate Masters Degrees be approved.

08/40 **Student Complaints Procedure**

Considered:

The revised Student Complaints Procedure and a supporting paper setting out the rationale for developments to the Procedure since its introduction in 2006/07 (APRC.08.05.06).

The Procedure was approved by Council on 4 July 2006 (CO.06.07.14), with the stipulation that a review should be carried out at the end of twelve months of the Procedure's operation. This had

been conducted and a number of alterations proposed for APRC's consideration:

- (a) That no complaints from third parties would be dealt with under the Procedure and that no correspondence would be entered into with a third party unless the third party was complaining on behalf of a student who, due to exceptional circumstances, was unable to act for themselves. In such cases, the student's authorisation would be required.
- (b) The limitation of the student's right to grieve to Council, with mediation becoming, in most cases, the final stage of the University's internal processes. Following their receipt of the Completion of Procedures letter from the University, an aggrieved student would be able to request that their complaint be considered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.
- (c) The insertion of new clauses allowing:
 - (i) The invitation of parties to a pre-mediation meeting, attended by at least one trained mediator.
 - (ii) Mediation at the informal stage (as well as the formal stage), provided this was agreeable to the parties.
 - (iii) Periodic reviews of the procedures to be conducted by the Student Complaints Officer and representatives of the Principal academic units to ensure good practice.

Resolved:

That, in order for consideration to be given to any questions of institutional risk arising from the removal of the student's right to grieve to Council, the revised student complaints procedure be referred for consideration by USMC/UEB.

08/41 **The Award of Unclassified Qualifications in the School of Education**

Considered:

A paper seeking APRC's approval to award the unclassified undergraduate qualifications in the School of Education of University Certificate, Certificate of Higher Education, Diploma of Higher Education and Advanced Certificate with Merit and Distinction (APRC.08.05.07).

This request was made on the basis of student equity given that, in April 2005, the Academic Board had approved the School of Education's request to award the unclassified degree of Bachelor of Philosophy with Merit and Distinction.

However, APRC were concerned that granting this request would incur wider equity issues in terms of students on similar programmes in other Principal academic units. Furthermore, it considered that students and third parties could make a summative judgement on a student's performance in the programme by reference to the module marks on the academic transcript.

Resolved:

That the School of Education's request be rejected.

08/42 **Consultations**

Noted:

- (a) Draft Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Guidance on Academic Credit Arrangements in Higher Education

The Credit Issues Development Group had carried out detailed work refining the arrangements for a national credit framework for higher education in England.

- (b) The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – Draft for Consultation (APRC.08.05.08).

The QAA was reviewing the framework prior to its submission for self-certification against the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* and had invited comments by 6 June 2008. APRC Members were requested to forward comments to Chris Twine in order for them to be conveyed to the QAA.

08/43 **Recording Exemptions to Regulations**

Considered:

A paper setting out proposals for standardised procedures for the approval and documentation of exemptions to Regulations (APRC.08.05.10).

Resolved:

- (a) That time limits specifying the duration of exemptions be introduced into the process of granting exemptions to regulations.
- (b) That a database of exemptions and regulations be created and maintained by Academic and Student Administration.
- (c) That, in order for there to be an official record of future exemptions to regulations, the use of the exemption record pro forma be adopted.
- (d) That, to ensure consistency, existing exemptions to regulations be subject to these procedures.

08/44 **Pro-Vice-Chancellor's Items**

Reported:

That Chair's Action was taken in May 2008 to approve:

- (a) The assessment of theses for the award of PhD in Applied Linguistics.
- (b) The running of core modules on the final three years of MBChB programmes.

08/45 **Thanks of Chair to Committee Members**

The Chair thanked the Committee Members for their work during 2007/08.

It was also noted that APRC's terms of reference and membership were under consideration, along with those of other Committees, in order to align them with University re-organisation.

08/46 **Dates of meetings for the Academic Year 2008/09**

Noted:

That future meetings would be held in Committee Room 1 (G32, Aston Webb) on:

- Thursday 9 October 2008 at 10.00 am
- Thursday 5 February 2009 at 10.30 am
- Thursday 21 May 2009 at 2.30 pm