Programmes Committee (PC)
Thursday 30 March 2017
Confirmed Minutes

Present
Mr Nas Andriopoulos, Dr Lorraine Craig, Professor Sue Gibson, Professor Emma McCoy (chair), Professor Myra McClure, Dr Edgar Meyer, Mr Dan Smith (secretary), Professor Sue Smith, Ms Judith Webster, Ms Sophie White

Apologies
Mr David Ashton, Dr Martyn Kingsbury, Mr Luke McCrone, Mr Ahmed Shamso, Professor Alan Spivey, Dr Roberto Trotta, Professor Denis Wright, Ms Betty Yue

In Attendance
Mr Phil Power

1 Welcome and Apologies
The chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as above, were noted.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting [PC.2016.92]
The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with no amendments

3 Matters Arising
There were no matters arising

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

4 Strategic Approval of New Programmes
There were no new programme proposals to be considered for strategic approval

5 New Programme Proposals
There were no new programme proposals to be considered

6 Major Modifications to Existing programmes

6.1 MEng & BEng Design Engineering [PC.2016.93]
The committee considered additional information from the Dyson School of Design Engineering in support of their proposal to restructure the above programme with effect from October 2017.

6.1.1 The committee discussed the need to find a balance between the College's obligations to students under consumer protection law (and the associated risks of failing to meet these obligations satisfactorily) and the need for departments to review provision and introduce changes to enhance a programme in a timely manner. The committee noted that the timing of this proposal and the request to introduce the changes with effect from October 2017 made these issues particularly acute.

6.1.2 The committee heard that the Students’ Union representatives had discussed the proposed changes to the programme with the department's student representatives and that the students were generally supportive of the proposals. The committee noted that the Students’ Union did have several specific concerns however.

6.1.3 The committee discussed the Students’ Union's concern that the assessment methods for the module DE2-COM2 (Computing 2) did not adequately assess ability. The committee noted that students had found this module challenging and that the intensive scheduling of the module required students to progress quite quickly. The committee further noted that the department was looking at ways to address this problem in the future.
6.1.4 The committee noted that there were a number of minor inconsistencies and technical inaccuracies in the paperwork which had been raised by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team. Furthermore the committee felt that the level of assessment detail provided for some modules was insufficient.

6.1.5 The committee recommended that the department clarify minor inconsistencies and technical inaccuracies in the module outlines and programme specification.

6.1.6 The committee recommended that the department provide further detail regarding some of the individual assessment methods.

6.1.7 The committee noted that the quality of module learning outcomes, particularly for modules in the later years of the programme was poor.

6.1.8 The committee recommended that the department review their learning outcomes to ensure these are appropriately phrased and clearly aligned to the relevant FHEQ level, in particular the learning outcomes at FHEQ levels 6 and 7.

6.1.9 The committee discussed whether the changes to independent study hours would actually benefit students when there was no net change to the amount of scheduled learning and teaching in the programme and no reduction in content. The committee heard that the department’s student representatives were keen that the content of the programme should not be reduced.

6.1.10 The committee discussed the Students’ Union’s concern that the increase in independent study hours for the module DE1-MEM (Engineering Mathematics) had not been matched with an increase in scheduled learning and teaching. The committee noted that the departmental student representatives felt that additional problem classes would be helpful to complement the additional problem sheets.

6.1.11 The committee recommended that the department introduce additional problem classes to the module DE1-MEM (Engineering Mathematics) in response to student concerns.

6.1.12 The committee noted that there was significant variation in the scheduled learning and teaching hours for modules sharing the same credit value. The committee recognised that this was due to the natural differences between theoretical and practical modules but felt that there was no clear explanation of the difference in the programme specification.

6.1.13 The committee noted that the department intended to introduce new students to the expectations and requirements of different learning and teaching styles during the Director of Undergraduate Studies’ start-of-session presentation.

6.1.14 The committee recommended that additional information be included in the programme specification to explain that the programme contains a balance of theoretical and practical modules which will have considerable variation in the ratio between scheduled learning and teaching and independent study.

6.1.15 The committee discussed the sustainability of the programme including staff recruitment, student recruitment, employability and career prospects, industry engagement, and the size of the elective portfolio. The committee was satisfied that appropriate measures were in place to ensure the future sustainability of the programme and were positive about the success of the programme to date.

6.1.16 The committee noted that in accordance with the College’s new Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Vice Provost (Education), Professor Simone Buitendijk, had stated that programmes should not restructure into a modular format until October 2018 for students in their first year of study. Students entering prior to October 2018 should continue through the programme in its current structure rather than transferring to a programme with a modular structure part-way through their programme of study.
6.1.17 The committee recognised that the programme was taking the opportunity to align the credit structure with the modular framework which the College’s future regulations are expected to adopt. The committee recognised that there were risks associated with adopting this framework early however the committee felt that there was a clear justification to recommend this proposal as an exception as both the programme and department were new and going through a natural period of evolution.

6.1.18 Furthermore, the committee felt that it would be unreasonable to recommend delaying a proposal which had been designed in response to student feedback and with strong support from the Students’ Union.

6.1.19 The committee noted that careful consideration would need to be given to how to manage the College’s obligations under consumer protection law and how to mitigate the inherent risk associated with introducing this proposal with effect from October 2017.

6.1.20 The committee recommended that the department consult with current students, offer-holders and applicants regarding the changes to the programme.

6.1.21 The committee agreed to recommend the proposal to QAEC for approval with effect from October 2017 subject to the recommendations above.

6.1.22 The committee noted that the department would still be expected to undergo a curriculum review to align with the College’s new learning and teaching strategy. The committee further noted that the MEng and BEng Design Engineering programmes are also due to undertake a ‘second-stage’ review during the 2017/18 academic year.

7 Suspensions and Withdrawals of Existing Programmes
There were no suspensions or withdrawals to be considered

8 New Short Course Proposals
There were no new short course proposals to be considered

9 Modifications to Existing Short Courses
There were no modifications to existing short courses to be considered

10 Suspensions and Withdrawals of Existing Short Courses
There were no suspensions or withdrawals of existing short courses to be considered.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11 Dates of Meetings
Tuesday 9 May, 10:00-13:00, Boardroom, Level 4, Faculty Building