College of Science and Engineering

College Learning and Teaching Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 23rd October

Present: Dr N Hulton Convenor
Dr S Anderson School of Informatics
Prof J Ansell Undergraduate Dean, HSS
Dr S Bates School of Physics
Dr J Bond School of Biology
Dr T Bruce School of Engineering
Dr J Byatt-Smith School of Mathematics
Dr A Dugmore School of Geosciences (in place of Dr S Rigby)
Prof R Fisher PGT Adviser
Dr J Martin Deputy Head of College
Mr S McFadden Student Representative (UG)
Dr M Paton School of Chemistry
Dr D Williams Head of Academic Affairs
Ms L Burns Minutes Secretary

1. Remit and Membership

Noted:

i) The Convenor welcomed members to the first meeting of the College Learning and Teaching Committee;

ii) Distribution of papers will be improved for future meetings;

iii) Apologies were received from Ms L Henderson (Academic Affairs Officer), Dr S Rigby (GeoSciences) and Mr S Martin (Student Representative PG).

Considered:
The remit of the Committee (Paper A).

Resolved:
Reference should be made to responsibility for quality enhancement in the remit of the Committee.

Note: This revision has been incorporated into Paper A

2. Minutes of previous meetings of related committees

Considered:
i) The minutes of the meeting of the College Undergraduate Studies Committee held on 15th May 2007;
ii) The minutes of the meeting of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee held on 22nd June 2007.

2.1 Matters Arising

Noted:

i) Teachability (item 6 from the minutes of the CUGSC) will be raised at the next meeting of the L&T Committee members should give this matter some consideration before then.

ii) The subject of TEAM Testing (item 121 from the minutes of the CPGSC) was being reviewed by the Secretariat and proposals would come to a future meeting of the L&T Committee.
3. Report on the Learning and Teaching Strategy Project

Note: Ms S McConnell, the Learning and Teaching Strategy Project Officer, attended for this item

Received:
An overview of the Learning & Teaching Strategy Report from the Project Officer, a copy of the associated paper is filed with these minutes.

Noted: The following points were noted in discussion:
- It would be of benefit to involve and encourage administrative staff as much as possible in this issue;
- The activities could be promoted more effectively, paying particular attention to those people and groups who were historically less enthusiastic;
- There should be a focus on years 1 and 2 so that the strategy was embedded effectively in these years – this will assist the rollout to honours years;
- In addition to the activities in the 1st year of this project there should be a clear 3-5 year ‘road map’ for the future development of the strategy;
- It is important to consider the sustainability issue and how this can be distributed over the time-scale of the project, both in terms of the level of current support given to the course teams and also resourcing in a steady-state

4. Exam scripts feedback

Received:
(i) Written reports from the Schools of GeoSciences, Mathematics; Physics (Paper B); and Chemistry (filed with the Minutes)
(ii) Oral reports from the Schools of Biological Sciences and Informatics

Noted: The following points were noted in discussion:
- At previous meetings it was noted that all Schools offer opportunities for students in years 1 and 2 to see their exam scripts. Schools had been encouraged to trial and develop individual models;
- All Schools allow students to see scripts on demand, but there appeared to be a very low take-up of students wishing to take advantage of these opportunities. Such opportunities are publicised within each School, but not all Schools incorporate such publicity in their Course Guides;
- Some students do not appear to appreciate the benefit of feedback as an opportunity to reflect on their understanding, rather than just their mark, and that further progress could be made in this area;
- Oral feedback or tutorials are sometimes not recognised by students as being ‘proper feedback’;
- There is good practice within the College, differing in the mechanisms and format of feedback: e.g.
  - audio feedback (e.g. Physics, Biological Sciences);
  - electronic feedback on essays (Biological Sciences);
  - whole class “post-mortem” sessions to provide formative feedback (e.g. Chemistry)
  - enhanced formative commentary on scripts (for the benefit of External Examiners and students, e.g. GeoSciences).

Resolved:
i) Schools should wherever possible advertise the benefits of feedback on scripts;
ii) EUSA should be encouraged to convey the developmental benefits of feedback to students;
ii) Information on feedback opportunities should be incorporated into the Course Guides for next year.

5. Convenor’s report

Noted:
i) The Convenor wished to pass on his congratulations to Dr John Martin for his success with the JCMB studio. Dr Martin thanked the Convenor and suggested that credit for this project should be also be extended to the Audio Visual Technology Section.

ii) Congratulations were extended to Mechanical Engineering for the encouraging signs for the outcome of the TPR.
iii) John Cooke had given a briefing to Committee members on 3rd October concerning the EUCLID activities and plans for the Assessment stream. Consultation meetings with Schools had not yet taken place.

iv) Calls for proposals to the Principal’s Teaching Awards Scheme have been issued, with a closing date of 17th December. Schools are encouraged to participate in the scheme. The Convenor indicated that he is developing a bid on standardised approaches to clicker questions, as part of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. A Workshop on this Scheme would be taking place on Tuesday 30th – details of which can be obtained through the TLA website.

v) The Convenor had, in his new role as Dean of Learning and Teaching, been meeting with all TO Administrators, School Administrators and members of the Committee. This is to give the opportunity for Schools to raise any issues or areas of concern throughout the academic year.

Resolved:

i) The Convenor should write to John Power to congratulate him in his involvement in the successful JCMB studio project. ACTION : NH

ii) The Convenor should contact John Cooke to establish a time-scale for the expected school visits. Secretary’s note: John Cooke’s reply has indicated that he will be contacting Schools shortly about consultations on requirements.

6. Feedback from students

6.1 Taught Postgraduate questionnaire

Considered:
Results from the Taught Postgraduate questionnaire (Paper C1).

Noted:
Although the overall response rate was low, the level of overall satisfaction with the College of Science and Engineering was very encouraging. It was noted with disappointment that three specific areas had lower levels of satisfaction: accommodation issues; academic support; and training and development needs. The first two issues are being addressed at University level.

Resolved:
There should be a discussion on training and development needs of PGT students at the next meeting of the Committee.

6.2 National Student Survey (NSS)

Considered:
(i) List of NSS questions (Paper C2)
(ii) Initial analysis by School of questions 1-9, 22, prepared by the Secretariat (Paper C3)
(iii) Commentary from the Convenor on the assessment and feedback aspects, including draft guidelines to Schools on short-term actions to address feedback issues (Paper C4)
Noted:
- The results were similar in that, although there was a high overall level of satisfaction, specific sections revealed weaknesses, particularly in the area of student feedback (questions 7-9);
- There may be contributing factors towards the weakness with feedback:
  - the timing of the questionnaire in February may be at a time when students are particularly stressed and this is reflected in their answers;
  - students may not always be aware when they are receiving feedback (e.g. in the form of tutorials or problem sessions);
  - the timeliness of feedback from a small minority of examiners could be improved.

Resolved:

(i) The draft guidelines to Schools on short-term actions to address feedback issues should be approved, with the incorporation of the following points:
  - any documents issued to students which could be regarded as feedback should be clearly marked “Feedback”;
  - Schools should look at their own procedures for issuing feedback and their turn-around period;
  - School staff / student liaison meetings should include feedback as a specific issue on agendas;
*Note: These revisions have been incorporated into a revised document Paper C4–GuidanceforSchools.*

(ii) The Convenor should send the revised guidelines to Heads of Schools for implementation.

7. Concessions

Received:
Oral reports from Schools on any general principle of University-wide significance in concessions approved within the devolved structure, i.e. at School or College level.

Noted:
It was hoped that the new EUCLID system would make concessions easier to administer and involve less paperwork.

Resolved:
There were no specific issues raised regarding concessions that would require amendments to College or University regulations or policies.

8. New courses

Considered:
New courses from the Schools of GeoSciences and Mathematics (Paper D1)

Received:
A list of courses approved by the Convenor on behalf of the Committee during the summer (Paper D2)

Resolved
All the new courses are compliant with the Curriculum Project Framework and should be approved.

9. New programmes

MSc/Dip in Structural and Fire Safety Engineering

Considered:
A new programme: MSc in Fire Safety Engineering (Paper E), proposed by the School of Engineering and Electronics
Noted:
The programme builds upon a successful undergraduate degree in this area of strength of the School, and is compliant with the Curriculum Project Framework.

Resolved:
The new programme should be approved.

MSc/Dip in Electronics: Analogue Systems Design

Considered:
A new programme: MSc in Electronics: Analogue Systems Design proposed by the School of Engineering and Electronics. (Paper F1: programme specification; Paper F2: extract from business plan; Paper F3: list of associated courses for approval)
Note: It is not a requirement that Schools submit a business plan to the Committee.

Noted:
The programme is in an area of strong industrial demand and has good industrial collaboration. It compliant with the Curriculum Project Framework.

Resolved:
The new programme and the associated new courses should be approved.

MEng in Electronics and Electrical Engineering (Communications)

Considered:
A new programme: MEng: Electronics and Electrical Engineering (Communications), proposed by the School of Engineering and Electronics. (Paper G1: summary and list of new courses; Paper G2 programme specification),

Noted:
The programme complements the existing BEng degree and completes this suite of BEng / MEng degrees in this area of strength of the School. It is compliant with the Curriculum Project Framework.

Resolved:
The new programme and the associated two new courses should be approved.

10. MSc in System Level Integration - revised College Regulations

Considered:
Revised College regulations for this joint, collaborative programme, incorporating revisions to the list of optional courses (Paper H1: regulations; Paper H2: DPTs).

Resolved:
The proposed revisions should be approved.

11. Boards of Examiners - roles

Considered:
Draft guidance from the Assessment Administration Working Group on the operation of Boards of Examiners, covering the roles of Convener, External Examiner, Members and Secretary. (Paper I)
Noted:

Para 1.2.3
- Reference to the week of the Semester should not preclude the possibility of meetings being held outside of normal Semester times.
- It may not always be possible to specify the actual date two years in advance.

Para 3.2.2
- Members favoured wording that “it is highly desirable... that all members”

Resolved:
Members should send any further comments to david.williams@ed.ac.uk by 30 October 2007.

12. Academic Affairs Office - contacts

Received:
Contact details for the Academic Affairs Office (Paper J).

13. Any Other Competent Business

There was no other competent business

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 20th November 2007 at 2.00 p.m. in the Old Faculty Building.