

**File Note of Link Tutor Forum**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Room EE2035,  
12.30pm – 2.00pm**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
Robin Bell	Karen Appleby
Stuart Currie	Sean Bracken
Sue Cuthbert	Yvonne Cashmore
Judith Davies	Gareth Dart
Liz Elston	Liz Davies-Ward
Stuart Gallagher	Christian Edwards
Richard Henson	Rob Herbert
Adam Hewitt	Ruth Hewston
Debbie Hodson	Marilyn Hunt
Jennifer Joyce	Lisa Mauro-Bracken
Michelle Malomo	Michelle Rogers
Wendy Messenger	Nicola Watson
Nicola Rawlings	Susan Wood-Griffiths
Alison Reeves	Tim Kilner
Sharon Lesley Smith	Helen Taylor
Anna Streater	Huw Richards
Samantha Sutton-Tsang	Mike Reed
Richard Woolley	Karima Kadi-hanifi
Doug Wotherspoon	Bob Parker
	Rosie Walker
	Alison Prowle

Sue Cuthbert welcomed everyone to the Forum.

**1. Notes of the last meeting, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

1.1. The notes were approved as an accurate record.

**2. Matters Arising**

2.1. The forum considered the Matters Arising, and confirmed that the item had been resolved.

**3. Policy and Process Updates and the Changing Quality Landscape.**

3.1. Debbie Hodson spoke to the forum about the internal policy and process updates and the external changing quality landscape.

3.2. The Policy and Process update sheet will be circulated with the notes of this meeting and builds on the annual internal memorandum circulated to Institutes by the Director of Quality and Educational Development (17/07/15). Sue Cuthbert also circulated a partner version of this to HE Managers and Link Tutors in

September. Link Tutors are invited to forward the update document to partner colleagues so they are aware of expectations. The following key points were raised with respect to collaborative courses:

- **Taught Courses Regulatory Framework (TCRF):** The regulations relate to FD and HNs as much as BAs. The key issues for postgraduate courses are the shift from 20/40 to 15/30 credit modules and the shift from % to grades. All postgraduate courses will be on the new framework from Sept 2016.
- **Mapping learning outcomes to the award:** an approach has been taken that meets what is required in the sector without being unduly onerous. It is the Course Leader's responsibility to complete, this year any new courses and those that go through Periodic Review will need learning outcomes mapped. Guidance will be made available. HNCs and post-graduate courses will need to be mapped, but no mapping will be required for FDs.
- **Assessment:** Key issue is guidance relating to how to translate % to grades if modules include exam/tests. Further guidance will be provided on how to assess presentations.
- **Talis Resource Lists:** DH meeting with Library Services to discuss the challenges that have arisen, including the connectivity between the Module Specification and the resource list. Indirect funded courses are expected to use Talis. Courses with direct funded students should have equivalent resources provided by the partner, but how these are delivered is not prescribed.
- Link Tutors were reminded to be mindful of **cumulative change** to a course. Further, a change in the balance of delivery between partners (eg staff, resources) would need to go back to CSG.

**ACTION: NR to circulate DHs Policy and Process update sheet with the notes of this meeting**

3.3. The Changing Quality Landscapes presentation will be circulated with the notes of this meeting. Debbie Hodson explained that following national consultation, Higher Education Funding Bodies will consider and pilot activity for 2016/17 with new arrangements in full place for 2017/18 – which is when UW are due 'Quality Assessment'.

**ACTION: NR to circulate 'The Changing Quality Landscapes' presentation with the notes of this meeting.**

- 3.4. The following key issues relate to the possible new arrangements:
- Autonomy for established providers with degree awarding powers to set and maintain academic standards i.e. no cyclical external review by QAA etc
  - Governing body (whether or not it is the degree awarding body) to provide confirmation about the student academic experience on an annual basis.
  - Definition of a common baseline requirement for the higher education system e.g updated FHEQ.
  - Application of metrics: NSS, DLHE, retention, achievement, proportion of 'good' degrees.
  - Strengthening of the external examining system to include national training and a central register/appointment.
- 3.5. Sue Cuthbert noted that [Post-16 Education and Training Institutions Area Reviews](#) (led by BIS and DfE) are taking place with FE Colleges, 6<sup>th</sup> Forms and independent providers, to be completed by 2017. These aim to restructure the FE sector through review of the economic and educational needs of the area. This may result in bigger groups of colleges and reorganisation of provision.

Birmingham and Solihull colleges are currently under review, due to report in Jan 2016. The Marches and Worcestershire (includes HoWC, HLC, Kidderminster, TCAT) is due to take place early in 2016.

- 3.6. It was noted that the University is committed to partnership working and taking forward collaborative provision where it is strategically aligned to the University. With the current FE reviews and repositioning of some HEIs in relation to partnerships, the role of the link tutor in maintaining relationships, support and quality will be important to sustaining the University's partnerships.

#### **4. Periodic Review clusters and partnership provision**

- 4.1. Liz Elston explained that periodic review of partnership provision will be considered either by:
- Holding a partner cluster (eg. HOW College FdA Payroll and FdA Pensions Admin)
  - Undergoing combined partnership and periodic review (eg. NCT provision)
  - Partnership provision reviewed alongside UW provision within a specific subject cluster.
- 4.2. The third scenario of the review of partnership provision alongside UW provision within a specific cluster, presents the most challenges:
- Ensure that consideration of partnership provision is not "lost" within a greater UW cluster.
  - Ensure that a proliferation of partnership review of small partners does not result from periodic review clusters.
  - Ensure that areas for improvement and good practice specific to a given partner provision is also not "lost" when considering provision at multiple partners.
  - Ensure that external advisors are appropriate to consider both UW based and partnership provision (eg. BA and FD).
- 4.3. Liz explained what the partnership provision clusters will look like for the next two years, the presentation incorporating this schedule will be circulated with the notes of this meeting.

**ACTION: NR to circulate the presentation on partnership provision clusters with the notes.**

- 4.4. Partners will be advised of forthcoming clusters by AQU, Link Tutors to refer any queries from partners to AQU.
- 4.5. Debbie Hodson noted that where a review cluster consists of numerous courses and partners, how these reviews will be managed and how the Evaluation and Development Document (EDD) should be addressed will be dealt with at the preliminary meeting.

#### **5. Developing a checklist for course proposal and approval to determine specific link tutor role and expectations**

- 5.1. Sue Cuthbert explained that a checklist to determine the specific link tutor role and expectations to take account of risk and proportionality related to courses or partners (e.g. new partner, new course, new subject area or level) is being developed for course proposal and approval. The Forum discussed the following questions:

**5.2. Kinds of Partnerships/Partners cause most concern/risk:**

- New partners without HE experience
- Where course is not their core business
- Recently merged college or under another college banner
- If financial difficulties
- If different perspective of HE provision
- Decisions made at higher level that are not communicated well
- Embedding scholarly expectation within validated courses in addition to or instead of FE CPD format
- Mapping to HE, progression to MA, cost implications and the flexibility to step on/off a course.
- Quality assurance systems may not match between FE and HE, not always communicated clearly.
- International partners or partners dealing with international students, or flying faculties.
- Partners who do not meet face-to-face with students.

**5.3. Kinds of Courses cause most concern/risk:**

- Small provision, small part of business, fractional delivery
- New Link Tutor requires more time to establish relationship with Partner
- Hours allocated on timetable - HE or FE hours/contract.
- Loss of Course Leader and changes in staff that are not communicated to Link Tutors.
- Difficulty to recruit for courses (for a variety of reasons)
- Very large courses – particularly where the partner is based overseas or where we operate flying faculty.

**5.4. Areas of practice that might require additional attention in the 1<sup>st</sup> year:**

- Delivery and Assessment (two areas students give feedback on).
- HE nature of course, such as preparation time.
- Focus on scholarly activity, including research as opposed to CPD and staff development.
- Identification and monitoring of staff who will/are delivering HE provision.
- Follow up registered lecturer status and scholarly activity.
- Level of delivery – support for tutors, content understanding, quality of teaching, T&L.
- Assessment – standardisation and moderation opportunities.
- Terminology to be consistent and understood by partners.
- Familiarity with UW quality arrangements and registry.
- Registering students on our systems and getting them appropriate training on UW systems.
- Work based learning – accountability, safe-guarding.
- New Link Tutor – needs more time to build relationships.
- Recruitment.
- Quality of External Examiner(s).
- Attainment and achievement.
- Induction.

**5.5. How to know if student experience is being managed and delivered appropriately:**

- Mid module requires time
- Being proactive, building informal relationships with students takes time

- Team teaching makes you visible to the students to encourage students to contact link tutors and support staff new into HE teaching.
- Touch base with students three weeks in.
- CMC meetings
- StAR clinics, focus groups
- Student voice / feedback at regular intervals.
- Planned contact, in advance.
- Telephone sampling.
- Facebook
- Sit in on sessions.
- Samples of work.
- Module Evaluations
- External Examiner reports
- Discussions with Course Leader and staff surveys.

**5.6. Other considerations:**

- High turnover of staff in FECs
- New mergers, for example, Birmingham 'super college' and potential closure of existing colleges.
- Resources available at FECs/partner organisations
- First year delivery – team teaching with HEI Staff and FEC.
- Marketing – are course team aspirations being appropriately represented.
- Should we not pay equal attention to all these matters every year?

**ACTION: Sue Cuthbert to develop a checklist/guidance for use in course proposals/approvals to determine the specific link tutor role and expectations to be considered by EPPSC March 2016.**

**6. Any Other Business**

6.1. With no other business to discuss, the forum ended at 14:00.

**7. Date of next meeting: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, 12:15-14:00 CC009 (Hereford Room)**