Taught Programmes Board

Minutes of the meeting of the Taught Programmes Board held on Wednesday 26 October 2011 at 13.00 in the School of Engineering and Materials Science Seminar Room, 3rd Floor Engineering Building.

CONFIRMED

Present:
Professor Susan Dilly (Chair)
Sam Brenton                      Dr Theo Kreouzis
Dr Martin Carrier                Professor Peter McOwan
Professor Elizabeth Davenport    Dr Alastair Owens
Professor Omar Garcia-Obregon    Dr Matthew Williamson
Dr Henri Huijberts               Oscar Williamson

In attendance:
Dr Katherine Bevan               Dr Leone Leonida
Ken Chow                         Professor George Kapetanios
Dr Vivien Easson                 Professor Boris Khoruzhenko
Professor Joy Hinson             Dr Olivares-Caminal

Apologies:
Dr Warren Boutcher               Dr Martha Prevezer
Professor Ray Croucher           Professor Julia Shelton
Professor Anthony Warrens        Professor Olwyn Westwood

Part 1 – Preliminary Items

2. Terms of Reference and Membership

The Board discussed the Terms of Reference and Membership and noted that:

i. The membership had been revised to reflect the changes to the Board’s remit following the review of the work of its predecessor Programme and Module Approval Board. New members were welcomed to the Board.

ii. As well as the Vice President (Education and Welfare), the membership included two course representatives drawn from a pool of four. The Students’ Union had completed the election process for course representatives and would be nominating members to join the Board.

iii. Professor Joy Hinson (Dean for Postgraduate & Postdoctoral Studies) had been nominated as the Dean for Education’s alternate. The Board agreed to formalise this arrangement and adjust the membership accordingly. It was also noted that a similar arrangement was in place within Humanities and Social Sciences and could be developed in Science and Engineering.

iv. The Board approved the Terms of Reference and Membership subject to the amendment in point iii.
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Board considered and confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 27th July 2011, subject to the following amendment to minute 2010:256 (iii) School of Engineering and Materials Sciences MEng Programme Amendment, as follows:

The School operated different weighting schemes for its Engineering and Materials programmes and wished to bring these in line. It enquired whether there would be any Faculty or Queen Mary initiatives to move towards a uniform weighting scheme. If this would not be the case, a uniform weighting would be decided upon internally and the required paperwork submitted.

4. Matters Arising From the Previous Meeting

The Board received a paper on the matters arising from the minutes of the previous (July) meeting of Programme and Module Approval Board. It was noted that there were a number of actions still to be addressed.

5. Programme and Module Development Procedures and Guidelines

The Board received a paper on the revised programme and module approval procedures and noted the following:

i. That the processes had been revised following the work of a Task and Finish Group convened to review their effectiveness. Recommendations from the Group had been approved by Senate, and the guidelines had been updated to reflect the revised procedures. Updated forms for all the procedures were available on the ARCS quality assurance website. The new procedures would be kept under review.

ii. In addition to the points highlighted in the document, it was reported that Part 2 proposals could be developed in parallel with seeking Part 1 approval due to the time required to develop new programmes.

6. Summary of Action Taken by the Chair Since July 2011 PMAB

The Board noted a report of actions taken by the Chair on behalf of the Board since the last meeting.

7. a) Key Information Sets (KIS) 2012/13

The Board received an oral report on the recent publication of technical guidance and further information from HEFCE and HESA on the Key Information Sets agenda. The following points were noted:

i. That data needed to be provided for a Key Information Set (KIS) to be collected between January and February 2012. The technical specification had recently been released and further guidance would come out in December and March. The KIS requirements were de facto another
ii. A significant proportion of the data were already captured through other surveys and returns, for example, careers data through the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey. However information on learning and teaching activities (contact hours) was required at a programme level, and the College would need to devise mechanisms to systematically produce this.

iii. That given the Taught Programmes Board’s remit, members felt that it would be the appropriate forum to discuss the College’s approach to responding to these requirements and the methodology used to capture and collect data; particularly as it would need to be a collaborative project between Schools/Institutes and Professional Services.

iv. In parallel with this, members of the Academic Secretariat were liaising with colleagues on the feasibility of streamlining with existing data collection surveys and processes. SIS functionality to support the new requirements would be explored, as it was understood that Tribal (SIS software producers) would offer a bolt-on package. It was anticipated that this would be used by a number of other HEIs.

v. There was a possibility that the module paperwork currently used in the approval process would need to be updated, and this would be looked at when the technical guidance had been fully absorbed.

vi. Members queried the definitions to be used for learning and teaching activities (contact hours) and assessment activities. It was advised that the criteria produced by HEFCE/HESA would be used to develop College-wide definitions to ensure consistency. HEFCE/HESA had decided that data on activities should be produced on the basis of a typical student path (modal average). HEIs would have the option of returning this field either as actual data (relating to 2011/12) or an institutional estimate (relating to 2012/13).

vii. There currently was not a complete picture of programme-level contact hours across the College, as this would be the first systematic collection process. It was anticipated that the publication of this information would have implications for student recruitment across the sector. The potential impact for Queen Mary was being considered in the 2012 Task and Finish Group and Schools would need to factor this requirement into their planning.

viii. It was also required that each published KIS should link to Schools’/Institutes’ programme WebPages, which should include a current programme specification. A new student-facing format had been developed for 2011/12 and information would need to be moved across into the new template as part of this project. Where Schools/Institutes had changed programme structures and were running different versions for different student cohorts for the same programme title, a programme specification for every version would be published from the KIS link.

ix. In terms of timescales, the Tribal software was expected to be available to HEIs in spring, and it was anticipated that the bulk of the data collection work would take place between January and March 2012. A temporary Project Officer would be appointed to provide support. Due to the tight timetable it was recommended that there should be an associated risk assessment for the project plan.
x. It was suggested that whilst SIS was the appropriate repository to manage the quality assurance of these data, concern had recently been expressed regarding issues of accuracy. These related to the module directory, which had been populated with static information from individual Schools and SIS, and when changes had been made since then the published information became out of date. A paper on plans to develop an interface to automatically update the module directory was to be discussed at the Vice Principal’s Teaching and Learning Advisory Group.

xi. The Board agreed that it should receive a full report at its next meeting regarding the detail of the technical guidance, and in particular the requirements relating to learning, teaching, and assessment activities.

Action: KB

7. b) Integrated Masters Programmes

TPB2011-006

The Board received a paper proposing that integrated masters awards should be standardised internally and with the sector. This was following a proposal from the School of Physics and Astronomy to adjust the pass mark for level 7 modules on Physics MSci programmes. The Board noted the following:

i. The paper highlighted issues relating to two characteristics of integrated masters programmes, the number of credits required at the level of the award, and the pass mark for level 7 modules.

ii. That there was currently some variability across Schools in terms of the number of credits required at the level of the award. This concerned integrated masters programmes offered in the Schools of Maths, and Engineering and Materials Science, as they were not in line with the national framework (FHEQ) and external reference points. The School of Geography had also recently started running and integrated masters programme that fell into this category.

iii. The School of Maths had an academic rationale for structuring their programmes, and the level of modules, in the current format. It was felt that further debate was required at the discipline level before an agreed position from the School could be put forward.

iv. There was initial support from the other Schools for moving towards the national framework, and there should be further internal consultation to firm up their positions.

v. Members discussed some of the administrative complexities in changing the level of modules. It was highlighted that it was possible to put arrangements in place to offer versions of the same module at different levels, for example, by introducing different assessments.

vi. The School of Physics and Astronomy was moving towards adjusting the pass mark from 40% to 50% for students on level 7 modules in the intercollegiate MSci programmes. Consistency across the College was felt to be desirable. Members were broadly supportive of exploring further a plan to move towards the higher pass mark for level 7 modules in integrated masters programmes.

vii. It had also been observed that with the changes to undergraduate fees/funding in 2012, there would be a substantial fee differential for the final year of integrated masters programmes compared to the current fees for a
standalone masters programme. Although it was recognised that there was uncertainty about the future of the funding regime for postgraduate fees.

viii. On a related issue, members discussed the fact that different weightings were used within and across Schools for the classification of integrated masters awards.

ix. The Board agreed that there should be further consultation at School level on the implications of the changes proposed in the paper, and the issues raised at the Board, including those regarding rationalising the classification weightings, for integrated masters awards. The outcome of these discussions should be reported to the Science and Engineering Dean for Taught Programmes Advisory Group (DTPAG), with representation from the School of Geography, with a view to making firm recommendations including feasible timescales to the Board.

Action: All Schools in Science and Engineering and the School of Geography

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2011:008 The Board considered a Part 2 programme proposal for the MSc Banking and the MSc Business Finance and two associated module proposals detailed above. The following points were noted:

i. That the two proposed programmes augmented the postgraduate taught portfolio within the School of Economics and Finance. They were designed to respond to market demand for postgraduate training for careers in the Banking and Finance sectors.

ii. The modular content comprised, in the main, modules that were already offered within existing masters programmes. The new programme titles were intended to be distinct from other programmes by introducing a new compulsory module specific to the programme title, and through the design of the student diet. The Board queried the efficiency of offering a high number of elective modules; however it was confirmed that there was sufficient critical mass within the School’s postgraduate taught cohort to manage this.

iii. It was confirmed that the programmes would include a standard pre-sessional course offered by the School for all masters programmes. The aim was to raise students’ confidence before commencing the programme, and the normal lectures were delayed by a week to accommodate the course.

iv. It was also confirmed that there would be double marking of the dissertation by both the supervisor and a second internal marker; which needed to be clarified in the programme specification. The Board discussed the policy of
supervisors’ marking the dissertation assessment, as there was variable practice in the College and a rationale on both sides. The external examiner was satisfied with the current arrangements in these programmes.

v. The External Adviser had scrutinised the common elements of the two MSc awards and the LLM award brought forward by the School of Economics and Finance; therefore he had produced the same commentary to confirm that they were nationally comparable. Some members queried the rigour of this approach. However it was argued that this was appropriate for these proposals, as the programmes were based on a significant amount of existing content, and were part of a suite of masters programmes in this area. It was for marketing purposes that the School’s chosen structural model was to use discreet programme titles and unique codes, rather than pathways within one overarching programme.

vi. That attention should be paid to the following areas of the documentation:

- The programme specification should be revised to clarify the dissertation assessors, and the final section - links with employers etc - should be updated to refer to the correct programme learning outcomes.
- The Part 2 form should be revised to describe the arrangements for detecting plagiarism that would be in place.
- The learning outcomes for the two new modules referred to a literature-based project, however the module would be assessed by examinations and this should be clarified.
- The programme level learning outcomes should be enhanced to reflect demand/depth at level 7.

vii. The Board approved the Part 2 programme proposals for the MSc Banking and the MSc Business Finance and two associated module proposals, subject to the items detailed above in point vi. The School should submit a revised Part 2 Programme Proposal form, Programme Specification, and Module Proposal forms. The revised documentation would be considered outside of the Board by Chair’s Action.

Action: SEF/Chair

9. Centre for Commercial Law Studies

LLM Law and Economics (full time and part time) and three associated module proposals:

- Law and Economics I (for Lawyers);
- Law and Economics I (for Economist);
- Law and Economics II.

TPB2011-009

2011:010 The Board considered a Part 2 programme proposal for the LLM Law and Economics and three associated module proposals detailed above. The following points were noted:

i. The programme had been developed to capitalise on the increasing number of students wishing to study the interaction between law and economics. It was designed with two pathways, one for students with a legal background/degree, and the other for students with an economics/finance background/degree.

ii. As the programme would be offered jointly the Schools had provided a
service level agreement on the joint working arrangements. This statement was now required for all joint programmes, to ensure that the issue of providing a coherent student experience was addressed at the point of approval. The agreement had not identified that there would be a discreet programme management committee for the new LLM, as there were already mechanisms for working collaboratively between the two Schools in place through the other joint programmes.

iii. There was some discussion about the programme structure and number of credits required, as there was a lack of clarity in the service level agreement which needed to be updated. It was confirmed that students would take two compulsory modules worth 22.5 credits each, three economics modules worth 15 credits each (from a list of options), one law module worth 45 credits (from a list of options), and the dissertation worth 45 credits.

iv. The Board queried the fact that not all optional modules would be available every year, and the implications of this on the part-time mode and managing students’ expectations. The programme team anticipated that the optional module offering would run as described. However it was not possible to guarantee in the programme specification, at this stage, that all modules would always run.

v. There were potentially some imbalances in the assessment load for modules of different credit values offered in the programme, and the programme team should be mindful of this. However it was also noted that credit value referred to notional learning hours and effort, and that assessment load should be considered in the context of these factors.

vi. That attention should be paid to the following areas:

- The assessment methods described in the documentation. The programme specification stated that a wide variety of assessment methods would be employed which was queried by the Board. The new compulsory modules were assessed only by examination, as were a number of the optional modules, and depending on student choice they could follow an assessment regime that comprised exam and dissertation only. Consideration should be given to the assessment methods on the compulsory modules.
- The service level agreement should be revised to fully explain the mechanisms for working collaboratively between the two schools; to clarify the programme structure and credits required (as detailed in the programme specification); and to update the module titles to match those in the programme specification.

vii. The Board approved the Part 2 programme proposal for the LLM Law and Economics and three associated module proposals, subject to the items detailed above in point vi. The Schools should submit a revised Programme Specification, service level agreement, and Module Proposal forms. The revised documentation would be considered outside of the Board by Chair’s Action.

Action: CCLS/Chair

Faculty of Science and Engineering

10. School of Mathematical Sciences

MSc Mathematical Finance (full time and part time) and eight TPB2011-010
associated module proposals:

- Mathematical Finance Dissertation;
- Portfolio Theory and Risk Management;
- Advanced Computing in Finance;
- Stochastic Calculus and Black-Scholes Theory;
- Foundations of Mathematical Modelling in Finance;
- Computational Methods in Finance;
- Presessional Probability and Statistics;
- Financial Instruments and Markets.

2011:011 The Board considered a Part 2 programme proposal for the MSc Mathematical Finance and eight associated module proposals detailed above. The following points were noted:

i. The programme had been developed jointly between the Schools of Mathematics, and Economics and Finance; it was based upon existing modules from Economics and Finance and new content developed by Mathematics.

ii. It was confirmed that the core modules were assigned this status intentionally, as this was the policy in the School of Economics and Finance.

iii. The Board queried the level that had been assigned to the pre-sessional modules. These modules had no credit rating and were not assessed but would appear on students’ transcripts. However as these modules were designed to introduce/refresh students on core content, albeit at an accelerated pace, the Board agreed that the appropriate point for the modules to be assigned on the FHEQ was level 6. More broadly, it was suggested that this should be the College’s preferred model for managing pre-sessional courses.

iv. There was a detailed response to the points raised by all the External Advisers including the issue of staffing expertise. This was recognised by the School of Maths; they had made a new appointment and would be factoring in the need to strengthen financial expertise into their staffing planning.

v. In line with other joint programmes and the new programme approval documentation, a joint working statement/service level agreement should be submitted for consideration.

vi. The programme level learning outcomes could benefit from some attention to ensure that they reflected level 7 demands. The outcomes in the transferrable skills category should be enhanced to provide further detail of the particular skills it was intended students should achieve.

vii. The assessment methods for two of the 15 credit modules (Advanced Computing in Finance and Computational Methods in Finance) referred to a project dissertation, and this should be clarified.

viii. The Board approved the Part 2 programme proposal for the MSc Mathematical Finance and eight associated module proposals, subject to the items detailed above in points iii, v – vii. The Schools should submit a joint working statement, a revised Programme Specification, and Module Proposal forms. The revised documentation would be considered outside of
Part 5 – Report of Collaborative Provision

11. Articulation and Progression Agreements

2011:012 The Board received a report on the business considered at the Articulation Agreements Sub-Board in 2010/11, which had considered and approved a number of proposals to set up new agreements.

Following the review of the work of PMAB last year, the Sub-Board had been formally disbanded and its work moved to the remit of the Taught Programmes Board. In future the Board would directly receive academic proposals to establish new articulation and progression agreements for scrutiny.

The Board noted that:

i. The Sub-Board had approved a progression agreement for the Foundation Certificate in Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Pre-Masters Diploma in Social Sciences and Humanities managed by the Language Learning Unit, with specified QM undergraduate degrees.

ii. The Sub-Board had approved an articulation agreement between programmes in four Chinese universities; Donghua (DHU), Central South (CSU), Wuhan University of Technology (WUT) and Xi’an Jiaotong University (XJU); and undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the School of Engineering and Materials Sciences.

iii. The Schools of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science, and Engineering and Materials Science had considered establishing a progression agreement with KDU University College in Malaysia for their Engineering Foundation programme. The Schools decided not to move forward with a formal progression arrangement at that time, and should they decide to do so the proposal would be submitted to Taught Programmes Board.

iv. The Sub-Board had approved an articulation agreement with modules at the Open University and undergraduate programmes in the Schools of Physics, and Biological and Chemical Sciences. The Board ratified the proposed articulation arrangement.

Part 6 – Report of Proposals Approved by Schools/Institutes to Note

12. Programme Amendments
   Programme Suspensions
   Module Proposals
   Module Amendments
   Module Withdrawals

2011:013 The Board noted a report of decisions made by Schools/Institutes of changes to their curricula for the period 17/07/2011 – 05/10/2011. This comprised thirty-four module amendments, one programme suspension, and four programme amendment instances.
13. Programme Withdrawals

2011:014 The Board noted that a decision had been taken by MRAG to approve the withdrawal of the BSc Maths and Computing due to low recruitment. The last intake onto the programme was September 2011.

14. Dates of next meeting

The meeting date of the Taught Programmes Board is Wednesday 23rd November 2011 (11-1pm).

The deadline for papers for this meeting is Wednesday 2nd November 2011.