

**Board of Studies
23rd Meeting**

31 January 2008, Seminar Room, MANDEC, University of Manchester

Minutes

Present

Nigel Beasley, Terry Bransbury, Louise Cole, Adam Cresswell, Janet Flexney, Catherine Lillie, Mike Miller, William Mortimer, Ann Morton (Chair), Alison Robinson, Helen Thomas, Bob Westaway

Apologies

Amanda Ashley, Sue Beech, Marion Cartwright, Joyce Tate

01.23 Minutes

Confirmed: minutes of the previous meeting

Matters Arising:

- (1) (03.22) The AUA office will shortly be contacting inactive Mentors to ascertain whether they are still interested in mentoring or if they feel that they require further training.
- (2) (04.22) The formal response to the External Examiner's report had been sent.
- (3) (06.22) A summary of the outcomes from the Annual Participant and Mentor Monitoring questionnaire has been posted on the website.
- (4) (05.22) The Board are currently awaiting a response from the Equality Advisory Group on including disability advice in the Programme Handbook.
- (5) (08.22) - The updated reading list has been circulated to participants.
- A joint cohort day for 2006/07 cohorts will be held in April 2008.

02.23 Terms of Reference and Membership

Received:

- the Terms of Reference of the Board
- the current membership of the Board

Noted:

- (1) The item within the Terms of Reference relating to non-attendance at meetings should be changed from "their membership on the committee will be revoked" to "will be reviewed".
- (2) Bob Westaway, Terry Bransbury and William Mortimer are happy to stand again. Alison Robinson will leave as a co-opted member to become ex-officio when she becomes AUA Executive Director.

- (3) It will be recommended to PDC that the trainer position becomes a co-opted position.
- (4) An election will be held shortly for the participant vacancy.
- (5) Elections for mentor representatives will be held if other mentors express an interest in standing.

Resolved:

- (1) Formal approval will be sought from the PDC for the amendments made to the Terms of Reference.
- (2) The Board would recommend to the PDC that the trainer representative position becomes a co-opted position.

Action: PDC/Programme Manager

03.23 Statistical Summary

- (1) **Received:** a Statistical Summary of recruitment, progression, and retention

Noted:

- (1) The admission numbers for March 2008 had increased since circulation of the Statistical Summary – there are currently 10 participants and 6 mentors.
- (2) Although there are similar numbers of participants and mentors, they are not always in the same regions. Not all of the registered mentors are active.
- (3) Although there is a decrease in the level of withdrawal, it is still a cause for concern. It was suggested that this could be related to the nature of the programme (i.e. self-directed learning), and that the new Study Guidance is an attempt to inform potential students about the kind of course they are enrolling onto. Further statistical analysis (e.g. age profiling of withdrawals) could prove informative. Research into withdrawal levels on comparable programmes would also be useful.
- (4) It is likely that the target of 60 new admissions for 2007-08 will be met.

Resolved:

- (1) Further statistical analysis on withdrawal levels e.g. age profiling, the courses they are withdrawing from, and a year on year comparison, would be available for the next meeting.
- (2) Inactive mentors will be contacted to check their availability and interest in continuing as a mentor and offered further training where appropriate.

Action: Programme Management Team

04.23 Assessment

Received: an oral report from the Programme Manager and Mike Miller

Reported:

- (1) 2007/08 Assessment rounds
18 submissions in the first instance
 - 6 passed
 - 3 passed major assignment only
 - 3 referred on both elements
 - 2 referred on major assignment only
 - 4 referred on portfolio only

- 9 resubmissions
 - 6 passed
 - 3 failed
- (2) PGC37
 - 24 submissions
 - 17 passed
 - 2 decision deferred as assessor ill
 - 5 referred
- (3) In general, the standard of written work had improved.
- (4) The issue of differences between marking at formative and summative stage was discussed. The Assessment Board had agreed that the assignments affected would be allowed to pass. A procedure whereby the formative feedback is provided to the assessor along with the assignment will be implemented. The situation had also highlighted the need for clearer feedback emphasising the need to improve upon work submitted at the formative stage.
- (5) The issue of disclosure of disability had been discussed and the Assessment Board will seek advice from the Equality Advisory Group.

Resolved:

- (1) The wording on the guidance provided to participants should be changed so as to emphasise that feedback must be taken into account and that further improvements on formative assignments are expected. In future, assessor feedback needs to be more forceful.
- (2) It was agreed that no mark should be given at the formative stage.
- (3) The amended regulations will be approved by Chair's Action.
- (4) The Programme Manager would inform participants of this decision, which will take effect with the PGC39 cohort onwards.

Action: Programme Manager/Chair

05.23 Assessment Extension Guidelines

Received: the proposed Assessment Extension guidelines

Noted:**Resolved:**

- (1) The wording on both the guidelines and the application form would be altered to stress the importance of keeping to deadlines.
- (2) Section 2 would be removed and Section 2.2 would be moved to the end of Section 3 on "Penalties for late/non submission" (to become 3.9).
- (3) Further minor amendments to the policy will be made before circulation to the Chair for Chair's Action.

Action: Programme Manager/Chair

06.23 Incentives for Mentors

Received: a draft guidance document for mentors

Noted:

- (1) The AUA office are currently looking at the possibility of an ILM endorsed award for mentors (which could also be made available to AUA membership more broadly.) Mentors for the PG Cert would be given a discount on the fee. The

team are looking into whether AUA should become an ILM Registered Provider.

Resolved:

- (1) This issue needs to be resolved before the next academic year and the outcome would therefore be reported at the next BoS.

Action: Programme Manager

07.23 Study Skills Guidance

Received: a draft study skills guidance document

Noted:

- (1) The Programme Management Team had been asked to produce guidance for enquirers to the programme.
- (2) The guidance draws attention to the nature of self- directed learning and the level of discipline the PG Cert requires. It seeks to highlight the fact that the PG Cert is an M level programme which requires the participant to make the shift to this level of study.
- (3) There was some concern that the guidance could be off-putting. It was suggested that the wording could be altered to find a balance between drawing attention to the demands/difficulties that this sort of programme presents and the challenge/innovation. The guidance could also benefit from the addition of some graduate case studies.

Resolved:

- (1) The first paragraph on "Returning to academic study" needs to be strengthened to underline the need for self criticality and reflection. The guidance should make it clear that support will be provided (e.g. through study days) to those participants prepared to make the shift to M level study.
- (2) The amendments will be made before circulation to the Board for final comment.

Action: Programme Manager

08.23 Skills Analyses

Received: a draft Generic Skills Analysis template

Noted:

- (1) The Programme Management Team had proposed revisions to the template in response to participant feedback.
- (2) The template is comprehensive and allows participants to identify areas where they can develop. It is also useful in highlighting to them where there may be gaps in their skills.

Resolved:

- (1) The revisions were approved and will be introduced for the next academic year.

Action: Programme Manager

09.23 VLE

Received: an update on VLE from the Programme Manager

Reported:

- (1) The AUA office is working on setting up a blog for the PG Cert.
- (2) A representative from Pebble Pad will be invited to the office to discuss the possibility of introducing e-Portfolios, which are purportedly very helpful in promoting reflective practice. A comprehensive pilot scheme would be set up

prior to e-Portfolios being introduced fully.

Resolved:

- (1) The Programme Manager would report back on progress made to the next meeting.

Action: Programme Manager

10.23 Supporting the Portfolio: Guidance for Mentors

Received: a draft Guidance Note for Mentors

Noted:

- (1) There should be some words of guidance added to the section "The reflective statement".

Resolved:

- (1) The Programme Manager would make minor amendments before publication.

Action: Programme Manager

11.23 Reports

Received: an oral report from –

- (1) **BCs representative**

Reported:

- (a) The following feedback was reported:
 - (i) There was a request for a further study day.
 - (ii) The conference schedule meant that participants were unable to attend all the sessions they wanted to.
- (b) In response to the above:
 - (i) The Programme Manager would speak to the Conference Coordinator to see what could be done about rescheduling the sessions in question.

Action: Programme Manager

Reports from -

- (2) **Participants representative**

Reported:

- (a) The following feedback was reported:
 - (i) Participants were concerned the marks provided at the formative stage might be misleading.
 - (ii) The assessment turnaround was longer than had been anticipated.
 - (iii) There is no guidance on whether wordcount should be indicated on assignments.
 - (iv) A further study day in the second year would be useful as many participants valued the direction these can provide. Poor attendance at joint study days was likely to be because they don't know who is going to be there or what to expect from them. Participants prefer study days where they can network with their own cohort as this helps reduce any feeling of isolation.
 - (v) There was little response from participants on the subject of JISC mail.
 - (vi) Participants wanted to know if any research had been done on the promotional prospects for those who had completed the programme.
 - (vii) Participants feel that there is little or no moderation of the mentor

relationship. They were concerned that many mentors aren't aware of regulations and deadlines, and possibly should have more training.

(viii) Judging by the lack of feedback, the new cohort appear to happy with the programme.

(b) In response to the participant concerns:

(i) The Programme Manager pointed out that the assessment turnaround is indicated in the handbook as 2 months.

(ii) The Programme Handbook would be amended for the next academic year to instruct participants to include the wordcount with their assignment

(iii) The participant representative was asked to obtain feedback on what participants want out of a further study day and report back to the next BoS.

(iv) It was confirmed that research had been done in the past into promotional prospects for graduates and had been reported in Perspectives. The Programme Manager would send information on this to the participant representative.

(v) There is annual monitoring of mentors, and feedback has so far been positive. The role of the mentor is to provide support to participants in their self-development, and in-depth knowledge of regulations and deadlines for each cohort, whilst provided, is not necessary. The Board considered it to be the responsibility of the participant to know about regulations and deadlines, and that self-reliance was part of the process of self-development. It was confirmed that there is a process for changing a mentor if it is felt necessary. It was agreed that discussion on the need for further mentor training was required.

Action: Participant Representative/Programme Management Team

(3) **Mentor Representative**

Reported:

(a) The following feedback was reported:

(i) Most of the concerns expressed by mentors had already been covered in the meeting.

(ii) There are some trained mentors who have not been allocated a participant.

(b) In response to the concerns raised:

(i) The AUA Administrator will shortly be contacting inactive mentors to ascertain whether they are still interested in mentoring, and if so, whether they required further training. The Programme Manager is also looking at ease of access (e.g. rail links) to see if it is feasible for a participant to travel to meet their mentor even when they are in different regions.

Action: Programme Manager

12.23 Programme Management Team

Received: an update from the Programme Management Team

Reported:

- (1) There was nothing further to consider, that had not already been raised during the meeting.

13.23 Dates for 2008/09

Received: a schedule of Dates for 2008/09

Noted:

- (1) The dates for PGC41 and PGC42 have been put back to November and April respectively in order to avoid clashes in deadlines for assessment with existing cohorts.

Resolved:

- The schedule was approved.

14.23 Other Business**Noted:**

- There was no other business to discuss.

15.23 Dates of next meetings

- 24th meeting: 29th May 2008, London
- 25th meeting: 18th September, Manchester

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23rd Meeting**

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Minutes

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Action: Participant Representative/Programme Management Team

(3) **Mentor Representative**

Reported:

(a) The following feedback was reported:

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Action: Programme Manager

12.23 Programme Management Team

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Reported:

- (1) There was nothing further to consider, that had not already been raised during the meeting.

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Noted:

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