

Interdisciplinary Support Structures Implementation Group

Summary and Action Points

Thursday 12th June 2014, 11:00-13:00

In attendance: Paul Taylor (Chair, IATL), Steve Locke-Wheaton (Library), Jo Trowsdale (CES), Leucha Veneer (Computer Science), Juliet Raynsford (CES), Will Curtis (CLL), Richard Sutcliffe (CES), Hazel Rice (CES), Louise Botley (RSS), Martin Mik (Teaching Quality), Christine Bradford (Library), Mike Joy (Computer Science), Jackie Smith (PAIS), Alexandra Cristea (Computer Science), Faadhila Dadabhai (CES)

Apologies: Sue Maguire (CEI), Gill Frigerio (CLL), Racheal Corke (IAS), Caroline Gibson (IATL), Laura Jackson (CES), Darren Wallis (CLL), Julia Porter (CAL)

Discussion Points:

Challenges arising from cross-departmental / interdisciplinary (ID) collaboration

- Workload models: how ID collaboration is credited in across varied departmental workload models
- Consistency in assessment: variability of CAT schemes across departments
 - Departments working across disciplines usually have to offer variants of CAT credits depending on their home department (i.e. the same module with 24-CAT and a 30-CAT variants)
 - There is a desire for consistency and to harmonise schemes across departments
 - Advise from Teaching Quality is to follow the lead of IATL and CIM in this respect
- Assessment methodologies: departments are now required to produce an assessment strategy. These strategies can be shared among this group and more widely, to promote consistency
- Varied and inconsistent use of teaching information systems (i.e. Moodle, Tabula)
- Caroline Gibson from IATL setting up a departmental administrators network around interdisciplinary
- Differences in academic culture between disciplines, often hidden
- Students on modules in home departments have preferential treatment
- Timetabling problems, where options often clash
- Students have been asked whether they prefer more limited but guaranteed options, over a wider range of options that are less secure – they tend to prefer the latter
- Role of the personal tutor
- Consistency of deadlines in module registration
 - Is it possible to design some type of early warning system for departments to indicate areas of high demand early?
- Modules can often be withdrawn without wider departments being aware
- No single cohesive module registration system

- Ensuring employability is embedded into the degree – not losing the narrative of the degree with ever increasing options and variants

Best Practice

- Teaching Quality has produced a good practice guide to joint degrees, but some examples of good practice include:
 - Management committees with student representation
 - Named contact in departments for queries – both on academic and administrative sides
 - Clearly defined boundaries of responsibility
 - Having a core element of a degree to provide identity and state of ownership among students
 - Good student support literature, specific to a joint / interdisciplinary degree
 - Each department to have a programme director
 - Student experience manager to advocate interdisciplinarity and provide consistent pastoral presence
 - Cross departmental module approval committee (e.g. as in IATL)

Potential structures CES could implement to overcome issues and challenges

- Consult University about universal module registrations; opening the system up earlier to aid interdisciplinary teaching
- Encouraging outreach programmes between departments is a good way to build and cement relationships in facilitating longer term research and teaching collaborations
- Another useful feature of the new BA Education Studies degree could be to introduce taster sessions earlier in years 1 and 2, before interdisciplinary options become available. This could be done through visiting speakers on existing modules.
- Worth exploring a system of research secondments / PDRF placements to build research capacity / connections
- Encourage departments to have a lead liaison between themselves and CES
- Discussions are already in discussion to have a general Interdisciplinary Research Committee (Simon Swain) which would make the business of navigate individual research committees easier

Action Points:

1. CES to receive invite to faculty GEM working group – **Martin Mik**
2. Explore ways to share assessment strategies across departments – **Martin Mik**
3. Departmental contacts; compile a list of academic and administrative contacts across departments – **Hazel Rice with assistance from CLL**
4. Early enquiries system for module registration to be discussed with Jo Latimer – **Martin Mik**
5. Activate network of administrators with interdisciplinary interests – **Paul Taylor / Caroline Gibson**
6. Paper exploring issues, best practice and solutions to be drafted building on IATL Paper to ASQC and Teaching Quality best Practice guide – **Laura Jackson, Anne Packwood and Will Curtis (CLL)**

7. Explore research secondment / PDRF placement scheme looking at IAS fellowships as a model – **Hazel Rice / Richard Sutcliffe**
8. Conduct research into departmental workload models – **Hazel Rice**