**Faculty of Humanities**

**Notes of the Teaching & Learning Administrators’ Network (TLAN) Meeting 17 December 2015**

**Present:** Fiona Fraser & Elizabeth Nolan (School Arts, Languages & Cultures – SALC); Michael Cheslett, Katrina Clark & Janice Dodds (School Environment, Education & Development – SEED); Amanda Brereton & Amanda Bridgeman (School of Social Sciences – SoSS); Melanie Crank, Nor Haslin Jalil, Chris McGlinchey, Madeleine Ryan & Kelly Salimian (Alliance Manchester Business School – AMBS); Joanne Davidson (HERA); Nicola Lord (Faculty); Anusarin Lowe (PGR Faculty); Lisa McAleese (Chair).

**1. Apologies**

**Noted:** Apologies were received from:Lee Felvus, Morag Guilfoyle, Sara Latham, Louise Stewart & Emma Wilson (SALC); Abi Robinson (Law); James Walker (SEED); Bernadette O’Connor (SoSS); Gareth Hughes, Jackie Kan, Emily Marner & Lynne McCormack (AMBS); Gail Divall & Emma Sanders (Faculty).

**In attendance:** Paul Brierley, Matt Casey and John Hornsby for agendum 4.

**2. Previous Notes**

**Confirmed:** The notes from the meeting on 1 October 2015 were confirmed as an accurate record.

**3. Matters Arising**

**Ref 8 - PSS Staff Representing the Faculty on University Groups**

**Reported:** James Walker has taken over from Rosie Williams as one of the Faculty reps. on the Student Communication sub-group of the Student Administration Management Group.

*Secretary’s Note: By the end of January 2016 there will be a dedicated page on HumNet on Faculty Representation on University Committees, Groups and Networks which will have a list of the Faculty reps on these and links to the terms of reference.* [*http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/committees/faculty-representation/*](http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/committees/faculty-representation/)

**Ref 6. - Issues with Exclusion of Students via the Resit Grid and via Program / Plan**

*Secretary’s Note: Sian Nash has confirmed that currently it is only the program action of WADM which extends students’ access to their IT accounts for 28 calendar days. Apparently, it’s a simple change to extend this to EXCL- Wayne Eden has already spoken to integration about this and submitted a change request to Simon Eley’s team.*

**Ref 7 - Auto Extension for Disabled Students**

**Reported:** This issue was discussed at the University’s Teaching and Learning Group. Further discussion is taking place around this requirement.

**Reported:** A situation has arisen in one School whereby the submission date for students’ work is 18 December 2015. For Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS) registered students the automatic extension will mean that the submission date is actually 25 December 2015 i.e. Christmas day. It was queried with DASS as to whether or not the bank holidays should be counted as non-working days and therefore the submission date would be 29 December 2015, or whether the date should be extended into January 2016 when the University re-opens (this would give DASS registered students a significant time advantage). The advice from DASS was that DASS registered students should be required to submit immediately after the Christmas bank holiday (electronically at least) i.e. on 29 December 2015.

**4. Presentation from Paul Brierley (Timetabling Manager)**

**Received:** A presentation from Paul on:

* + - timetable changes and the student experience
		- counting timetable changes
		- timetable ranking and KPIs
		- room utilisation survey results

**Reported: Timetabling Policy** - The University’s timetabling policy was agreed by Senate. It was reviewed by the Learning Spaces Group and has since been reaffirmed. The Timetabling Team produce accompanying guidance notes which are available on their [website](http://www.estates.manchester.ac.uk/services/timetabling/).

Changes to the published timetable can have a negative effect on the student experience and a change in one part of the timetable can have knock on effects on a range of other activities. In accordance with the Policy on timetabling teaching activities changes can be made in exceptional circumstances, such as staff illness; approved change in staff availability; actual number of students exceeds room capacity; actual number of students is significantly smaller than expected. CTS process all changes submitted to them, regardless of the reason, however less than a quarter of all changes submitted are of the type outlined in the University’s policy.

**Impact on Students** - The Yik Yak app allows students to anonymously post comments which are grouped geographically. As such the app can be used to track student comments in and around the University. The app is not for the faint hearted! The anonymous nature means a lot of offensive comments are posted. However, the app is useful as it is possible to see students getting frustrated over things, including last minute timetable changes.

Twitter is also interrogated. Search terms are for tweets including words relating to timetabling which have been geotagged in the immediate area. Major sources of student frustration are late changes to the timetable and conflicting information about where they should be.

Categorising National Student Survey comments by keyword is hard, e.g. “timetable” may refer to exam or lecture timetable, or even difficulty of getting to campus because of a bus timetable. Despite that, the number of comments does not fit with the often repeated line that students want to be in particular buildings for the student experience.

**How timetable changes are measured** - The categories listed below are being used to group timetable changes, for 2015/16:

* students requested change
* more students than expected
* fewer students than expected
* change in staff availability
* revised DSO requirements
* new Activity
* extension of an existing activity
* partial cancellation of an existing activity
* clash discovered
* estates issue
* school swap of rooms between activities
* change in response to a complaint
* school error
* other
* no valid reason / reason not provided

The nature of the Syllabus+ database makes it difficult to log deletions (i.e. full cancellations). However, manual logging of these has identified well over 1,000 made within the first few weeks of Semester 1 (N.B. deletions are not counted as changes).

The biggest group of changes is new activities – things which were not known about in time for the room allocation exercise. This suggests that planning of new courses and the timetabling process are not well aligned.

**Year on Year Increases** - Despite a few variations (most notably a significant reduction in Estates imposed changes), the overall percentages for each category are roughly the same as for 2014/15. CTS have received more changes than at the same point last year (even though term started a week later!).

**CTS Impact** - The impact of timetable changes on CTS is significant; the entire team’s (5 permanent members of staff) workload is dominated by change requests, even when supplemented by temps. Certain activities, such as checking the condition of teaching rooms, are completely impossible at present. Processing of changes also delays the processing of other activities such as ad-hoc bookings. The largest volume of changes comes from Schools in Humanities.

**Timetable KPI Ranking** - A KPI value for timetable changes has been established.

Let c be the number of changes

Let a be the number of activities

$$K=1-\frac{c}{a}$$

K =1 means the School has made no changes.

K decreases as the School makes more changes.

A value of 1.0 means “no changes made”, and as the number of changes increases the KPI value falls.

The Timetabling Team only look at CTS rooms for this in order to be as fair as possible (i.e. to enable comparison between Schools who only put CTS room teaching into S+ with those who put all their teaching into Syllabus+).

If Schools are ranked by the KPI value for the last three years there is a lot of movement. A single School’s position may change because their own processes have changed or because other Schools’ processes have changed. Despite that, there are three Schools (Physics, Computer Science and Dentistry) who have held the top three places for the last three years. This suggests that their business processes minimise the number of in year timetable changes.

**Room Utilisation Survey** - The Room Use Survey for the last two years highlights two specific issues:

1. Over-booking - People book more rooms than they need.
2. Under-occupancy - People are using bigger rooms than they need.

About half of the unused slots are from the Faculty of Humanities. The four “worst offenders” in the University are responsible for half of the unused slots are from four divisions.

**Noted:** Utilisation of rooms (no of hours per week and number of seats used) is reported to HEFCE, who can award money for good utilisation of rooms. No one turns up for circa 10% of rooms booked.

**Discussed:** It is difficult to change the culture of some academics wanting specific times / rooms for their teaching; it is easier to begin to change this culture if there is a supportive academic who understands the issues and impact and can spread the word amongst colleagues. It is easier for a higher grade administrator toquestion specific change requests from academics. **Noted:** Paul is happy to come and talk to School Committees on this topic.

SALC expressed thanks to Paul and his team for all their support.

**5. Student Communications Strategy**

**Received:** A copy of the University’s current Student Communications Strategy outlining key principles for effective communication with students (which will soon come under review), was received.

**Noted:**  The Head of Student Communications, Paul Govey is looking for any recommendations on other elements which should be considered within the strategy and we’ve also been asked to consider:

1) The extent to which, this current, and any new strategy are ‘used’ and implemented at a local level.

2) The extent to which there is appropriate support for staff who engage with students within Humanities.

**Discussed:** It would be useful if there was mandatory training, spread across the year i.e. themed chunks, for both academic and PSS staff, which is specific to the Faculty. It would be helpful if a toolkit were developed.

3) How should the Faculty support Schools in developing Governance, professional advice and guidance for front line staff to students to ensure a consistent approach across all areas of Humanities, particularly at times when consistent messages are needed across Schools (i.e. industrial action, incidents overseas etc.).

**Discussed:** Schools should be trusted to deliver such messages.

**6. Examinations**

**Received:** A copy of a proposal to extend the May/June examination period and the examination report for 2014-15 were received, both of which will be considered by the Teaching and Learning Group in January 2016.

**Noted:**  These papers are also being considered at the Faculty’s Teaching and Learning Committee.

**Discussed:** TLAN members agreed that an extension to the May/June examination period (of 2-3 days) would be useful.

**7. Mitigating Circumstances**

**Reported:** The University recently received a decision from a student appeal case which went to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The complaint was received by the OIA in April 2015 and concluded in November 2015 (ruled ‘not justified’). A couple of lessons that can be taken from the case:

1. The School did not send out decision letters explicitly informing students of the outcome of their requests for mitigation given the proximity of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel’s meeting to that of the Board of Examiners. However the Board outcome letter sent to the student was ambiguous as to whether or not the claim for mitigation had been considered and what the outcome was.

Paragraph 29 of the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances requires that *“Schools should inform students of the outcome and progress, as appropriate, of their request for mitigation.”*

The OIA stated that Schools need to take measures to ensure that students are notified of the outcome and progress of their requests for mitigation, particularly where this is not explicit within the Board outcome letters. **Action: All Schools.**

2. Part of the appeal was based around the fact that the student was unaware that they could submit a request for mitigation without any evidence providing information on why the evidence is not available and an indication when such documentation would be available.

Under the section on ‘Nature of Supporting Documentation’ on the University’s Notification of Mitigating Circumstances Form it states that *‘Should you be unable to provide supporting documentation please provide the reason why, and indicate when such documentation will be available’*.

Where Schools are using their own adaptation of the University’s Form they need to ensure that the same sentence about supporting documentation is included. **Action: All Schools**

**8. Ethical Approval in Taught Programmes**

**Reported:** At the July 2015 meeting of TLAN it was reported that the Policy on Ethical Approval in Taught Assessment was approved by Senate however there was one area of the Policy which needs clarification before it would be issued to Schools. The Policy has now been issued. The policy has been written to try and prevent ethical approval for taught programmes progressing to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

The central Teaching and Learning Support Office will be developing some guidance in collaboration with the UREC.

**Action:**  **Schools** to monitor the implementation of the Policy and report any issues to Lisa McAleese.

**9. A.O.B**

**9.1 Moderation Procedure**

**Received:** The Faculty’s Draft Moderation Procedure was received.

**Reported:** In September 2015 an away day on the theme of ‘marking and assessment’ was held for T&L / UG / PGT Directors and other academic colleagues in Schools.

During the sessions it became clear that there is no consistency of practice / process across the Faculty (or even sometimes within a School). It was agreed that we should be explicit about what is expected of the different roles in the moderation process, hence the production of the paper.

The Draft Moderation Procedure paper has pulled together relevant requirements from different University documentation (so what we should already be doing). From the away day discussions and those at the Teaching and Learning Committee the following areas in the procedure may be a change in practice for some areas:

• Moderation applies to all summative first sit, referred and deferred assessment, at all levels (i.e. 4, 5, 6 and 7 and CPD activity which leads to an award).

• Reviewing course unit and programme statistics.

• Defining / agreeing the normal range of marks for the discipline.

• Completion of ‘Internal Examiners and Internal Moderator’s Report’ (see appendix B) – this could have implementation implications for PSS staff, see section 5.2.

**Discussed:** It was queried where the Internal Examiner’s and Internal Moderator’s Report form would ‘sit’ and how this could be accessed by external examiners. It was queried whether or not SharePoint could be used for this purpose.

**Noted:**  It is only when marks are posted on Campus Solutions that statistics can be generated. These should then be taken to the examination board.

**Action:** **TLAN** members to forward any additional comments on the Draft Moderation Procedure paper to Lisa McAleese, by 29 January 2016.

**10. Briefing Note**

**Received:** A briefing note for information and dissemination, as appropriate, containing information on:

* Policy on Personalised Learning for Students on Taught Programmes
* Faculty Task and Finish Group Recording and Monitoring Student Attendance
* Proposed Teaching Excellence Framework
* Information from the University’s Student Communications Group
* Not Permitting Students to Graduate if they have an Outstanding Debt

**Reported:** The briefing note contains inaccurate information. The briefing from the Student Communications Group states that ‘*there will be a staggered roll out for having a My School tab in My Manchester for each of the Humanities Schools (Alliance MBS is already on board)*’ implying that AMBS is already up and running, which is not the case. It is not clear who is doing the technical implementation for AMBS and this has previously been reported to Pete Morris.

**Action: Lisa McAleese** to report this issue back to Marie Gray.

**11. Notes of Central Committees**

**Received:** Received, for information, notes of the following central committees:

* Teaching and Learning Management Group, 20 July 2015
* Timetabling Management Group, 05 November 2015

**Summary Action List**

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| **Agenda Item** | **Action** | **By Whom** |
| 7 | Measures need to be in place to ensure that students are notified of the outcome and progress of their requests for mitigation, particularly where this is not explicit within the Board outcome letters. | Schools |
| 7 | Ensure that if using an adaptation of the University’s Mitigating Circumstances Form that the sentence *‘Should you be unable to provide supporting documentation please provide the reason why, and indicate when such documentation will be available’* is included. | Schools |
| 8 | Monitor the implementation of the Policy on Ethical Approval in Taught Assessment and report any issues to Lisa McAleese. | Schools |
| 9.1 | Forward any additional comments on the Faculty’s Draft Moderation Procedure paper to Lisa McAleese by 29 January 2016. | TLAN members |
| 10 | Report issues with AMBS My School tab to Marie Gray. | Lisa McAleese |