Validation Forum

21 March 2007

Minutes

Present:

Colin Bourne  Vice-Principal  Northern School of Contemporary Dance
Della Little  Principal’s Assistant  Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance
Dermot O’Brien  Drama Chief Examiner  University of Kent
Gillian Hooper  Quality Assurance and Registry Manager  Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
Gurmit Hukam  Principal  Northern School of Contemporary Dance
Dr Ian Bride  Department representative and RARE lecturer  University of Kent
Janet Reynolds (JR)  QA&V  University of Kent
Joanna McPherson  Head of Studies  Circus Space
Linda Lough  Faculty Officer  University of Kent
Louise Ainley  Head of Studies  Central School of Ballet
Dr Louise Naylor (LHN)  Head of UELT  University of Kent
Mary Nolan (MMN)  QA&V  University of Kent
Dr Peter Boenisch  Department representative for Drama  University of Kent
Suellen White  QA&V  University of Kent
Suzie Taylor  QA&V  University of Kent
Tim Roberts  HE Courses Director  Circus Space
Dr Valerie Ainscough  Director of Academic Programmes  Chaucer College

Apologies:
Sara Matthews and Richard Ralph (Central School of Ballet); Dr Keith Wren (Chaucer College); Chris Clark (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust); Peter James and Sarah Rowe (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts); Kirsty Alexander (London Contemporary Dance School); Lynn Atkins (North East Surrey College of Technology); Ross McKim (Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance); Rosemary Godfrey (RARE Centre for Tropical Conservation); Dr Oliver Double and Professor Paul Allain (School of Drama,
Welcome and Apologies for Absence: NOTED.

LHN introduced the institutions which had begun collaborative partnerships with Kent since the previous Validation Forum meeting (January 2006). They included Northern School of Contemporary Dance, North East Surrey College of Technology, ifs School of Finance and in the process of validation for later this year, Southern Counties Psychotherapy.

Minutes of Meeting held 25 January 2006: CONFIRMED.

Matters Arising:

NOTED that as a result of suggestions made in the previous minutes (item 3.), the Gulbenkian Theatre was due to stage three performances by the Northern School of Contemporary Dance.

QA Developments:

INFORMED that the University of Kent (Kent) had implemented a new logo and had redesigned their website. Instructions were given on how to navigate to the QA&V webpage and included highlights of the Code of Practice, the Credit Framework, and the External Examiners web pages.

UPDATED the forum on all changes made to the Kent academic infrastructure since the previous meeting.

Reports from Validated Institutions:

Circus Space (CS)

REPORTED;

CS is the only institution in the country to run a two year Foundation degree plus top up to Honours degree for their subject area. They find it difficult therefore to benchmark the programme and thus look to Europe and Australia.

Have found that working with Kent has placed them ‘at the top of their game’.

Engaging a ‘mindset change’ was a challenge initially with motivational related issues in taking the transition to HE seriously. However, once tutors had gone through this transition, they were much more positive.

Changing and updating of paperwork and procedures created a huge amount of work and included translations, both to students and tutors, of the ‘HE language’ into understandable English.

CS has had to think about how to balance the programme between the vocational and the academic and how to create a successful relationship between the two.
5.1.6 Positive outcomes included clarity in how everything links together, for example module specifications within the student handbook. Students now have greater awareness of the concept of learning and self reflection.

5.1.7 CS ENQUIRED as to what steps they have to take to put programme specifications into ‘plain’ English without changing the course. They would like to move closer to an easily understandable content of published material.

5.1.8 SUGGESTED that each module might include a summary written in plain English to attract students and that programme specifications could also be tweaked to make them more attractive and informative to students.

5.1.9 LHN CONFIRMED the importance of ensuring documents (e.g. module and programme specifications) was written in everyday language to aid better understanding by all stakeholders.

5.2 Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD)

5.2.1 NOTED that this was the first year that they had been validated by Kent.

REPORTED:

5.2.2 The validation process had encouraged them to review their programmes of study. This inspired them to introduce new practical and creative modules to balance the existing, more theoretical, modules. Besides enhancing the student experience, this has also opened up pathways for students, for example to a graduate diploma.

5.2.3 NSCD plans to introduce a new pathway for choreography.

5.2.4 NSCD gave students the choice between keeping their award with the original validating partner (Leeds) or transferring to Kent. Students chose to transfer; they have no major issues and are satisfied with the Kent experience.

5.2.5 Attending the Board of Examiners training (held during the morning) had been useful in clarifying some of the rules and regulations.

5.2.6 NSCD takes the view that information they give to students about the experience cannot be described, it is a personal discovery for students and therefore, their curiosity needs to be triggered to aid this journey.

5.2.7 As the programme increases NSCD hopes to develop their premises.

5.3 Central School of Ballet

5.3.1 REPORTED that their third year BA (Hons) students opened a successful tour last week.

5.4 Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD)

5.4.1 INFORMED that CDD is an umbrella organisation for eight schools, of which six are validated by Kent. It is defined as a single HEI.

REPORTED:

5.4.2 There is now a shared view of what is done separately in the eight schools and what is done together, i.e. what common quality systems can be developed towards an overarching quality framework. The two schools which are not validated by Kent are starting to integrate and work towards a common framework.
5.4.3 There have been general difficulties in unification across all eight schools but progress is being made.

5.5 Ifs School of Finance (ifs)

5.5.1 REPORTED that ifs has recently been validated by Kent to award a Foundation degree in Financial Services Management. The Foundation degree sits within what can be called an intricate HE programme structure; level 1 leads to a Diploma awarded by ifs, level 2 leads to a Foundation degree awarded by Kent and level 3 leads to an Honours degree awarded by the University of Manchester. As expected, the challenge has been to develop a meaningful programme that is accountable to three different Academic Infrastructures and has academic content and structure acceptable to the next level to allow for progression.

5.6 Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance

5.6.1 This is the School’s first year of offering their degree and although they have found it a challenge, it has been very successful. Students have appreciated the improvements and are far more aware of the reasons for change.

5.7 Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and RARE Centre for Tropical Conservation

5.7.1 Ian McBride REPORTED that he is involved with both Durrell and RARE programmes.

5.7.2 The RARE programme is a difficult programme as students spend a relatively short time at Kent before continuing their studies in their home country. They then return to Kent at the end of the year for the final assessment. The main challenge is supporting students while they are abroad. Pastoral care can sometimes include such diverse topics as dealing with hurricanes and political conflict.

5.7.3 Both programmes are highly successful.

5.8 Chaucer College

REPORTED:

5.8.1 Chaucer College is an independent College of Higher Education for Japanese students and is situated at the University of Kent. The College provides a certificate, equivalent to first year university study, which is awarded by Kent.

5.8.2 Besides the obvious issue of linguistics, the main challenge for the College is that they have no input with marketing of the programme as this is done in Japan. This means very little control over numbers of students recruited. This lack of control over marketing is frustrating as students enjoy the programme and the College would like to increase numbers.

5.9 Forum DISCUSSED how a valid assessment process might be a different experience for say an 18 year old student to say a 32 year old student and how this might be addressed. Personal development plans were
recommended as they aim to promote individual reflection. However, it was noted that duplication should be avoided.

6. **Student Information**

6.1. DISCUSSED that most existing partners and Kent seemed to experience difficulties with the process of migrating student data of collaborative provision onto Kent’s main student data base.

6.2. CONFIRMED that Kent as the awarding institution is responsible for transcripts. It was understood that extra questions may be asked to help with producing accurate transcripts etc.

6.3. ENQUIRED whether Kent’s collaborative partners hold student data in similar ways. CDD reported that they do not hold any shared or centralised student data. However, they confirmed that the student records system for all the CDD partners can be sent to Kent in a similar way.

**ACTION:** MMN to discuss with Gillian Hooper.

6.4. ENQUIRED what Kent’s position was with regards to the European Diploma Supplements (EDS). LHN confirmed that Kent introduced their digitary system at the start of the 2006/7 academic year so students can apply online for their EDS to be generated.

**NOTE:** As members of the forum were interested to know more about the EDS, here are some URLs to Kent’s website providing information on EDS and also the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);

- [http://www.kent.ac.uk/european/students/diplomasupp.htm](http://www.kent.ac.uk/european/students/diplomasupp.htm)
- [http://www.kent.ac.uk/european/students/ects.htm](http://www.kent.ac.uk/european/students/ects.htm)

7. **Feedback Exercise:**

7.1. MMN EXPLAINED that the Validation Forum is designed for Kent’s collaborative partners and as such, Kent would like feedback on future structure, content, timings etc.

7.2. AGREED initially the most popular choices;

- One full day rather than two separate half days
- Include half a day of external speaker and/or training with half a day for the forum itself
- Midweek is most convenient
- Arrange nearer the beginning of term
- Forum to include a short written overview for each partner (to be submitted prior to the Forum) but to focus on issues/challenges and sharing of good practice
• London is the most convenient location. However, obtaining room bookings can be challenging and expensive so location to remain at the University of Kent
• The Symposium room at Kent Business School deemed as very suitable
• Frequency of meetings to be yearly.

7.3. Suggestions for discussion topics at the next forum included;
• Vocational/professional aspect, in particular how it fits with the academic side of programmes
• Accredited Prior Learning
• Practice based research, for example, looking at different types of assessment.

8. Any Other Business:

8.1. JR INFORMED the forum that the QA&V office provide a regular newsletter which at the moment is accessible to Kent staff only. This could be produced as a web file or word document for external access.

ACTION: JR to publish QA&V newsletter for external access

8.2. JR ADVISED partners to ask the QA&V office for copies of Kent documents which they might like to access.

8.3. MMN REPORTED that she is updating and reviewing Kent’s collaborative provision policies and procedures. She will be consulting partners as part of this process and hopes to have and agreed collaborative policy in place for October 2007.

8.4. ENQUIRED if mock examination papers should be sent to the external examiner to ensure that they are not too similar to the actual exam. This was not seen as necessary unless the mock exam was part of the summative assessment.

8.5. QA&V REPORTED that further to Circus Space including them in a send out of flyers recently for their programmes this year, they take a keen interest in the development and any initiatives of partner programmes.

8.6. CDD REPORTED they are developing an online tool that helps students to search for a course with all their institutions simultaneously and will share it once it is implemented.

9. Date of next meeting:
January 2008 - exact date and venue to be advised.

SLW