Validation Forum

The meeting of the Validation Forum was held on Monday 24 January 2005 at 2.00pm in the Senate Chamber at the University of Kent.

Present: Dr Louise Naylor – Chair (QA&V), Cat Fergusson (QA&V), Jim Coleman, Prof Clive Wake, Dr Sarah Hyde, Tim Roberts, Sarah Rowe, Peter James, Ursula Fuller, Rosemary Godfrey, Dr Ian Bride, Dr Richard Griffiths, Ron Strang, Jane Hacket, Prof Christopher Baugh, Dr Peter Boenisch, Sarah Matthews, Faye Beesley (Secretary)

1. Apologies for Absence: Kent Institute of Art & Design (KIAD), Torrelodones College of Drama, London Contemporary Dance School, (LCDS), Bermuda, Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC), Jane Rice (The Circus Space).

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed representatives from the validated institutions to the forum and thanked everyone for their efforts last year with regard to the Institutional Audit. The audit report states that the auditors were pleased with collaborative arrangements and the good synergy of interaction between University of Kent and its validated institutions (para 127-129). It was suggested that the ‘demise of Collegiate Board had reduced the opportunity for the exchange of information and discussion of general issues and that the establishment of forums for the exchange of good practice would be a useful development’. Hence the establishment of the Validation Forum.

The Chair welcomed the most recently validated institutions to the forum - The Circus Space, LAMDA and Central School of Ballet. The Chair thanked the Drama Department for their support in full and assistance in preparing these institutions for the validation process.

The Chair also thanked Cat Fergusson, who oversees the validation procedures and Faye Beesley for assisting with the Validation Forum arrangements.

3. Institutional Introductions

Canterbury Christ Church University College - has taught degrees awarding powers but, University of Kent validates their research degrees. CCCUC have formed the Graduate School which deals specifically with the research degrees that cover a wide range of subjects. The Dean of STMS (Ursula Fuller) is a member of the Validated Research Degrees Committee.

Central School of Ballet - has a small number of students (approximately 100) aged between 16 and 19. The courses are vocational providing broad training for dancers, with the third year students become a member of a touring company.

Chaucer College – The College was set up by the Shumei University in Tokyo for Japanese students to attend to take 8 week courses. The College has approximately 160 students per year. The first year students take a Management
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& Governance course. Students can also take the validated Certificate which provides them with direct entry to British Universities.

The Circus Space - the institute was founded as a charity in 1989, initially as an institute for professional circus artists. Over the years the institute has grown and covers more areas of education and now offers BA Honours degree programmes. The Institute takes students from countries worldwide and next year hopes to have 57-60 students next year (full capacity). When students complete their studies they usually go on to create their own circus companies or go freelance.

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust - The Institute was founded as Jersey Zoo in 1962. Gerald Durrell had a vision of setting up a running University in Jersey and training students about wildlife by running short programmes. The Institute started to run validated programmes in the 1980s for students to train and undertake work experience in the zoo. Students can study for a Certificate or attend Summer Schools.

Kent Institute of Art and Design - no representatives present. KIAD is one of the leading specialist art, design and architecture institutions in the UK. Their undergraduate and post graduate taught provision is accredited by the University of Kent and their postgraduate research provision is validated by the University.

Based on 3 sites (Rochester, Maidstone and Canterbury), KIAD offers research degrees in the fields of Fine Art, Design, Fashion, Architecture and Photography.

London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts - The Institution was founded in 1860 and focused on teaching and music. In 1924 it expanded to teach acting, and in 1956, added teaching of technicians. The courses have limited written work and mainly focus on vocational, practice skills. There is no particular teaching method, teaching is focussed on the students skills and public performance. The Institute's students achieves high employment rates after completing their studies.

LAMDA thanked the Drama Department for making the University validation process run smoothly.

London Contemporary Dance School - The Institute was founded in the 1960s by Robin Howard, who founded the Contemporary Dance Theatre Company, and the School was founded in the early 1980s. The School was the first Conservatoire in the country to achieve validation for their degrees. The students gain vocation rigorous overall training, which includes subjects like history, music and painting.

RARE - The Institution is a non-profit organisation founded in Washington in the mid 1970s to train people from developing countries to help with their needs and environmental problems. The Institution campaigns to help community members identify problems and assist with solutions. The Facilitators get to meet each other and exchange knowledge and work towards a Diploma. There are approximately 5-6 students worldwide, who attend a Kent based module and are provided with distance support. The students work closely with DICE and study modules including Introduction to Biodiversity and Conservation Law.
Torrelodones College of Drama - The Drama College is based in a small commuter town north of Madrid, which was founded 12 years ago by the local authority. The College does not own a building, it is allowed use of the theatre in the centre of the town, but sometimes has to work around bookings. The fourth year students are pre-professional and well respected in Spanish Theatre and Television.

Bermuda College - Bermuda College has approximately 1350 students in total, about 900 of which are registered in credit courses. There are 65 full-time lecturers. The Bermuda College offers a variety of academic, technical and professional courses in the Divisions of Applied Science & Technology, Business Administration & Hospitality, Liberal Arts, and the Centre for Professional and Career Education. Programmes lead to Associate Degree, Certificate or Diploma credentials, and there are a number of Professional Designation, and non-credit offerings for life-long learners.

4. Validation Forum

The Chair referred to the proposed ‘Validation Forum’ paper supported by Learning and Teaching Board (22 November 2003). It is hoped that the Validation Forum will give institutions a chance to feedback problems, improvements, suggestions to the University. There is a Validation Forum web page on the Quality Assurance & Validation web site containing the Validation Newsletter, mailing lists for sharing information and passing on information to other institutions.

5. QA Developments

The Chair outlined the policies and procedures currently under review by the University:

- Structure of the academic year. In 2001, the University of Kent changed the academic year to a 12+12+6 week pattern of terms. This year, the terms have changed to 12+10+8 because Easter is early. This may affect the dates and times of exams. Dates for University committee meetings are available on the University of Kent web site. This is useful as it provides the deadlines for getting proposals through the University procedures for approval.

- Credit Framework - this will have an impact on Stage 1 level of programmes in relation to retention and failure rates and the degree of outcome discretion used by Boards of Examiners to progress. Cat Fergusson will inform the institutions of any changes.

- The University is reviewing its Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance Research Programmes as a result of the HEFCE paper on ‘Improving standards for postgraduate research programmes’ (HEFCE 2003/23) and the revised QAA Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes. This will include the greater need to enhance annual monitoring, establish research programme supervisory teams and develop regulations of practice.
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- The Arts and Humanities Data Service (a principle advisory body using non-print based means for making research accessible) are giving a presentation in May, which may be useful for some of the validated institutions to attend.

6. Cycle of Deadlines

It was proposed that the deadline of 30 November for annual monitoring reports (Validation Policy and Procedures) be reviewed as it does not fit in with processing reports in validated institutions. It was proposed that the deadline be extended to Christmas so that reports could feed into departmental annual reports and be presented to the Faculties in the Spring Term.

Prof Baugh requested that an example of a completed report should be provided to give the institutions some idea of what is required. It was agreed that a completed annual monitoring report would be provided as an example, and institutions should contact either the department or the Office for Quality Assurance & Validation for help or guidance with the report as required.

**ACTION: CF**

7. University Computing Accounts

Two members of administrative staff per institution may apply for a University of Kent login to access the intranet. The intranet holds important information regarding committees and boards and it will make it easier for validated institutions to track minutes of University meetings.

8. 40th Anniversary

The University is celebrating its 40th Birthday (1965-2005) and is holding a number of events throughout the year, starting with the Service of Celebration in the Cathedral on 26 January 2005 (Tickets are available from Cat Fergusson). A list of planned events can be found on the back of the University of Kent Newsletter (November 2004 Vol26 No2 – circulated), on the University of Kent Calendar or on the web site.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be in the Autumn Term between October and December. Date to be confirmed.

10. Any Other Business

None

FTB/LHN