

Annual Review of Teaching and Learning as part of the Teaching and Learning Engagement Forum (TLEF)

Thursday 20th October 2022

Present: April McMahon (Chair of TLSG and TLEF), Banji Adewumi, Robert Appleby, Richard Baker, Craig Best, Jennie Blake, Ian Bradley, Paul Brierley, Esther Cadd, Hannah Cobb, Colette Cooke, Adam Danquah, Helen Eccles, Miriam Firth, Alison Fisher, Danielle George, Christopher Godden, Ken Graakjaer, Peter Green, Nicola High, Janine Holdway, Andrew Horn, Ian Hutt, Timothy Jones, Helen Jopling, Xuan Kang, Sarah Lister, Andrew Mawdsley, Jennifer McBride, Jane Mooney, Sharon Newton, Steve Olivier, Carly Peesapati, Patricia Perlman-Dee, Steve Pettifer, Laura Pike, Richard Quayle, Camden Reeves, Shauna Rogers, Jennifer Rose, Emma Rose, Paul Shore, Jennifer Silverthorne, Fiona Smyth, David Spendlove, Simon Thomson, Emily Turvey, Niels Walet, Charles Walkden, Andrew Weightman, Nicholas Weise, Judy Williams, Sarah Williams

Student reps: Liwen Shen, Xinran Li, Angad Sahni, Benjamin Hobbs, Khushi Sharma, Samantha Edwards, Mia Campbell

In attendance: Miriam Graham (Secretary)

In advance of the meeting, attendees were provided with the Faculty SWOT analyses and QA proformas and Teaching and Learning Delivery (TLD) Appendices:

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/monitoring-review/annual-review/artl/>

1. Welcome and introduction from April McMahon and Craig Best

Attendees were welcomed by April, and it was noted that this was an important year for teaching and learning, with preparation for the TEF submission ongoing (deadline 24th January 2023). The event today was an opportunity to recognise and celebrate enhancement in teaching and learning. A wide range of attendees were present, including colleagues from all three Faculties, UMSU, student reps, subject leads for the Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) and the Flexible Learning Programme (FLP), and the TEF team. It was noted that the FLP Strategy had been approved by Senate the previous day.

Craig noted that the ARTL was part of the annual academic assurance cycle, about reflecting on the past and determining how we can take forward any issues or examples of good practice.

In terms of the specific outcomes colleagues would like to achieve from the day, the following were identified:

- Hearing the challenges that other Faculties are facing and the possible solutions
- Focussing our priorities to try and achieve more, rather than attempting to work on a large number of areas
- Understanding more of how student reps feel and any support they need.

Attendees were asked to consider one main takeaway from the day that they would like to put into action.

2. Faculty and UMSU overviews

a. Humanities

Fiona Smyth flagged up the main areas highlighted by the Faculty, including:

Strengths

- Challenges in terms of widening participation, however the Faculty has done well in recruitment of WP students; positive destinations are good; and the Faculty already carries out a significant amount of flexible learning, especially in AMBS.
- The move to more online assessment has worked well, with one benefit being a reduction in awarding gap between black and white students.
- The Faculty is looking into trying to reduce the assessment load on students and staff.

Opportunities

- Size and Shape project - a plan to introduce 25 new programmes to generate an additional £60 million of income & £40 million additional contribution, as well as improving student experience. As part of this, the Review and Refresh project is looking at the programmes, including their quality.
- The recent Appointment of an Associate Dean for Student Experience. There is a 25% target of Teaching and Scholarship staff in each area.
- Working on part-time student experience and diversification of the student body.
- Measures are being put in place to improve student comms, including having new student comms PS colleagues in each School.

Challenges

- NSS results; the Faculty is currently doing some work around student voice, including running mid-term surveys. Assessment and feedback are being considered.
- Succession planning for External Examiners.

Threats

- Over recruitment of students.
- Estates – the ability to manage the increased numbers of students and having sufficient staff spaces.
- Industrial action; have had Faculty Exam Boards taking place in 7 of the last 8 years.
- SEP and the impact on PS colleagues as well as the impact on student experience.
- Some areas are falling below the Office for Students B3 Thresholds.
- UKVI requirements; concern around how the Faculty will be able to deliver on attendance/engagement monitoring specifications.

b. FBMH

Helen Eccles highlighted the following:

Strengths

- Governance strategy; the Faculty has traditionally separated UG & PGT areas.
- Appointment of new School T&L Directors and new portfolio of Associate Deans including for quality and student voice/inclusion.
- Curriculum review, working with regulatory bodies.
- External Examiners - feedback on assessment methods.
- Working with new technologies; Cadmus, Unitu, Teams based learning pilot.

- Positive outcomes – the Faculty does well, with graduates feeling quite prepared for the workplace. There is a need to identify what the Faculty has done to get students in that position.
- Staff are committed and dedicated.

Opportunities

- Student voice - current project looking at feedback models.
- QA framework - moving towards a new risk-based approach should improve workload.
- Communication.
- Standardisation - working with student partners on rubrics and feedback.

Weaknesses

- NSS results are still below standard and low level of student engagement.
- Student outcomes - part-time student completion and continuation are below benchmarks in Nursing and Midwifery subjects.
- Reviewing student appeals and complaints and what comes out of those.
- Consistency and transparency of student comms, including ILOs, handbooks and rubrics.
- Feedback.
- 5-year plan - access & success, APP.
- Continuation: CAGs, TAGs, and grade inflation

Threats

- Estate - lack of appropriately designed and equipped buildings.
- SEP - impact on programme delivery.
- Over-recruitment - issue of student experience and academic/PS staff workloads.
- Processes - lack of transparency between professional programme exemptions and University regulations/policies.
- IT systems – concerns around stability.
- Data analysts - lack of qualified data professionals in FBMH.
- Staff capacity - lack of headspace and time to engage in key strategic aims due to workload and burnout.

c. FSE

Peter Green highlighted the following:

Weaknesses

- The single biggest weakness is the high levels of vacancies in PS TLSE teams, with currently 30% vacancies and in addition 15% sickness absence. Delivering business as usual is difficult and there is a limit to how many new initiatives can be considered.
- NSS scores – there are high levels of PS/academic colleagues' delivery and high-quality teaching, but this doesn't translate in the NSS scores.
- Still have a huge reliance on one international market.

Threats

- Inability to deliver change due to extent of multiple change programmes
- Staff and student wellbeing.
- Over recruitment of students - having to take away practical lessons.

- IT services - need to ensure IT colleagues are aware of impacts on T&L and work with them to deliver necessary services.
- Issues with short timescales and manual processing of data prior to graduation led to problems last year, as systems aren't fit for purpose.
- The Faculty is good at looking at new policy and would like to mirror every policy development with details of staff and infrastructure that accompany it.

Strengths

- Commitment of staff.
- Teaching college - brings academic, PS and students together.
- Our degrees are still highly regarded by professional bodies/external organisations.
- Standardising processes - now have moderating and scaling standard process; the number of appeals based on scaled marks has disappeared since this was introduced.
- Academic and PS partnership working.
- The Faculty has decided to create full scholarships for black students.

Opportunities

- There are no tools currently to tackle academic staff who are not delivering good quality teaching.
- Keep standardising and simplifying assessment processes.
- Awarding gaps; carrying out focus group work with students.

d. UMSU and student reps

The UMSU Faculty Officers highlighted four key priorities:

- IT issues
- Over recruitment
- Student comms
- Estate/buildings

IT issues

- Blackboard is quite outdated.
- Using the student centre to choose course units; there were issues with this during the summer.
- Student system - trying to check in for tutorials or workshops, took long time to do this. Consider making it an app, rather than a website.
- IT is below-par and not what students expect.

Over recruitment

- Insufficient space for the number of students.

Student Comms

- There should be dedicated student comms roles, linked to student reps in Schools. There is a need for 2-way communications between students and staff.

Student rep comments

Officers and student reps provided their views:

- scaling and moderation were seen as being good.
- Issues around IT affecting assessment, feedback and student experience.
- Differences between GTA marking and teachers' marking. Feedback isn't useful as it comes too late.
- Diversity of the workforce - imbalance of BAME and gender amongst staff.

- Student voice and feedback; students don't feel like they're listened to. It is difficult to gather feedback from large groups of students.
- Over recruitment - difficult to manage and affects students' learning.

3. Recurrent themes and University issues

a. Operational priorities

April McMahon and Craig Best outlined the five core TLS priority areas and then the three operational priorities for 2022/23:

- Student voice (especially 'closing the loop' for students on response to their comments)
- Assessment and Feedback
- TEF

NSS position:

- Overall satisfaction is still in the lower quartile, but the aim is to be in the upper quartile - 86% (now 71%).
- Response rates are low - 62% (7% lower than sector average). The aim is to increase this during the current year.
- Assessment & feedback and Student Voice require significant improvements.

b. Key themes

The 7 key themes that came out of Faculty SWOTs were:

1. Student intake
2. Curriculum development and delivery
3. Digital and physical infrastructure
4. Professional and academic staff
5. Student success and outcomes
6. Student voice
7. Communication

Assessment and feedback

- Positive work is taking place through Assessment for the Future
- But what about now?
- What are the 'quick wins'?
- Timeliness, feed forward...
- What can we learn from the SU 'build your Mcr' survey?

Student voice

- NSS tells us that we give students opportunities to tell us what they think, but we don't follow up and close the loop
- Response rates - all our students' voices matter. What should local targets be? How do we get there?
- We should also be encouraging use of UEQs and mid-term surveys.

Acknowledging IT issues

- New digital learning environment (DLE) - what should it look like, what should it enable us to do?

c. Discussion on tables

Colleagues were asked to discuss what they have capacity and resource to change or act on.

Some of the responses included:

- It was suggested there was a need to stick with priorities until we make a difference, rather than trying to concentrate on too many things at once.
- What do we mean by feedback? Making sure the course design is informed by student feedback.
- IT issues; there is a lot of work happening in ITS to stabilise systems and improve processes, but a growing acceptance that there's a lot of work still to do. Some strategic projects have been paused and there is a need to work on how to communicate better when there are problems. It is important to ensure ITS are aware of the impact of issues on staff and students; but also to work in partnership with our ITS colleagues in resolving these.

4. Concluding remarks

Attendees were thanked for their contributions, and advised that an online form would be circulated for attendees to state what one action they would take forward from the session. Views would also be invited about the format of today's session and how colleagues and students across the institution can work together towards the aims highlighted from the session.