# **HUMANITIES FACULTY COMMITTEE**

## Wednesday 7 February 2024

**Present:** Fiona Devine (Chair), Emma Rose, Maggie Gale, Fiona Smyth, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Claire Alexander, Ken McPhail, Rachel Walton, Jon Shute, Patricia Perlman-Dee, Umit Kemal Yildiz, Nichola Ellis, Roz Webster, Claire Goulsbra, Linda Evans (for Martin Evans)

**Apologies:** Mabel Sanchez-Barrioluengo, Charles Insley, Constance Smith, Martin Evans, Thomas Schmidt, Katie Jackson

**In attendance:** Gemma Keaveney (note-taker), Victoria Roberts (Business Support Manager), Admos Chimhowu (AD for PGR), Vicky Skinner (Head of Faculty Finance), Fiona Keenan (Head of Faculty P&OD), Kate McNamee (Head of Faculty Comms & Marketing), Emma Pemberton-Eccles (for item 5)

### 1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

Professor Fiona Devine welcomed the group to the meeting.

### 2 Minutes and actions of previous meeting

Confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in process. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 were approved.

### 3 Teaching Sustainability update

Presentation given by Fiona Devine and Emma Rose about this project followed by an update on progress to date.

Confirmed that this is a major piece of work which is being undertaken within Humanities to consider the large number of course units, programmes, and pathways currently on offer. The scale of activities is huge and presents many challenges which we aim to address.

Programmes have grown over several years and there is an ever increasing workload involved in trying to deliver this highly complex range of programmes. Although our teaching portfolio has continued to grow, it does not align with or reflect our staff expertise and student demand, but we cannot simply continue to do as we have always done. Although the breadth of choice is a strength, we do not and cannot deliver everything as before because we just don’t have that capacity.

It was noted that although there are benefits to offering a diverse range of programmes, we need to reduce the administrative burden and additional workload generated by offering so much choice.

Recommendations from this initial review are to look at the following areas:

* Minimum and max student cohort sizes.
* Best practise in use of Teaching Assistants.
* Financial contributions though to note that this is not a driving factor in decision making. Our five-year plans show tuition fees rising year on year, but staff and other costs are rising faster.
* Ongoing management of our teaching portfolio and making reviewing this business as usual

Options to improve our teaching portfolio will promote a more curated choice for students.

Included in the initial review is identification of ‘ghost’ courses – those courses which are closed but have not been deactivated, the large number of programmes without any student intake over the past six years, non-recruitment (some of which are ghost programmes, but others are just not recruiting).

A Task Force has been set up with representation from each School and this will focus on programmes/pathways with no student registrations for past six years to identify whether there is no demand or interest. At present, all these programmes still must be timetabled as are still live programmes which are advertised to students. The group will also look at pathways and programmes with four or less students over last six years.

As we do not currently have a portfolio management system in place, it is difficult to gauge the reasons why some programmes have not been deactivated, though it is noted that whilst these programmes do not cost anything in financial terms, it does cost time for PS colleagues overall.

We appreciate that this review may make some colleagues feel anxious or vulnerable, but we are at the first stage of delving into the data and considering the implications of what we find. Data is the starting point then follow up discussions will take place with appropriate School colleagues to consider further actions.

This is a three-year project and there will be additional work for some colleagues in this initial stage of data review and refreshing of programmes. Communications should be open and clear so that colleagues are kept informed throughout the process, especially those directly involved. An intranet page has been developed and is now live. This will be updated regularly to provide information about the project. [Humanities Teaching Sustainability Project | Faculty of Humanities | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/humanities/about/teaching-sustainability-project/)

To note that there are ongoing discussions with the Vice-President for TLSE and that much knowledge was gained from the Size & Shape initiative in terms of core and optional units when light touch was required or when deep dive was more appropriate. We are also involving admissions staff in the process which has many elements including estates, ICT, academic & PS staffing, and resources.

**HFC070224-03-01:** Gather feedback and questions from colleagues in TLSE to feed into, and inform further, the content of the webpages.

### 4 Research update and Doctoral Academy

Presentation given by Maggie Gale on what is happening in the University’s research space and the four main objectives for the year which are:

**Collect and evaluate data for REF 2029** including an internal stock-take (partly through RRE) and through calibration of grades. We will look at a series of draft impact case study examples which are currently being assessed to identify what additional PS support may be required. We are also looking to progress what we have already and the potential for resubmitting existing case studies. There will also be an evaluation of grant outcomes although to note this is an interim assessment at this stage.

**Refresh research themes especially AI digital and post-Covid society**. Have held research showcases and consultation events. Potential also for major investment of SIRF funds in AI/Digital.

**Develop the mentoring and research development framework** and specifically looking at the training offered to researchers across all stages of their career. We do well with ECRs but not so well with other career stages and this needs to be addressed.

It was noted that there is a need to generate more income in research and that we would probably need to submit c. 10 bids and be awarded at least three large grants from those.

We are also exploring ways to protect research time and mitigating against the fragmentation of this time.

**Continue to collaborate with University services to facilitate an improved researcher experience.** Some real issues in getting the services they need to get and maintain their grant.

Further discussion highlighted the need for EDI to be embedded in training for PIs and research staff who become managers. It was confirmed that although provisions are made for training within HNAP and ECR development programmes, this was not adequately captured at a mid or late career stage. There are however supervisor expectations which means they should continue to develop their skills throughout their career. Currently working on an indicative guide on the level of training expected of colleagues and EDI is one of the core areas.

Research and innovation should be embedded in our culture, and we need to consider how we incorporate data as part of our reporting process.

We now have a new AD for Business Engagement, Richard Allmendinger, who has been working to refresh strategies including IP working closely with Schools and research colleagues. Noted that we may need to do this in a slightly different way and further discussion would be required.

**HFC070224-04-01:** Further discussion between Vice-Dean for Research and the Associate Dean for Business Engagement & CCP.

Presentation given by Admos Chimhowu as AD for PGR.

It is noted that the launch of Doctoral Academy had been a success however the team are currently rethinking the PGR strategy.

An update on completion rates and PGR funding included preliminary information on the drivers of delayed completion rates and that this is being analysed by subject area to identify what is causing the low completion rates. Findings show that issues around mental health and wellbeing are major drivers and that those completing are usually engaged within a vibrant learning and working community, whereas lone workers’ completion rates are lower. There is a need to look at supervision, to seek additional support and to look at the incentives to complete. Further, more granular analysis in ongoing in this area.

There is awareness that some issues remain with the Doctoral Academy such as the use of generic email and staff resource shortage however the team are working to resolve asap and to prioritise the core deliverables. Emma Rose confirmed that she is working with the team to help resolve any outstanding issues.

An issue was raised on the focus of quality rather than quantity of Teaching Assistants and from a teaching perspective to perhaps look at alternative ways to support teaching. We should not be using PGRs to replace TAs and this there are ongoing conversations to find ways to creatively resolve the issue.

### 5 Bicentenary activities and community festival

Members were shown a short video on the theme of bicentenary activities and shared a presentation on the core activities we are involved in.

The main activities include:

Student competition with a prize of £750 for the winner and there is one winner per faculty. Winning work will be exhibited during the festival, and the Universally Manchester initiative with over 500 applications submitted to date.

Request to encourage colleagues and students to enter the competition noting that there is a very small amount of financial support to be made available.

It was confirmed that there is a committee working on supplementary activities specific to Humanities that are collaborative and have longer term view rather than being focussed on bicentenary. One highlight of this work is *Telling our Story* looking at the strengths within Humanities and what we stand for. The project comprised interviews with senior leaders, external contacts and students and there is a planned launch of theme-based workshops.

Any further ideas or contributions can be passed to the committee who meet monthly, or colleagues can contact Kate McNamee directly.

**HFC070224-05-01:** Provide list of colleagues on the Humanities Bicentenary working group.

It was confirmed that we are working closely with MMU who are also in their bicentenary year to ensure there are no clashes with major events. We are also working with them on joint activities such as a civic reception to be hosted by Manchester City Council.

The first six months of the campaign are retrospective and will be led by Nancy Rothwell. The final six months will be led by the incoming VC & President, Duncan Ivison and will be forward looking in focus.

It was agreed that we should look to diversify the pool of people we are using within our celebrations to include more women and other more under-represented groups.

The Chair confirmed that UoM has been very clear in being cognisant of the situation in Palastine and that we are a safe place for the globally diverse. We do not tolerate racism, anti-semitism, Islamaphobia or any other prejudices.

There is also a programme of work on *Justice and Fairness,* and it is noted that the recent TV programme about the Post Office scandal has been very influential. It was suggested that we try to engage further with Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh as honorary professors to involve them in these activities.

Comms & Marketing colleagues are already working with colleagues from Law on this and can discuss this in more depth.

**HFC070224-05-02:** Emma Pemberton-Eccles and Kate McNamee to pick up outside this meeting.

### 6 WAM allocation

The issue of WAM allocation was raised again and has been reconsidered by the University. To ensure parity across Faculties, it has been agreed that section 24 of the Halpin review recommendations be implemented. To ensure consistency across UoM, Heads of Planning, Compliance & Governance from each faculty will work together to provide a universal model.

In the meantime, it has been agreed that in retrospect for the academic year 2023-2024, there will be a notional 16 hours WAM allocation. This is based on four meetings of two hours with one hour prep and one hour follow up per meeting.

### 7 Any Other Business

A query was raised at the end of the meeting as to why exams continue to be held online within humanities. There are consistency issues with this as it is not consistent across Faculties.

Online exams were brought in during Covid and have been largely kept within Humanities. There have been requests for on campus exams however these have mostly been for quantitative exams and some languages, and we should remain mindful of all the issues involved and remain flexible. One of the reasons other Faculties have on campus exams is because of exam body requirements. We should bear in mind that if we move away from online exams then this may mean additional weeks scheduled in summer and Christmas.

### 8 Next meeting

The next meeting, currently scheduled for 3 April will be moved as a large proportion of colleagues will be on leave during that week – Easter break.

**HFC070224-08-01:** Gemma Keaveney to reschedule meeting to move away from Easter period.

# **Action Log**

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| **Item reference** | **Action** | **Lead** | **Context** | **Update** |
| HFC070224-03-01 | Gather feedback and questions from colleagues in TLSE to feed into, and inform further. | Rachel Walton | Item 3: Teaching Sustainability  This is a three-year project and there will be additional work for some colleagues in this initial stage of data collection. Communications should be open and clear so that colleagues are kept informed throughout the process, especially those directly involved. |  |
| HFC070224-04-01 | Further discussion with Richard Allmendinger as Associate Dean for Business Engagement & CCP | Maggie Gale | Item 4: Update on Research  Discussion about the importance of embedding research innovation, AI and Intellectual Property into our culture. |  |
| HFC070224-05-01 | Provide list of colleagues on the Humanities Bicentenary working group. | Gemma Keaveney | Item 5: Bicentenary activities and Community Festival  Faculty Committee members are encouraged to forward ideas and suggestions for events and activities that align with the bicentenary theme and community festival. |  |
| HFC070224-05-02 | Emma Pemberton-Eccles and Kate McNamee to pick up outside this meeting. | Emma Pemberton-Eccles & Kate McNamee | Item 5: Bicentenary activities and Community Festival  There is a programme of work on *Justice and Fairness,* and noting the success and influence of the recent TV programme about the Post Office scandal, we should try to engage further with Toby Jones and Julie Hesmondhalgh to involve them in our activities in this area. |  |
| HFC070224-08-01 | Reschedule next meeting (scheduled 3 April 2024) | Gemma Keaveney | Item 8 (item 7 on agenda): Date of next meeting  Meeting to be rescheduled as currently falls in Easter week. | COMPLETE |