



## Academic Council

### MINUTES

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Tuesday 27 October 2020 / 9.30am | By Microsoft Teams

In attendance

Elena Rodriguez-Falcon (ERF), Chief Executive Officer (Chair)  
Beverley Gibbs (BG) Chief Academic Officer  
Tam Milner (TM), Academic Registrar  
Dave Allan (DA), Learning and Teaching Lead (Development Lead)  
Sarah Hitt (SH), Elected Academic Member  
Neil Rogers (NR), Elected Academic Member  
Frankie Devereux (FD), Elected Professional Services member,  
Mary Kenyon-James (MKJ), Head of Student Experience

Apologies

Anthea Parker, Head of Strategic Planning and Academic Council Secretary, NMITE

Minutes

Anthea Parker, Head of Strategic Planning and Academic Council Secretary, NMITE

#### 1. Welcome, confirmation of updated Terms of Reference and membership

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming everyone to the first sitting of the NMITE Academic Council. The Council reviewed the Terms of Reference updated with the membership details.

##### **Reported:**

- The Academic Council Terms of Reference have been approved by the Board.
- Membership of the Academic Council has been confirmed with the permanent members, including the Chief Academic Officer as deputy chair, and the three elected members.
- Three learner members will be elected once NMITE has a student body
- Terms of reference formally received by the Academic Council

##### **Noted:**

- Neil Roger's title to be updated in the Terms of Reference to Assistant Professor

#### 2. 2a. Approval of Sub Committee membership

The council considered the membership of each sub-committee.

Learning and Teaching Committee - It was considered whether the Head of the Academic Skills

Centre should be a member of the Learning and Teaching Committee as that area has a greater significance in NMITE.

Quality Assurance Committee – It was noted that the position of Quality Manager is missing from the membership. This will be an important role post validation. The provision for the role has been approved and will be appointed and then added to the committee membership.

Learning and Teaching Committee membership - agreed

Assessment Board Membership – agreed

Extenuating Circumstances Committee Membership - agreed

Quality Assurance Committee Membership - agreed

<i>Agreed actions:</i>	Responsible	Deadline
Addition of the Head of Academic Skills Centre to Learning and Teaching Committee	BG	By first committee meeting
Sub Committee membership document to be updated and re-circulated	AP	In advance of next Academic Council

## 2b. Co-opting Members

It was discussed whether further members should be co-opted onto the Academic Council. Consensus was that there should be provision for this to happen should gaps be identified.

Agreed to periodically review whether any further members should be co-opted to the Academic Council

## 3. Chairs Report

The chair reported that NMITE are now registered provider of Higher Education by Office for Students. NMITE submitted first batch of Validation paperwork and by end of the week (31<sup>st</sup> October) NMITE will conclude all the submission. It is Understood that Validating Partner will meet on the 18<sup>th</sup> to consider that NMITE becomes a validated partner as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

The chair stated that NMITE and this committee are committed to ensure that we comply with responsibility of Registration and Validation and that these two achievements are very significant. They are also important as it means that we will soon be able to recruit learners and the true task of deliver high quality learning experience truly begins.

The chair wanted to recognize effort of every single individual involved in NMITE over the past several years and more markedly in recent months. The effort must not be underestimated, but also NMITE should not underestimate the challenge that comes next. The chair expressed her gratitude for what has been completed and excitement about the next challenge.

#### 4. Academic Registrar's External Landscape Report

The Academic Registrar noted that NMITE is now part of the regulated Higher Education environment and therefore integration and submissions are required to statutory bodies.

This includes Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Unistats, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA).

Submissions such as Unistats will be nil initially until validation and then further returns with details of the MEng will be submitted. For the Student Loans Company details are being finalised, but again will not be published until after validation.

There will be additional integration into the Higher Education sector following validation.

#### 5. Rules of Engagement (discussed after item 1 on the agenda)

The Council considered the document summarising key Academic Council Rules of Engagement. It was noted that the Chair would get a casting vote in the situation of a tie and members should also adhere to NMITE's code of conduct and values.

The topic of confidentiality was considered as the minutes will be accessible as per the schedule of publication. It was noted that the nature of the discussions should not include anything commercially sensitive, but there is the option for some types of information to be redacted, for example, HR related topics. If necessary the reserved business protocol can be enacted.

It was agreed that the Academic Council will follow the Rules of Engagement

#### 6. Changes to MEng Programme

The council considered the three proposals in the accompanying paper of changes to the MEng Programme. It was noted that it was not normal procedure for these proposals to come straight to Academic Council. The normal process would be first to the Learning and Teaching Committee. However, the Learning and Teaching Committee was not yet constituted and the changes, if approved, would need to be included in the end of October Validation submission. Therefore, they were brought to the Academic Council.

Any proposals agreed by the Academic Council must be presented to the Validating Partner for approval.

Proposal 1. In the Assessment Policy:

**• change '...must pass all elements of assessment..' to '...must pass sufficient elements of assessment to demonstrate achievement of all module Learning Outcomes'.**

It was noted that the rationale for the change was to mitigate the serious risk of non-progression/student attrition which is a reportable and publicly visible metric. Student retention is very important for NMITE as a new provider with small initial intakes and could be damaging. The proposal is intended to provide more flexibility for Module Leads to recognise adequate achievement and avoids mechanistic failures that are unnecessary and damaging to both the student(s) and NMITE.

Concerns were raised that assessments were designed to have different weightings and were holistic in that students are expected to put effort into all types of assessment. There were also concern around disparity between students if some could progress without passing all assessments.

It was agreed that the standard process would not be changed, but there would be an exception process available whereby if a student was unable to achieve a learning outcome a different assessment mechanism could be used.

Any use of the exception process and the nature of the revised assessment would need approval via the Learning and Teaching Development Lead and Head of Quality.

The proposal will be submitted to the Validating Partner for proposal.

**Agreed actions:**

Sentence to be added to the programme about the exception clause and that it would be robustly managed by L&T lead and Head of Quality and to be submitted to the Validating Partner

Responsible    Deadline

BG                      31 October 2020

Proposal 2. Change Module ME6FABEP ('Bachelor's Engineering Project') as follows:

- ***Change from 'individual activity' to 'group activity'***
- ***Change title from 'Bachelors Engineering Project' to 'Group-Defined Project'***
- ***Create new 14-credit module for students who are exiting the programme early (for non- progression or personal reasons) but who wish to (and are eligible to) receive a Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) exit award.***
- ***Amend the Programme Handbook, Programme Description and Programme Specification accordingly, and update the module specification and associated documentation, AHEP mapping, assessment mapping, prospectus, website, module specification and Canvas.***

It was noted that the rationale behind Proposal 2 was to disincentivize students from leaving early with a BEng exit. The name Bachelors project highlights the exit route. Without a validated BEng qualification, such changes would be recorded as a failure to progress on the MEng and would be reported in statutory returns accordingly. There were also concerns about the resourcing implications of the individual projects.

There were some concerns raised with the proposal. It was raised that taking away individual activity from the Bachelors modules would mean students would not complete any individual projects until the Masters level. It was noted that there were also concerns about the impact moving to group project could have on academic quality.

The Chair acknowledged that the Council were split on this proposal and there are concerns. The Chair asked the CAO to work with the Academic Team on remaining concerns and that Academic Council are satisfied that the Academic quality is maintained.

The Proposal was approved to be presented to the Validating Partner

- It was agreed that the name should be changed from Bachelors Project.
- It was agreed that an exit at this stage would be a pass exit and not honours (to disincentivize early exit).
- On majority vote (4 in favour) it was agreed to change the project to a group project and create new 14 credit module for students are exiting programme.

**Agreed actions:**

CAO would work with the Academic Team on implications of the proposal and through the Learning and Teaching Committee.

Responsible Deadline

BG

Amend the Programme Handbook, Programme Description and Programme Specification accordingly, and update the module specification and associated documentation, AHEP mapping, assessment mapping, prospectus, website, module specification and Canvas

Academic Team

**\*\* Update: Subsequent discussion resulted in a route to keep the project as an individual project to be discussed at Academic Council on 15<sup>th</sup> December\*\***

Proposal 3. Amend the MEng Assessment Policy and Programme Handbook as follows:

- **Replace this text, “MEng classifications will be calculated using a combination of the assessment marks achieved in modules at FHEQ Levels 6 and 7 weighted at 50% and 50% respectively. Results from assessments in FHEQ Level 4 and FHEQ Level 5 modules will not affect your degree classification but will affect your ability to progress through the programme” with**

- **“MEng classifications will be calculated using a combination of the assessment marks achieved in modules at FHEQ Levels 5, 6 and 7 weighted at 1:1:2 respectively. Results from assessments in FHEQ Level 4 and FHEQ Level 5 modules will not affect your degree classification but will affect your ability to progress through the programme.”(changes in bold)**

The proposal is intended to make final awards that more closely reflect the student’s graduating performance and weights their final classification towards Level 7 which contains more substantive individual work than Level 6.

Proposal 3 was agreed subject to checks that it does not go against validation regulations (50/50 split between level 6 and 7)

<i>Agreed actions:</i>	Responsible	Deadline
Clarify changes are acceptable under validation regulations	TM	31 October 2020

**\*\*Update: The Validating Partner have subsequently confirmed that proposal 3 cannot be enacted\*\***

Chair noted that the Learning and Teaching Committee must be given sufficient time to consider proposals

**7. A.O.B**

No further business raised

Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and that she will pass views to the Board of Trustees and provide them reassurance on the Academic Governance.

Next meeting: 15 December 2020