Coventry University

Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Strategy 2011-15

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To be reviewed annually

Introduction:

Corporate Objectives for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

In its Mission Statement, Coventry University aspires to be a dynamic, global, enterprising university committed to engaging its students in a community of learning.

The Corporate Plan for 2010-2015 takes this Mission down into the core aims for Teaching and Learning which are:

- To improve students' satisfaction by empowering them as participants in a community of learning where staff and students work together to learn, create, solve problems and research. That community also includes external practising professionals, employers and alumni.
- To ensure that teaching is designed to inspire and engage students in their chosen course through a range of techniques which encourage lively, interactive learning, and by drawing on relevant research and professional practice. Excellence in classroom teaching will be enriched by appropriate use of virtual environments, technology and specialist facilities.
- To improve the learning environment to maximise student achievement and completion
- To assist students in achieving their further study, international career or self-employment aspirations. To this end our curriculum will be employment–related, making use of research activities, real or 'live' projects, placements and work experience as appropriate.

The Corporate Plan then states that courses will be designed so that students:

1. Reach high academic, professional, vocational or creative practice standards.
2. Are challenged to think for themselves, assess evidence, test assumptions, frame and solve problems.
3. Are introduced to the latest research in their subject and its methodologies, and acquire research skills themselves – all at an appropriate level.
4. Gain from the global community of which Coventry University is a part, and have the opportunity to engage with international issues and comparative perspectives through their study and learning experiences.
5. Develop a sense of professional responsibility and social citizenship including an ability to engage with ethical issues in a well-informed manner.
6. Become enterprising and entrepreneurial graduates, contributing to innovation, creativity and productivity in the organisation or community of practice which they join.
7. Develop the leadership capabilities, communication competencies, and generic skills that employers of graduates are looking for.
8. Are supported to obtain rewarding and interesting careers.

KPIs and Metrics are set out for 2015 in terms of: student satisfaction measured through the National Students Survey; the qualification completion rate as measured in the HESA return; the Positive Destination figure as measured by the DLHE return; the staff to student ratio; and the percentage of our undergraduates who take up a work placement, internship, etc or a study or work experience opportunity overseas. These metrics are then tailored for each year's Corporate Plan and are reflected in individual targets agreed through the DPR process.

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Running through the Mission Statement and the Core Aims for Learning and Teaching are a set of values which include:

1. A belief that the University's students and staff are members of the same community of learning - a community that is made distinctive by our global, enterprising nature.
2. A shared commitment to educational excellence based on our courses and a culture of reflective practice. Our courses are designed to relate clearly to academic, vocational, professional or creative 'communities of practice'.
3. Placing the student at the centre of learning, teaching, assessment and research supervision and engaging them in curriculum design and innovation.
4. The importance of linking teaching with the research agenda in the University to provide undergraduates and postgraduates with a stimulating learning environment that will develop intellectually enquiring minds and problem-solving attributes.
5. The importance of providing a safe and supportive framework for the personal and professional development of our students so that they can become independent learners and realise their aspirations whatever their background
6. Introducing students as appropriate to social, ethical and professional practice issues, and to opportunities for engagement with the community, so that they develop as responsibly aware professionals and involved citizens
7. Ensuring that our students have opportunities within their course and outside it to develop the advanced knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities that are required of graduates seeking successful careers in the modern, globally-connected world.

Given these Corporate Objectives, Aims and Values, the purpose of this strategy paper is to set out a clear framework for implementation and quality improvement. The paper is organised under five Key Themes: the students' academic experience; research-informed learning; internationalisation; digital literacy; and employability.

1 Key themes

Our students' academic experience

The academic success of our students requires their involvement in our community through which they increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and embrace the opportunities offered by the University. We will therefore take an active role in ensuring that our students are engaged in their learning. We will use a range of approaches to promote that engagement, including a personal tutor system, and will monitor the excellence of our teaching and the effectiveness of students' learning experiences at course, Department and Faculty levels as well as through the central professional services.

We recognise that an excellent learning environment depends to a large extent on the experience and expertise of our staff. So we will ensure that our staff can access, on a continuing professional development basis, a wide range of activities that support excellence in teaching, in whatever form it is carried out (including the digital environment) and in personal tutoring and academic support.

We further recognise that the assessment regime can support or hinder the learning that takes place. We are committed to using the most appropriate forms of assessment for the learning outcome desired and will develop assessment processes that enhance the coherence of what is learned.

With a very diverse student population the University will try to ensure that its strategies for supporting students are reviewed and enhanced regularly, taking into account the changing expectations of students and new legislative frameworks.

To meet these challenges we will:

1. Develop the strength of our course-based approach to learning supported by a clearly defined personal tutorial system.
2. Ensure continuous improvement in our teaching by being responsive to feedback from students, and by closing the feedback loop through highlighting to students how the issues they have raised are being addressed. We will further develop our approach to evaluating modules, courses and academic support services.
3. Encourage and empower our students to be actively involved in the development of their courses where appropriate, the pedagogy used, and the initiatives taken to improve their academic experience.
4. Ensure continuous improvement in our professional academic support services
5. Provide a comprehensive Academic Professional Development (APD) programme for all staff which focuses on teaching, learning and assessment, personal tutorial support, and the wider student academic experience.
6. Develop an assessment framework that is flexible and appropriate to each course and that enables students to demonstrate in an integrated and coherent way the attainment of advanced skills, knowledge, attributes and capabilities.

For 2011/12 we have agreed the following Key Activities to address these challenges:

1. Revise the previous Teaching and Learning Strategy. This is the responsibility of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Student Empowerment and the relevant academic committees – this document is that revision.
2. Review the personal tutorial system and refine it. The responsibility is equally with the PVC Student Empowerment, Deans and Associate Deans with responsibility for Teaching and Learning.
3. Review the Teaching and Learning plans of those Departments with the poorest student satisfaction scores in the 2011 NSS. This is the responsibility of Deans, Associate Deans with responsibility for Teaching and Learning, and the relevant Heads of Department with support from HR and the PVC Student Empowerment as needed.
4. Implement a new, developmental Teaching Observation scheme. This is the responsibility of the PVC Student Empowerment to design, with the necessary training delivered by HR, and implementation supported by the Deans. Training needs identified will be met through the HR academic staff development programmes.
5. Continue to use mid-module and end-of-course questionnaire surveys and compare results to 2010/11. Responsibility of PVC Student Empowerment to organise, supported by the Survey Unit and with necessary actions including feedback to students being taken by Heads of Department and Course Team leaders.
6. Complete the current training cycle for all Course Teams. This is the responsibility of the Director of HR.
7. Consolidate and extend the programme of staff development for teaching and learning, including the introduction of a formal CPD programme for academic staff. This is the responsibility of the Director of HR.

2 Research-informed learning

Excellence in higher education requires teaching and learning to be informed by current research and by leading-edge professional practice so that students experience, preferably at first hand but at least vicariously, the way in which new knowledge and professional practice is formed, tested and applied. Where possible, as members of our community of learning, students should have the opportunity to work alongside staff on research, or professional practice developments, or 'live' projects. At some point in their course, all students will have the opportunity to develop their own research skills that will enhance their future career prospects.

To this end, all course teams should:

1. Update course content regularly so that it reflects current research and scholarship, and relevant, leading, professional practice.
2. Ensure that at some point on the course students are taught and develop relevant research skills and methodologies
3. Where appropriate involve their students in real research or consultancy projects
4. Develop models of engagement between course content, research and professional practice in their field using appropriate pedagogies such as enquiry-led learning or problem-based learning to do so.
5. Having established a coherent pedagogy for their course, engage with their broader subject or professional community to establish recognition and, where possible, pedagogic leadership in the field.
6. Ensure that all research students actively participate in leading research activity such that by the end of their programme of study they have made a significant contribution to the development of their subject through the creation of new knowledge.
7. Work with the Library to ensure their students develop appropriate research and information evaluation skills.

In 2011/12 the agreed Key Activities that will enable us to address these challenges are:

1. The completion of the current cycle of training and development for all course teams. This is the responsibility of the Director of HR
2. Scope a review of the 'fitness for purpose' of the formal ways we approve, review and assure the quality of our courses and the feedback cycle that goes with it. Responsibility of the DVC Academic supported by the PVC Student Empowerment and the Academic Registrar with input from Deans and Associate Deans Teaching and Learning. Any changes would be implemented in later years of the Plan once the new QAA Institutional Review criteria are also known and understood.
3. Normal monitoring of the progress and completion rates of our PhD students and the feedback from their Examiners. Responsibility of DVC Academic.

3 Internationalisation

We are a global university with an extensive network of international partners. All of our students should be given the opportunity to become 'global' graduates with an understanding of cultures, languages and belief systems other than their own, so they may make a positive contribution to an increasingly multi-cultural, connected and complex world. We are committed to ensuring that all our students study on programmes that draw on international perspectives, that they have opportunities to engage with and learn from a diverse student and staff population, and that they can experience another country at first hand if they wish through a study, work or volunteering experience abroad.

To achieve these ambitions:

1. Our staff will be assisted to develop learning experiences for their students which include international perspectives, and which draw on relevant international professional practice or research.
2. We will strongly encourage students to access language courses, removing barriers to the take-up of languages within and outwith the formal curriculum.
3. We will increase opportunities for study, work and volunteering placements abroad and, wherever possible, ensure that all students have equal access to these opportunities.
4. We will value the diversity of our student body and ensure that the academic and social life of the University reflects and benefits from this cultural diversity.
5. Through our wide range of international partnerships we will enhance opportunities for staff and student mobility.

The agreed Key Activities for 2011/12 are:

1. To support UG Course Teams to deliver a substantial international component in their teaching. Responsibility of Heads of Department and course leaders supported by the Course Team training programme (responsibility: Director of HR). The quality assurance of this element of courses will be looked at in the planned review to be scoped in 2011/12 (see 2.2 above).
2. Increasing the percentage of PG students who enrol on the Global Leaders Programme to 20%. Responsibility of PVC International and Head of the Graduate Centre.
3. Increasing the opportunities for student mobility so that 1300 take up an international experience. Responsibility of PVC International and Director of IEMS
4. Provide specialist HR support to the internationalisation agenda particularly new ventures, bases and offices overseas. Responsibility of the Director of HR
5. Pilot a programme to further improve the UK experience of international students, within the SU. Responsibility of the Students Union.
6. Improved programme of academic, cultural and social events which bring students from different backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, religions and beliefs together. Responsibility of PVC International, Director of IEMS and PVC Student Empowerment (for management oversight of the Students Union)
7. Normal monitoring of the international streams in the Add+vantage programme including the language options. Responsibility of DVC Academic and course administrator of the Add+vantage scheme
8. Increase in international partnerships (which inter alia can support joint curriculum projects and student/staff mobility) through the work of the newly established Academic Partnership Unit. Responsibility of PVC International.

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4 Digital Literacy

We define digital literacy as the skills necessary for living, learning and working in a digital society, taking this definition from JISC. To prepare our students for that digital society, we need to give them opportunities to learn through a diversity of relevant media, challenge them to lead their real and virtual lives and identities in a coherent manner, and prepare them for the rapid changes we are seeing in the increasingly digital workplace. Above all, we need to recognise that they are the 'digital natives' and value the contribution that they can make to our community of learning on that basis.

In parallel, we recognise that at various points in the value chain of higher education, there is a quiet revolution taking place that will have a profound impact on the way academic learning is sourced, packaged, accessed and accredited. (See the PA Consulting Group analysis presented in 'Degrees of Freedom: the tectonic forces shaping the future of universities'. PA Knowledge Limited 2011, London.) Open, digital, educational resources are improving in quality; global 'for profit' and 'not-for-profit' providers offer on-line partnerships, pathways and supplementary support services; specialist technology firms offer outsourced academic infrastructure; accreditation services are booming in the UK and overseas supported by administrative digital technologies. The traditional self-sufficiency with which we supplied all elements of the value chain is under attack.

We will therefore establish a barometer for digital literacy, as part of the course review and development process, and we will use this to measure the scale of engagement with digital learning and academic support/administration technologies. The barometer will measure:

- the use and tailoring of open educational resources within courses
- the use of digital simulations, digital worlds, and other means of providing vicarious relevance in learning and training
- the training given to students to test and evaluate the authenticity and accuracy etc of digital information sources
- the use of video conferencing and collaboration tools in student group projects particularly those involving peers in partner institutions or external clients
- the use of social media for learning
- the development and use of digital and online applications for learning
- the use of technology to improve the academic administration of the course and the students' pathways and progress through it
- the use of digital technology to engage alumni actively in the course to the benefit of students
- the extent to which students are encouraged and empowered to drive innovation in learning on the course through digital technologies and applications

The responsibility for getting the Barometer designed and agreed lies with the PVC Student Empowerment supported by the E-Learning Unit and HR. We recognise that the pace of development will differ by subject area for many reasons but we will continue to push for increased experimentation and engagement that we will then measure through the barometer.

We will enhance the level of "on the ground" support and training for the adoption of digital technologies and will establish a stable platform of such technologies for staff to use. Responsibility of Director of HR supported by the E-Learning Unit.

5 Employability

We will try to ensure that our graduates secure the type of employment, or further professional training, or advanced academic study that they want, and to ensure that Coventry graduates are well regarded by employers. In order to achieve this we will provide students with a broad educational experience that develops the advanced knowledge, skills, capabilities and attributes that employers value and which will equip them for their future careers. This experience will comprise the opportunities for personal and professional development offered through our courses and central professional services, the Add+vantage scheme, and the offer of an international experience to all students.

To meet these goals we will:

1. Ensure that where appropriate our courses are closely aligned to the requirements of particular economic sectors, industries, vocations, professions, or creative practice communities.
2. Provide integrated careers advice and support with clear responsibilities defined at course, Department, Faculty and central support service levels.
3. Further develop opportunities for all of our students to gain relevant work experience through internships, placements, 'live' projects, and other such practices.
4. Enhance the wider cultural skills and global perspectives of our students through access to an international experience or experiences.
5. Ensure that our students are in high demand by developing: their communication skills; the ability to manage their own personal and professional development; and the qualities of leadership, creativity and enterprise.
6. Ensure that students have the encouragement, opportunity and support to develop as entrepreneurs if they wish.
7. Provide opportunities for acting as student representatives, for volunteering, and for community engagement to build CVs and develop appropriate attributes.

The responsibility for the activities and implementation of these commitments is as follows:

1. For alignment of courses to economic sectors etc the responsibility lies with the DVC Academic who oversees the quality assurance and review systems relating to courses. We will scope a review of the 'fitness for purpose' of our current approach to course QA this year.
2. For employment preparation, work experience opportunities, and careers advice the responsibility is through Deans to the heads of Employment Units in each Faculty/School and with the DVC Academic for the Careers Service provision and effectiveness.
3. For the provision of a wide range of international experience opportunities the responsibility lies with IEMS reporting to the PVC International
4. For support of student entrepreneurs responsibility is with the DVC Business Development, and through him to the Institute for Applied Entrepreneurship
5. Responsibility for managing the Student Representative system lies with the Students Union reporting to the PVC Student Empowerment.
6. Generic employment skill development is particularly the objective of the Add+vantage programme which is the responsibility of the DVC Academic.
7. Volunteering schemes in the UK are run by the Students Union (reporting to the PVC Student Empowerment), and by IEMS (reporting to PVC International) for international volunteering opportunities.

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