

POLICY ON INTER-DEPARTMENTAL TEACHING

With the growth of the university and the increasing diversity of its course offerings the issue of policy on co-operative teaching needs to be addressed.

Co-operative teaching arises when a programme co-ordinated by one Faculty or academic Department requires expertise and course delivery in an area which is the primary concern of another Faculty or Department.

The overall principles which should govern policy in this area are:

- The student's interest should come first.
- The highest possible quality should be ensured in the delivery of all course material.
- The cohesion of the university should be protected and enhanced.
- The autonomy of each department within its own sphere of responsibility and expertise should be respected.

It is essential to make clear distinctions between responsibility for the delivery, content and assessment of *programmes* and the delivery, content, and assessment of individual *courses* or modules within programmes.

The principle of autonomy means that the primary responsibility for the overall content of programmes should remain with the Department or Faculty which is managing the programme.

The dictates of quality mean that where specific expertise in the given area is available in the university that that expertise should be employed. In general, university level teaching of sustained quality can only be provided by persons who are active in research in the area which they are covering.

It sometimes happens that Departments hire staff in an exogenous area specifically to support a particular programme even though that area is represented by a major Department of the university.

This practice has its perils. The main problem is that staff in such positions are not adequately supported in promoting their research. They are cut off from the main body of researchers in their area and gradually lose touch with its development and evolution. Their isolation from the main body of researchers in their own area means also that they are less likely to learn of new pedagogical developments relating to their discipline.

Even more undesirable is the practice of having staff teaching in an area outside their primary expertise. Such staff usually bring a flawed and/or outdated understanding of the discipline to the task, and the deficiency grows progressively more serious with the passage of time and generations of students.

Interaction between staff in different research areas is an extremely fruitful ground for novel developments, and it would be unwise to reduce or eliminate opportunities for this to occur.

In those instances where one department provides an examinable teaching input to another's curriculum, the University provides no formal guidance as to how the interdepartmental relationship should be governed. As such instances appear to be increasing and may, on occasion, lead to disputed authority over curriculum and pedagogy, it seems helpful to provide some general guidelines for good practice.

1. Where a department seeks teaching input to its curriculum from outside the department, it is considered normal that this should be sought from within University in the first instance and that any department receiving such a request will normally respond positively. Without such general practice, development of curriculum and academic innovation is likely to be impeded to the general disadvantage of the University as the alternatives are to curtail curriculum, or to seek teaching input from outside. Nevertheless, it is possible that departments who are requested to provide teaching may find themselves without sufficient resources and under such circumstances the University, through Faculty, and Council should have the opportunity to consider the merits of the associated resource questions. Where it proves necessary for a department to seek teaching input from outside University (where relevant expertise exists in University), the Faculty Dean(s) should be notified in the first instance.
2. Where a department requests a teaching input, this should be done between Heads of Department/Course Directors in the first instance. It is understood that the overall responsibility and accountability for the programme of study lies with the requesting department, including the general coherence, integration and quality of the programme.
3. In the case of the specific unit of teaching provided, the providing department, as the focus of academic expertise, is responsible for its content, pedagogy and examination and for its internal coherence.
4. It is deemed good practice that full consultation take place between the two departments concerning both the overall programme and the specific course and that both take due account of the academic imperatives and *desiderata* of the other.
5. The home department for the programme has a right to expect that any teaching material is of an appropriate level and content and will be well prepared and professionally delivered at the times and places agreed.
6. The providing and requesting departments should agree to the basic principles of content, pedagogy and examination procedure following which the providing department will have responsibility for the implementation of these.
7. Where conflict arises and cannot be resolved, the matter should be raised with the relevant Dean(s) and resolution sought. If such a process proves unfruitful, the Registrar/Vice-President may be consulted.
8. The resource-related implications of such relationships are normally reflected in the transfer of FTSEs between departments or in the transfer of monies between departmental budgets.
9. These guidelines are put forward without prejudice to the recognised relationships between Departments or between Departments and Centres, for which agreed consultative procedures exist.