

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS
SCHOOL OF COMPUTING AND MATHEMATICS**



**MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIFE SCIENCE**

Distance Learning Postgraduate GIS Network (UNIGIS)

**Minutes of Programme Committee/Joint Board of Studies Meeting held 1st November
2007 at Manchester Metropolitan University**

Present: Dr R P Armitage
Dr J Cheng
Dr M P Cresswell
Mr J Greenley
Dr S R Hoon
Dr D B Lambrick
Dr S A Power
Ms E Rahulan
Mr G R Smith (Chair)

In Attendance: Miss T A McKenna (GIS Network Administrator)

Membership and Terms of Reference:

Membership and Terms of Reference for the UNIGIS Programme Committee/Joint Board of Studies were confirmed to comply with the relevant academic regulations of Manchester Metropolitan University (Academic Procedures Handbook) and the University of Salford (Academic Quality and Standards Handbook 2007/2008 Section 15)

Attendance of members for the previous year:

Representatives from all three institutions attended the Board of Study in the previous academic years 2006/2007.

Confirmation of the Chair of the Joint Board of Study:

In accordance with the regulations of the lead institution (Manchester Metropolitan University), Graham Smith (Programme Leader at Manchester Metropolitan University) was confirmed as Chair for the academic year 2007/2008.

Confirmation of the Programme Leader and lead person at each institution:

The Programme Leaders were confirmed as; Derek Reeve (University of Huddersfield), Graham Smith (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Dr Richard Armitage (University of Salford).

In addition it was confirmed that Dr David Lambrick (Manchester Metropolitan University) would continue as UNIGIS UK Programme Director.

Confirmation of Admissions Tutor:

The Admissions tutor was confirmed as Dr Stephen Hoon (Manchester Metropolitan University).

Confirmation of the External Examiner and constitution of the Board of Examiners:

The External Examiners were confirmed as Professor Nigel Walford (Kingston University) and Mr David Green (University of Aberdeen). Both examiners are appointed in accordance with the regulations of Manchester Metropolitan University.

Confirmation, and where necessary updating, of the administrative and financial arrangements:

No updating of administrative arrangements is required. Authority to deal with financial matters is delegated to the UNIGIS Management Board, which meets next on the 6th December 2007.

140. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms A Boxer, Prof F M Danson, Dr I B Drew, Ms F Hughes, Dr R G Murphy, Mr D E Reeve and Dr C P Wheeler.

141. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

142. MATTERS ARISING

It was confirmed that David Green (University of Aberdeen was invited (and has accepted) to become the next External Examiner for the UNIGIS programme. Mr Green's tenure will begin on the 1st January 2008.

143. STUDENT FEEDBACK AND PROGRESSION

A summary of responses from the *Programme Evaluation Questionnaire* (distributed annually to registered students) was circulated for discussion.

Intake 14 (2004) response rate was 31% and indications were that students overall were happy with the organisation of the programme and with the support received.

Comments received included: Strengths – support, flexibility offered by the programme was vital to success as was the online resources available via the institutions libraries.

Weaknesses – isolation (resolved partially by introduction of discussion forum), lack of practical exercises (again addressed during the Programme Review in 2006).

Intake 15 (2005) response rate 25%. The feedback demonstrated that students appeared broadly satisfied with the delivery and organisation of the programme and that responses indicated that students were contacting the library more frequently and making use of the libraries online resources. Comments included: Strengths – admin support, flexibility and the breadth of the programme (*“encourages critical thinking and deeper understanding of the subject”*). Weaknesses – were again addressed at the Programme Review in 2006 with the introduction of new units geared towards recent trends.

Intake 16 students (2006) 48% completed the questionnaire and the responses demonstrated that students were progressing very well (majority of which had completed sufficient units up to PgC level). Students appeared to be happy with the programme overall, making more use of the library facilities and satisfied with assessment methods. Manchester Metropolitan University’s Faculty Professional Development Plan had been implemented with this intake and feedback demonstrated a neutral response. Comments received included: Strengths – discussion forum, flexibility, well organized and the online resources. Weaknesses – Model answers (could be provided after the final deadline date for submission), more interaction, more feedback on how the intake performed as a whole (provide a mean mark and standard deviation for each unit). It was agreed that encouragement and regular direct contact by the Clerical Assistant had helped keep students on track.

144. PROGRAMME MONITORING

Draft Collaborative Provision Quality Action Plan 2007/2008: A draft copy of the AME/2 Report was circulated for consideration and discussion.

- 1) **Outcome of Quality Action Plan 2006/2007:** The Chair confirmed that each of the following six items had been addressed by the Programme Team during the academic year.

Monitoring and Review of PDP implementation – utilization of the database at Manchester Metropolitan University had been put into place during 2006/2007 and the feedback obtained from students regarding the usefulness of the PDP was neutral.

Spatial Analysis of Health unit – minor modification successfully processed during the summer of 2007.

MSc Dissertations and allocation of supervisors – supervisors provided information on their research specialisms for inclusion on the UNIGIS UK webpages.

Review of student progress – Programme monitoring statistics 2006/2007 collected by the UNIGIS office.

Marketing materials – all publicity material was updated to accommodate the new programme structure and used at the AGI 2006 event to promote the courses. Investigation of new sources of advertising to be carried out during 2007/2008.

2) **Report on Key Issues:**

Academic Standards of the Programme and its awards

External Examiners satisfied with the structure in place and the standard compares well with other similar programmes within the sector.

Quality of student learning experience

Learning, teaching and assessment regarded to be of a high quality by students and external examiners. UNIGIS team ensures that all assessments match the learning outcomes of each unit. Elements of this good practice have been adopted by the EGS postgraduate network. Students are provided with detailed reader documents for each unit as well as key textbooks and specialist GIS software. Support is provided to students through individual tutors as well as the Programme Leaders and pastoral support is provided by the UNIGIS Office (an example of good practice as identified by students within recent feedback).

Programme Design and Content

In the Quinquennial review the programme was designed to meet M-level descriptors identified by the QAA. The External Examiner identified the UNIGIS Programme teaching, learning and assessment methods as being of a high standard and students are achieving the programmes intended learning outcomes.

Analysis of issues raised in student performance data

The UNIGIS programme continues to recruit part-time postgraduate students with numbers similar to 2006/2007. The UNIGIS programme's new structure with fewer units and more spread out over the academic year together with the implementation of activities to assist students with progression and retention. Statistics indicate that 54% of Intake 16 (2006) students had completed up to PgC level compared with 39% for the previous intake (Intake 15 – 2005).

Analysis of issues raised in internal student feedback and external survey

Unit Reports were submitted to Programme Leader – no key issues to report to QAP or that require further investigation.

Analysis of issues raised by External Examining Team

External Examiner provided positive comments with no issues to report apart from the small number of students who do not progress through to the final qualification. The recent programme re-structure has tried to address this issue with fewer units and progress has improved greatly.

3) **Action Plan for 2007/2008:**

GISRUK 2008

UNIGIS UK to host key event in April 2008. This will raise the presence and identity of UNIGIS UK.

Alumni

Invite alumni students to join an alumni section on the social networking site Facebook to further promote UNIGIS within the GI community

New Spatial Health in Practice unit

Minor modification proposed during the 2007/2008 academic year

Marketing

Ongoing

145. IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICE

The following were identified as examples of good practice employed within the programme:

- 1) Continuing pastoral support from the UNIGIS Office especially through discussion forum interaction and prompting of deadlines;
- 2) Introduction of deadline dates for the submission of assignments and the opportunity to complete an alternative set of assignments (Unit 1) if students miss the original deadline to encourage student progression.

146. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The library representative reported that it was now possible to digitize journals for students. This service is also available at the University of Salford and students should visit the library webpages for more information.

147. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29th May 2008 at 1pm