

Pro-Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
Professor Denise McAlister

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19 June 2008

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This proposal, submitted for funding in response to the JISC Circular 05/08 "Call for projects on institutional approaches to curriculum design." has the full support of the senior management of the University of Ulster.

The recently adopted University Teaching and Learning strategy (2008/09 – 2012/13) has as two of its aims "to enhance the quality of the student learning experience" and "to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery". This proposal is timely in that it will provide the University with added capacity and a distinctive learner focus to the curriculum change agenda during the lifetime of this Strategy.

This proposal, if successful, will provide staff of the University with a fresh approach to reviewing and enhancing course curricula and to better engage with learners and other stakeholders in this process. It will develop and roll-out a suite of curriculum reflection tools that focus on key issues from the learner perspective. This will assist staff in identifying and realising the types of innovation necessary to meet the needs of learners and society in the 21st Century.

Furthermore it is strongly believed the University will benefit from participating in this programme through the exchange of knowledge, experiences and outputs with other projects and institutions.

Yours sincerely



Denise McAlister

Cover Sheet for Proposals <i>(All sections must be completed)</i>		JISC e-Learning Programme	
Name of Initiative:		Institutional approaches to curriculum design	
Name of Lead Institution:		University of Ulster	
Name of Proposed Project:		Viewpoints Project	
Name(s) of Project Partner(s):		N/A	
Full Contact Details for Primary Contact:			
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Length of Project:		45 months	
Project Start Date:		September 2008	
		Project End Date: July 2012	
Total Funding Requested from JISC:		£395,440.48	
Funding Broken Down over Academic Years (Aug-July):			
Aug08 - July09	Aug09 - July10	Aug10 - July11	Aug11 - July12
£120,746.73	£124,989.01	£124,839.61	£24,865.13
Total Institutional Contributions:		£119,312.92	
Outline Project Description			
This proposal will develop a suite of co-ordinated tools and services which will use learner based timeline scenarios to assist staff to reflect upon and formalise innovative adjustments to the curriculum. These tools will utilise standard data schemas to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permit the targeted querying of data rich resources such as course documents and student data • export key information into downstream curriculum development tools. 			
This proposal will assist the University to address the strategic goals “to enhance the quality of the student learning experience” and “to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery”. as described in the Teaching and Learning strategy (2008 – 2013).			
I have looked at the example FOI form at Appendix B and included an FOI form in the attached bid (Tick Box)		YES	
I have read the Circular and associated Terms and Conditions of Grant at Appendix D (Tick Box)		YES	

FOI Withheld Information Form

We would like JISC to consider withholding the following sections or paragraphs from disclosure, should the contents of this proposal be requested under the Freedom of Information Act, or if we are successful in our bid for funding and our project proposal is made available on JISC's website.

We acknowledge that the FOI Withheld Information Form is of indicative value only and that JISC may nevertheless be obliged to disclose this information in accordance with the requirements of the Act. We acknowledge that the final decision on disclosure rests with JISC.

Section / Paragraph No.	Relevant exemption from disclosure under FOI	Justification
N/A for this proposal		

Please see <http://www.ico.gov.uk> for further information on the Freedom of Information Act and the exemptions to disclosure it contains.

Project Title: Viewpoints Project

Overview of Proposal

1. Curriculum design is at the core of the education process, yet it is typically supported in an ad-hoc fashion, placing huge responsibilities of teaching and support staff. These staff must seek to address a number of underlying issues such as retention, widening participation within the context of a number of institutional agendas such as the Academic Plan, Teaching and Learning Strategy, widening participation and student retention. The curriculum design and review processes typically focus on course-based outputs such as the Course Document, Learning Outcomes and Module Specifications. This emphasis on teaching centred outputs can obscure a number key learner related issues and the need to design a learning experience that best meets the needs of the subject and the target student cohort.
2. This proposal seeks to provide a co-ordinated range of tools and services that will provide practitioners with a fresh approach to the review of these issues in isolation from the context of formal curriculum documents. It will focus on key cultural challenges and will seek to develop a co-ordinated range of tools and services based on identified user requirements. The project will provide a student profile (actual or expected) tool and a suite of learning experience timeline resources to allow course teams to identify high level aims and challenges for a given course.
 - Recruitment and enrolment
 - Induction and community building
 - Module selection and pathways
 - Resources and teaching methods
 - Assessment and feedback
 - Retention risks
 - Course completion and added value
3. These tools will provide course teams with outputs such as the following to meet a number of distinct use cases including course validations and learner orientation.
 - Conceptual diagrams (supporting evidence for validation panels etc.);
 - Annotated timelines (to support student orientation);
 - Data imports into relevant course template documents and curriculum tools;
 - Mind maps (for dissemination and to assist further brainstorming).
4. The initial development of these tools and services will be based on face-to-face facilitated approaches. As these tools become more robust and usable, the project will develop on-line technologies (i.e. Flash based tools supported by back end databases) to provide a scalable and sustainable suite of tools that can seamlessly integrate with complementary curriculum tools using defined and interoperable data schemas.
5. These tools and services will assist course teams to reflect upon the learner experience and identify adjustments in the curriculum that are relevant to the needs of the subject and stakeholders. The key benefit of these scenario-based tools will be the creation of focused artefacts that will facilitate debate among stakeholders and provide a mechanism for the reflection process to be integrated with key institutional data and curriculum workflow tools.
6. This proposal builds on the work of the CETL for Institutional E-learning Services, which has developed a learner-focused Hybrid Learning Model to assist staff (and learners) to reflect upon and adapt teaching and learning practices to meet the needs of changing student cohorts. This model has been positively evaluated and formally embedded in key University of Ulster activities including Academic Induction and a range of teaching related staff development courses.
7. The success of the project will be evidenced by:
 - Positive evaluations of tools and services by key stakeholders;
 - Case studies describing the changes / benefits effected;
 - Digital stories by a range of stakeholders describing their experiences of using the tools and services developed by the project;
 - Project outputs used as supporting evidence in course (re)validation panels etc.;
 - Learner, support staff and employer participation in curriculum development processes;
 - Changes in elements of curriculum design (including course rationale, teaching and assessment methods, learning pathways, student advice and support, timetabling and use of supporting resources);
 - Positive evaluation (by range of stakeholders) of effected curriculum changes.

Fit to Programme Objectives and Overall value to the JISC Community

8. This approach will contribute to the vision of this call in the following ways.

Learning and teaching practice

9. The introduction of simple tools that explore a number of learner experiences using a narrative timeline approach will allow staff to identify and explore opportunities to significantly enhance the learner experience through, for instance, the choice of appropriate assessment / feedback methods. The exploration of key issues away from the course document context will assist course teams to better identify opportunities to positively impact on the learner experience and offer courses that are innovative and responsive to real learner needs.

10. This project will provide practitioners with an efficient and flexible method to identify changes in curriculum design in a creative manner, informed by the changes in learners and other key factors and in a format that facilitates collaboration with key stakeholders.

Technology and standards

11. Tools and services will be focused around the learner experience and use simple and universally understood terminologies to elicit high-level strategic goals regarding the enhancement of the curriculum. The careful use of language and the focused user experience scenarios will present key information about “course and cohort” in formats that best facilitate reflection and the consideration of fresh ideas.

12. The project will address three distinct technical issues:

- Capturing of curriculum related data in a format that can be exported into relevant curriculum based tools (such as XCRI, COVARM and the Pedagogic Planner tools)
- Extraction of data from information dense sources such as the above tools, course documents and student record systems for use with tools that assist teachers (and learners) to reflect upon key issues in a focused and non-judgemental manner.
- Identify effective scenario-based approaches (such as learner-focused timelines) that can provide an effective user interface for reflection, innovation and collaboration among key stakeholders such as learners, support services and employers.

Strategy and policy

13. The project will provide course teams with an efficient and effective approach to reviewing the learner experience. This will assist the University to address three key strategic challenges:

- To develop niche professional courses and learner defined pathway awards necessary to meet the demands of the Leitch and widening participation agendas;
- Provide curriculum offerings that best meet the growing diversity of the student body, and supports widening participation;
- Target effective changes in course curricula to address identified and potential retention challenges.

Outcomes

14. The project will contribute to the anticipated outcomes of the programme through:

- Demonstrating how key learner and curriculum data can be used to identify and realise effective changes in the curriculum;
- Supporting innovation in curriculum design through the provision of tools and services that focus on key learner experiences;
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of user centred tools to assist stakeholders to reflect upon and enhance the course curriculum.

Institutional Context

15. In May 2008, the University of Ulster formally introduced a new Teaching and Learning Strategy (Appendix 1) This strategy was a response to a number of challenges facing the University of Ulster and the HE sector as a whole. In particular:

16. *“..... its large and diverse and geographically dispersed student body makes student non-continuation and progression a challenge. For several years student non-continuation rates have been higher than our benchmark. A key challenge of the University in the next five years is to*

design and implement more effective intentional interventions to deal with the multi-factorial nature of the problem.”

17. A key focus of the strategy is to seek to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery. *“During the course of the implementation of the Strategy, alternatives will be sought to reduce the burdens of bureaucracy (without compromising academic standards and quality) and to free-up academic and research staff time to focus on excelling at the core activities.”*
18. Alongside the introduction of this new Teaching and Learning strategy, a review of Standards and Quality Assurance Arrangements (Appendix 2) has been undertaken to *“establish as a guiding principle the creation of a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking for curriculum development and teaching and assessment practices and for students.”*
19. This review resulted in a number of measures to streamline bureaucratic processes in order to encourage risk-taking and more flexibility in the curriculum and multi- and inter-disciplinarity.
20. A third related strategic initiative is a formal set of guidelines for First Year Undergraduate Teaching which have been approved by Senate. A key element of this paper is the co-ordination of the first year, in particular:
 - *A first year course team should strategically plan, co-ordinate and implement an integrated first year experience for students.*
 - *Curriculum, study skills development and assessment strategy should be co-ordinated across the range of (core) first year modules.*
 - *The curriculum should recognise the diversity of prior student qualifications.*
21. This JISC proposal is timely in that it will provide the University with a number of tools and services that will allow course teams (and learners) to better reflect upon and plan the orchestration of the learner experience in a supportive and efficient manner in line with the aforementioned Ulster strategy documents. The use of simple student centred timeline scenarios will allow course teams to identify key strategic objectives and use these as drivers for curriculum change.
22. The opportunity to reflect on educational practice from a fresh perspective will assist course teams to innovate the course curriculum and provide resources that can be used to describe these innovations to validation panels and learners. It is also anticipated that the learner focus of the tools and services will allow course teams to better engage with learners and other key stakeholders in the curriculum development process.

Sector relevance of proposal

23. The project team believes that the experiences and outputs of this proposal will be relevant to other F/HEIs, in particular the findings of various review processes will be transferable across the sector. The outputs of the project will provide institutions with a suite of tools and services that can promote effective reflection and innovation in the curriculum. The focus on the use of cohort profiles (real or predicted) and student-based scenarios will ensure that such innovations are informed by the changing demands of learners. The conceptual focus of the proposed curriculum reflection tools will complement existing commercial and sector developed curriculum workflow and data capture tools, most of which provide additional scaffolding to assist practitioners embed effective practices.

Engagement with the Community

24. The project will liaise with a number of key stakeholders within the University of Ulster and beyond:

Stakeholder	Roles
Educational Managers	Heads of Schools, Deans, PVC (Teaching and Learning)
Course teams	Course Directors, Co-ordinators of Teaching and Learning
Teaching Staff	Academics, Teaching Assistants, Post Graduate Demonstrators
Learners	
Data and systems interoperability staff	JISC, CETIS, e-learning system / SIS developers

Academic Support Depts.	Quality Assurance & Enhancement, Academic Office, Staff Development, Library, Student Support, Careers,
External Bodies	JISC, HE Academy, SEDA, ALT
Related initiatives	Related JISC projects, CETLs

25. The project will adopt a number of approaches to engage with these stakeholders:
- *Use formal workflows and practices:* The Institute of Lifelong Learning provides a leadership role in the design and development of fully online programmes across the University. The project will benefit from this role in that it will provide a ready source of course teams to engage with. The project will similarly benefit from engagement with Faculties and Schools as they introduce, with the support of the Institute of Lifelong Learning, offerings and optional learner defined pathways under the Certificate for Personal and Professional Development framework;
 - *Build on existing networks and contacts established by the Institute of Lifelong Learning and the CETL:* These networks include Deans, Heads of School, Faculty Co-ordinators of Teaching and Learning and key support departments, in particular Staff Development, the Library, Student Support and external networks;
 - *Establish links with subject units identified in the University course revalidation schedule.* The Marketing subject team, who have experience of piloting the CETL Hybrid Learning Model tool, have agreed to liaise with the project (if awarded) to assist with the development of conceptual tool specification.
26. The project will build on the user engagement approaches and practices of the CETL CIES project (Appendix 3):
- Stakeholder engagement through surveys and focus groups throughout the project to identify and review challenges, opportunities and priorities;
 - Conceptual development work with a small number of experienced staff to establish initial reference models (data schemas and UML diagrams) for project tools and services;
 - Pilot studies to refine the tools and services and provide an initial series of evaluations, case studies and user narratives;
 - Develop scalable versions of tools and services and evaluate with a larger pilot group, again capturing case studies and user perspective narratives;
 - Formally embed tools and services into institutional processes based on proven demand and positive evaluation.
27. This iterative approach will provide the project with a stakeholder engagement process that involves staff (and learners) in the development and evaluation of the project and provide the University with a range of user-focused tools and services that effect changes in course design in a supportive and risk managed manner.

External Stakeholders

28. The project team will liaise with the Programme Synthesis project associated with this call to share findings and use cases and to identify opportunities to engage in cross-project development, testing and evaluation activities. The project will also utilise existing networks (HE Academy, JISC, SEDA and CETL) to engage with practitioners across the UK education sector.
29. The project team will liaise with JISC CETIS and other relevant agencies to ensure the project is linked to the e-framework initiative. The University of Ulster is keen to actively engage with the projects associated with this call and will seek to collaborate in development, testing and evaluation of programme related tools and services where appropriate.
30. It is envisaged that the project will work with project teams engaged with tools based on XCRI, COVARM and the Pedagogical Planner tools to demonstrate data interoperability and the integration of such tools into a typical curriculum development / review workflow.

Workplan

Period	Activity	Outputs (bold – key milestones)
Q3 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit Development officers Identify stakeholder requirements evaluation participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruited and in post
Q4 08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out baseline review exercise Establish project data framework Conceptual engagement with initial course team (Marketing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish draft data framework
Q1/2 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete baseline review report Identify and publish user requirements and use case scenarios for tools Establish outline evaluation framework Establish templates for user experience stories and case studies Develop phase 1 tools / services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish baseline review report Publish user draft tool requirements and use cases Publish evaluation framework Establish case study repository
Q3/4 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot phase 1 outputs with > 2 courses Evaluate stakeholder and curriculum impact of pilot Prepare revised user requirements and use case scenarios based on initial pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish revised user requirements and use cases
Q1/2 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out interim project evaluation report Evaluate revised phase 1 outputs > 4 courses Develop phase 1 tools / services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish interim evaluation report Phase 1 tools complete
Q3/4 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Phase 1 tools Pilot phase 2 tools / services Evaluate stakeholder and curriculum impact of phase 2 pilot Identify technical synergies with other projects / tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish phase 1 tool / service user guides / run Train the Trainer workshops
Q1/2 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate revised phase 2 outputs > 4 courses Prototype 3rd party integrations Publish final versions of project tools under Open Source Licence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 tools complete Software and visual resources freely available to sector under open source / Creative Commons licences
Q3/4 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Phase 2 tools / services Publish final versions of project tools under Open Source Licence Carry out final project evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish phase 2 tool / service user guides / run Train the Trainer workshops
Q1/2 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete project evaluation Provide mentor support for embedded outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish final project and evaluation reports

Notes:

- Project reports will be prepared in line with the schedule described in the bid document
- Project and associated staff will engage with Programme related activities as scheduled by JISC
- The tool / service development process and expected deliverables is formally described in Appendix 3.

Project Management and Governance

31. A Project Director (Dr Alan Masson) will provide leadership for the operational aspects of the project, in particular the project work-plan and the setting and evaluation of key milestones and deliverables. The Director will report to the Director of Access and Distributed Learning, who in turn reports to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning).

32. The Project Director will be supported by an administrative officer based in the Institute of Lifelong Learning. This full time permanent position, currently being recruited, will oversee the monitoring, recording and administration of income and expenditure, the organisation and co-ordination of internal and external events and take the lead in the preparation of reports and ensure records are adequately maintained.
33. Overall budget management, including financial liaison with JISC, will be carried out by the Research Grants and Contracts division of the Research Office in line with University procedures for externally funded projects.
34. This team-based approach to project management will provide a focused and efficient approach to the operational and administrative management of the project.
35. The project will be guided and informed by a project steering group. This steering group will provide strategic guidance to ensure that the project is institutionally embedded and that the deliverables are sustainable across the sector. It will also review the project plan and monitor progress of key activities and deliverables.
36. The project team will include two external consultants, Helen Beetham in the role of “critical friend” and a second consultant (TBC) in the role of project evaluator. The critical friend role will provide a valuable external perspective to benchmarking the aims and progress of the work and ensure that the activities of the project are best informed by activities and initiatives across the sector. The project evaluator role will provide leadership in the internal evaluation of the project.
37. The steering group will have a membership including:
 - External representation: (Chair) Dr Mark Stubbs (Manchester Metropolitan University), Sheila MacNeill (CETIS), Helen Beetham (project critical friend), TBC (project evaluator);
 - Project Staff: Alan Masson (Project Director), TBC (Project Administrator), Staff working directly on the Project;
 - Key University of Ulster Stakeholders: Pro-Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)*, Head of Quality Management & Audit Unit*, Director of Access & Distributed Learning*, Head of Staff Development*, Head of Academic Office*, User Services Librarian and Faculty representatives (TBC)#.
38. The project will also be embedded within the following Institutional processes to facilitate Senior Officer / key stakeholder engagement with the aims and progress of the project in an efficient manner.
 - Standing agenda item on the monthly Teaching and Learning Departmental briefing meetings (membership includes * above);
 - Report to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee of the University (membership includes * and # above);
 - Extend the remit of the CETL for Institutional E-learning Services twice-yearly Faculty Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators forum to include the work of this project. (# above). These informal briefing sessions provide an opportunity for Faculty representatives to discuss key issues and identify appropriate pilot cohorts etc.

Sustainability

39. This project will seek to embed the experiences and resources developed during the funding period within the University of Ulster and make these available to the sector as a whole. These services will be embedded within the institution and beyond by:
 - Production of use case and facilitator guides;
 - Providing Train the Trainer support for key academic and support staff;
 - Technical outputs in the form of process / data visualisation tools that will be made available to the Institution and the greater F/HE Community using appropriate Open Source licensing arrangements. These tools will utilise appropriate data models to assist interoperability with sector relevant Curriculum / Learning Design tools.
40. These embedding activities are included in the project workplan.

Risk

Hazard	Impact	Mitigation in Place	Risk
Slow to recruit staff	Reduced resources to support initial phase of the project	Key project staff committed to the project from the Institute of Lifelong Learning will provide a skilled & experienced resource base that is immediately available.	D
Loss of a project core member due to long term illness, change of career etc.	Slippage of project timelines, possibly beyond funding period	Project staffing includes multiple programmers and researchers – slippages due to a single staff loss will therefore be limited	D
Willingness of practitioners to participate	Limited user engagement will compromise the specification & evaluation of project outputs	Project builds on existing CETL user engagement activities. Early pilot group has been identified.	D
Lack of Institutional support	Poor engagement internally. Limited uptake and impact of provided tools and services	Project supported at PVC level and by key institutional stakeholders.	D
Interest and take-up by the sector	Activities and outputs of the project not relevant to the sector	Specific outputs are based on use cases that are transferable. Generic outputs will be informed by external consultant	D

A = HIGH Likelihood and HIGH Impact, B = LOW Likelihood and HIGH Impact
C = HIGH Likelihood and LOW Impact, D = LOW Likelihood and LOW Impact

41. The use of established staff from within the Institute of Lifelong Learning and experienced external consultants provides the project team with a managed approach to risk.
42. The project team is confident that the allocation of two development officers to the core project team will limit the risk to the project in the event of one staff member being unavailable for a significant proportion of the funding period.
43. In the event of one of the specified existing member of staff being unavailable for a significant period of time, the project will draw on the experiences of staff within the Institute of Lifelong Learning who have similar roles and experience.

Planned Deliverables

44. The project will deliver a number of formal outputs in line with those described in paragraph 31 of the bid document. These deliverables will include:
 - Plain English overview of the project
 - Baseline evaluation of curriculum processes and key issues and challenges reviewing and (re)designing courses
 - Use case Scenarios and UML workflows to describe the outputs of the project.
 - Case Studies, and Digital stories describing how project tools and services have impacted on a range of stakeholders.
 - Workshops to raise awareness and train staff in the use of project tools and services
 - Tools (software and paper based) which will be available under appropriate open source licensing arrangements
 - Evaluation reports addressing the project problem space, usability, usage and impact
 - Project progress reports
45. The project will ensure these deliverables are targeted to meet the needs of stakeholders (learners, academic and support staff and employers).

Project Staffing

46. Dr Alan Masson (18% FTE) is Senior Lecturer in Learning Technologies with responsibilities for the co-ordination of e-learning services within the University and Director of the CETL for Institutional e-Learning Services. Alan will provide expert guidance and support to the project in the areas of developing usable, learner-focused tools, effective pedagogic and curriculum practices and conceptual integration of workflows and information between diverse educational services.
47. Administrative Officer (Institute of Lifelong Learning): 25% FTE for the duration of the Project. This post has been created to provide administrative support to externally funded projects within the Institute of Lifelong Learning. This post is currently being recruited.

48. James Gheel (20% FTE) is a Senior Systems Developer based within the Institute of Lifelong Learning. His role is the technical development and management of e-learning related services and environments. James will provide specialist support to the project in the areas of data schemas and vocabularies, systems interoperability development and testing, visualisation of complex information and on-line database systems.
49. Damien McConville (20% FTE) is an Academic e-Learning Consultant based within the Institute of Lifelong Learning. Provides pedagogical leadership for the development of fully on-line courses across the Faculties of Life and Health Sciences, Engineering and Social Sciences. Damien will provide specialist support to the project in course team liaison, curriculum and assessment practices and the modelling of user requirements.
50. 2x Project Development Officers (100% FTE). These posts will be recruited for the initial three years of the project. The roles will provide the project with skills in the areas of multimedia design, visual storyboarding, ergonomic information display and capture tools and the identification and evaluation of user requirements. These posts will work under the direction of other project staff to specify, storyboard, pilot and evaluate on-line tools and services associated with the project. The Institute has successfully recruited a number of posts with this skill set over the past two years and is confident that it can recruit suitably skilled staff. The project may recruit an additional suitably skilled placement student in the event of a delayed recruitment process which risks key project timelines.

Evaluation

51. An effective evaluation strategy is critical to monitor the degree to which the activities and deliverables of the project are achieving the operational and administrative objectives as defined in the project plan and by JISC.
52. The CETL(NI) for Institutional E-learning Services utilises a formal tool / service development framework (Appendix X) to ensure tools and services are simple to use and fit for purpose. This framework allows a three-tier evaluation approach, which focuses on usability and fitness of purpose, usage and effectiveness of dissemination and impact.
53. This framework, with its emphasis on extensive user engagement through focus groups, development of use case scenarios and software / service prototype testing has assisted the CETL to develop a number of highly usable tools, services and training activities.
54. This project will use this framework to ensure that the project team works closely with key stakeholders and provides tools and services that directly impact on the planning and development of new and existing courses. The initial baseline review of Curriculum processes specified in the funding call will provide a valuable reference point for the evaluation of the project. A formal user engagement framework will provide the project with a rich knowledge base to inform internal and external evaluation activities.
55. The external project evaluator will liaise with the project steering group and the project director to identify an appropriate information base to inform the evaluation processes and establish a schedule of evaluation activities to be included in specified project reports.
56. It is expected that the evaluation schedule will shift in focus as the project progresses and ensure that the evaluation process adequately takes into account the views and needs of relevant stakeholders and perspectives. The evaluation of the project will be a standing agenda item for the Steering Group.
57. A key feature of the evaluation evidence base will be the use of stakeholder narratives that describe the impact of the project from the perspectives of the University, course curricula, teachers, students and support staff.

Dissemination

58. Dissemination will be a key feature of this project. A website will provide information about the project for the HE community and a range of communication tools (in particular blogging and

community tools such as Ning) will be used to facilitate interaction among the project team and with relevant constituencies associated with the work of the project.

59. The University of Ulster has been pro-active with the dissemination of its work to date, presenting at the JISC, HE Academy, Academic, Library and e-learning specific forums. A feature of previous project outputs has been the provision of plain English resources with a user focus to provide meaningful resources for a range of stakeholders.

60. The project will seek to disseminate the outcomes of this project through:

- Participation in relevant JISC, SEDA and HE Academy events;
- Presenting at IT, e-learning and other related conferences and workshops;
- Liaison with relevant standards groups such as CETIS;
- Publishing of practices and guidelines for a range of institutional stakeholders;
- Establishing development and support communities for freely available (under Creative Commons and Open Source licence) tools and resources.

Budget

Directly Incurred Staff	Aug08– Jul09	Aug09– Jul10	Aug10 – Jul11	Aug11 – Jul12	TOTAL £
Development Officer Grade 6/7 pt 32 100%					
Development Officer Grade 6/7 pt 32 100%					
Total Directly Incurred Staff (A)					
Non-Staff	Aug08– Jul09	Aug09– Jul10	Aug10 – Jul11	Aug11 – Jul12	TOTAL £
Travel and expenses / dissemination					
Hardware/software					
Evaluation / Critical Friend					
Other					
Total Directly Incurred Non-Staff (B)					
Directly Incurred Total (C) (A+B=C)					
Directly Allocated	Aug08– Jul09	Aug09– Jul10	Aug10 – Jul11	Aug11 – Jul12	TOTAL £
Staff					
Estates					
Other					
Directly Allocated Total (D)					
Indirect Costs (E)					
Total Project Cost (C+D+E)					
Amount Requested from JISC					
Institutional Contributions					
Percentage Contributions over the life of the project	JISC 77 %	Partners 23 %			Total 100%
No. FTEs used to calculate indirect and estates charges, and staff included	No FTE1.148s	Which Staff Dr Alan Masson, Damien McConville			

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE PROJECT TEAM

61. **Dr Alan Masson** has an established track record of successfully leading a number of JISC funded projects, in particular the Digital Repositories TrustDR Project and DiVLE 4i project, and is an invited member of the JISC Pedagogy Experts group. He has extensive knowledge and experience in the development and institutional implementation of innovative learner focused educational services.

62. Alan is currently (30% FTE) Director of the Centre of Excellence for Institutional E-learning Services. This work is engaged in the development of a number of user facing services to inform and support effective, learner-focused, changes in teaching and learning practices.
63. He has over 10 years experience of providing leadership in the introduction of e-Learning to the curriculum through advising and supporting course teams and as a member of course validation panels. He has extensive experience of disseminating to teaching and learning, e-Learning, Library and IT communities.
64. **James Gheel** is a Senior Systems Developer, with direct responsibility for the development, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation of e-Learning related services. James has extensive experience of information visualisation, GUI design, use case modelling and data and system integration using IMS and other related XML and Open Standards-based data schemas. In addition, James has research experience on EU framework projects.
65. **Damien McConville** is an Academic e-Learning Consultant based in the Institute of Lifelong Learning. He has 6 years academic experience of providing pedagogic and curriculum support to course teams developing fully online and technology enhanced undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. He also has extensive experience in the design, development and implementation of innovative e-learning content, and was the co-developer of the the GLAZE knowledge repository for applied ceramics which has been disseminated throughout the U.K. and Ireland. He is currently carrying out PhD research into the use of bioinformatics and data mining techniques to investigate the mechanisms of malignant progression in prostate cancer.
66. CVs for the above staff are in Appendix 4
67. The following staff will also provide expert guidance input into the project.
68. **Dr Helen Beetham** is Research Consultant to the Joint Information Systems Committee's e-Learning Programme, in which role she develops and supports the JISC's activities in e-learning and pedagogy. Previously a Research Fellow in e-learning at the Open University, she is widely published and a regular speaker at conferences in the UK and abroad. Helen is ** project "critical friend" to the CETL for Institutional E-learning Services at the University of Ulster
69. **Dr Mark Stubbs** is Managed Learning Environment (MLE) Project Director within MMU's Learning and Research Information Services. Mark is an experienced project manager, who has coordinated deployment of MMU's VLE and is currently involved in a suite of JISC-funded e-Admin projects: XCRI, ADoM, DELIA and P-SPEX. He is also involved in MMU's Higher Education Pathfinder work. Mark is an active member of the JISC-CETIS Enterprise SIG; he is familiar with the e-Framework, heavily involved in efforts to establish European-wide standards for describing courses.
70. **Sheila MacNeill** is the CETIS Educational Content (EC) Domain Coordinator. The main focus of the EC SIG is standards/specifications relating to eLearning content development. The SIG has been closely involved in the development and implementation of IMS Content Packaging and Learning Design. Sheila has 10 years experience of developing educational resources for both the HE and school sectors. Prior to joining CETIS, Sheila was a Learning Technologist with [LT Scotland](#).

Appendix 1

University of Ulster

Teaching and Learning Strategy

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

2008/09 – 2012/13

May 2008

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Teaching and Learning Strategy

2008/09 – 2012/13

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FOREWORD

Any successful strategy needs the support of staff, students and managers across and within the institution. Like every good strategy its outcome depends on effective implementation. I am encouraged by the collective goodwill towards, and enthusiasm for, inclusive excellence and resolve to commit resources, time and effort toward the aims and objectives outlined in this Strategy. I thank all those colleagues who have contributed to its formulation, and I think even more warmly of those of you who will take responsibility for its execution.

Denise McAlister
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)

1. INTRODUCTION

The University's Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09-2012/13) sets out four key University-wide priorities for the next five-year period as well as two cross-cutting aims in support of them. Strategies and annual plans will also exist at the Faculty and School levels and these will be congruent and consistent with this over-arching Strategy. The Strategy also articulates with other institutional strategies, policies and plans, in particular, the Corporate Plan (2006/07 – 2010/11), the Widening Participation Strategy, the Collaborative Provision Strategy, the International Strategy, SUCCINCT 3, the Estates Strategy, SUPPORTIVE, and the Admissions and Selection Policy. It is a live document subject to formative evaluation throughout its duration, with adjustments and fine-tuning as appropriate.

The Corporate Plan (2006/07-2010/11) sets out the University's vision '**to be a university with a national and international reputation for excellence, innovation and regional engagement.**' It also sets out the University's intentions to:

- *provide excellent learning opportunities which are student centred and client focussed;*
- *undertake excellent research in selected areas of activity;*
- *maintain the University's position as a sector leader in widening access to higher education;*
- *establish the University as a sector leader in promoting creativity and innovation;*
- *conduct business in line with the University's core values and to the highest standards of corporate governance.*

The Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09 – 2012/13) articulates the University's specific commitments relating to learning and teaching which emanate from the Corporate Plan. An overview of the Strategy is provided in Figure 1 below. Four key aims are identified to realise the vision. For each aim there are several key supporting

objectives. Underpinning and supporting each of the four strategic aims are two cross-cutting strategic aims, each with their own key supporting objectives. Annual action plans will set out in more detail how these commitments are to be delivered, responsibilities for achieving them and key performance measures.

The next five years represent an unprecedented and very challenging opportunity to provide excellent teaching and learning provision given, inter alia, changing student demographics and patterns of participation, greater globalisation and internationalisation, and a review of variable deferred fees in the context of the commodification of higher education.

Consultation

In April 2007 the University outlined its plans and timescales for the consultation process underpinning the development of the new Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09 – 2012/13). There were three phases to the consultation. In the first phase (Pre-consultation) the opinions and priorities of academic colleagues were obtained using the DELPHI method. The views of central departments were also sought and feedback obtained from various one-off events and the reports of working groups. It also has been informed by a wide range of recent relevant reports.*

In the second phase (Formal consultation) the draft strategy was considered by relevant committees at Faculty and University levels. A dedicated website was set up for staff and students to comment. Formal meetings were held with faculties and the Students' Union and relevant central departments. The draft Strategy was revised in the light of the comments and feedback received. The finalised Strategy was endorsed by the Senate in April 2008.

* These include, inter alia, Designing Spaces for Effective Learning (HEFCE2006); Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World Class Skills (Leitch Report 2006); Beyond the honours degree classification (Universities UK, 2007).

In the third phase (Post-consultation) the resourcing implications of the Strategy will be costed and Council's approval for the budget for its implementation sought on an ongoing basis.

Figure 1

OVERVIEW OF THE ULSTER'S TEACHING & LEARNING STRATEGY
2008/09 – 2012/13

VISION

Our vision is to be a leading provider of professional education for professional life

MISSION

To provide excellent learning opportunities which are student centred and client-focussed

We will realise our mission through the following four strategic aims:

To enhance the quality of the student learning experience

To target, recruit, support and retain a diverse range of students

To promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery

To promote learning, professionalism and employability through the integration of academic theory and relevant professional and vocational practice.

In support of our key aims we aim to:

Provide a supportive environment, in which teaching is recognised, valued and rewarded for all those who teach and support learning in the University

To enhance the quality of the physical and social learning environments for students and staff

Guiding Principles

2. CONTEXT

The University of Ulster is recognised locally and nationally for its high quality professional and vocational education. It also has a good reputation for innovation in curricula design and delivery. Its suite of taught programmes is characterised by a focus on the application of theory to practice and the provision of opportunities for students to undertake work-based learning and to study for coterminous awards. The University places a strong emphasis in working in partnership with employers, the community and voluntary sectors, government and accrediting bodies to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the region and to promote social inclusion. The University aspires to be the leading provider of professional education for professional life on the island of Ireland.

Ulster students benefit from participating in carefully designed and implemented learning activities that promote active and student-oriented learning and assist them in becoming independent critical lifelong learners. The University aims to provide a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment by providing courses and programmes which are scholarship-informed, and where appropriate research-informed, and which are taught and supervised by those engaged in research and/or scholarship.

Feedback from surveys on quality of teaching and the student experience at Ulster demonstrate that overall levels of satisfaction are good. However, the data indicate that assessment and feedback are among the key areas where students express least satisfaction; we also know that there are strong linkages between assessment, feedback, student motivation and non-continuation. Research by Yorke and Langden (2007) and Carter (2006) suggest that teaching and learning strategies should be oriented to enhance the experience of all students, albeit with a particular emphasis on first year, first semester students. Over the next five years the University will aim to enhance the overall quality of the student learning experience.

Ulster welcomes diversity and inclusion. Students and staff come to the University from a range of backgrounds and cultures and with a wide range of academic and life experiences. This enriches life in the University for all. One distinctive contribution of the University of Ulster has been, and is, in it being accessible to people from all socio-economic backgrounds in this society, as individuals or as members of distinct issue groups. The University seeks, therefore, to create a learning environment which provides the necessary support for all students to achieve their potential.

Ulster has the third highest percentage of students historically under-represented in higher education in the UK and is nationally recognised for widening participation. However, its large and diverse and geographically dispersed student body makes student non-continuation and progression a challenge. For several years student non-continuation rates have been higher than our benchmark. This is both wasteful of resources and a demoralising experience for many students and their families. A key challenge of the University in the next five years is to design and implement more effective intentional interventions to deal with the multi-factorial nature of the problem. This will necessitate a comprehensive, integrated and co-ordinated approach, beginning with pre-entry and continuing through with recruitment, admissions, induction and transition. Successful implementation of the Strategy will, therefore, seek to maintain Ulster's position as a sector leader in widening access to higher education and through this reducing levels of social inequality and increasing care with difference through the active engagement together of diverse staff and student bodies.

One of the University's core strategic aims is "to establish the University as a sector leader in promoting creativity and innovation". Ulster traditionally has been viewed as an innovator and sector leader in curricula design and delivery. If this competitive edge is to be maintained the University's reputation as an innovative institution needs to be under-scored and re-emphasised through infrastructural change and a re-envisioning of approaches to pedagogy, programme planning and design. A key focus, therefore, of the strategy will be to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery.

Within the context of the academic development and scholarly activity provided by its taught and research programmes, the University is committed to providing opportunities for its students to develop the skills, knowledge and personal attributes which will enhance their employability on graduation. Ulster places particular emphasis on integrating academic content with professional practice to consolidate and stimulate learning by permitting students the opportunity to reflect on the relevance of course content and to put what they have learnt into practice and to study for coterminous awards.

Currently some 48% of Ulster's full-time programmes have an integrated, work-based component and the University has one of the highest proportions of part-time students amongst Universities in the UK. Learning through work is a powerful tool for widening participation and employer engagement and addressing the regional and national government's agendas to improve skills and productivity in economically relevant subjects, in particular STEM skills, and to maximise innovation, enterprise and creativity. The University is also committed to the development of policies and procedures for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning and for work-based and work-place learning. Over the duration of the Strategy the University will promote learning, professionalism and employability through the integration of academic theory and relevant professional and vocational practice.

The University values all staff who support teaching and learning and is committed to rewarding, developing and supporting staff and acknowledges the need to recruit and retain the highest quality staff. It is conscious of the need to continually reinforce the parity of esteem which it accords to all three core activities, namely, teaching and learning, research and academic enterprise, and explore ways in which excellence in each of them and the synergies between them, may be demonstrated, recognised and rewarded.

The University also recognises that the good practice in teaching and learning currently demonstrated by many individuals and several subject areas is deserving of wider

dissemination. Improved mechanisms to share and further develop good practice locally, nationally and internationally will, therefore, be sought.

The University is also mindful of the demands which are imposed on staff's time in order to satisfy growing internal and external accountability requirements and to meet the accreditation requirements of Public, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. During the course of the implementation of the Strategy, alternatives will be sought to reduce the burdens of bureaucracy (without compromising academic standards and quality) and to free-up academic and research staff time to focus on excelling at the core activities.

Finally, a supportive teaching and learning environment is crucial in providing students and staff with the support they need to learn and to teach. A welcoming environment promotes empowerment and confidence. It encourages inclusion and diversity and promotes experiences of inter-depending with different others. To achieve this a comprehensive and integrated approach to the quality of the student experience is required. Our most important interactions with students occur in teaching and advising. However interactions also occur in admissions, registration, student support, accommodations, finance etc. It is imperative that the encounters that students have with all employees are productive and courteous and personify Ulster's commitment to excellence and high quality.

The physical, social and technological environments are also central to the student learning experience. Well designed, flexible, technology-enabled learning spaces can help to energise, motivate and inspire learners and teachers. They encourage, facilitate and support collaborative and peer learning. Their flexibility aids personalisation and inclusion. In short, they are instrumental in changing practice. These are areas which will also need further improvement and investment over the next five years if the Strategy is to be successful.

3. CORE STRATEGIC AIMS

Strategic Aim 1

To enhance the quality of the student learning experience.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to provide a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment;
- to provide increased opportunities for small group teaching;
- to provide a safe, yet challenging learning environment, that supports students to engage and learn with fellow students from diverse backgrounds and identities;
- to provide courses and programmes which are scholarship-informed, and where appropriate, research-informed, and taught and supervised by those engaged in research and/or scholarship;
- to focus on assessment as a means of promoting student learning as well as providing evidence of that learning;
- to provide opportunities for (peer) supplemental instruction targeted at high-risk modules and/or courses, not high-risk students;
- to develop personal tutoring/studies advice/peer mentoring systems which meet the needs of students;
- to enhance possibilities of EU and international exchanges and outreach for students;

- to ensure that learning resources in support of teaching and research degrees are accessible to all students;
- to develop and implement new ways of obtaining students' views on the quality of teaching.

KEY RISKS

- Failure to continue to achieve the national and international standards that demonstrate excellence in the University's learning opportunities
- Failure to secure the necessary quality and level of human and infrastructural resources to successfully implement the Strategy

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Student satisfaction ratings/surveys
- PSRB Accreditation visits
- QAA Audit
- Student Complaints
- External Examiner Reports

Strategic Aim 2

To target, recruit, support and retain a diverse range of students.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to promote outreach activities to raise aspirations of potential applicants and improve the number of applications from traditionally disadvantaged and excluded communities;
- to create a seamless transition between different forms of learning;
- to promote the development of students' key skills including numeracy and literacy to enhance their overall performance, their continuation and aid their progression into labour market employment and/or further study;
- to support inclusivity and diversity to underpin all aspects of the student experience, from pre-arrival to graduation;
- to improve student attendance since this is an indicator of student commitment and engagement;
- to facilitate transition and progression between HE and FE by continuing the promotion and development of progression pathways and agreements with collaborative partner institutions, in particular regional area-based Colleges;
- to increase the use of VLEs, mobile learning technologies, and blended learning approaches to make courses as accessible as possible;

KEY RISKS

- Risk/Opportunity arising from failure to anticipate and respond to market demand from students, employers, government and other potential funders
- Failure to maintain and build upon the University's position as a sector leader in widening access to higher education
- Risk/Opportunity arising from University 's Collaborative Provision Strategy with the FE Sector
- Risk/Opportunity arising from impact of variable deferred fees and any further future deregulation.

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Achievement against Academic Plan
- Student non-continuation and progression rates
- Employment Statistics
- Student Satisfaction ratings/surveys
- Percentage of students from low socio-economic groups

Strategic Aim 3

To promote and foster creativity in curriculum design and delivery.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to identify and disseminate the means of promoting student creativity within subject curricula;
- to promote collaborative working within, and between disciplines, between staff and students;
- to promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary curriculum innovation and programme provision;
- to promote and disseminate effective innovations in the pedagogy of teaching;
- to encourage further risk-taking in curriculum development whilst at the same time conforming to the requirements of the academic infrastructure and accrediting and/or regulatory bodies;
- to ensure that appropriate recognition and (re)accreditation is maintained for all programmes, with positive outcomes from all external scrutiny and review;
- to enhance and extend the entrepreneurship agenda to include non-SET constituencies;
- to encourage and support curriculum innovations and other initiatives (eg Science Shop, Tutoring in Schools etc) designed to increase the employability of graduates;

- to remove administrative barriers to interdisciplinary development by continuing to develop and integrate University timetabling systems;
- to explore the possibility of developing a more flexible regulatory framework for academic standards and learning, teaching and assessment methods;
- to modify standards and quality assurance mechanisms and quality management procedures, as appropriate, to reflect the breadth of learning, teaching and assessment approaches being used;
- to keep under review established internal funding mechanisms in order to counter any perceived disincentives to collaboration between schools and faculties.

KEY RISKS

- Failure to motivate, facilitate and support staff to recognise the benefits of being creative and innovative.

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Employer Feedback
- Evaluation/Revalidation Reports
- New (and renewed) PSRB Accreditations
- Employment Statistics

Strategic Aim 4

To promote learning, professionalism and employability through the integration of academic theory and relevant professional and vocational practice.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to promote the development of the skills and attributes which will strengthen students' employability, including career management skills;
- to encourage curriculum innovations that are designed to increase professionalism and the employability of students and promote civic responsibilities within students;
- to widen and strengthen links with industry and local employers to meet local and regional skills needs;
- to increase and enhance work-related and work-based learning opportunities;
- to ensure that all students undertaking research degrees receive appropriate RSGST training and appropriate support;
- to broaden the skills and competences of research students in order to smooth the transition from doctoral study to subsequent employment;
- to embed PDP within all programmes;
- to monitor PDP in its role of promoting employability.

KEY RISKS

- Risk/Opportunity arising from the need to maintain and build upon the University's reputation as a key provider of professional and vocational education.
- Risk/Opportunity arising from the effective management of quality assurance and accreditation issues, and in securing funding for the costs associated with more flexible and responsive design and delivery models.

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Employer Feedback
- PSRB Accreditation
- Graduate Surveys
- Employment Statistics
- PDP/RSGST Uptake
- Percentage of programmes with work-based component

4. CROSS-CUTTING CORE STRATEGIC AIMS

Cross-Cutting Support Aim 1

To provide a supportive environment, in which teaching is recognised, valued and rewarded for all those who teach and support learning in the University.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to enhance the teaching skills of newly appointed and experienced academic and other support staff by providing appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities;
- to promote and disseminate pedagogic developments locally and nationally by supporting the activities of the two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLS), the work of the Forum for Innovation in Learning and Teaching Support, and other related initiatives and activities (eg Subject Centres);
- to facilitate staff in developing and implementing e-learning through technical and pedagogical training and support;
- to encourage and recognise excellence in teaching and learning through awarding University Distinguished Learning and Teaching Fellowship Awards, and supporting actual and potential National Teaching Fellowship award winners;
- to ensure that teaching is properly recognised in staff remuneration and considerations for advancement/promotion (including readerships and professorships).

KEY RISKS

- Lack of buy-in to the Strategy by staff at all levels
- Risk/Opportunity arising from University's performance in recognising and rewarding all staff who contribute to the achievement of excellence in support of teaching and learning

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Staff Surveys
- Developmental Appraisal and Review Uptake
- Compliance with CPD Policy for academic and non-academic staff
- Annual Promotion and Advancement Statistics
- National Teaching Fellowship Awards

Cross-Cutting Supporting Aim 2

To enhance the quality of the physical and social learning environments for students and staff.

Key Supporting Objectives

- to continue to improve those processes, practices and functions that matter most to local, international, research and on-line students;
- to review space-management procedures to ensure effective decision-making processes;
- to accord the provision of social learning spaces a high priority in new designs and refurbishments;
- to progressively embed technology into learning and teaching spaces through the adoption of mobile, connected, support and visual and interactive learning;
- to review on an annual basis the achievement of service standards identified in the student and associated subsidiary charters;
- to ensure the continuing relevance of institutional-based technologies and support, and identify opportunities for greater flexibility in accommodating technologies preferred by learners;
- to enhance and extend ongoing efforts to mainstream equality and good relations by promoting positive attitudes to disabled people, and encouraging participation by disabled students and staff in University life.

KEY RISKS

- Lack of commitment to the Strategy by staff at all levels
- Failure to achieve an appropriate balance in investment in physical capital infrastructure and technology
- Failure to identify and manage the funds necessary to achieve the Strategy

KEY INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Staff Satisfaction Surveys
- Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Good relations surveys
- Equality and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Data

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The specific objectives as outlined in the Strategy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. This process of review and updating will include an assessment of the extent to which the objectives are being met and the introduction of further objectives, the latter reflecting both internally-generated objectives and the need to respond to governmental policy changes and/or initiatives. Implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09-2012/13) will be monitored on an annual basis through the development of detailed annual action plans by the University Teaching and Learning Committee, which reports directly to the Senate. Responsibilities and actions devolved to faculties and/or directorates/departments will be monitored and evaluated by the University Teaching and Learning Committee through its consideration of structured annual reports from Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and other relevant central departments.

The University Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for reviewing the overall effectiveness of the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09-2011/12) towards the end of the five-year period.

6. NEXT STEPS

The Action Plan for 2008/09 will be finalised and presented to the University Teaching and Learning Committee in September 2008. During the academic year the Plan will be monitored and reported to the University Teaching and Learning Committee in September 2009. In each academic year thereafter similar planning, monitoring and evaluation arrangements will apply.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09-2012/13) will inform the preparation and update of other relevant University strategies, and in particular, the Widening Participation, Collaborative Provision and International Strategies. Relevant risk

registers (at corporate, departmental and faculty level) will be updated to reflect the risks and opportunities arising from the new Strategy.

Denise McAlister
May 2008

Guiding Principles

In promoting the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09-2012/13), the University acknowledges its key role in enhancing the experience of University of Ulster students. The Teaching and Learning Strategy, therefore, embodies a number of guiding principles which the University advocates and upholds for students studying at the institution, namely:

- that the learning and teaching opportunities afforded to students should challenge students intellectually, encourage reflective learning, and enable them to take their place and be at ease with 'diverse others' locally and internationally;
- that the learning and teaching is designed to develop the subject-specific and generic transferable skills necessary for academic success, future employment and active citizenship;
- that students should appreciate the importance of demonstrating high standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct in every aspect of their studies, research and professional practice;
- that the learning and teaching environment and the delivery of programmes and research student training is as supportive and inclusive as is reasonably possible;
- that it encourages approaches to teaching and assessment that foster student engagement, together with an awareness and understanding of the skills and attributes that they already possess and are developing;
- that curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods take account of the diverse learning support needs of the student body;

- that in valuing lifelong learning deep approaches to learning are fostered which enable students to continue to grow, and develop on graduation into their chosen careers;
- that value is attached, and encouragement given, to scholarship in teaching, and the scholarship of teaching with staff integrating their own research and professional practice into all aspects of curriculum delivery, leading to research-informed teaching and evidence-based effective pedagogic practice;
- the creation of an atmosphere that provides a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking for curriculum development, for teaching and assessment practices and for students;
- that in welcoming and celebrating the diversity of its staff and student body the University will endeavour to ensure that for all programmes of study, both classroom based and on-line, these guiding principles will apply.

Appendix 2

University of Ulster

**Review of Standards and Quality Assurance
Arrangements**

REVIEW OF STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

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UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE
23 April 2008

REVIEW OF STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1 BACKGROUND

The final version of the new Teaching and Learning Strategy is to be considered by Senate on 16 April 2008. This establishes as a guiding principle the creation of a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking for curriculum development and teaching and assessment practices and for students. A consensus emerging from the consultation on the Strategy was the value of streamlining bureaucratic processes in order to encourage risk-taking and more flexibility in the curriculum and multi- and inter-disciplinarity.

Notwithstanding the review of processes undertaken in 2005/6 and the annual review for enhancement in light of participants' comments, the development of a new Strategy has provided the impetus for a thorough review of the University's taught course regulatory framework and quality assurance processes by the Teaching and Learning Department, to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, are informed by a risk-based approach which protects standards and does not impede academic creativity by perceived or real, but unnecessary, bureaucratic burdens on academic staff. This review has been informed by discussion with a small but representative group of academic staff to brainstorm processes. A whole-department approach was taken to ensure a holistic view. It is always useful periodically to stand back and undertake such a systemic review, in order to remove the accretions that may build up or remain over time. Some safeguards may have been useful at the time when novel arrangements were being tested but former exceptional practice may now be more accepted, or former accepted practice may be now more questionable.

This review has noted that our existing arrangements have provided important benefits to the University both for the external quality assurance perspective (QAA), which has confirmed that they meet the expectations of the UK's Academic Infrastructure and the Code of Practice, and for self-assurance. The proposals are designed to continue to fit within the University's Principles of Standards Assurance and Quality Management (Appendix 1) and the external regulatory requirements.

2 UNIVERSITY REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The review considered whether the various elements of the University's Regulatory Framework might be constraining innovation and creativity in curriculum. It was noted that the vast majority of the rules have been introduced after due consideration, and are designed to safeguard standards by fulfilling the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure or by ensuring students are treated fairly and equitably across the University and in comparison with other UK institutions. As HEIs are autonomous bodies, there is no single universally applicable set of rules. All institutions have developed their own, and in making comparisons it is often important to ensure that specific matters are considered in the round and not in isolation. It is important too that rules should be long-standing and should not be, nor need to be, subject to frequent change.

The University's Regulatory Framework has only a small (but important) number of areas where course teams are obliged to meet a University standard without exception. (Occasionally University regulations are explicitly amended to accommodate a variation eg assessment requirements in Nursing or the less generous resit arrangements in the Honours degrees in Occupational Health and Speech and Language Therapy where the relevant Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Body had determined that a higher standard was a requirement for public safety.) In some instances the Framework specifies a norm, and

exceptions to this norm require approval at University level, through the Teaching and Learning Committee. Such cases are reconsidered at the time of revalidation. It is understood that the requirement to articulate again the rationale is seen as a hurdle, which may act as a deterrent to innovation and creativity in curriculum design or assessment practice. Consequently, **it is considered** that the merits of such non-standard approaches should generally be judged through the evaluation/revalidation engagement without subsequent review by Teaching and Learning Committee. (The external examiner's support would then generally be adequate during a period of approval.) **The Committee is asked to consider** whether, as a norm does not preclude departures, variations should continue to require the Committee's approval; if so, it is proposed for departures raised at the time of validation and supported by the panel that the panel itself, rather than the Faculty, should make the case to TLC.

This review has focussed on those aspects of the Regulatory Framework, which may be holding back such development, rather than on those that act as safeguards to standards. It has been proposed subsequently to provide a commentary which summarises not only what the framework requires but also to emphasise what is not proscribed. Course and subject teams might use this to assist them in developing or recasting their curricula and their delivery in creative and innovative ways.

2.1 Qualifications and Credit Framework

There is no proposal to reduce the minimum credits and levels required for each of the University's awards. The main awards (Hons degree; Foundation degree; CertHE; postgraduate awards) are aligned with national practice. With regard to the Honours degree, there is scope within the parameters for this award to have up to 30 points at level A and to have more than 120 at level 3; course teams are not obliged to provide 120 credit points at each of levels 1, 2, 3.

In accordance with the policy decision of 2001, **it is now proposed** to rescind the DipHE award given that DEL has allowed Foundation degrees in all vocational areas. The AB award is used extensively as an exit award within degrees and has been used in two partner institutions. The DipHE has not been used for internal courses for a number of years. The AB and DipHE are identical in specification. (The HND/C awards will also be removed once the final students have completed.)

No change is proposed to the Access Diploma, which, although longer than the norm in England, has proven successful and its 120-point standard is in keeping with the QUB model. The option of developing 60-point Access Certificates was not supported in partner institutions when provided in the early part of the decade, with preference for exemptions from the early part of the Access Diploma.

2.2 Module Size

The Framework currently states that taught modules in award-bearing courses *normally* use any of the following sizes: 10, 15, 20, and 30 credit points. The undergraduate project/dissertation may have a value of 20, 30 or 40 points. (The postgraduate dissertation, if there is one, is usually 60 credit points.) Exceptions are proposed to TLC by the Faculty and requests for 40, 45, 90 and 120 point modules have been approved in the last two years. (Short courses may have a size of 5 credit points and this size is also explicitly permitted for the Certificate of Personal and Professional Development.)

The current Framework reminds Faculties intending to introduce 15 and 30 point modules in undergraduate programmes to ensure that this does not impede the modular framework and the necessary matching by students with other subjects.

It is not proposed to extend the use of 5 point modules. However **it is proposed** that any multiple of 5 credit points be permitted, with a minimum module size (outside short courses and the CPPD) of 10 credit points (100 notional hours of student effort). Course/subject teams, external examiners, evaluation and revalidation panels have the academic and professional capability to consider the suitability of module size within the integrity of the programme's curriculum design and structure, and its impact on student choice and workload. Course teams should be mindful that with large modules the opportunity for condonement to be applied may be reduced.

Currently in full-time undergraduate courses, the number of 10 point modules is normally restricted to two per semester (with a special case for more allowed to TLC). **It is proposed** to remove the restriction. No special case need be made in future.

There is currently no restriction on the use of "long-thin" modules. It is suggested that Faculties and course/subject teams take greater account of this opportunity in developing the curriculum.

2.3 Semesters and Study Load

The University has used semesters since 1992 (and they were in place at the New University of Ulster). Senate received guidelines on first year teaching in November 2007 and noted that the use of semesters and the consequent lack of contact with students in January might be a constraint.

It is not proposed to revert to a term-based organisation of the academic year as some institutions have recently decided. It is considered that the availability of long-thin delivery and wider recognition of the fact that the semester is of 15 weeks duration rather than 12, and that the 3 week examination period may be used for course delivery, will allow course teams and students to make full use of the time available – particularly if formal examinations are not part of semester 1 assessments or the assessment is completed in week 1 of the examination period.

The University currently prescribes the maximum study loads for full and part-time students, based on the national norm of one credit point notionally equating to 10 hours of effort (inclusive of class attendance, directed study, reading and assessment and revision). This notionally equates to c. 40 hours of effort per week. It is however well recognised that, as self-directed learners, students' pace of study outside the timetabled curriculum will vary according to their own abilities, engagement, learning styles, assessment deadlines and external pressures. The University does not attempt to regulate this nor does it propose to.

The review has however noted that the University prescribes study loads for each semester as follows.

Study load	Full time (notional hours per week)	Part time maximum (notional hours per week)
Semester 1	60 (40)	45 (30)
Semester 2	60 (40)	45 (30)
Intensive summer semester	40 (50)	20 (25)
Normal summer semester	60 (40)	45 (30)

For full-time students, this was intended to ensure a balanced workload through the year and to guard against excessive study requirements affecting students' ability to cope with the demands of the course. The total full-time loads of 120 credit points in the 30-week academic year and 180 in a calendar year accord with national norms.

Part-time study is more flexible with course teams determining through regulations the requirements (subject to the prescribed maximum and the expectation of some study each semester) and whether they are fixed or students are able to pace themselves.

It is important to remember that the distinction between full-time and part-time remains real for University funding and student support purposes. Consequently, it is not proposed that full-time students should be allowed to study part-time while retaining the full-time designation or vice versa.

The review noted that in practice some teams have provided flexibility by exceptionally permitting full-time students to take an additional module in a semester. While this arrangement may put additional demands on the student, approval was given to accommodate a student request. It has therefore been suggested that the semester basis of the limit should be removed. In practice, the University recognises an academic year structure through its formal student progression process (except in BSc Hons Nursing and Nursing Sciences for which regulations have been amended to allow the Faculty to finalise results and determine progress each semester). **It is proposed** that the study loads be expressed for the 30-week academic year, the calendar year and for the intensive summer semester, as follows.

(Normal) study load	Full time (notional hours per week)	Part time maximum (notional hours per week)
Academic year (30 weeks)	120 (40)	90 (30)
Calendar year (48 weeks)	180 (40)	120 (30)
Intensive summer semester	40 (50)	20 (25)

Where appropriate course teams continue to be able to extend the academic year to meet additional study requirements, which may involve recognition through additional credit.

A consequence of the new flexibility proposed may be that more full-time students, in fulfilling the 120 credit requirements for a year, will wish to take a heavier load in one semester than in the other in response to the restricted availability of optional modules. If Faculties support such choices, it is considered that this decision should be driven by a desire to facilitate flexibility in student learning and not by staff convenience. Course teams should take care to ensure that a balanced study load is offered and that student choice is not unduly constrained with options only available in a particular semester if there is sufficient demand to deliver in both semesters.

In addition, the Committee may determine that it wishes to allow course/subject teams to design full-time programmes with an imbalanced study load for academic reasons related to the particular teaching and learning strategy, or because of uneven module sizes, for example to allow 70 credits in one semester and 50 in the next. If so, the **Committee should decide** whether, as well as fulfilment of the total requirement, any minimum requirement is set for each semester for a student enrolled for a full year's study – say at least 30 or 40 credit points. (The Committee should avoid permitting within a course structure all or nearly all modules for the year to be completed in one semester as this would seem considerably outside the convention.)

It is not proposed to increase the full-time study limit for the year or the eight-week intensive summer semester. Firstly, it may be viewed as unreasonable to require students to work for hours that exceed the European Working Time Directive (a limit of an average of 48 hours per week). Secondly, the University would obtain no additional block grant. Notwithstanding, the University has approved a course structure at its partner institution in Switzerland, HTMi, for the BSc Hons Hotel and Tourism Management which requires students to undertake the 120 credit points of the final year of an Honours degree in 20 weeks – notionally 60 hours per week. Given that this intensive workload is considered

feasible for full-time non-native speakers who have not had the benefit of prior study at the University and that students follow a curriculum identical to that offered at the University over 30 weeks, there is no academic reason to withhold such an opportunity from our own students. Indeed the completion of a full degree in 60 weeks (say one and a half years) might prove an attractive option to students. **It is therefore proposed** that the year limits above are deemed “normal” requirements, and that proposed departures *which are to be applied to whole cohorts* are considered by TLC which will wish to be assured that adequate student support arrangements are in place to support a high quality student learning experience. A formal evaluation may be required.

(The Committee may wish to note that two-year Honours degrees using the full calendar year are back on the agenda in England with nine “pathfinder” projects involving at least 22 such degrees being funded by HEFCE through its Strategic Development Fund which aims to support flexible learning. The University initiated one full-time accelerated degree in the 1990s as part of its new semester arrangements. That degree is no longer offered. Faculties may once again wish to consider the opportunities available from the use of the whole calendar year.)

In addition, course teams may wish to facilitate *individual students* who seek to take additional modules above the normal maximum load. This may be as a consequence of transfer from part-time to full-time mode and the desire to complete all studies for the level in a year, or a desire to change course but not take longer to complete (see 2.5 para 4 below). If the Committee supports this possibility, **it is proposed** that this decision should be at the discretion of the relevant course/subject committee(s), taking account of prerequisite requirements, timetable constraints and the ability of the particular student. Faculties should note that at present there is no additional block grant (nor fee income) for students taking additional modules in their courses within an academic year, as funding is not based on credit points. Students should be aware that they have made an informed choice and that the heavy study load cannot be claimed as an extenuating circumstance.

Module Teaching Patterns

Teaching patterns and the balance between lectures, seminars, tutorials, project, laboratory and fieldwork, etc are not regulated. The University offers no guidelines on specific contact or how this should be arranged. Arrangements for specific course delivery are described in course documentation and validated through approval processes. There is, however, a common pattern of weekly lectures and seminars, varying according to subject convention. The Senate discussion on teaching guidelines noted, inter alia, the need to have structures in place that would permit front-loading of contact time to ease the transition from school. There is no regulatory impediment to such arrangements in course delivery. It will obviously require close liaison with the Department of Physical Resources to ensure availability of the appropriate accommodation.

2.4 On-line Modules

The current framework requires a special case to TLC for fully on-line modules at levels 2 and 3 in **full-time** campus-based courses. No fully on-line modules are permitted in Year 1 of full-time undergraduate campus-based courses. This rule reflected a sensible caution at the time of early development of on-line courses, a concern that students would not be adequately prepared for the requirements of a different style of delivery in a module or modules which were contributing to a final result, the importance of social interaction and cohesion within the overall year 1 induction processes, which help improve retention, and the general expectation that campus-based courses include staff contact. To date only one fully on-line module at level 3 has been proposed but it emerged that this module was in fact a blended web-dependent module.

It is now proposed that special cases to TLC be no longer required. The validation processes address the appropriateness of such delivery within the overall curriculum. **It is also proposed** that the restriction in Year 1 be reduced to semester 1 only.

Incidentally, the Senior Management Group has recently streamlined the planning approval process for on-line courses, by removing the additional requirement of approval of a business case by SMG. It is now sufficient for the Institute of Lifelong Learning to sign off a Resource Agreement with the Faculty and append it to the CA1/3 form considered by Academic Planning Sub-Committee.

2.5 Modular Framework for Undergraduate Honours Provision leading to Combined Awards (Major/Minor; Main/Main; Three Minors)

This framework prescribes the proportion of study at levels 2 and 3 in each subject by requiring modules amounting to 80 credit points at each level for a Major, 60 for a Main and 40 for a Minor. This model was developed at a time when the standard module size was 20 credit points and a simple rule was useful in initiating the scheme. No limits were set at level 1 but most subjects (with the exception of those in the Faculty of Arts) followed the Level 2/3 rule. It has been noted that Psychology as a subject is constrained in the provision of a professionally recognised Major curriculum by its need to offer 5 level 2 20-point modules.

Options include a) to allow students to take an additional module in the relevant semester (see also 2.3 above); b) to provide an additional module during the summer semester; c) exceptionally to permit the substitution of one Level 2 Minor module (ie to allow subject areas to request variation to the rule through TLC); d) to revise the framework so that the proportions above need only be met in the totality of the programme taken at levels 2 and 3 – $\frac{2}{3}$ of 240 credit points (or in the full 360?) for a Major; $\frac{1}{2}$ for a Main; $\frac{1}{3}$ for a Minor; e) to revise the framework to specify a minimum $\frac{1}{4}$ for the Minor subject (60 credits at levels 2 and 3 overall) - this would still meet QAA guidance in the national Qualifications Framework; f) to add “normally” to the rule and to allow faculties to determine additional requirements for a subject – but subject to confirmation by other subjects and the campus coordinating group of a reduced requirement for specified minors.

Greater flexibility may of course have implications for the integrity of subject strands and their internal coherence and progression, as well as needing closer management of student choice to ensure that the requirements for the award are met. There is also an issue around naming a subject in the award title, if it does not feature to a certain proportion at the final level. Options d) and e) could conceivably require no or only one module in the Minor subject at the final level.

The Senate paper (S/08/04 January 2008) on student non-continuation and progression noted that Faculties asked for more flexibility (or deregulation) to enable students to change course [without a requirement to extend their total study period] and also noted the benefits of greater commonality in first year in this regard. Of course this request needs to be balanced against the proposals, also highlighted in the paper, to improve information to prospective applicants in order to ensure that students are fully aware of the expectations of their chosen course and enhanced induction and other measures to improve commitment and performance in first year. (Regulations do not prevent transfer to another course at the end of year one. The decision as to whether the first year curriculum in one degree provides adequate foundation for progression to another lies with the relevant course committee, taking account of whether the course designates specific modules as prerequisites or is content with completion of a first year, and it is probably only in related subject areas that this is feasible. As well as additional study load, as suggested in 2.3, the summer semester or second year options may allow suitable bridging to be provided or deficiencies to be made up.)

It is suggested that these matters around the modular framework might be referred to the Campus Coordinating Groups for consideration and recommendation in light of their experience. The Committee may also wish to encourage Faculties to consider the content and structure of first year curricula in integrated Single Honours degrees and the possibility for greater commonality so that students may change course without additional study requirements. Faculties might also wish to consider whether introducing an expectation of one or two elective modules outside the subject would assist students in changing course without undue delay.

3 COURSE REGULATIONS

The University has generic regulations for each of its awards. These ensure threshold standards and equity for all students studying for the same award, with common entry qualifications, pass marks, performance levels related to generic assessment criteria, rules on progression, failure and condonement, and final award. These rules are not seen as impediments to creativity in programme design, although it is evident that some course teams are not content with some aspects and would prefer latitude to regulate student progress and award without reference to a University standard. It may be thought that relaxation would reflect the spirit of flexibility which the Teaching and Learning Strategy expects of course teams. A small number of external examiners comment on lack of flexibility in regulations each year. Currently Faculties have discretion to specify particular subjects in their course entry requirements and a higher than minimum English standard for non-native speakers; to identify modules which cannot be condoned; and in specific failure circumstances to determine whether a student repeats a year or withdraws from a course. Faculties may propose a Level 2 contribution to the final classification if a professional body requires it. In considering the rules the Committee may wish to take account of national practice, and with regard to failure, condonement and classification consider holistically the impact of the regulations.

3.1 Entry

There are no proposals to change the general entry requirements for each award nor the rules on APL. These reflect national norms. While our previous APL rule allowing exemption from all but the final third of a course was at the generous end of national practice, the recent reduction to 50% for courses of 120 or fewer credit points brings our arrangements closer to the norm.

3.2 Assessment

This section deals with the regulated aspect of assessment. There are other aspects around assessment practice where there is scope for innovation and creativity. The Assessment Handbook discusses a range of methods. The work of the Higher Education Academy, the Centres of Excellence, and the University's Forum for Innovation in Teaching and Learning Support is relevant to those seeking to develop their approaches further.

3.2.1 Pass marks

There is no proposal to change the standard pass marks of 40% and 50% in undergraduate and postgraduate awards respectively. The Committee may wish to review the 50% standard required for the award of the undergraduate, associated DIS, DPP and DAS awards. The placement/intercalary year is passed at 40% and students progress to the final year, but unlike in other undergraduate awards this standard is insufficient for the award.

3.2.2 Percentage marks

The use of percentage marks is the widespread convention in the University and percentages are used for the purposes of defining classification bands for awards.

Assessment on a pass/fail basis (or the use of grades rather than percentage marks) is not precluded and sometimes modules or assessment components (particularly competence-based or placement modules) are so graded. However such assessment does not allow for classification and two courses which do not use marks make no provision for Distinction awards – PGCE and PgCert in Higher Education Practice. Course teams may wish to increase the use of such assessment schemes, but may need to consider the nature of the qualitative feedback given in the absence of a mark or grade.

3.2.3 Assessment criteria

There is no proposal to rescind the generic assessment criteria developed for each level by percentage mark bands, as they have been thought to be useful tools that contribute to consistency in assessment standards. Faculties and subjects remain free to develop their own subject-specific criteria, provided that they are compatible with the University's generic guidance.

The Regulations for Honours degrees, non-honours degrees, foundation and associate bachelor degrees include a rule which expects modules amounting to 60 credit points at level A/1 *normally* to be assessed by a combination of coursework and examination. Cases for variation are put to the Teaching and Learning Committee by Faculties. Only one case has been turned down in the last five years. This principle has only been promulgated for the first year, and there is no University requirement to use examinations as a form of assessment elsewhere. **It is proposed** to rescind the rule, although in the past the Committee has been unwilling to do so. Without it, course/subject teams would still be able to use examinations in the first and other years in accordance with the assessment strategy for the course. Its existence obliges teams to articulate a rationale for not using examinations in half or more of the first year.

3.3 Undergraduate Dissertation

Normally a dissertation/project is expected in the final level of an Honours degree. A sustained piece of individual work has been seen as a defining characteristic of an undergraduate degree and is a useful introduction to the likely demands of postgraduate or research studies. Faculties, which do not wish to provide a compulsory dissertation, are required to make a case to the Teaching and Learning Committee, setting out how the expectations of the dissertation are met elsewhere in the course. Most undergraduate degrees in the Faculty of Business and Management no longer contain a compulsory dissertation. **It is proposed** that the requirement for special approval of departures be removed. The responsibility for judging the appropriateness of the course structure and content and the range of teaching and assessment methods will lie solely with the validation panel. **The Committee is also asked** to determine whether the University's regulatory framework should continue to suggest that a substantial report on a major project is a common expectation in an undergraduate degree.

3.4 Master's Dissertation

It should be noted that the University has no requirement for a (60 point) dissertation in a Master's degree, although it features in the majority of courses. Some courses have used alternatives such as a journal-style article; and in others additional taught modules are offered.

The University has detailed rules for the form of presentation of final bound copies of Master's dissertations, as regulations require this work to be deposited in the Library for public access. The Committee and its predecessor have been asked on a number of occasions to review the requirement for such deposit, taking account of the costs to candidates for professional finish and binding, the additional constraint this puts on the timetable for initial hand-in, marking and feedback (clearly it is important for a public

document to address typographical and other errors before deposit), the requirements on Course Directors to monitor hand-in as students are not able to graduate unless the University has received a final copy, the questionable benefit to public knowledge of such a large stock of dissertations (in particular as readers will not know their quality initially). If the purpose of deposit is simply to give current students access to exemplars or examples of different quality, there should be a simpler way to achieve this.

It is proposed that the Committee considers rescinding the requirement for bound copies for deposit in the Library. This would reduce expense for candidates, increase the time for completion of work by candidates and/or marking by staff, obviate a need for corrections after assessment and reduce bureaucratic load on course directors, and relieve some pressure on Library staff and space. **The Committee may prefer** to defer taking a decision until progress on the electronic submission and access project is reported (min 08.38 refers). Such deposit will reduce expense, and save space, if the paper copy is dispensed with, but it will not address the question of the value of publishing all dissertations in this way. Course directors might identify outstanding work which merits deposit for public access. Such material is likely also to be suitable for publication by other means.

3.5 Failure

The following are the key aspects of the rules for dealing with failure (except pre-Registration Nursing which has been allowed its own rules based on performance in each semester).

3.5.1 Progression

Progression from the first semester to the second is automatic, regardless of failure (including prerequisites). All students are permitted to carry fails to the value of 20 credit points into the following year of study, provided the module(s) in question are not prerequisites which must be passed.

3.5.2 Repeat attempts

Except where certain professional/statutory bodies have required stricter rules, two resit attempts are permitted in pre-final years of courses of more than 180 credit points (although not in year 1 of a 240 point Master's degree as it is a postgraduate course). In courses comprising 180 credit points or less, or in the final year of a longer course (Fd, AB, (Hons) degree), only one resit is permitted (with the exception of year 1 of Access diplomas where a third attempt is allowed). However, students who fail more than 80 points in any year prior to final year are required to withdraw without resit opportunity (or more than 40 points in final year or at second attempt).

The University does not allow students who have been discontinued as a consequence of failure to apply to re-enter the course immediately including in a different mode, as the latter would subvert the regulation and it would be simpler to permit a further resit within regulations. The Academic Registrars Council (ARC) recently conducted two mail-base surveys (June 2006 and November 2007) of re-assessment practice. Of 56 institutions, only eight permit three resits; 21 allow two (although sometimes with restrictions eg final resit "discretionary" or only one further attempt allowed in postgraduate courses – a stricter approach in postgraduate courses is common), and 27 allow one attempt only. (Interestingly one institution, Worcester, which had moved to three attempts from two, abolished condonement at that time.)

The University would appear to be consistent with national practice but at the more generous end of the continuum. This generosity is to some extent compensated by its more severe treatment of students who have failed (without evidence of extenuating circumstances) more than three-quarters of the year ie 85 - 120 credit points. It is a moot point whether such students should be entitled to return to repeat the year.

3.5.3 Failure in placement year

Students who fail the assessment for the DIS/DPP/DAS year (after two or three attempts) are not permitted to proceed to the final year and are discontinued. On occasion course directors have sought to allow such students to progress - for those courses where the year in question is not a compulsory part of the course ie participation in placement is optional. The regulations do not permit this as progression is not a stated consequence of failure in the year. Such students are able to apply to the course after a year and may be admitted to final year at that time if the course committee so allows. **The Committee is asked** to consider whether it wishes to disregard failure in placement, although this would seem to be at odds with the University's commitment to employability.

3.5.4 Capped marks

If a student is required to retake an assessment, University regulations cap the mark recorded for the repeated assessment component at the pass mark for the award. In a June 2007 ARC survey which elicited 32 replies, 20 institutions cap the mark for the module, 10 for the element (coursework or examination) and one for both. The other institution confirms credit but the original fail mark stands for subsequent calculations. No change is proposed.

3.5.5 Distinction between coursework and examination

In University regulations coursework and examinations are regarded as distinct assessment elements. Where modules use both an examination and one or more pieces of coursework, students must pass (subject to condonement) both elements to pass the module overall. The marks system records a mark for the examination and an (aggregate) mark for the coursework. If there are more than one pieces of coursework, the course team may specify that a particular (or all) components must be passed (rather than following the convention that an aggregate pass compensates for failure within the coursework element). While there is an administrative need to distinguish between coursework and examination for the central organisation of written examinations, is there a pedagogic distinction which warrants a requirement to pass in both elements? This would presumably relate to the summative nature of an end-of-semester examination (unlike the in-session class test which may have a formative role). These may be matters of course assessment strategy rather than general principle. **The Committee may wish to propose** instead of the current regulation that, as a general rule for modules which use examinations, an overall pass in the module is sufficient and that there is therefore automatic compensation between these two assessment elements, in the same way that this generally occurs between coursework components. **Alternatively it may propose** not to have any general rule but to require this matter to be explicated in the assessment strategy for the module (and summarised in the course regulations). See also discussion on condonement below, at 3.5.5 option e).

3.5.6 Condonement

Condonement allows students who have marginally failed assessment to proceed without a requirement to repeat the failed assessment. (Academic judgement used to award a mark within the condonable range must take the view that the student has the ability to perform at the threshold, but the marginal nature of the fail is sufficient not to require the pass standard to be demonstrated.) There are restrictions on the use of condonement: it is not applicable to "core" modules (including the dissertation) nor in other modules or assessment components as specified in course regulations; it may only be applied if the mark is within the condonable range, to 5% below the pass mark; it is limited to a maximum of one-third of the modules studied in the year (one-sixth in final year and one-quarter in postgraduate courses); and a "compensatory" average mark of 5% above the pass level must be achieved – in the module or the year. The rules may be perceived as overly bureaucratic as a number of factors have to be considered in order to apply them. A simpler approach would free up time that is taken up at preliminary and final Boards of Examiners.

Condonement practices do not sit comfortably with an outcomes-based model of the curriculum, and the failed mark is recorded on the student transcript (and used if applicable in calculating final award classification), so its application may not necessarily be in the student's best interests. **One option** would be to do away with condonement altogether – all failures would be required to be repeated and the additional learning experience of the assessment would hopefully stand the student in good stead in subsequent studies. Nevertheless it is a long-standing practice which academic staff seem unwilling to relinquish. **Other options** which may be considered include: a) no change; b) extending the mark band for condonement by 5% (if adopted staff need to adjust their assessment practice to ensure that marks of 30 - 34% at undergraduate levels are not used for outright fails); c) abandoning the requirement for merit elsewhere; d) increasing the proportion of an award which may be achieved through condoned failure; e) removing the coursework/examination barrier so that it is no longer necessary to reach the condonable level in each element - it would be sufficient to pass overall.

3.6 Classification

The University has two key rules in regard to Honours classification.

The first expects that classification is based entirely on performance in Level 3, although level 2 contributions are permitted if a professional body so requires or an intercalary year counts. No course has availed of the latter option but over 20 courses have a level 2 contribution. Course teams remain divided on the merits of level 2 contribution. Some suggest that it is an important motivational factor and a common convention elsewhere in their subject. Others prefer to rely on the final level only, particularly for those courses which recognise a significant improvement in student performance after a placement year. Courses which allow direct entry to final year may be concerned about using the marks achieved in another institution.

The second rule, which also applies for the classification of non-honours courses (Commendation/Distinction), requires candidates to demonstrate both breadth and depth in achievement, by performing at the requisite level in their overall average and at least half the course which contributes to the final award (60 credits at level 3 in Honours degree; 90 credits for Master's Distinction). Occasionally students fall short on one or other count.

A scoping survey (35 institutions) undertaken for the Burgess review in 2006 revealed that the minority of responding institutions relied solely on final level for classification and the majority permitted course teams to use level 2 contributions if they wished. Most of the small sample had a general rule for determining that proportion – ranging from 50% level 2 to 25%. In regard to the methodology 17 institutions based the class on the sum or average marks (aggregate), four on a profile (eg at least three modules in the band), 11 used a combination (as Ulster); and three allowed either an aggregate or profile scheme to be adopted, with one allowing either aggregate, profile or a combination to be followed. Some institutions allowed the possibility of discounting performance in one or more modules (usually lowest mark) in the calculation.

The Burgess Review report, Beyond the Honours Classification, October 2007, having taken account of the variability of practices across the autonomous institutions that make up the sector, concluded that the Honours degree classification system is not fit for purpose, inter alia, in its reliance on a single summative judgement at a time when about 60% of the national cohort achieves 2i or better. It wished to see greater use made of the student's full profile in making judgements about their achievements and potential.

The University's rules have the merit of whole-institution consistency and clarity, in contrast to others' practices. The Burgess Steering Group "fully accepts that variations will, and do, occur in any large and complex system. Our research indicates, however, that in some cases the rationale for the differing approaches to regulations for classification have become

obscure. In addition, in some institutions the regulations relating to assessment and classification are difficult to interpret or written in such a way that they appear to rely on tacit knowledge for interpretation. Variation in regulatory matters, in addition to having a direct or indirect impact on class of degree, also raises fundamental questions about what the honours degree classification is intended to represent. For example, does it show whether the class of degree is intended to indicate the student's 'best' performance or some conception of 'average' performance?" (para 40)

The Committee may wish to develop a different basis for classification. It may prefer all courses to have a year 2 contribution or leave this to the course team to determine (with or without reference to the Committee); it may wish to classify on the basis only either of the average or achievement in a specified proportion of modules. If the Committee favours a level 2 contribution, it should decide whether it wishes to propose an appropriate general contribution, say 20, 25, 30 or 40% or some other rule such as may have previously operated. It may wish to have final results calculated by both rules (with year 2 or without) and then apply whichever gives the individual student the higher overall mark. Such variation may contribute to error, inconsistency and appeal.

The Committee will also need to consider how imported level 2 marks are used for calculating the final classification for students admitted to final year directly. This is not currently an issue as the majority of articulations follow a 2 + 2 model, although this is now changing in favour of 2 +1. Such arrangements have close supervision from faculties with mapping of content and clear understanding of assessment conventions. The same principle should apply for individual students admitted with advanced standing in accordance with University APL policy and procedures. It should therefore generally be possible to carry forward results, and to scale these to UK standards if necessary, to ensure that all students in a particular cohort are awarded degrees on the same basis.

Discretionary bands

When the University reviewed regulations in the 1990s, it did away with the convention which operated in some subjects of applying discretion to students whose results were outside the mark band so that they might be awarded a higher class than their marks would indicate. There had been notional discretionary bands from 2% below the class level for such consideration. A number of factors contributed to the abandonment of such practice, principally the full disclosure of marks (driven by the Data Protection Act), their publication in student transcripts and the detailing of rules for classification in the course regulations provided to students. The inappropriateness of explicit discretionary bands was reinforced by the adoption of clear generic assessment criteria, which brought with them the expectation that a student's class is reflected in the marks which make up the result. The rounding convention (for results at n9.5 – n9.9) already carries some candidates into the next band. While the results of all borderline students are subject to specific review by Boards of Examiners, and candidates may be viva-ed by the external examiner, some course teams may be reluctant to make adjustments to individual module marks to ensure that the overall result does fall within the requisite band, even though the viva assessment of a candidate would provide the evidence to allow the additional marks to be assigned, and this expectation may therefore be considered by some to be unnecessary bureaucracy. The scoping survey (35 institutions) undertaken for the Burgess review revealed that seven of the institutions made no provision for borderlines (without mark adjustment). It did not indicate whether those which had discretionary bands required adjustment to marks for the final award.

The Committee may wish to consider revising the University's regulations to allow a board the power to add marks without assigning them to particular modules or explicitly to allow the award of a higher class without allocation of additional marks and in this case to develop the explanatory guidance which will ensure equity and rigour. It is not proposed to extend the class bands by 1 or 2% downwards.

4 UNIVERSITY CODES OF PRACTICE etc

The University has a host of other rules, codes and similar guidance relating to academic practice. It is beyond the scope of this paper to highlight them all. These range from the timetable for the submission of examination papers to the encouragement of the use of anonymous marking for coursework where feasible, to the role of external examiners, to guidance on sample sizes for internal moderation of assessment, and policy for dealing with plagiarism offences. While they have been drawn up to enhance practice or standards, members may be aware of specific rules which impede curriculum innovation and creativity.

One topic raised as part of the departmental consultation is Entrepreneurship. It remains University policy “to embed a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in every student and throughout every programme“. Entrepreneurship is defined as being about “managing change within social systems that adds value in some way to those living and/or working within them. It is not solely about commercial business development or new business start-ups“. Entrepreneurship training is delivered to all students, including postgraduate students. The University requires this to be done through the course curriculum’s fulfilment of generic outcomes (although for subjects outside the Office of Science and Technology constituency not all outcomes have to be embedded) or through the incorporation of special modules at level 2 or M. (Minor subject strands are not required to include entrepreneurship as students receive exposure in their matching major strand.)

It has been reported that the University’s requirements are difficult to incorporate within specialist postgraduate courses of limited duration. The Committee may wish to review the University’s policy.

5 EVALUATION AND REVALIDATION PROCESSES

The evaluation and revalidation processes provide the means for the University to assure the standards of its provision and that it meets both internal and external benchmarks (including the regulatory framework above).

Our procedures conform to the relevant section of the QAA Code of Practice and have stood the University in good stead in QAA Institutional Audit and other investigations. The 2005 Audit confirmed that they were “appropriate and rigorous“. “It was also evident that CASC maintained a comprehensive overview of developments, and gave attention to matters of process and timing to further strengthen arrangements for quality management.“ They have proved suitable for joint validation and accreditation events with PSRBs.

The University has for some years operated a streamlined “light-touch“ approval process for derivative courses or subject strands. For a new course which uses existing modules – or has a small proportion of new modules – approval is simply a paper-based process relying on confirmation from an external expert that the curriculum matches the programme’s learning outcomes, has appropriate integration and coherence and fulfils the relevant standards. As with other provision such courses are subject to thorough University-level scrutiny at revalidation. The opportunity to include new substantive courses within revalidation units, which was quite common in the early period of revalidation, has however now been restricted. Too often neither existing nor new provision received adequate scrutiny in a crowded agenda. (Inclusion of such provision is now only permitted exceptionally, usually when a CA1 has been submitted too late to allow a separate event to be organised.) Similarly Faculties have been discouraged from proposing large subject units for single-day revalidations as they have proven impracticable and insufficient for in-depth scrutiny.

Revalidation runs to a five-yearly cycle. Such time periods for detailed review are common in the sector and it is not proposed to lengthen them. The schedule is fixed in advance and known to all staff, which should ensure that course teams and faculties are able to manage

adequately their preparations, including the opportunity for major curriculum review. A reminder is issued in the year preceding the event.

The processes should not impede creativity in curriculum design, but there is some concern that the current expectations may be seen as so daunting as to deter staff from undertaking a radical review of the curriculum, particularly at revalidation, as it may be considered safer – or easier - to follow a “tried and tested” model.

The validation process has often been seen as a mechanism for checking that new University-wide initiatives are being met. This has contributed to a growth in documentary requirements, to the extent that the focus of attention has on occasion moved away from the curriculum and its delivery, a problem compounded in large units which cover a number of courses. The key purposes are to confirm that standards are appropriate for the award in question and that resources will be or remain suitable for successful delivery. The current review has allowed consideration of how arrangements may be slimmed down to ensure that their primary function is met, and that the processes can continue to be managed efficiently, that duplication of activity is avoided and that core information needs for other University purposes continue to be met through source documents (eg information for course handbooks, (online) prospectus, module database and course record).

This review does not take account of internal Faculty processes, which may act as impediments to creativity. Faculties are encouraged in the light of ongoing development of University procedures to consider their own. Faculties may also wish to consider the support provided to course/subject teams in preparation for events and the advantages of sharing responsibilities among the whole team, which is a matter often raised.

The focus of evaluation and revalidation should then be on the curriculum - modules and content and delivery (including resources) measured against relevant benchmarks. The following sections consider three aspects: the timeframe for planning approval, the validation meeting and the documentation required of teams and the supplementary material provided to panels and teams.

5.1 Timescale for Planning Approval

The feedback on the draft Teaching and Learning Strategy included shortening the timeline for introducing innovations in the curriculum. For innovation through a new course, Faculties are encouraged to submit an outline CA1 proposal to Academic Planning Sub-Committee at least 15 months before it is proposed to commence. This is simply to ensure that a Faculty does not waste its resources developing a proposal that does not have University planning approval, and to ensure that central departments - Information Services, Student Marketing, Lifelong Learning, Planning, Academic Office - know to support the initiative and can manage their resources effectively and efficiently to this end. This timeframe is particularly important for full-time undergraduate courses where maximum impact is achieved by ensuing publicity and course evaluation before potential candidates have made other choices. This is not unreasonable as it allows other arrangements to proceed in a timely fashion in tandem with detailed curriculum planning and development, rather than as an urgent response to poor organisation. Such a managed approach allows central departments to respond promptly and flexibly to initiatives of genuine strategic value which emerge late in response to limited opportunity, but on an exceptional basis. Regardless of the recommended deadline within the process, **no** initiative has been held back if Academic Planning Sub-Committee has supported it. CA1 proposals have been endorsed as late as four months before the intended start date and events conducted two months before, even though offers of admission could only be provisional until conditions of approval were met and there is a risk that approval will therefore not be granted in time. Such additional events have diverted central resource from other commitments with the consequent impact on confirmation of approvals and level of service. It is disappointing to note the proportion of late proposals which are subsequently postponed by the Faculty or fail to recruit to target.

Faculties are encouraged to ensure that they seek planning approval at the earliest opportunity and not late on in their internal planning and development of the proposal. Nevertheless it is expected that APSC will continue to be responsive to strategic priorities in considering late proposals. Faculties may wish to remind course teams that the system can cope with late proposals of merit. They may wish to review their own internal approval arrangements to ensure that, while having due regard to standards and quality, they can respond with alacrity to initiatives which are creative and innovative. APSC meets five times a year to receive proposals.

5.2 Meeting

Fundamentally validation is a peer review process involving dialogue between the providers and an expert panel comprising internal University representatives and external subject specialists. It is not proposed to move from this principle, which is the standard model in the sector. The face-to-face meeting allows rapid clarification of queries, and provides first-hand evidence to support confidence in the capabilities of the team responsible for delivery, and allows physical review and confirmation of specialist resources (generally by the external members), which would not be achieved by a paper-based exercise.

There is currently no consideration of teaching in practice and there is no proposal to add this aspect of inspection, such as is undertaken in the school sector.

Membership of panel

The standard panel comprises a chair at PVC/(Associate) Dean/Head of School level; two internal members, drawn from a pool of nominees with interest and experience in course development and quality assurance, independent of the Faculty sponsoring the course(s); two external subject experts and optionally an employer representative. The QAA Audit report confirmed “the team was confident that strong and scrupulous use is made of independent external persons both at the point of initial approval and subsequent revalidation.” While internal members do not have subject knowledge, they are familiar with University expectations and practices elsewhere, give support to the chair in this regard, bring alternative perspectives from other faculties, can learn from the experience and contribute to the development of good practice in their own faculties. The use of two members also provides a safeguard as the absence of one has not been an infrequent occurrence. **It is however proposed** to reduce the internal representation to one member other than the chair. While this will narrow perspectives and increase the onus of responsibility on other members, it is expected that internal nominees will recognise their enhanced role and make a more significant contribution than when the representation is shared. It is to be hoped that nominees will not be deterred. There will be a greater risk of having no internal representation other than the chair as absence is generally at short notice, making substitution impracticable. The spread of the incidental benefit from involvement in the process will be reduced, although these staff will have more time to devote to other activities.

In order to assist panel members in their understanding of their roles, **it is proposed** that the CA7, preliminary comments form, be revised to remind members of their respective areas of expertise by specifically encouraging external members to comment on curriculum matters.

Programme of meeting

The review has noted that responsiveness to student opinion is a rising topic on the agenda of both QAA and HEFCE. The National Student Survey was introduced in 2005. While the recent QAA Audit had no issue with the totality of our processes in this regard, the audit report and QAA’s 2007 mid-cycle review noted that, with reference to the internal review of programmes, “the process does not normally include meetings with students [...]. There are no student representatives [on the panel]”. While neutral in tone, this perhaps signals an

item for future consideration (TLC min 07.194 refers). The QAA is proposing to add student representatives to Audit teams.

The revalidation process does not currently focus directly on student opinion. This was an intentional innovation at the time the new revalidation process was introduced in order to avoid duplication. At course level the Committee has approved means of consulting with and representing (full-time) students. Students are also represented on decision-making committees at Faculty and University levels. Action to respond in a timely fashion to course matters is monitored by Faculties through the annual subject monitoring process. Revalidation is a quinquennial process, which has to date simply noted processes for consulting students and obtaining views and any references to student concerns in the last ASM report.

It is not proposed to add student representatives to panels for practical reasons. However, **it is proposed** to add to the programme a meeting with a representative group of students (to include class representatives where this is the form of student consultation). This meeting will assist the panel in judging the effectiveness of the teaching and assessment methods, and will allow members to obtain views on curriculum development.

5.3 Documentation Requirements

As mentioned above there is concern that the documentation requirements are presenting too much of a burden to academic staff in developing their curriculum. A similar concern applies to panels in their reading requirements, with the danger that the focus of events is lost. Extraneous elements that have been added can be monitored in other ways.

It is proposed to have a much reduced single template for both evaluation and revalidation documents. The new template is attached at Appendix 2.

The following would be removed:

A1 Rationale (evaluation); Subject Overview (revalidation)

A2 Origins of the course; evidence of demand

A3 Relationship with other courses in the school/Faculty/subject (evaluation)

A3 Outcomes on internal/external reviews (revalidation)

These matters have already been scrutinised by APSC or the annual review of the academic plan. A1 - 3 are replaced by a brief Introduction in which Faculties may address some of these topics. The Introduction will also identify projected intakes for the next five years in order to assist panels in considering viability of options and resources. (They may also be covered orally in the introductory meeting between the panel and the senior Faculty team. It will be left to the Faculty to determine appropriate contextual information.)

B2 Commentary on Widening Participation

B2 Commentary on Relations with Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

C1 Equality of Opportunity and Admissions Policy (*A link to the University's "staff guidance on developing competence standards and audit tool" will however be added to assist staff in reviewing their teaching methods.*)

C2 Course/Subject Management

C3 Student Support and Guidance

C4 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Generic rather than course-subject statements have tended to be provided. It is pointless to reiterate University policy. Evidence of success in these areas will continue to be monitored through annual monitoring, student surveys and other institutional audits as appropriate.

The following, as relating to the core business of the process, would be retained:

B1 Programme Specification(s) *No change is proposed to the template for a programme specification (see also 6 below).*

B2 Commentary on recent and proposed changes (revalidation)

B2 Commentary on academic progression, coherence and choice within programme to *include structure diagram*

B2 Commentary on transfer and further study

B2 Commentary on work-based learning and placement

B2 Commentary on teaching, learning and assessment strategies

B2 Commentary on innovation and good practice *to be revised to Creativity, innovation and good practice*

B2 Commentary on standards

B2 Commentary on employability (in accordance with the topics set out in University policy: graduate qualities; widening participation; work-based learning; PDP; Entrepreneurship training; career opportunities, development and progression) *This topic is retained as a University priority within the Teaching and Learning Strategy.*

B3 Course Regulations

B4 Course Structure diagram *to be moved to B2*

B5 Module descriptions

It is proposed to change the template for module descriptions so that staff are no longer encouraged to identify in which particular assessment an identified learning outcome is assessed. Panels will assume that the course team will ensure that all outcomes are adequately assessed and that detailed assessment requirements are given to students.

C3 Student support and guidance. *In view of the proposal to meet with students it is proposed to retain a section on this topic – but it will be transferred to join the Commentary on teaching, learning and assessment above and should focus specifically on academic support and guidance in the course/subject.*

D1 Physical resources (specialist/course-related rather than University-wide)

D2 Staff resources and staff development

5.4 Contextual Information for Revalidation

A considerable amount of contextual information is provided to panels (and teams). **It is proposed** to remove all this except subject benchmark (and relevant PSRB) standards and external examiners' reports from the last two years, as they address standards and assessment matters.

The following would be removed:

- Unistats datasets (public information on admissions, progression, and career destinations).

- Results from the National Student Surveys (publicly available). *This information is not reported to course/revalidation unit level and therefore is often not directly matched to the course(s) being considered. It is readily accessible to panel members from internet sources and to course teams (along with other internal and external analyses).*
- The extracts from the Faculty's Annual Subject Monitoring Report and from the report of the University sub-group. *These have been found to be too general to add to the process except to provide reassurance of the Faculty monitoring processes.*
- The last QAA subject assessment and PSRB reports (unless the latter is requested for a joint event). *QAA reports are now considerably out of date. PSRB reports are often five years' old; conditions of approval and annual reporting ensure that issues have already been addressed.*

5.5 Comments

Comments from panel members (CA7) will continue to be circulated to other panel members and to the course/subject team in advance of the meeting. In addition the assessments of the adequacy of library and IT Services and the undertakings for future resourcing in these areas provided by the Information Services Department will continued to be provided.

It is proposed that the Academic Office's notes are no longer circulated to internal and external panel members. They will be provided only to the Chair of the meeting in advance and to the Faculty on the day of the meeting. Rather than highlighting key aspects and noting other matters in the sequential order of the document, the notes will be divided into two parts. The first part will deal with the key issues; for a new course they will also include relevant extracts from the CA1 form, in order to aid the briefing of the chair. The second part will identify minor (but important) standards and regulatory matters (such as inconsistency in module titles or levels). The points made in the second part will need to be addressed by the course team in their finalisation of documentation. (As at present the notes will not report the majority of spelling, grammatical or typographical errors which the Faculty is expected to address in its proofing of the definitive version.) While there is the possibility that internal and external panel members will spend time reporting on minor points, it is felt that this is preferable to the negative effect on the constructive intent of the validation process of publicly noting a large number of deficiencies.

The aide-memoire to guide panels and teams will be reduced to reflect these changes.

Timescale for submission

The timetable for submission of documentation fro distribution to panels is three weeks for a new course and four or six weeks for a revalidation event depending on complexity. If the reduction of documentation proposed above is accepted, **it is proposed** to use a three-week deadline for all single course events and to apply a four-week deadline for larger events.

5.6 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

Wherever possible the University aims to work closely with PSRBs through conjoint evaluation/revalidation and accreditation panels. Most bodies are content for the University to undertake the organisation and management of these events and the agenda and documentary requirements are adjusted to meet their specific requirements. Events may be co-chaired and private meetings may be accommodated. PSRBs generally respect the specific responsibilities of the University panel for the academic award, academic standards in the subject and the broad expectations of University education beyond professional training.

It is likely that PSRBs will require more information than the new internal streamlined model provides. However, they will probably welcome the meeting with students, which is a common feature of their engagements. The University will continue to accommodate their requirements.

5.7 Partner Institutions

Partner institutions should also benefit from the streamlined processes. However, it is considered that this can only be phased for each institution in relation to the completion of the institutional approval process. Until a college has been approved or re-approved at institutional level, sections C1 - 3 above will be retained.

6 COURSE REVISIONS

The course revision process is already streamlined with approval of most changes delegated to Faculties, but with standard provisos for consultation with external examiners and students. A CA3 form is used to notify central departments of changes so that relevant records and databases may be updated. Clarification may be sought on content. This is managed centrally with a single initial point of contact, which is thought to be more efficient than expecting course teams to contact the relevant offices individually. The Institute of Lifelong Learning requires its agreement to new or revised fully online modules.

A limited number of changes require approval at University level: APSC considers changes to location (different or additional campus or outcentre); mode of attendance or fully online introduction; other changes with substantial impact on resources, and changes of course title (marketability). CASC considers changes in title or aims/objectives.

The QAA audit noted that “the audit team concurred [...] that the programme revision procedure is effective in ensuring that changes are properly scrutinised before introduction, but that the deadline created some constraints on course teams”.

Timescale

The current main deadline set by Academic Registry is 31 March in the year preceding introduction. Changes mainly relate to the introduction of new modules, or revisions to course structure or content. Changes to coursework/examination weighting and content, if recommended by the external examiner, are accepted one month prior to the start of the semester. Proposals for new modules, arising from staff departure, new appointment or a request from an external organisation are accepted three months before the start of the semester. The discipline of the deadline has assisted the efficient management of the module database and timely provision of information to students. In practice late CA3s, including late changes to regulations, have not been blocked, as there is no longer the large volume of late changes which occurred in the early 1990s. It is not proposed that the deadlines for CA3 submission be changed (as any later deadline is likely to become the normal timetable), unless Academic Registry can confirm that it will be able to cope with a shorter timeframe. Some changes may not be able to be introduced in time if they miss the deadline for the relevant sub-committee or queries are not resolved. However, **it is proposed** that the implied immutability of the deadline be diluted by removing the adjective “final” from its description and the suggestion that later changes are “not normally” applied until the following year.

Assessment within module description

The module description advises staff that they should not be “too specific [in describing examples of assessment] since [they] may wish to vary the methods from time to time”. This advice will be strengthened by reminding staff that, as the module description contains exemplars of assessment, it is not necessary to submit a CA3 to change the actual

assessment used. A CA3 is only required where a substantial change to assessment strategy is made eg change to coursework/examination weighting, as this information is published through the module database. As mentioned in 5.3 above, module descriptions would no longer identify in which assessment component specific learning outcomes are assessed.

Programme specification

The programmes specification has a section (11) in which a grid links the learning outcomes to modules and a structure diagram which lists the modules. As the programme specification is expected to be published through the on-line prospectus, changes to module availability and course structure require this document to be updated. In view of the perceived limited value of the specification for prospective students, **it is proposed** that the full version be used for validation purposes only and that Faculties publish a reduced version, removing the tables in sections 11 and 12.

7 ANNUAL SUBJECT MONITORING

7.1 Overview

Section 7 of the QAA Code of Practice covers Programme Design, Approval, Monitoring and Review.

The section on monitoring and review includes the following statement: 'routine monitoring is an activity likely to be undertaken within the providing unit'. The Code distinguishes between routine monitoring which it comments 'will often be the responsibility of people who appraise their own performance' and which will involve the application of 'proportionality and risk analysis' and periodic review which is viewed as an institutional responsibility.

In considering the form of annual monitoring the University has sought to encourage a risk based approach at Faculty level, with the focus on those areas which, on the basis of the available evidence, appeared to require further review. The current process requires some limited reporting to the University but in practice quite elaborate Faculty-stage processes have evolved which have proved a significant burden and it has proved difficult to maintain a balance between effort and outcome.

The proposed method relocates the primary responsibility for the ongoing review of programmes and enhancement of the student learning experience to the academic staff delivering the programme: namely the course team. Rather than operating as an annual process with a review of all indicators together in a multilayered approach.

It is proposed that the **Course Committee/Subject Committee**¹ consider all quality indicators (the evidence base for ASM) **as and when** they are available. Effective Course Committees are operating this system currently and ASM places an annual reporting requirement as an additional burden on these teams. There is, however, evidence of considerable variability in the effectiveness of Course/Subject Committees.

Existing Committee structures within the Faculty and University permit the flow of issues and good practice to be fed by Course/Subject Committees up to the relevant decision-making point. The proposed process is consequently a reversal of the current 'top-down' approach to quality monitoring. Appendix 2 outlines the main reporting channels.

The following would, consequently, **not** be included within the revised process:

¹ Course Committees operate for named courses. Subject Committees operate for modular provision options (ie major/main/minor subject areas).

- Subject/School/Revalidation or other reports by groups of courses;
- Faculty reports;
- Reporting on specific University objectives for the year under review;
- Faculty objectives (at the discretion of the Faculty);
- As currently, Faculties would not be required to compile module boxes or undertake audits of these.

Implementation of the revised process would not remove responsibility from the Faculty and University for the oversight of quality monitoring, however, the focus of this activity would shift to a more distinct emphasis on ensuring the operation and effectiveness of Course/Subject Committee activity and the effectiveness of debate and communication through the Committee structures. The University will retain responsibility for considering practice across Faculties.

7.2 The Process

7.2.1 Objectives

To enable course/subject teams to review the performance of courses/subjects with a view to:

- Ensuring that courses/subjects are fit for purpose;
- Monitoring student progression and achievement;
- Coordinating delivery of the programme ensuring it is both student-focused and client-centred;
- Identifying, implementing and reviewing enhancements to the student learning experience;
- Receiving student feedback and responding to issues in an effective and timely fashion;
- Sharing good practice.

The activity at each level is summarised below. A description of how each item of evidence relevant to the quality of the student experience given consideration is detailed in the next section.

a) Course Level

Course Committees would be responsible for ongoing review of the performance of programmes in the light of evidence available to them at course and module level. The evidence base would remain that which currently informs course-level reporting in their preparation of annual reports under the existing ASM process (see detail in next section). This would be done as part of an ongoing cycle rather than through provision of an annual report.

Course Committee minutes would need to reflect clearly the evidence considered, conclusions reached and actions identified.

b) Faculty Level

Faculties would be responsible for ensuring the effective operation of Course/Subject Committees and the supporting structures for them. This would include: mechanisms for administrative support; effective monitoring of activity; effective communication of issues through the Faculty committee structure; and mechanisms for the allocation and monitoring of resource allocation.

Faculties may wish to give consideration to the rescheduling of Committee meetings to facilitate effective communication.

c) University Level

Provision of statistics to inform review by course/subject teams would continue to be provided centrally. A summary of institutional level statistics and benchmark data will be provided to the Teaching and Learning Committee annually.

In order to maintain assurance that the quality of the student learning experience is being appropriately maintained, the University would also continue to identify programmes/themes for detailed review on an annual basis by a Sub-Group of the Teaching and Learning Committee. These would be identified on the basis of the quality indicators available centrally, ie External Examiner reports, PSRB reports, Student Complaints, National Student Survey outcomes and student progression and award data. In addition, the University would increase the number of themed audits undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of key quality management processes at course and Faculty level. These may be audits of themes or tracking of sample issues. As with all themed audits, existing documentation would be reviewed and there would be no requirement for additional documentation to be prepared.

7.3 Evidence

The following table indicates how evidence would be considered under the proposed process.

EVIDENCE	WHERE CONSIDERED	ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION	WHEN AVAILABLE
Staff/Student Consultative Committee minutes	Course Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of programme delivery • Responding to needs of cohort • Identification of issues for communication to School Board for action at School, Faculty or University level 	Once per Semester
Module Monitoring data	Course Committee* and Head of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of under or over - performing modules for further investigation 	End of each semester
First sit data	Course Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for non-continuation • Standards assurance • Failure rates 	July
External Examiner reports	Course Committee and Staff/Student Consultative Committees Annual Report to TLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of Items raised by the External Examiner • Response to External Examiner • Sharing External Examiner report and context/response with students 	Within one month of Board of Examiners. PVC (T&L) Annual Report to TLC in November

* but see Section 8.

Benchmark data (HESA data)	TLC and Faculty Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend identification • External benchmarking 	Periodically over Summer. To be considered by TLC in November
National Student Survey outcomes	TLC and Faculty Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend data • Identification of priorities for Institution • Benchmarking 	October
Resit data	Course Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for non-continuation • Standards assurance • Failure rates 	October (UG) November (PG)
Entry qualifications of students enrolled	TLC and Course Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment compared with the academic plan • Student Profile and identification of areas of additional support or challenge 	November (Planning Department)
Summary data of performance at University and Faculty level	TLC & Faculty Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend identification • Internal benchmarking 	November
Student Complaints	Course Committee (informal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (informal) resolution of issues arising and enhancement to programme 	Ongoing
Employer feedback	Course Committee (guest lectures and course development) Faculty Committee for Faculty-level liaison groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum development • Employability of current and future student cohorts • Programme delivery • Student learning experience: translating theory into practice 	Ongoing
PSRB Reports and other engagement	Course Committees with oversight by relevant Faculty Committee TLC receives report and Faculty response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation requirements • Enhancements to programme • Curriculum development 	On receipt of PSRB reports and ongoing monitoring /programme development
Evaluation/ Revalidation reports/outcomes	Course Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course development and review • Monitoring implementation of actions identified • Ensuring delivery in accordance with Course Document 	Preparation for and post evaluation/ revalidation
Changes to programmes (CA3s)	Course Committee with sign off by Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum development • Enhancements 	Ongoing

Assessment of Teaching: Student Questionnaire	Note that this questionnaire has been discontinued and a Working Group established to consider the most appropriate methods of obtaining feedback on the quality of teaching. The location for consideration of the outcomes of this will depend on the nature and purpose of the questionnaire.
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7.4 Potential Benefits

In addition to reducing the bureaucracy of the current system, the following potential benefits are anticipated from effective implementation of the revised process:

- Relocation of trust and responsibility to those responsible for delivery of programmes;
- More effective use of Course Committees;
- Wider engagement of academic staff in the coordination of delivery and enhancement of provision/reduced isolation;
- More effective use of the existing Committee structure at Faculty and University level;
- More timely consideration of issues on an annual cycle.

7.5 Risks

The introduction of a revised system carries associated risks. The existing system has proved effective internally and in satisfying external audit requirements. The implementation of the revised process would need to include proactive oversight at Faculty and University level and appropriate staff development to minimise the following identified risks.

The main risk associated with the proposed revised method is the difficulty of embedding a revised approach into existing structures and the associated cultural change required. Other risks arise from this main risk:

- Overburdening of Course Director if all members of Course Committee do not engage;
- Existing ineffective Course/Subject Committee practice in some areas which will act as a barrier to implementing the system;
- Ineffective Course Committees causing issues to be 'hidden';
- Inadequate formal records with consequent implications for student complaints/litigation;
- A failure to address issues raised by Course Committees at higher levels resulting in disengagement of staff;
- A failure to identify issue across subjects, Faculties or the University.

7.6 Resources

The proposed revised method of Annual Monitoring is not proposed to impact on the level of resourcing when in steady state. There would, however, be a change in the nature of activity undertaken.

Centrally, a reduction in oversight of Faculty processes would be refocused on increasing the monitoring of activity through themed audits. Course-level reviews undertaken by a Sub-Group of the Teaching and Learning Committee on an annual basis would continue as under the current system.

Administrative support within the Faculty would no longer be required to support the coordination of course, subject, school or Faculty reports or coordinate associated ASM panel meetings. However, the Faculty would need to ensure that appropriate resource is in place to support Course Committees through facilitating evidence provision, retention of

records of Course Committees and the tracking of items through the Faculty's various Committees to ensure that issues raised are dealt with.

There would, however, be a substantial additional requirement for staff development for Course Directors and course teams (see below).

7.7 Implementation

7.7.1 Pilot area

It is recognised that cultural change involves changing mindsets and breaking well-established habits as well as changing practice. Owing to the difficult nature of this and the need for ongoing support throughout the year, it is proposed to pilot the introduction of this method in one Faculty during 2008/09. If agreed, Faculties would be invited to volunteer to participate. A joint University/Faculty evaluation would be undertaken of the success of the pilot before making recommendations regarding potential roll-out to other Faculties from 2009/10.

7.7.2 Transitional arrangements

At course level, immediate implementation would be possible from one academic year to the next as, for the majority of evidence; there would be no gap in the evidence considered. Eg for a course adopting the new process from 2008/09, the external examiner's report and statistics for 2007/08 would be considered at the first Course/Subject Committee meeting.

However, at Faculty level, it would be necessary to follow up on actions identified from the previous year during the first year of implementation. It would therefore be necessary in the first year of operation for a Faculty adopting the new process to submit a short Faculty report updating on progress on actions identified in the previous year.

For Faculties not moving to the new process in 2008/09, it is proposed that, as a University objective for the year, Faculties are asked to consider the implementation of the revised process, identify risks, associated risk management plans and an implementation plan.

7.7.3 Staff Development

In order to achieve this change, it would be necessary to have a range of activity to communicate the nature and requirements of the new approach and to support Course/Subject Directors and Course/Subject Committees. The following action is proposed:

ACTION	BY WHOM	FOR WHOM	TIMESCALE
Briefing sessions on new process	QMAU	Faculty Staff in pilot area, Dean/ Associate Dean, Heads of School, Faculty administrative staff, academic staff with responsibility for ASM, Faculty Teaching and Learning Coordinators	May 2008
Briefing sessions for Course Directors	Faculty Teaching and Learning	Course Directors in pilot Faculty	August/September 2008

	Coordinator		
Ongoing monitoring	Course Directors' network (facilitated by Staff Development) E-Learning Course Directors' Forum (facilitated by Lifelong Learning) Supported by QMAU/Staff Development	Course Directors in Pilot Faculty	2008/09

7.7.4 Evaluation

The pilot would be evaluated before roll-out to other Faculties. This would involve:

- A review of Course Committee minutes;
- A review of other Committee minutes to track effectiveness of consideration of issues: SSCC minutes, School Board minutes and relevant Faculty and University Committee minutes;
- A comparison with the evidence base (External Examiner reports, statistics, PSRB reports etc) to ensure key issues were being addressed;
- A meeting with representatives from Course/Subject Committees to discuss issues of implementation;
- A meeting with Faculty representatives.

The evaluation of the pilot would be undertaken in May 2009.

7.8 Implications for Other Activity

If the revised process is agreed and the pilot successful, the following activities would require further action:

- A review of the duties of Course Directors;
- A review of the criteria for selection of Course Directors;
- Consideration of the frequency of Course Committee meetings;
- Consideration of the scheduling of Committee dates, particularly at course, school and Faculty level to facilitate timely communication of issues.

8 MODULE MONITORING

The purpose of the module monitoring process is to identify modules for detailed review based on a consideration of statistical information provided. It is also intended to reduce the quantity of routine surveying of students by removing the questionnaire-based survey associated with its predecessor – module evaluation. The focus of Module Monitoring is to consider outliers in terms of student performance on modules, ie to consider both modules with performance with significantly lower and modules with significantly higher than expected student performance. In order to maintain student input, it is recommended that the main method for obtaining student feedback is through Staff/Student Consultative Committees, student focus groups (where these are used), and student representation on Course/Subject Committees. Student business should therefore be a standing item on agendas. This provides a mechanism to obtain qualitative feedback which can be used in the module monitoring process, not only to identify issues, but also good practice.

Module monitoring has been designed to reduce the overall quantity of reporting required and to focus activity on those areas requiring most attention ie modules with a significantly lower or higher than expected level of student performance. The review process is carried out by the Head of School not the Module Co-ordinator. It is carried out at the end of each semester, thus allowing time to make enhancements to a module before it is next delivered. There is no requirement for any direct central reporting from this activity, although there is an expectation that Faculties will consider the outcomes of module monitoring as part of their ASM process.

The Quality Management and Audit Unit liaise with the Academic Registry to provide summary statistics to Heads of School. The principle adopted has been that information is provided on all modules delivered by the School whether they are provided for a course owned by the School or on a service teaching basis to courses in other Schools. Information is not currently available on a course basis and it is recognised that for this material to be useful to Course Committees this will be a necessary refinement. The Quality Management and Audit Unit will investigate this development with the areas which generate the reports and will seek to introduce this additional level of reporting. The timescale for this implementation will be dependant on the priorities of staff in the related areas. Summary reports will continue to be provided to Heads of School for their information and action as they deem appropriate.

March 2008

PRINCIPLES OF STANDARDS ASSURANCE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The University aims to operate an integrated system of standards assurance and quality management and enhancement which makes an effective contribution to the achievement of the University's Mission and which underpins the academic planning process. The system must be sufficiently robust to maintain the defined standards of the University's awards, to satisfy internal quality management and enhancement objectives, to comply with the published sections of the *QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education* and to ensure that other aspects of the national quality framework are fully addressed.

The Principles have been received and endorsed by the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (former) and the Research Degrees Committee.

In relation to **standards** the system seeks to ensure that:

- the academic standards of the programmes of study offered by the University are appropriate to their related awards;
- the University's programme structures accord with the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and all awards conform to the approved structure;
- the standards of awards are kept under review to ensure the continued validity of the award and that student achievement is commensurate with these;
- standards are externally benchmarked and validated through, *inter alia*, the input of external examiners and PSRBs and by reference to relevant subject benchmarks;
- the learning resources provided are sufficient to support students in achieving the award for which they are registered;

In relation to **quality** the system seeks to ensure that:

- the processes in place for programme approval, monitoring and review are working effectively;
- the views of students, staff, academic subject peers, employers and PSRBs are fully integrated into the process of programme planning, development and change;
- appropriate quality management arrangements are in place to ensure that all aspects of learning resources are working effectively in support of student learning;
- timely and appropriate action is taken where change is necessary or where matters of concern have been identified;
- excellence in teaching is recognised and rewarded;
- excellence in research and the support of research study is promoted;
- good practice and innovation are recognised and promulgated.

The key operating principles of the system are that:

- all formal processes are linked to the appropriate point in the management structure at which decisions can be taken about the specific action required within the timescale identified;
- all issues raised through the formal processes and any action taken are recorded and reported appropriately;
- formal processes are applied rigorously to all programmes of study and subjects, including franchised and validated provision;
- the implications of the quality processes for Faculties are the subject of consultation before implementation and the effectiveness of processes are reviewed regularly.

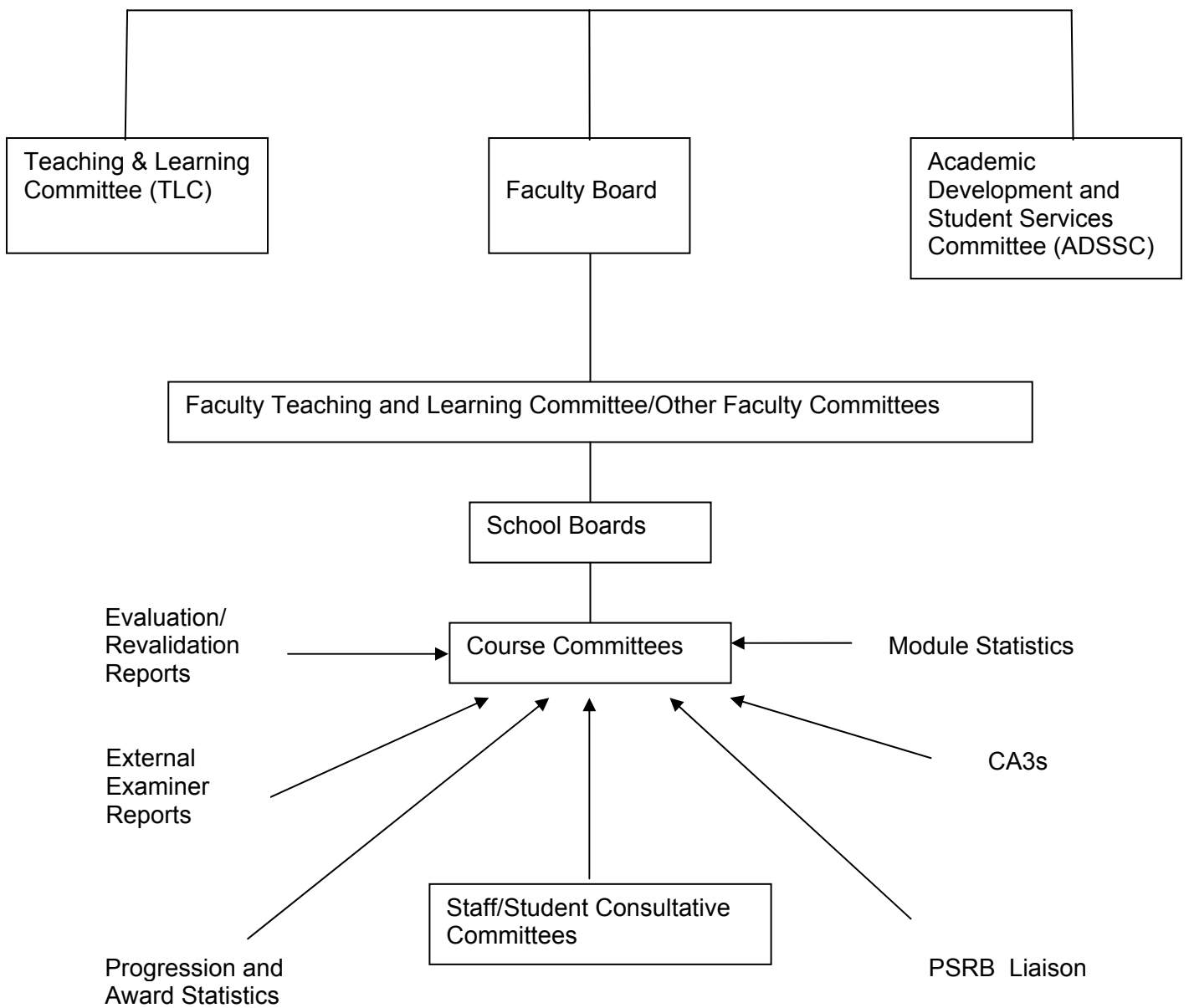
Title page to identify provision (in accordance with template)

Course/Subject Committee membership (for evaluation/revalidation of single course) (also identify members of course/subject planning committee)

(Note: the sections may be presented in separate documents or in a single bound document.)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION	A	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>(A brief summary of the rationale, origins, demand and relationship with other courses in the School/Faculty/subject may be provided. Projected intakes for next five years should be given.)</p>
SECTION B: COURSE/SUBJECT PROVISION	B1	<p><u>Programme Specification(s)</u> (For each course or undergraduate honours degree subject (with information relating to each strand), a summary statement of its main features and learning outcomes in accordance with standard template.)</p>
	B2	<p><u>Commentaries</u> differentiated by subject, course, level, campus, institution, as appropriate, on the following matters, related to University and Faculty/institution policies and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent and proposed changes (revalidation only) • Academic progression and internal coherence and opportunities for student choice within the programme(s) <p><u>Structure diagram(s)</u> (For each course or undergraduate subject strand by mode of attendance, a diagram indicating semesters, modules, their credit value and level, core or optional status, pre- or co-requisites and whether modules are <u>C</u>urrent, <u>R</u>evised or <u>N</u>ew)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer to and from other programmes of study and opportunities for progression to further study (where applicable) • Work-based learning and supervised work experience/ placement (where applicable) • Teaching, learning and assessment strategies (to include student support/guidance arrangements) • Creativity, innovation and good practice • Standards • Employability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate qualities - Widening participation - Work-based learning - Personal development planning - Entrepreneurship training - Career opportunities, development and progression
	B3	<p><u>Regulations</u> (in accordance with standard template) (For revalidation, each set of regulations for each award (which will be provided to students), or, where there is sufficient commonality, a single exemplar set by qualification, with variations stated eg entry requirements, condonable modules)</p>
	B4	<p><u>Module descriptions</u> (in accordance with standard format.) Modules should be indexed and grouped by level (or course if limited commonality)</p>
SECTION C: RESOURCES available to the course(s)/subject	C1	<p><u>Resources</u> (physical).</p> <p>Accommodation, library, laboratory, computing and other equipment for the course(s) (General resources need only be described briefly, but specialist resources should be detailed. Library resources should specifically identify whether they are available from the library catalogues. For revalidation, dedicated resources for particular courses should be clearly identified.)</p> <p>Maintenance and renewal plans</p>
	C2	<p><u>Resources</u> (staff)</p> <p>Summary statement and brief CVs for all staff contributing to the subject unit (with particular reference to more recent activities). (These staff form the course or subject committees. CVs should be no longer than 1 or 2 pages each. For revalidation, a summary matrix indicating which staff contribute to which courses or subject strands should be provided.)</p> <p>Statement of how the teaching and research areas represented are of relevance to the subject.</p> <p>Information on the use of part-time lecturers, postgraduate teaching assistants and demonstrators.</p> <p>Information on staff development.</p>
<p><i>IN ADDITION: reports from central University departments on resource matters and career opportunities are provided centrally to the panel; external examiner reports for the last two academic years are also provided to the revalidation panel.</i></p>		

SENATE



Appendix 3

University of Ulster

CETL for Institutional E-learning Services

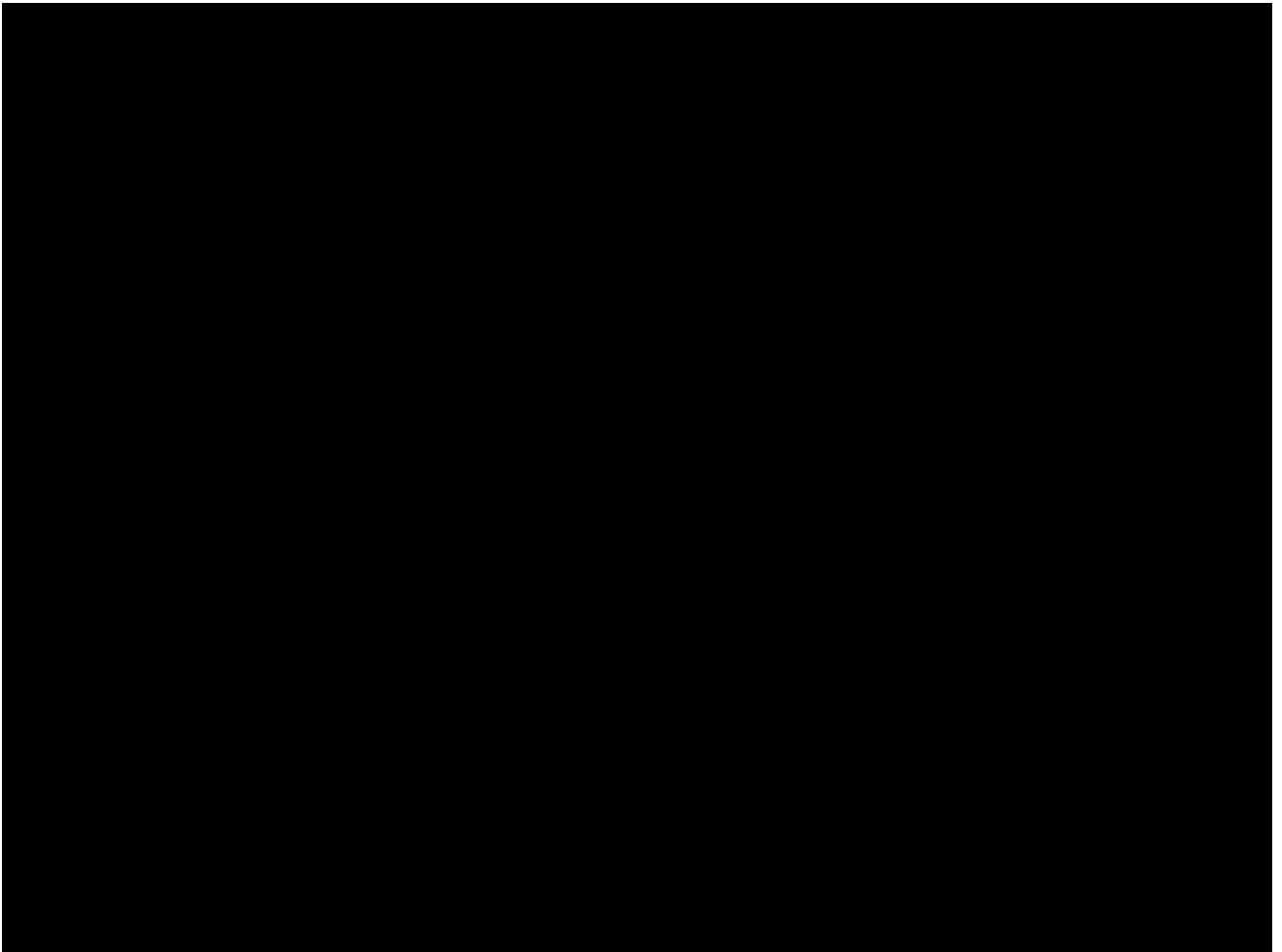
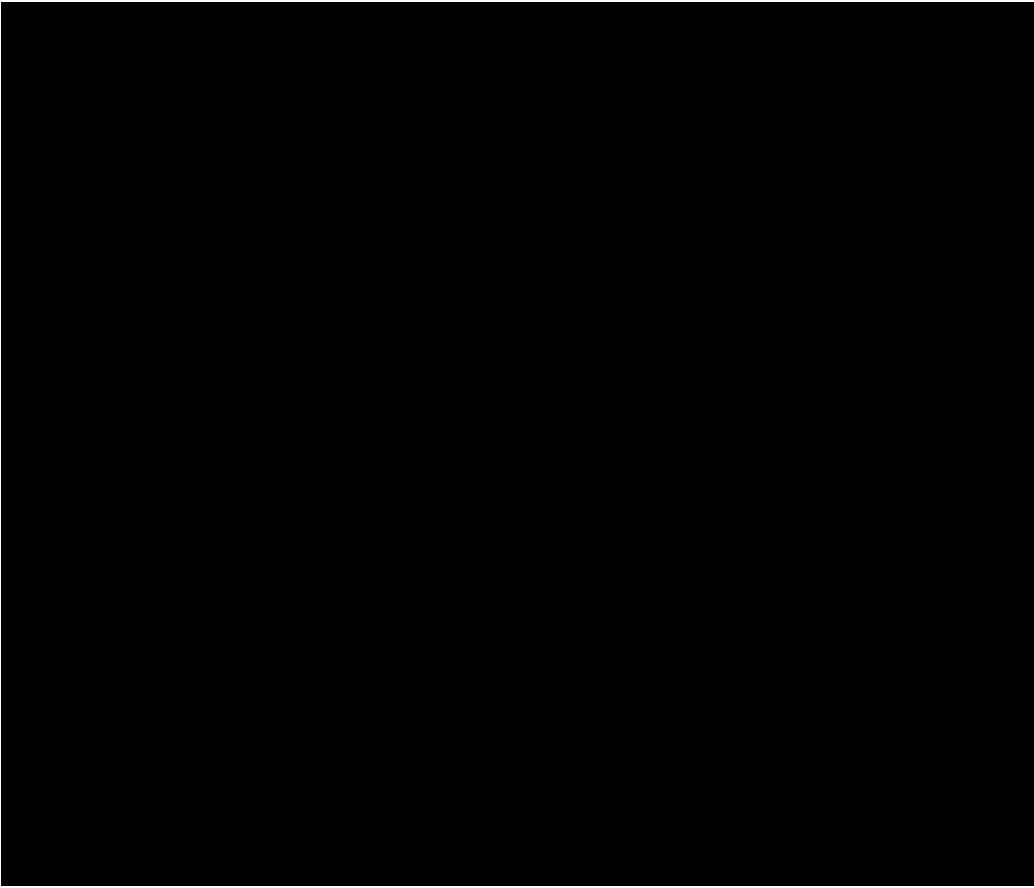
Tool Development Framework

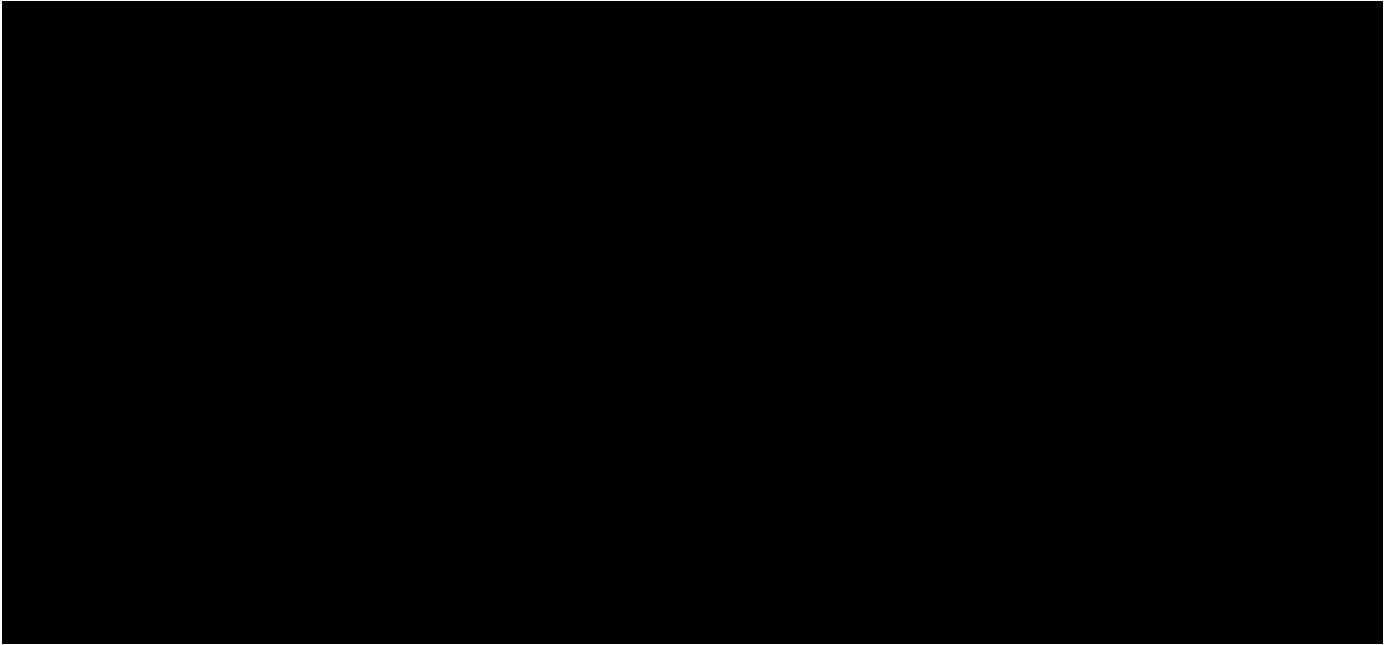
USER NEED ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY	CETL TOOL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	CETL DESIGN AND SUPPORT ACTIVITY
Targeted users will be representative of the groups being surveyed. Questionnaires/Surveys developed will be structured and will be concise (10 to 20 minutes for completion time).	Establish benchmark of user perceptions and cultural barriers <i>survey / questionnaire</i>	Provide benchmark data on user awareness, usage, prioritisation and cultural barriers relating to the targeted theme of the tool to be developed.
Refine feedback from user perceptions to develop a framework of possible user needs. Representative focus groups of > 4 and no more than 1hour duration will take place in an informal setting. Aim is to develop clear specification of user needs from analysis of focus group feedback.	Refine requirements via user focus groups	Refine findings of survey to provide a formal prototype tool requirements specification (functional and cultural) Agree impact evaluation metrics and indicators for tool.
Scrutiny of the analysis from Stage 1 and 2 of the development process will identify specific user needs in terms of both what is serviceable and practical to staff, and what will be beneficial to the learner.	Develop prototype tool <i>User Interface data presentation</i>	Develop and test prototype tool based on technical opportunities and defined user requirements.
Observe usage of prototype tool with sample groups. Examine the impact both in relation to academic staff and to the learner. Evaluation metrics and indicators to be informed by Stage 1 and Stage 2 findings.	Evaluate prototype tool <i>Identify sample groups survey focus groups behaviour and activity analysis</i>	Ensure tool is intuitive and efficient to use and presents options and data in a manner to best meet users functional and cultural requirements.
Utilise evaluation of prototype to refine tool and to present case studies of effective usage.	Revise tool based on feedback	From the pilot phase, develop supporting documentation of the effective use of the tool and benefits identified (life stories, case studies etc.).
Launch tool with appropriate user support and examples of usage.	Deploy tool	Deploy tool as part of CETL toolset which is available to users within the VLE. Provide appropriate awareness and user support.
Continue to monitor usage and impact of tool by development and adoption of relevant evaluation tools/ methodology.	Evaluate tool usage and impact (longitudinal study) <i>tool usage analysis survey focus groups</i>	Periodically carry out awareness, usage and impact evaluations using specified frameworks, metrics and indicators.
Key		
Benchmarking / requirements gathering phase		
Tool development phase		
Tool deployment phase		

Appendix 4

Key staff CVs

CURRICULUM VITAE





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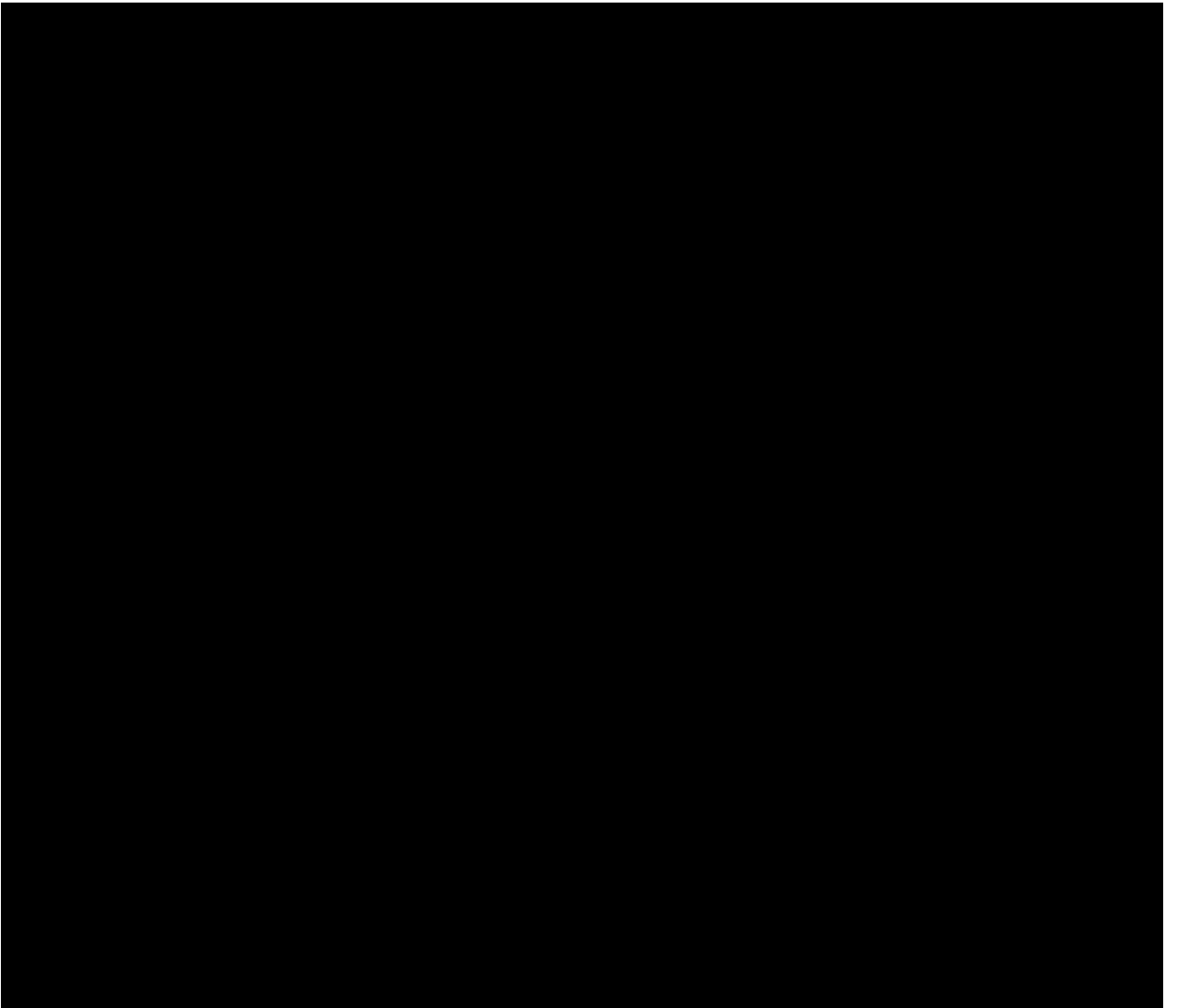
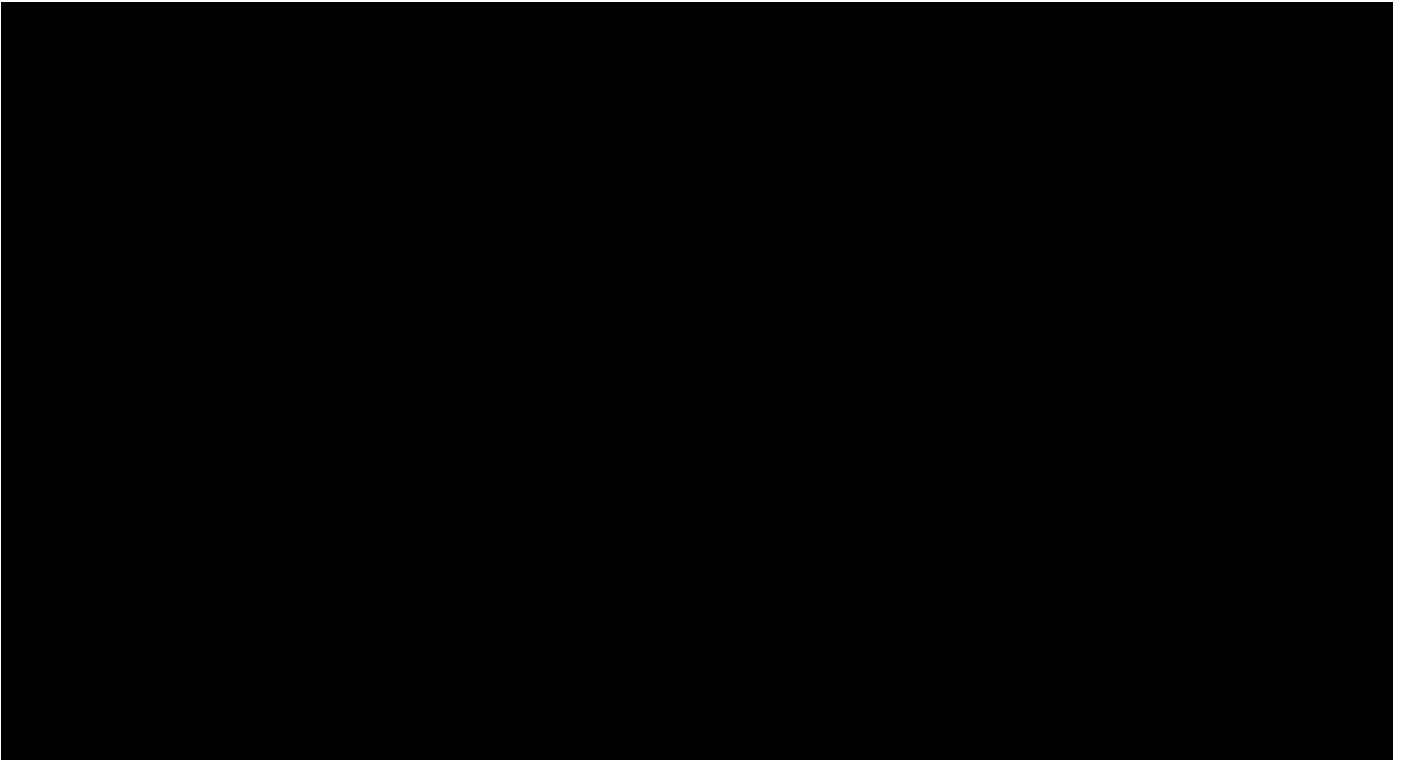
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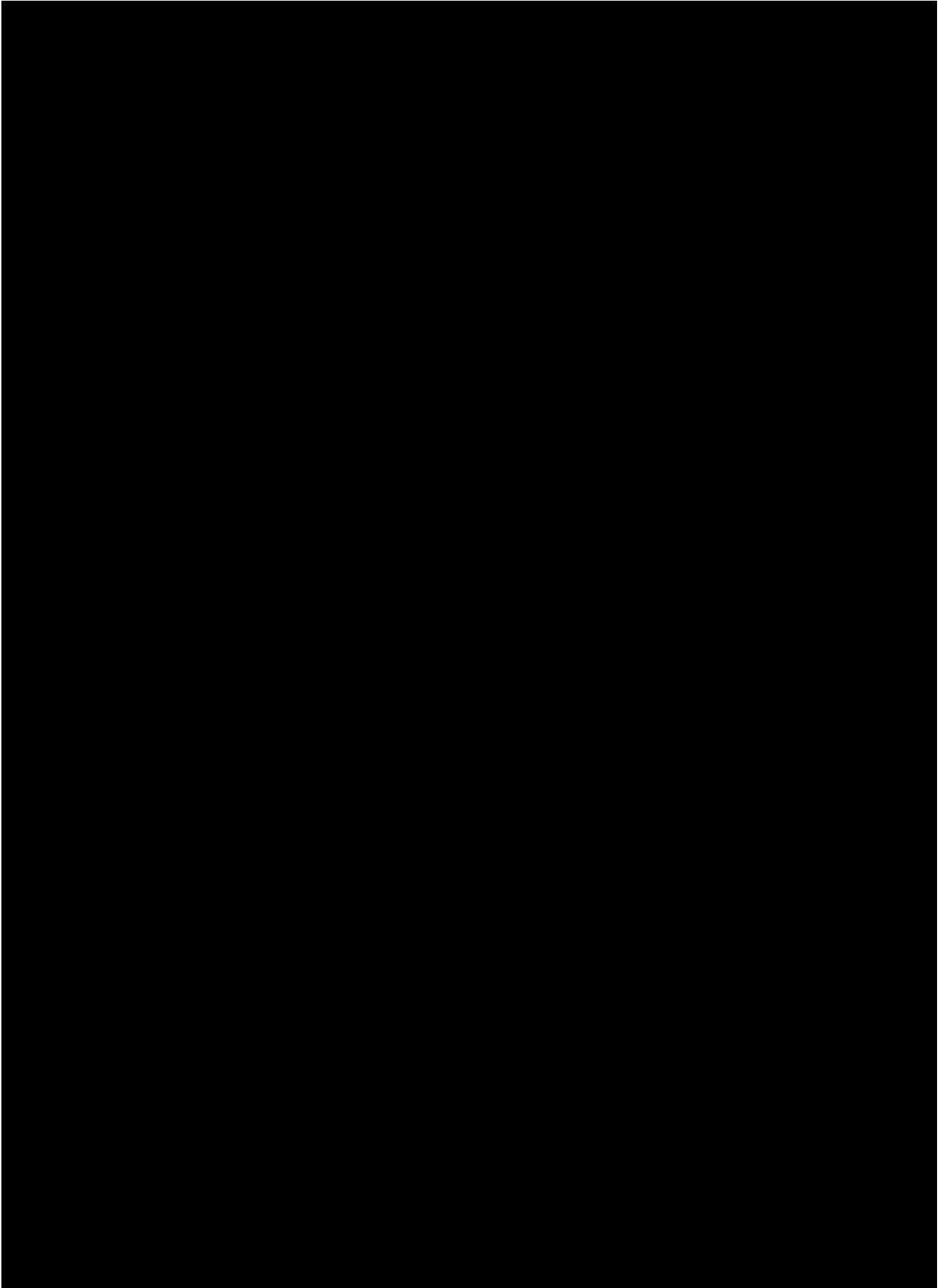
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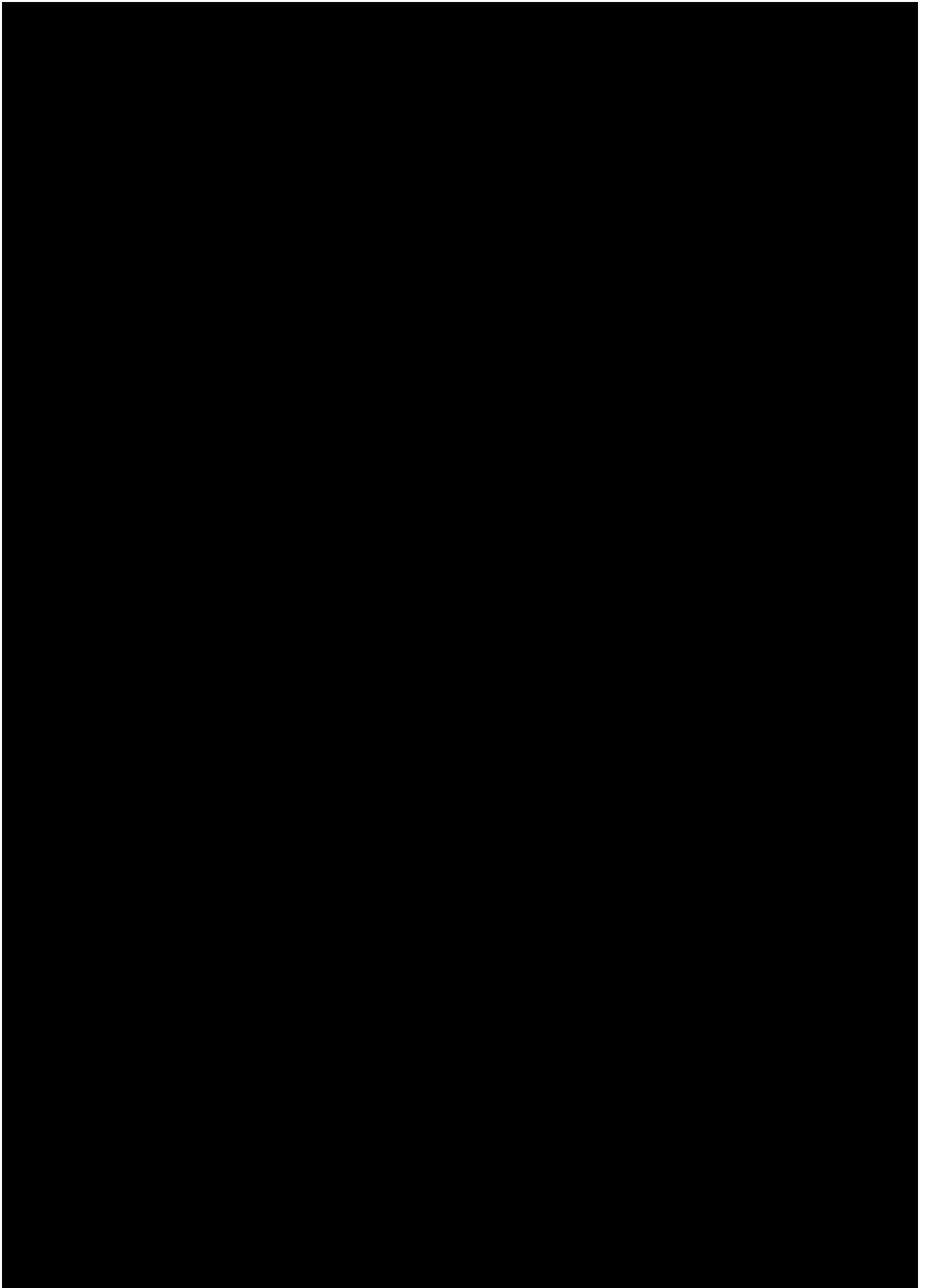
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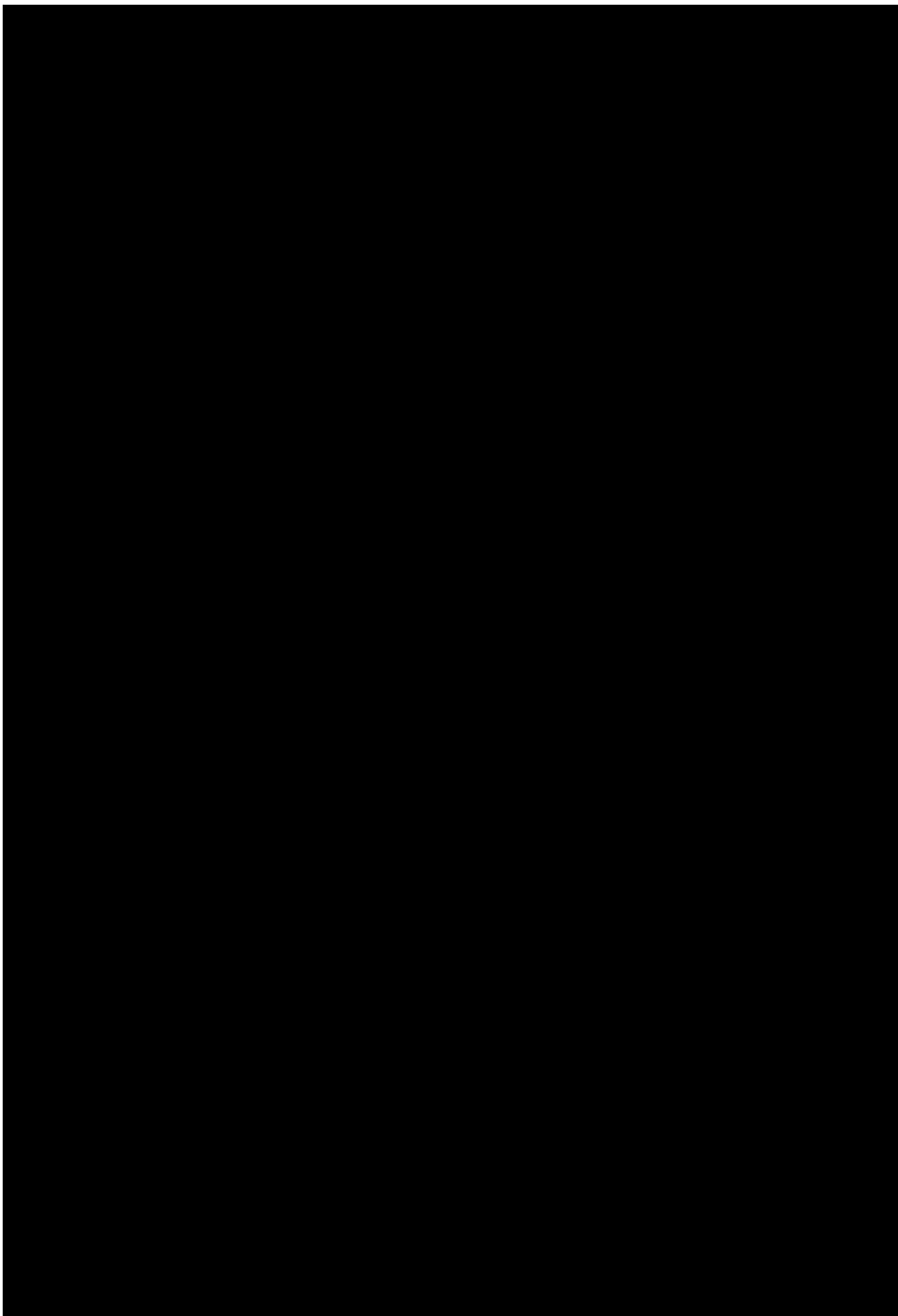
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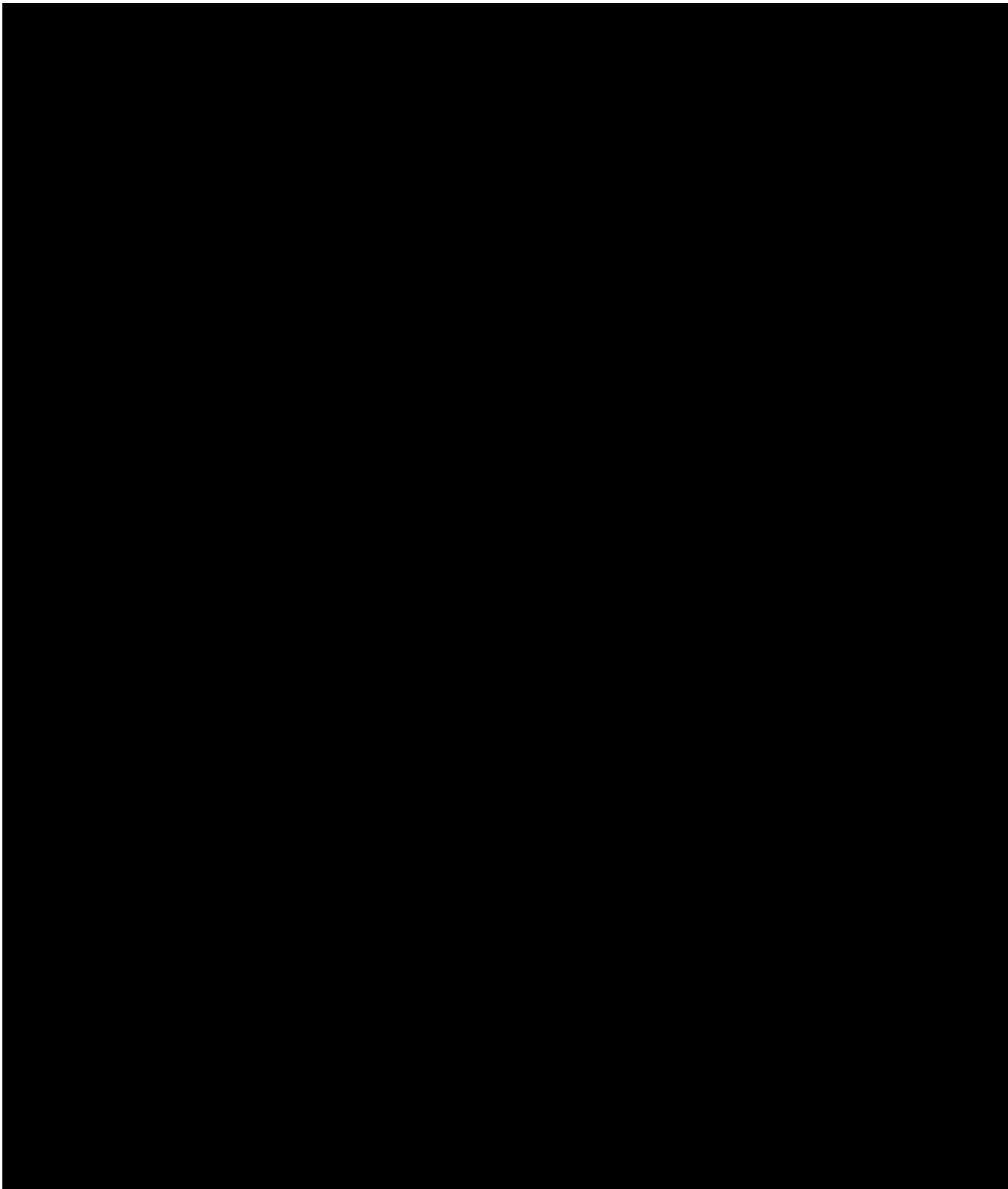


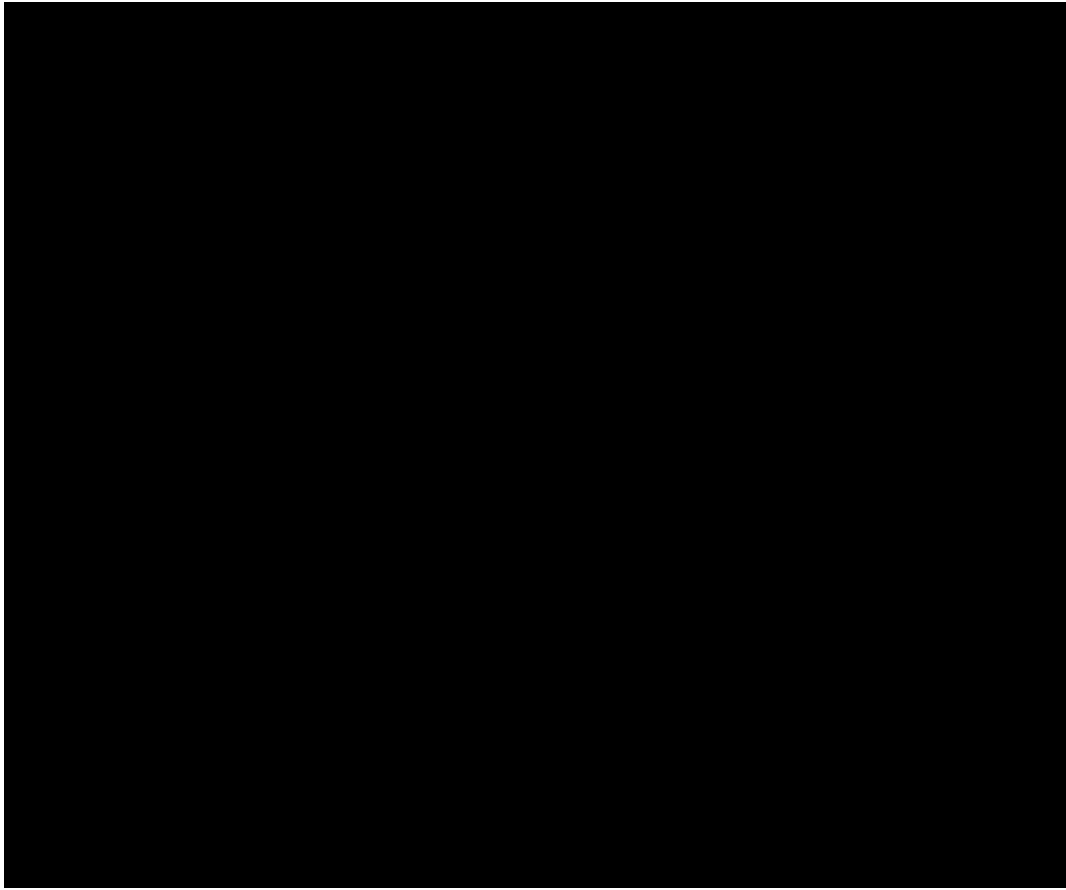
Curriculum Vitae











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