

Comments from the UgTLC members on the discussion document on a Curriculum Change Framework which was released by the Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG) on 28 June via the VC Desk.

Members unanimously found the language used in the document to be difficult to engage with, commenting as follows:

- The language used is couched in terminology which makes it difficult to understand
- The language is aggressive and divisive in nature, and seeks to entrench viewpoints that many will not agree with or understand, and which may damage the education project.
- The language is subjective and full of emotion
- The language prevents understanding of how changes would be implemented
- The terms decolonisation and decolonialisation are used interchangeably in the document, but the theorists that are quoted make it clear that the two terms mean different things, and it is important that they are used correctly.

With regard to the content, the following comments were made:

- The document tries to encompass the whole university; it is too general and too diffuse, which makes it difficult to unpick and see how it could be implemented in our faculty, particularly as we have professional degrees with external requirements (eg ECSA).
- It should rather address issues faculty by faculty so that we can understand the implications for us and our role in it, and usefully engage with the way it is being presented.
- Science, and specifically Maths and Physics, were mentioned as having colonialism particularly entrenched in the curricula, but without describing how. Engineering is an applied science, but the document does not give much scope for what can happen in EBE.
- Programme convenors would need serious help to understand what was required of them and to translate the document into actual curriculum changes, as they would not know where to start. It was questioned who would provide the skills and resources, how time would be found for the implementation, which could take weeks, and what assurances would there be in case of inadvertent mis-steps on the part of the implementers.
- It was emphasised that EBE offers professional degrees so there are stakeholders outside the university who have input into the curriculum, and on the technical side we are required to deliver a certain product. While there are spaces where we can engage with decolonisation, such as in complementary studies courses (and we must not shut down such conversations), there are constraints, and it raises concerns when it is implied that scientific courses must be decolonised.
- A department that had tackled decolonising a stream said that it had been a contentious process which turned out to be not about the academic courses alone, but about everyday practices that were entrenched. The process had highlighted that everyone had blind spots which only became apparent when under scrutiny, and way it had played out had made some staff afraid of speaking out in case they said the wrong thing, even if it was with good intentions.

Best Regards,

Sunetra

A/Prof. Sunetra Chowdhury, Pr.Eng (20160723)