

DEPARTMENT OF PAEDIATRICS

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16th March, 1984.

Mrs. Marion Ferguson,
Director of Nursing Studies,
Bedford College.

Dear Marion,

Many thanks for your letter of 13th March about the composition of the Working Party on Health Studies. Your statement is quite correct that when this was discussed by the S.A.C. in Nursing Studies at its meeting on 17th February members agreed with your concern about the under-representation of the behavioural sciences in the make-up of the working party. It was, I think, also agreed that whereas the S.A.C. was in a unique position to make representations about the relationship of academic courses in health studies and the accreditation of vocational training by professional bodies, it would only be one of many interested voices in claiming adjustment of the working party on grounds of inadequate representation of individual disciplines. The letter to the Chairman of the Academic Council was the outcome of this discussion and the omission of the latter point was intentional.

Nevertheless, I share your view of the importance of trying to ensure that the behavioural and social aspects form an integral part ab initio of the deliberations of the Working Party. To this end we have arranged that a copy of your letter with a supporting statement from the S.A.C. is sent to the Secretary of the Working Party. I am grateful for your emphasis of this matter and I hope that the Working Party will take it fully into account.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



Thomas E. Oppé

cc Mrs. Janet Longden

13th March, 1984.

Professor T.E. Oppé,
Chairman,
SAC Nursing Studies,
Department of Paediatrics,
St. Mary's Hospital,
Praed Street,
Paddington, W.2.

Dear Professor Oppe,

re: Your letter to Professor Howe of 20.2.1984 :
Working Party in Health Studies Degrees

I am writing to you in relation to your letter, the contents of which I fully endorse, especially in relation to the important point raised which discusses professional bodies, their accreditation procedures and their relationship to universities. There is, however, yet another issue which to my mind is of equal importance and which I did raise at the meeting held on February 17th, 1984, though perhaps not loud enough!

This also concerns the composition of the proposed Working Party but emphasises another aspect. It refers to what might constitute and be defined imperatively as Health Studies Degrees within London University.

Though the Working Party as constituted at the moment includes one representative of the social sciences, it is nonetheless heavily weighted towards the medical sciences but states that as and when the need arises, behavioural, biological and social sciences representation will be co-opted. This procedure was decided on to prevent the Working Party from becoming over large and therefore to impede progress. Notwithstanding the problem related to size and the importance of having clinical representation, I wish to draw attention to the balance of the composition of the Working Party and express my concern at the clinical elements overshadowing those of the social sciences.

Through their work, the considerable body of social science research provides the focus for an orientation of Health Studies by locating it within the social context. It thereby broadens a perspective of health and illness from one to define it through absence and/or presence of pathology to one including an understanding and comprehension of the implications that health and illness are essentially and essential social components. It is this balance which I believe we need to get right straight at the start and not wait till later co-option of relative thought will find the field already mapped out. The function of the social sciences will by then only be able to fill gaps instead of having been instrumental, together with the clinical professions, in helping to shape the degrees right from the beginning. As the social sciences represent a number of areas, it will not be possible for one person to bridge all of them, and anyhow, as one

compared to a number of clinicians, the balance of the committee will be decidedly lopsided.

It is because I feel very strongly about this balance that I have decided to contact you again in spite of the fact that the letter has already been sent.

Yours sincerely,

Marion Ferguson,
Director of Nursing Studies.

Copy to Mrs. Longden,
Secretary to SAC Nursing Studies.