

The University of Edinburgh
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19 September 2017
at 2pm in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Convener)
Bobi Archer	Vice President (Education), Students' Association
Dr Shereen Benjamin	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw	Director of Quality Assurance, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, and Assistant Principal, Researcher Development
Megan Brown	Schools Engagement Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee
Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Claire Phillips	School Representative (Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Inger Seiferheld	School Representative (Business School), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Dr Jon Turner	Director, Institute for Academic Development
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services

Apologies:

Dr Sheila Lodge	CMVM Head of Academic Administration (Co-opted Member)
Dr Gordon McDougall	Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Science and Engineering
Barry Neilson	Director, Student Systems (Co-opted Member)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25 May 2017

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

a) Membership

The Convenor welcomed **Ms Bobi Archer** to her first meeting in her new role as Students' Association Vice President Education and **Ms Megan Brown**, Students' Association Schools Engagement Officer, replacing Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka on the Committee for the forthcoming year. Ms Brown is responsible for supporting elected School Reps and her membership will foster linkages between Students' Association and University quality enhancement processes and allow the Students' Association to diversify its staff membership on University committees. The Convenor also welcomed **Dr Shereen Benjamin** joining the Committee as the new Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science.

The Convenor thanked **Dr Huw Lewis** for his work on the Committee during the 2016-17 session. Dr Lewis had been co-opted for a year as a member with expertise in school quality processes, particularly important last year due to the new annual monitoring, reporting and review processes being implemented.

b) Terms of Reference and Committee Priorities 2017-18

The Committee received and noted the Terms of Reference and summary of the planned priorities for 2017-18 which was approved by Senate in May 2017.

c) Thematic Review

The Convenor reported that Professor Alan Murray would convene the forthcoming thematic review of support for mature students.

For Discussion

3. School Annual Quality Reports 2016-17

The Committee received and discussed the report on the first meeting of the sub group tasked with reviewing School annual quality reports. It was noted that the Moray House School of Education report had been submitted after the sub-group meeting and therefore would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee in November.

Action: College Deans of Quality to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions in regard to the School Annual Quality Reports 2016-17 are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).
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The Committee noted that the new process had been generally well received and therefore, it was agreed that there would be no major changes for 2017/18. It was noted that the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) online report submission system had worked particularly well and could be considered as an example of good practice.

Themes of positive practice for sharing across the University were noted as follows:

- **Assessment and feedback** - many innovative practices such as a major project in CAHSS to implement online assessment and feedback, open note examinations, discussion-based teaching and the use of class participation in assessment, the use of reflective feedback, video feedback, formative feedback, and clarification and communication of key dates in a variety of ways.

- **Academic Community** - initiatives to develop academic communities such as postgraduate research student fora, writing retreats and away weekends, community newsletters, a student-led journal, and peer support initiatives such as academic families and alumni peer-assisted learning.
- **Innovative Learning and Teaching and Curriculum Development** - evidence that schools have carefully considered and acted upon student feedback as part of a number of curriculum development initiatives across the University.
- **Enhancing and Management of Teaching** – schools were approaching this in a variety of ways, including integration of teaching scores within annual review and performance conversations (with supportive coaching) and online recording of peer observation of teaching.
- **Student Support** – student satisfaction rates with the Personal Tutoring system were high within a number of Schools and the annual quality reports outline examples of commitment and progress made, including programme group meetings, management of Personal Tutor/tutee ratios, and the provision of student mental health training. There were also examples of Schools supporting particular groups of students, for example, pastoral support for postgraduate research students, attendance monitoring to identify and support at risk students, and tailored and targeted support for particular student groups.
- **Support for Postgraduate Research Students** - schools have enhanced their processes for recruiting, training and developing postgraduate research students who teach. One school has attributed the support provided to postgraduate research students who teach with increased quality of tutorials and relevant National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Research Students measures.
- **Employability** - schools were supporting students to develop their employability and graduate attributes through various initiatives which include career boards, work-related learning, consultancy projects, and new modes of assessment linked to employability.

Areas for further development at University level were noted as follows:

- **Learning and teaching accommodation** - in the context of increasing student numbers and estates developments, insufficient suitable learning and teaching accommodation was a consistent theme throughout School annual quality reports. The Committee was in agreement that references to accommodation and space must emphasise the context and link to/impact on the student experience.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues (and request a response) in regard to space management and the impact on the student experience to the Space Strategy Group.

- **Timetabling** - also in the context of increasing student numbers and estates developments, several School annual quality reports highlighted issues with timetabling. Issues included, the timetabling of back-to-back classes which are in buildings far apart and classes near disruptive estates work, and issues with the room booking system.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues (and request a response) in regard to timetabling to Head of Timetabling Unit.

- **Personal Tutor (PT) system** - student feedback on satisfaction with the PT system varies widely across schools and annual quality reports reflect on the inconsistency in the support provided to students by PTs. In CAHSS in particular, there was a need to clarify and communicate the division of responsibilities between PTs and Student Support Team members.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues (and request a response) relating to the PT system to the Assistant Principal Academic Support and College Deans of Students.

- **Consistency and clarity of assessment and feedback processes** - student feedback highlights a need for clarification of marking schemes and grade descriptors so that students are clear on what was expected of them in assessment. There was evidence of schools giving this careful consideration and that plans were underway to address this issue, both at School- and University-level (aligning with ELIR outcomes).

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues (and request a response) relating to the consistency and clarity of assessment and feedback processes to the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback.

- **Data to Support Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes** - school annual quality reports highlighted challenges accessing and understanding the data available to support the annual monitoring, review and reporting process. Comments particularly focused upon the perceived accuracy of data and insufficient data for postgraduate research students. The Committee noted that the student data dashboard for undergraduate students had been well received, with a number of requests for postgraduate taught and research student data.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues (and request a response) relating to data to Support Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes Director of Student Systems and Administration.

The Committee noted that Academic Services would collate a matrix of good practice examples. The themes of positive practice and areas for further development would be sent to the Senior Vice Principal Learning and Teaching. It was suggested that there may be correlations between school QA models and NSS results.

Action: Committee Convenor to analyse School reports, QA models and NSS data to determine if there are any correlations.

4. Internal Review Themes 2016-17

The Committee discussed the themes that emerged from teaching/postgraduate programme reviews held in 2016/17.

Action: College Deans of Quality to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions in regard to the Internal Review Themes 2016-17 are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

The following areas of positive practice were noted:

- **Innovative learning and teaching** - examples of innovation in learning and teaching were identified throughout the reviews (in particular developments to enhance online learning).
- **Assessment and feedback** - reviews highlighted the wide variety of assessment methods and mechanisms used to provide feedback to students.
- **Student support** - the support of students by staff was commended in a number of reviews, with a variety of good practice examples being highlighted.
- **Building student communities** - there was evidence of examples of good practice in relation to student engagement, supported through a variety of practices, including facilitated cross-year and School initiatives, events such as lecture series, and peer support.

Areas for further development were noted as follows:

- **Learning and teaching** - benchmarking exercises were recommended in a number of reviews, to gain a greater understanding in a variety of areas. The Committee agreed that no further action was required to progress the individual benchmarking recommendations as they were being actioned by Schools.

Action: Academic Services to monitor the 2017/18 reports to establish if benchmarking continues as a theme from reviews.

- **Student support** - development of the Personal Tutor (PT) system was a predominant area for further development across the reviews in relation to student support. The Committee noted that the need to clarify roles in the PT system was a particular issue in the CAHSS and that this had also been highlighted the School Annual Quality Reports 2016-17 (as noted above).

Action: CAHSS Dean of Quality to progress the issue of PT system roles and responsibilities at College level during 2017-18.

Action: Assistant Principal Academic Support to consider the other recommendations as part of the continuing work to enhance the system through the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and in response to the last Enhancement-led Institutional Review.

The Committee noted that there was a number of additional recommendations from reviews related to go/study/year abroad. It was noted that the following work strands were already underway across the University in relation to study abroad and therefore no additional action would be required:

- The Service Excellence Programme would include work on redesigning the processes and systems for study/working away.
 - Edinburgh Global were liaising with the Colleges and existing Exchange Coordinators about developing a clearer role description and set of indicative tasks for staff within Schools supporting student exchanges.
 - The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences were holding discussions on this matter, with the aim of sharing good practice across the College.
- **Postgraduate tutors and demonstrators** - the training and support for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators as an area for further development produced a variety of

recommendations across the reviews. It was noted that individual recommendations were being progressed by Schools. The Committee noted that the reports contained evidence that many Schools had enhanced their processes for recruiting, training and developing postgraduate research students who teach. It was further noted that the newly launched 'Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators' covered the recommendations and the impact would be evaluated in due course.

- **Space** - the provision of space, for both staff and students, was a theme across a number of reviews. The Committee agreed that in the first instance these issues would be remitted to the Space Strategy Group. The Committee would then consider the response and request further action as appropriate. The College of Science and Engineering (currently undergoing a large estates development) would also specifically consider the issue of space as part of its plans for 2017/18.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues in regard to space management and the impact on the student experience to the Space Strategy Group and request a response.

- **Supporting and developing academic staff** - the Committee noted that a number of issues relating to the career development of academic staff were raised across the reviews.

Action: Committee Secretary to remit issues relating to supporting and developing academic staff to Vice-Principal People and Culture.

5. Students' Association Priorities 2017-18

The Committee discussed the Students' Association's priorities for 2017-18 as presented by the Vice President (Education):

- **Reducing the pressures of Semester 1** – the Students' Association will work with the University to ensure that students were provided with adequate time to prepare for the semester one examination diet. It was noted that the Students' Association was due to present a discussion paper to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee with options for addressing this issue.
- **Joint Degrees** – the Students' Association will work with the University to ensure that systems were in place to support joint degree students and help foster a sense of belonging to their academic community. It was suggested that there could be more systematic consideration of joint degrees as part of the internal review process.
- **The Three C's: Communication, Community and Class Reps** – the Students' Association will work with the University to establish clearer representative structures and transparency in communications to amplify the student voice within the University.

6. Senate Committee Planning

The Committee discussed the arrangements for the forthcoming 2018-21 planning round and the following initial statement of priorities for student experience, learning and teaching:

- Enhancing the sense of shared community linking academic staff and students, and developing more effective ways of listening and responding to students' views;

- Improving the timeliness and quality of feedback on assessment;
- Enhancing the academic support we give to students;
- Recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching and learning;
- Developing new approaches to online learning that can provide an excellent student experience to large numbers of students;
- Strengthening support for tutors and demonstrators.

The Committee was in agreement that, in the light of the evidence from internal review and the school annual quality reports, the provision of suitable learning and teaching space to ensure sufficient standards in student experience are maintain should also be prioritised in the forthcoming planning round.

The Committee noted that, in addition to highlighting these priorities in planning round guidance, equality and diversity in relation to learning and teaching was an issue to consider. It was noted that there was already interest in various areas, for example the Students' Association, in engaging with equality and diversity issues in relation to the curriculum. Since the issues regarding equality in the curriculum are likely to vary between disciplines, a focus on local projects may more appropriate than an institutional initiative, although the Committee suggested that the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee also discuss and share good practices on the issue.

7. College of Science and Engineering Postgraduate Research Annual Report 2015-16

The Committee received and discussed College of Science and Engineering's postgraduate research annual report for 2015/16. It was noted that due to an internal College deadline, it had not been possible to include postgraduate research within the College annual quality report submitted in January 2017. It was further noted that the contents of the report aligned with the actions identified for the Committee at the February 2017 meeting. The Committee approved the report.

8. Enhancement-led Institutional Review - Theme Lead Reports

The Committee received and discussed the reports from the theme leads responsible for taking forward the areas for development from the University's Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) in 2015/16. The Committee noted that the report on the Student Data Dashboard remained outstanding and agreed that it should be submitted to the next meeting in November.

The Committee discussed the utility of the current reporting process in the longer term given that the year on report had now been submitted. The Committee agreed to monitor the effectiveness of the current reporting arrangements.

9. MOOCs Annual Review 2016-17

The Committee received and discussed the annual report from the MOOC Strategy Group.

The Committee was in agreement that the primary responsibility for quality review of MOOCs rests with schools and this should be made explicit in the annual quality assurance guidance to schools. It was also agreed that there would be benefits in exploring ways to get a better institutional perspective on the quality of students' experience of MOOCs. It was suggested that more data on learners would be helpful, for example the MOOCs Strategy Committee could explore ways to track whether applicants for undergraduate or postgraduate programmes had previously undertaken MOOCs.

Action: Committee Secretary to feed comments back to MOOCS Strategy Group.

10. PT System Oversight Group

The Committee received and noted an update on the work of the PT System Oversight Group, in particular the approval of the School Personal Tutoring Statements 2017-18. It was noted that the statement from the Deanery of Clinical Sciences remained outstanding and would be requested from the Deanery as a matter of urgency. Members also noted anecdotal evidence that student and staff awareness of the existence of the statements was limited.

Action: PT System Oversight Group to request and consider a report from each school in regard to how the Personal Tutoring Statement is communicated to students and staff.

The Committee noted that the Group had proposed that it should continue to oversee the mainstreaming of the PT system for at least a further year with the following meeting schedule for 2017-18:

- One meeting to consider most recent student satisfaction survey results. This would be held in November 2017 and report to the Committee at the meeting due to be held later that month.
- One meeting to consider and approve School PT Statements for 2018-19. This would be held in late June/Early July 2018 and report to the September meeting of the Committee.

The Committee approved the proposals to extend the lifespan of the Group by a further year and the meeting schedule for 2017-18. The Committee agreed that the Group should continue to focus on monitoring whether each School's approach to Personal Tutoring was effective, although the Committee recognised that the available evidence limited the Group's capacity to do this.

11. Quality Framework

The Committee discussed and approved minor updates to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy and Thematic Review Guidance documents to align with current quality processes in relation to College reporting.

12. Internal Periodic Review - Portfolio Management and Review

The Committee discussed and approved proposals to enhance the Internal Periodic Review process to include consideration of the ongoing sustainability of courses and programmes to inform decisions about their continuation, in the context of the wider School, College and University portfolio.

For Information and Formal Business

13. Scottish Funding Council Annual Report 2016/17

The Committee approved the contents of the report subject to a minor amendment correcting TPR/PPR cycle by one year.

14. School Director of Quality Role Outline

The Committee approved the updated version of the School Director of Quality Role Outline.

15. Internal Review Reports and Responses

The Committee approved the final report of the 2016-17 TPR Asian Studies.

The Committee considered the recommendations and confirmed that it was content with progress for the following:

- 14 week responses 2016/17:
 - Joint TPR & PPR of Economics
 - TPR European Languages and Cultures
 - TPR Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies
 - TPR Social Work

- Year on responses 2015/16:
 - PPR of School of GeoSciences Postgraduate Taught Programmes
 - TPR Applied Sport Science and Sport & Recreation Management
 - TPR Celtic and Scottish Studies
 - TPR of Mathematics
 - TPR of School of Veterinary Studies – BVM&S programme

16. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17. Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday 30 November 2017 at 2pm in the Hodgson Room, Weir Building, Kings Buildings