

The University of Edinburgh
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 February 2018 at 2pm
in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

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
Megan Brown	Schools Engagement Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Services
Dr Gail Duursma	School Representative (Engineering), College of Science and Engineering
Brian Green	Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching), University of Strathclyde
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Sheila Lodge	CMVM Head of Academic Administration (Co-opted Member)
Sarah McAllister	Head of Operations & Projects & Assistant Director, Institute for Academic Development
Dr Gordon McDougall	Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Science and Engineering
Dr Inger Seiferheld	School Representative (Business School), College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science

Apologies:

Dr Claire Phillips	School Representative (Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services

Welcome:

The Convenor welcomed Dr Gail Duursma to the Committee as School Representative (Engineering) for the College of Science and Engineering. It was noted that Dr Duursma was replacing Sarah McAllister, who in turn replaces Dr Jon Turner on the Committee as representative for the Institute for Academic Development.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 30 November 2017

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1 Notes of the electronic Senate Quality Assurance Committee conducted from Wednesday 20 December 2017 to Friday 12 January 2018 were approved and decisions homologated.

For Discussion

3. College Quality Reports 2016-17

The Committee received and noted the annual College Quality Reports for 2016-17. The Committee was asked to discuss the reports, especially items noted in 'Themes for SQAC forward planning'.

The following was noted:

3.1 College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Estates and Space

The College reported that Schools had found the availability of high-quality teaching space and social spaces for students challenging. Concerns had also been raised in relation to the experience for students with learning adjustments and accessibility requirements, particularly in older parts of the estate.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from Space Strategy Group and the Head of the Timetabling and Examination Services to College concerns.

Quality Assurance Data

The College reported that feedback on the Student Data Dashboards had been very positive. However, some schools had raised concerns in regard to discrepancies between centrally held data and local school data which could undermine School confidence and engagement with the Dashboards. The College Dean of Quality thanked Alastair Duthie (College Academic Administrator) for reconciling data discrepancies for the purposes of the report. It was also noted that further training and guidance for schools would help staff to monitor trends effectively.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Director of Student Systems and Administration to College comments.

Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)

It was suggested that further information regarding the timeline for distribution of CEQs and guidance for staff and students in relation to how to use the results would enhance course evaluation process. It was noted that some schools had also requested that the emphasis of CEQ staff questions be placed on innovation in and enhancement of teaching from course teams rather than the performance of individual staff.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Director of Student Systems and Administration to College comments.

Extended Common Marking Scheme

The College reported that individual Schools and External Examiners had requested greater clarity and guidance on definitions within the Extended Common Marking Scheme. It was

noted that the College would continue to work with the central University to identify opportunities for enhancement and the sharing of good practice.

3.2 College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Estates and Space

The College reported concerns in relation to the availability of space for staff to meet privately with students. The College also requested that building work (and associated disruption caused by noise pollution, reduced accessibility etc.) be given greater attention when allocating teaching spaces. It was also requested that Timetabling be asked to ensure that sequential classes are based in as close proximity as possible, and not scheduled in relatively distant locations or entirely different campuses.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from Space Strategy Group and the Head of the Timetabling and Examination Services to College concerns.

Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)

The College reported concerns in regard to low CEQ response rates and suggested that alternative methods to email be sought for delivering the surveys and communicating reminders to students.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Director of Student Systems and Administration to College concerns.

External Examiner Reporting System

The College reported ongoing concerns with attributing comments to a particular course where an External Examiner is responsible for multiple courses. It was noted that External Examiners having responsibility for multiple courses was common practice in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and suggested that the Colleges may wish to share practice.

3.3 College of Science and Engineering

Estates and Space

The College reported ongoing challenges regarding the availability of high quality teaching space and social spaces for students, particularly in regard to the impact that lack of space has on further development of innovative learning and teaching strategies.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from Space Strategy Group to College concerns.

Quality Assurance Data

The College reported that feedback on the Student Data Dashboard had been positive, supporting monitoring and review processes. It was also noted that further training and guidance for schools would help staff use the data and that postgraduate research data was now essential for effective analysis and quality assurance purposes. The College Dean of Quality thanked Matt Elliot (Deputy Head of Academic Affairs) for helping compile the data for the report.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Director of Student Systems and Administration to College comments.

Course Enhancement Questionnaires (CEQs)

The College reiterated concerns in regard to low CEQ response rates and the detrimental impact this may have on confidence in the accuracy of the results.

Action: Committee Secretary to request a response from the Director of Student Systems and Administration to College comments.

Recruitment and Admissions

The College reported concerns that central University driven growth in student numbers may be challenging for Schools to support locally. As numbers grow some Schools were finding it challenging to find suitable tutors and supervisors for projects which has led to a greater number of Peer Learning Groups being created to fill the gap; a solution which was not suitable as a long term strategy. It was noted that Student Support was fundamental to Student Satisfaction and, as numbers grow, greater consideration needs to be given to how this was managed and how Schools were supported.

Sharing Good Practice

The Committee suggested that good practice examples from within the College of technology-enhanced learning could be shared at a future meeting of the Directors of Teaching network and of developing opportunities (projects) with industry could be shared at a future meeting of the Directors of Quality network.

Action: Committee Secretary to pass these suggestions to the relevant Academic Services colleagues.

4. Enhancement-led Institutional Review: Theme Lead Reports

The Committee received and discussed reports from the theme leads responsible for taking forward the areas for development from the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) held in Semester 1 2015.

The Committee agreed to reduce the theme update reporting frequency to annually in recognition of the fact that activities were being progressed and reported on via other mechanisms (such as the Learning and Teaching Strategy and Student Partnership Agreement implementation plans).

5. External Examiners: Postgraduate Taught Reports - Thematic Analysis 2016/17

The Committee considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering postgraduate taught programmes for the academic year 2016/17. The report noted a high number of commendations across the University and a low number of issues that required attention. Of the commendations, it was noted that the main theme commended across all three Colleges was the Assessment Process with the sub-theme of Student Feedback most commented on. Of the issues raised the main theme was the Provision of Information to examiners.

Action: Academic Services to include analysis of student feedback comments from postgraduate taught External Examiners' reports as a theme with the analysis of undergraduate reports (agree as an action at the last meeting of the Committee) and forward findings to the Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback and discuss at Director of Teaching Network.

Action: College representatives to ensure that the outcomes of the Committee's discussions are made available to and considered by the relevant College committee(s).

6. Mid-year update on progress against SQAC priorities

The Committee received and noted the mid-year update on progress towards the Committee's priorities agreed at Senate in May 2017.

It was noted that the Assistant Principal Academic Support, and Convenor of the Personal Tutor (PT) System Oversight Group would continue to explore methods for gathering data relating to the perceived effectiveness of the support provided by individual PTs. The Committee agreed that School Directors of Quality should be encouraged to reflect fully on the PT system in their School Annual Quality Reports.

Action: Convenor to encourage School Directors of Quality to reflect fully on the PT system in their School Annual Quality Reports at the forthcoming School Director of Quality briefing. Academic Services to work with College Quality Officers (or equivalent) to encourage School Directors of Quality to reflect fully on the PT system in their School Annual Quality Reports

In regard to this year's Thematic Review of support for Mature Students and Student Parents and Carers it was noted that the review panel would meet with student and staff stakeholders in a series of consultation sessions during March and April. The panel would then identify areas of good practice and areas for enhancement in student support across the University and report findings back to the Committee.

For Information and Formal Business

7. Service Excellence Programme

The Committee noted the update on the work being undertaken by the Student Administration & Support strand of the Service Excellence Programme.

8. Knowledge Strategy Committee

The Committee noted the update on matters considered by the Knowledge Strategy Committee at its meeting held on 13 October 2017.

9. Internal Review Reports and Responses

The Committee approved the following final reports:

- Postgraduate Programme Review (PPR) of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences;
- Teaching Programme Review (TPR) of English Literature;
- TPR of Medicine;
- TPR of Physics and Astronomy.

The Committee noted the year-on response for the PPR Physics and Astronomy and confirmed that it was content with progress.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday 26 April 2018 at 2pm in the Raeburn Room, Old College