

The University of Edinburgh
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 April 2016 at 2pm
in the Boardroom, 29 Buccleuch Place, George Square**

Present:	
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw	Director of Quality Assurance, CMVM, Assistant Principal Researcher Development
Dr Linda Bruce	Head of Quality Assurance Team, Academic Services
Professor Tina Harrison (Convener)	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Erin Jackson	Co-opted Member: Distance Learning & E-learning
Dr Sheila Lodge	CMVM Head of Academic Administration
Dr Robert Mason	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Humanities and Social Science
Dr Gordon McDougall	Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Science and Engineering
Ronnie Millar	Director, Student Counselling Service, Representative of Student Services
Professor John Sawkins	External Representative. Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching), Heriot-Watt University
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 Humanities and Social Science
Dr Jon Turner	Director, Institute for Academic Development
In attendance:	
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee
Gavin Douglas	Deputy Secretary - Student Experience
Nichola Kett	Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Apologies:	
Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	EUSA Academic Engagement Co-ordinator
Barry Neilson	Director, Student Systems
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services
Imogen Wilson	Vice President (Academic Affairs), EUSA

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convener welcomed members and noted apologies.

2. Minutes of previous meeting held 28 May 2015 QAC 15/16 5A

The Minutes of the previous meeting held electronically between 28 January and 4 February 2016 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. Convener's Business

4.1 Membership

The Convener noted that several members would come to the end of their term of office in the summer. Members were invited to consider possible gaps in committee membership where the provision for co-opted roles could be used and these would then be discussed at the May meeting.

4.2 Teaching Excellence Framework

The Convener reported that the technical consultation for TEF would take place in early May 2016. It was noted that the University would submit a response and would also contribute as part of the sector-wide consultation.

4.3 Enhancement Led Institutional Review

The Convener and Professor Sawkins would be members of the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland) group designing the next ELIR method.

5. For Discussion

5.1 Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Humanities and Social Sciences QAC 15/16 5B

The Committee received and noted the Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

5.2 Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Humanities and Social Sciences - Reader Comments QAC 15/16 5C

The Lead Reader noted the Meet the Deans meeting as an example of positive practice to share with other Colleges. The event continued to be exceptionally popular with students, judging by the highly positive news reports on the EUSA website written by student representatives who attended.

The Lead Reader noted that there remains a need to address the very low 4-year completion rates for PhD students, especially in the context of the University's target to increase the ratio of students: eligible supervisors to 2.5:1. The College needed to explore further the opportunities for growing and supporting online distance learning seems. It was also noted that the College must ensure that penalties for plagiarism were aligned with University policy.

5.3 Moray House School of Education oversight of Initial Teacher Education Provision QAC 15/16 5D

The Committee received a report from the College of Humanities and Social Science in relation to the annual quality assurance and enhancement report for the Moray House School of Education (MHSE). It was noted that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) agreed to a request from MHSE for a rescheduling of internal subject reviews to allow for a combined Teaching Programme Review of Education provision in 2017-18. Due to this change in schedule the review of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) would fall outside of the 6-year review cycle set by the SFC. Therefore, in agreeing to the request, the SFC and Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland) stipulated that particular attention must be given ITE provision in annual monitoring processes to until the review takes place in 2017-18.

The Committee **confirmed** that it was content with School and College ITE oversight procedures during 2014-15.

5.4 **Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine** QAC 15/16 5E

The Committee received and noted the Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

5.5 **Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine - Reader Comments** QAC 15/16 5S

The Lead Reader noted the Speedwell pilot as an example of positive practice to share with other Colleges. Speedwell allows users to develop exam question banks and in turn to produce exam papers (in the format of multiple choice questions) once a sufficient bank of questions and associated performance data has been established. Other examples of positive practice noted: the "Managing Expectations Surveys"; the approach to student engagement and community building (e.g. the meetings between student reps, the Director of Teaching and the BMS Quality Assurance representative); the online tutorial booking system, TUBS (permitting students to leave feedback for the tutor); and the database of good practice & annual showcase event.

The Lead Reader noted that the College's role in quality processes was an area for development which would be taken forward within the revised University quality framework. The Convener emphasised that there was a clear role for the College in monitoring and supporting schools, given its proximity to and familiarity with the context-specific issues. Other areas for further development at the College included: timetabling; instances of recurrent high fail rates on a small number of courses; degree classification results; college level oversight of study abroad; widening participation; PhD supervision, including completion rates (for discussion at institutional level at Senate Researcher Experience Committee).

5.6 **Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Science and Engineering** QAC 15/16 5F

The Committee received and noted the Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report for the College of Science and Engineering.

5.7 **Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report 2014-15: College of Science and Engineering - Reader Comments** QAC 15/16 5G

The Lead Reader noted the tutor and demonstrator champion role, part of efforts to improve support for tutors and demonstrators, as an example of positive practice to share with other Colleges. It was also noted that the College provides effective support for schools undertaking collaborative activity and has

effective overview of accreditation activity. The aide-memoire from College to Schools, together with review of progress, is also a good example of closing one element of the QA loop at School and College level.

The Lead Reader noted that it would be useful to monitor continued use of interruption of studies to undertake industrial training, to ensure that this remains an effective alternative to the more formal model. Consideration should also be given to best practice in moderation, which was an area where discussion across colleges would be useful. The Committee encouraged UG degree classification data (etc.) to be shared routinely with external examiners.

5.8 **Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Reports 2014-15:
Key Themes**

QAC 15/16 5T

The Committee received an overview report highlighting the key themes from the three 2014-15 College reports. It was noted that, in a change to the previous process, the Convener had met with the lead readers prior to the Committee meeting in order to discuss their observations and produce a collective overview report, bringing out key themes at College and University level.

The Convenor noted that there was good evidence that the new external examiner system seemed to be bedding in well and had had a positive impact particularly in regard to increased submissions and use of external examiner report data. There also appears to have been a significant shift towards the use of on-line submission and marking (in line with EUSA priorities for the year past) and the plans to roll-out EvaSys across the University have been well-received. It was also noted that changes to the TPR/PPR process (including feedback from the Committee), had been well-received as had the revised collaborations guidance material.

The Convenor noted space management, particularly the availability and appropriateness of learning and teaching space, continued to be an area for further development at the University level. Appropriate consistency in the quality and quantity of feedback to students across the University remains an institutional priority. Mainstreaming of the Personal Tutor system within QA processes is ongoing and it is important that Schools and Colleges continue to share innovation and good practice. Areas of improvement in regard to the postgraduate researcher experience include the need for a clear policy on the allocation of supervisors and the need to address low completion rates for PhD students (especially in the context of the University's target to increase the ratio of students: eligible supervisors to 2.5:1). There is also potential for further enhancement to the management of collaborations.

Action: College Representatives to disseminate Key Themes (Paper T) to College committees and take appropriate actions during the next cycle of meetings.

5.9 **Student Support Service Quality Assurance Framework (SSSQAF) Sub-Committee Report on the Annual Review of Student Support Services**

QAC 15/16 5H

The Committee received a report from the sub-committee on the annual review of Student Support Services. It was noted that this had been the first year that services had used the new service value grid format, and meetings had also been held earlier to better align with the University's planning cycle. It was reported that feedback had generally been positive in regard to the new simplified template and the change to the timing of reporting, which had enabled services to take earlier action within the academic year. The meeting format was valued as an opportunity to see how other services approached operational

processes and challenges. Services also valued the reporting process itself for internal planning purposes and the focus on student needs.

The Committee **approved** the commendations and recommendations.

It was noted that there was scope to refine the annual process further in order to maximise the benefit of collective discussion across services. It was agreed that consideration would be given to lead readers identifying key themes from annual reports in advance for discussion by the services; moving away from individual feedback to each service; reporting back to services on topics flagged for consideration at University level and actions taken; consideration of the interaction of annual and thematic reviews and supporting material.

It was agreed that the same timeline as 2015/16 should be adopted for the annual process in 2016/17.

Action: SQAC Convener and Deputy Secretary Student Experience to consider the future format of the SSSQAF annual reporting process and submit proposals to SQAC.

The Committee discussed proposals for future thematic reviews. It was agreed that as a first step it would be valuable to reflect on the current process and its outcomes, and that proposals for future themes and scheduling of reviews would be brought to the Committee.

Action: SQAC Convener to initiate reflection

5.10 **ELIR Reports**

QAC 15/16 5I

The Committee received and noted the final reports, the high level Outcome Report and the detailed Technical Report, on the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) held in Semester 1 2015. It was noted that the University had achieved the highest possible judgement and outcome in the ELIR, that of "effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience".

The reports have been published on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) website (www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007790) and the outcome of the ELIR has been communicated widely to staff and students, including through the University website.

5.11 **ELIR Theme Lead Reports**

QAC 15/16 5J

The Committee received and discussed reports from the theme leads responsible for taking forward the areas for development from the University's ELIR. It was noted that a themed approach has been taken to ensure broad alignment with existing learning and teaching priorities and Assistant/Vice Principal roles and responsibilities as part of an integrated planning process.

The five key themes and their leads are: postgraduate research student experience (AP Jeremy Bradshaw); personal tutoring system (AP Alan Murray); student representation at college and school level (EUSA & college deans of quality); assessment and feedback (AP Susan Rhind); staff engagement in learning and teaching, with a focus on workload allocation models (VP Jane Norman & SVP Charlie Jeffery). The University was also encouraged by the ELIR to progress existing work on the Student Data Dashboard project led by Barry Neilson, Director of Student Systems.

The Committee will receive progress reports on a 3 monthly basis during the first year after the ELIR, and 6 monthly thereafter. The aim will be to make substantial progress during the first year and to ensure all actions are complete by the end of year 3. The impact of actions will be evaluated.

The Committee commented on each theme as follows:

Theme: Assessment and Feedback

Members agreed that student satisfaction, as measured by the National Student Survey, was an important indicator of success but must not become the paramount criterion. A broad and balanced approach to the issue was essential. Members also noted that it would be helpful to consider methods of assessment, as well as feedback issues, and grade descriptors, as well as course descriptors.

Theme: Personal Tutor System

Members agreed on the importance of staff training in order to raise standards across the PT system. It was noted that enhanced training provision was planned with the aim of providing staff with greater clarity as to their role within the PT system, the way their School divides work between PTs and Student Support Teams, and how this local support articulates with other University support services. It was also noted that there had been strong growth in the demand for support for student mental health issues, both at the University and nationally. In response, the University has invested resources to provide all PTs with a half-day training in mental health issues starting in September 2016 (and continuing over a 2-3 year period). The sessions would be delivered by Student Counselling and the Student Disability Service and there would be an expectation that all PTs would attend. Members were in agreement that, while acknowledging immediate capacity issues due to staff resource limits, the University must move to a point whereby training is mandatory for all staff working within the PT system. Certain types of training for specific roles could be prioritised in the first instance.

Members were in agreement that the support needs of ODL students must be considered in parallel with ongoing enhancement for on-campus students. Furthermore, it was suggested that a different model of PT support for ODL students may be appropriate.

It was noted that peer support schemes were most successful where schools put an infrastructure in place. The committee recommended that the forward plan should aim to learn from current best practice. The schemes offered great scope for distance learning programmes to be involved. It was noted that peer support for postgraduate research students was under discussion via Senate Researcher Experience Committee.

Theme: Postgraduate Research Student Experience

Members noted that the proposed Postgraduate Research Experience Project (PREP) would cover many of the issues identified by the review and that a decision on funding for the project was due by June 2016, as an outcome of the current funding round. However, should PREP funding proposals be unsuccessful, it was agreed that alternative options for addressing the ELIR recommendations should be planned by separating the work that is dependent on funding (e.g. the development of online tools) and the work relating to policy development and training. This would allow certain elements that were not contingent on funding to be progressed quickly, some of which are already underway.

Members agreed that the recommendations regarding tutors and demonstrators were complex and needed to be unpacked and addressed as part of a discrete strand of work. Particular attention should be paid to clearly separate training

and support for staff (who support and supervise doctoral students) from that aimed at students (both in their roles as tutors and demonstrators and also in regard to research training).

The Committee requested that the July report should include an update on plans in the light of the decision on PREP.

Theme: Staff engagement in learning and teaching (workload allocation models)

Members agreed that (in regard to Recommendation 14), in regard to the effectiveness of learning and teaching strategies, student feedback satisfaction scores were an important indicator of success but must not become the paramount criterion. Members noted that implementation of the planned work was likely to take time to embed, and that a point later than February 2017 should be planned to gather evidence and assess the impact of the work.

Theme: Student Data Dashboard

Members noted that work was progressing well.

Theme: Student representation – college and school level

Members noted that the new elected College representatives would not be in place until 2017-18 at the earliest. However, it was agreed that the intervening period should be regarded as an opportunity for the Colleges and EUSA to develop clearer college-specific role descriptions and responsibilities for each of the college representatives. Members also agreed that the funding source for the new part-time, paid college representative roles needed clarification.

Action: SQAC Secretary to disseminate Committee comments to theme leads.

5.12 **Senate Committee Planning**

QAC 15/16 5K

The Committee received the framework for Senate Committee planning for 2016-17 onwards. It was agreed that the Committee would discuss how to approach planning in the longer-term at the next meeting in May.

5.13 **University Quality Framework Review - Draft Proposals**

QAC 15/16 5L

The Committee received draft proposals for revisions to the University's quality framework. It was noted that the review of the framework aimed to streamline processes while deriving maximum benefit from quality activity. The proposals had been developed following consultation with all schools and colleges. The proposals took account of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code.

In discussion, it was noted that the University level requirement for annual pro forma based course monitoring was being removed in order to lighten a particular burden raised by schools, but that course level issues could still be identified via existing processes and through the introduction of university annual programme review from 2016/17. Shortening of the annual reporting cycle by schools was welcomed, but in the light of reservations about all schools being able to meet a June deadline, it was agreed that an August deadline should be introduced. This would still allow annual quality reporting to feed in to school planning more effectively than at present. The proposals for streamlining Teaching and Postgraduate Programme Review were noted, including a more strategic focus on the school as a whole. It was noted that discussions were being held with QAA (Scotland) regarding the scope for greater alignment with accrediting bodies where appropriate.

The Committee agreed that a further version of the proposals would be circulated to schools and colleges for comment. QAA (Scotland) would also be asked to comment on the proposals. The final proposals would then be brought to the May meeting for approval. The revised framework would be implemented according to the timescales agreed at that meeting. Changes to the annual process would be implemented for 2016/17. Some changes could be implemented straight away for TPR and PPR, but other aspects would be developed further during next year. These changes would be communicated by Academic Services via college representatives, the Senate committees' newsletter and the Academic Services annual policy update in June 2016. A briefing event would be held for schools and colleges.

Action: Linda Bruce to circulate revised proposals, draft school and college annual report templates and timeline to colleges for consultation with schools prior to May SQAC.

5.14 **Non-standard QA arrangements for Zhejiang programmes** QAC 15/16 5M

The Committee noted that the University was in the process of establishing a jointly delivered (dual award) undergraduate degree programme in Integrative Biomedical Sciences with Zhejiang University. A short-life task group had been established to advise the Committee and Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) regarding proposals for the academic aspects of this new programme. The Committee endorsed the remit and membership of the task group and the quality assurance elements of the proposals for academic management of jointly delivered UG programmes at the ZJU-UoE Institute.

5.15 **Undergraduate Degree Classification Analysis** QAC 15/16 5N

The Committee received and noted the annual report on the degree classification outcomes of successfully exiting undergraduates.

Action: College Representatives to disseminate Undergraduate Degree Classification Analysis data to Schools.

6. For Approval

6.1 **Internal Review Reports and Responses - Feedback to Schools:** QAC 15/16 5O

- TPR of Architecture 2014/15 – year-on response.

The Committee approved the feedback to the School.

Action: SQAC Secretary to send the Committee's response to the School.

7. For Information

7.1 **Evasys Update** Verbal

Action: SQAC Members to send to the Director of the Institute for Academic Development examples of the use of EvaSys data to enhance teaching provision.

7.2 **Knowledge Strategy Committee Report** QAC 15/16 5P

The Committee received and noted the report to University Court from the Knowledge Strategy Committee meeting on 11 March 2016.

8. Electronic Business

8.1 Internal Review Reports and Responses:

QAC 15/16 5Q

- TPR of Archaeology 2014/15 - year on response.
- TPR of Informatics 2014/15 - year on response.
- PPR of Health in Social Science 2014/15 – year-on response.
- PPR of Online Distance Learning Programmes, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine 2014/15 – year-on response.
- TPR of Oral Health Sciences 2014/15 – year-on response.

The Committee noted that, subsequent to the meeting, individual Members would be invited to comment on specific responses. These comments would then be consolidated by the Convener and circulated electronically to the Committee, in order to avoid undue delay to the subsequent dissemination to the relevant subject areas and support service. The comments would then be submitted to the next meeting at which point the Convenor may wish to highlight specific points for discussion.

Action: Committee Secretary to allocate reports to lead readers for comment.

8.2 Internal Review Forward Schedule: College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

QAC 15/16 5R

The Committee **homologated** the changes to the review schedule.

8.3 Subject Benchmark Statements

The Committee noted that the following Subject Benchmark Statements had been circulated to the appropriate Schools:

- Revised:
 - [Accounting](#)
 - [Computing](#)
 - [Finance](#)
 - [Social Policy](#)
- Draft for Consultation:
 - [Art & Design](#)
 - [Landscape Architecture](#)
 - [Physics, Astronomy and Astrophysics](#)

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 Thursday 26th May 2016 at 3pm in the Hodgson Room, Weir Building, the King's Buildings Building