

The University of Edinburgh
Senatus Quality Assurance Committee

**Minutes of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee
held at 2pm on Thursday 8 December 2016
in the Hodgson Room, Weir Building, King's Buildings**

Present:

Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Convener)
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw	Director of Quality Assurance, CMVM, Assistant Principal Researcher Development
Brian Connolly	Secretary to Senatus Quality Assurance Committee
Patrick Garratt	Vice President (Academic Affairs), Students' Association
Nichola Kett	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Huw Lewis	Senior Lecturer School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures (Co-opted Member)
Dr Sheila Lodge	CMVM Head of Academic Administration (Co-opted Member)
Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka	Students' Association Academic Engagement Co-ordinator
Dr Gordon McDougall	Dean (Quality Assurance), College of Science and Engineering
Dr Claire Phillips	School Representative (Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies), College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Dr Jon Turner	Director, Institute for Academic Development
Tom Ward	Director, Academic Services

Apologies:

Dr Robert Mason	Associate Dean (Quality Assurance) College of Humanities and Social Science
Barry Neilson	Director, Student Systems (Co-opted Member)
Dr Inger Seiferheld	School Representative (Business School), College of Humanities and Social Science

1. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 October 2016

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved with the following amendment:

- Item 4.1 The Convenor reported that the undergraduate External Examiner Themes Report had been postponed until the next meeting in December due to the volume of reports **and responses** still outstanding.

2. Matters Arising

- **Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) Theme Lead Reports**
The Committee noted that the next set of theme lead reports, due at the next meeting in February, would form the basis of the University's ELIR year on response to Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland due in March 2017.
- **Consultation on the next iteration of ELIR**
The Convenor reported that an institutional response had been made to the consultation and several points had been taken forward by QAA Scotland in the development of the review method.
- **Convenor's Business**
 - **Membership**
The Convenor reported that Professor John Sawkins had stepped down as external member of the Committee due to work commitments. The Committee thanked Professor Sawkins for his work during his tenure and noted that Mr Brian Green, Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching) University of Strathclyde, would join the Committee as the new external member from February 2017.

Action: Committee Secretary to arrange for a thank you card and gift for Professor Sawkins.

 - **Course Enhancement Questionnaires**
The Convenor provided the Committee with an update on recent developments with the questionnaires following feedback from some stakeholders. These included some concerns raised regarding equality and diversity issues.

For Discussion

3. External Examiner Themes

The Committee received and considered an analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) covering undergraduate programmes for the academic year 2015/16. The report highlighted the high volume of commendations, and the scope to use the data systematically to assist with policy development and identifying good practices.

The Committee noted that in some Schools a high proportion of External Examiner reports were late and that Colleges had been working with the Schools concerned. In particular, the Committee noted that for the second year in succession the School of Law still had all 17 reports recoded as late.

Action: College Office to discuss External Examiner reports with the School of Law.

It was noted the report deadline, 6 week response deadline, and details of roles requirement were not in University policy. Members noted that there may be locally valid reasons why external examiner reports had not been responded to within 6 weeks. However the Committee was in agreement that the information contained in the reports must be acted upon promptly in order to maximise its use to schools and students.

Action: Academic Services to include reporting deadlines and key School and College roles in the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy, following College discussion of the 6 week response deadline at the next Deans of Quality meeting.

The Committee noted that in 2015/16 four matters were flagged for escalation to institutional level by Academic Response Coordinators. Of those, two were commendations, one was an issue and one a suggestion (both of which were CAHSS).

Action: TW and NK to liaise with RM to discuss the response to the external examiner issue escalated to institutional level in 2015/16.

The Committee noted that the number of issues raised by EERS remained low. The Committee were advised that the feedback from external examiners on the most common issue raised, assessment process, related to the need for clarity and consistency of moderation processes and marking criteria. Committee members were encouraged to ensure that moderation processes and marking criteria are made clear to external examiners.

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).

4. Annual Report on Complaint Handling

The Committee considered the annual report on Complaint Handling. The Committee noted that there were no discernible trends in the complaint handling cases.

Action: Investigations Manager to include details of areas not sufficiently engaging with the complaints process in the next report.

5. Student Appeals Annual Report – **CLOSED PAPER**

6. Student Discipline Annual Report – **CLOSED PAPER**

7. PT Oversight Group Update

The Committee received and discussed the report from the Group in relation to the operation of the Personal Tutor (PT) system. It was noted that the Group had considered the operation of the PT system in relation to the most recent National Student Survey (NSS), Edinburgh Student Experience Survey (ESES), and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results. The Group noted the limitations of this data in relation to PT performance and suggested that more robust, granular internal benchmark data was required if meaningful conclusions were to be

drawn and judgements made in regard to the relative performance of both Schools and individual PTs. However, in the context of PT performance data currently available, it was noted that the Group was satisfied that Schools had initiated actions where student survey results had dropped significantly compared to the previous year.

The Committee noted that good practice, drawn from the Student Association Teaching Awards, and PT system enhancement proposals were due to be considered by the Senior Tutor Network at the meeting to be held on Tuesday 13 December 2016.

8. MOOCs Report

The Committee received and discussed the annual report on the University's Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). It was noted that due to their non-credit bearing nature, the courses were not currently covered by the quality framework. However, the Committee was in agreement that MOOCs were an increasingly important and high profile element of the University's provision and as such it was important to ensure appropriate processes are in place to safeguard the quality of these courses.

Action: Committee Secretary to liaise with Melissa Highton, Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division, and with Colleges, to clarify the MOOCs quality assurance processes.

For information and formal business

9. Internal Review:

- **Teaching Programme Review (TPR) of Linguistics and English Language – Final Report**

The Committee approved the Final Report with the following amendment:

- The review team recommends that the dissertation (or project) should be compulsory ~~but~~ **and** with flexibility in the type of assessment.

- **Thematic Review of Mental Health Services – Initial Response**

The Committee approved the initial response.

10. Any Other Business

11. Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday 9 February 2017 at 2pm in Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House

Brian Connolly, Academic Services
December 2016