



University of the
West of England

ACADEMIC BOARD

Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2013 at 2pm in The Dartington Suite, Farmhouse, Frenchay Campus

Present: Leah Blackman, Jackie Chelin, Rachel Cowie, Megan Edmunds, Liz Falconer, Nadine Fry, Paul Gough, James Longhurst, Marc May, Julie McLeod (Chair), Margaret Needles, Peter Rawlings, Gerry Rice, Fiona Tolmie, Erica Toms, Teresa Wood.

In Attendance: Lisa Connors (Officer), Rebecca Smith, Martin Underwood, Gail Wilson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

AQEC13.12.01 John Clarke, John Deane, Marie-Annick Gournet, Mandy Lee, Billie Oliver, Rosie Scott-Ward, Jonathan Simmons, Dawn Stephens, Neil Willey.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

AQEC13.12.02 The minutes of the AQEC meeting held on 23RD October 2013 were confirmed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

AQEC13.12.03 **AQEC13.10.07 External Examiners' Summary Report Action Plan:** the formal feedback from the Deputy Head of the Student Administration Team (SAT) had been circulated to the Group. It was noted that the reference in the Collaborative Provision section to External Examiners (EEs) being invited to field and award boards should have referred to collaborative partners not EEs.

AQEC13.12.04 **AQEC13.10.08 Proposal for Teaching Observation:** the DVC (Academic) thanked Hartpury College colleagues for sharing their peer observation information. A number of other papers had been received and discussions were taking place with the Director of HR and the PVC Teaching & Learning and Student Experience as to how to take this forward.

AQEC13.12.05 **AQEC13.06.30 Recommendations regarding the External Examiner Workload – update on feedback from Associate Deans.** Discussions were ongoing with Award Board Chairs and relevant teams and External Examiner (EE) portfolios were under review. Data was now available to support the required costing exercise for a proposal for a revised fee structure and a paper would be submitted to Academic Board.

- AQEC13.12.06 Timeliness of EE nominations continued to be a concern with subsequent impact on the work of colleagues in Corporate and Academic Services and the EEs themselves. Members noted that identifying and contacting potential EEs was a lengthy and difficult process. The External Examiner Team was proactively facilitating this process by using JISC mailing lists and Professional Body contacts but it was agreed that Faculty Academic Quality and Standards Committees (ASQC) should take responsibility for ensuring that nominations were made in a timely fashion.
- AQEC13.12.07 The Group agreed that a robust system of support was required to support EEs, particularly those new to the role and members were invited to contribute to the consultation on an operational guide for EEs.
- AQEC13.12.08 Members did not support the proposal for an additional fee for attendance at Boards but recognised the particular importance of EE attendance at Boards considering collaborative provision. Caution was suggested in considering each module run as a distinct EE responsibility linked to fees as a run might relate to a very small number of students. There was some discussion of the suggestion that collaborative provision should not initially be identified to EEs as such but the Group considered that this distinction was important to allow for comparison with University based provision.

Action: Paper to be circulated to Faculty ASQCs

Outstanding Actions

- AQEC13.12.09 AQEC13.10.14 – The Director of the UWE Graduate School confirmed by e-mail that the January 2014 Graduate School Committee would consider a revised Code of Practice for PGR which would include application of the word count policy to PGR submissions. This would be followed up at a subsequent AQEC meeting.
- AQEC13.12.10 AQEC13.10.37 – The ECHO 360 demonstration had been circulated to the TEL Steering Group and would now be shared with AQEC members.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- AQEC13.12.11 **Update from the Survey Enhancement Board (SEB)** – The SEB was taking a targeted approach to improving survey results in the five key subject areas identified by Academic Board. The aim was for each area to exceed the NSS sector mean and, although specific deadlines for this had not been set, ongoing improvement was expected and would be monitored by ASQCs. The programme action plans had been reviewed by the SEB and feedback given to programme leaders.
- AQEC13.12.12 Whilst these five areas had been specifically targeted, all programmes were aiming for improved survey scores with a view to the University achieving 90% satisfaction rates in the coming years. In addition, the Board considered some university-wide areas of concern including timetabling and start of the year. Regular reports would be made to AQEC.

- AQEC13.12.13 **Moderation Task and Finish Group** – The Task and Finish Group had mapped the student assessment journey with a view to providing a comprehensive moderation guide available in both paper and electronic formats. The draft assessment map was presented to the Committee for discussion.
- AQEC13.12.14 Members noted that clarity was required between marking and moderation and that stakeholder input would be required for assessment in practice. It was vital that marks were moderated against the marking criteria and not through a process of normalisation. Where there was a third level of moderation, potentially by the module leader, it should be clear what the marks were to be moderated against.
- AQEC13.12.15 The Student Representative Members welcomed the standardisation of the process and emphasised the importance of transparency. Clarity in assessment setting and the information provided in module handbooks was very important to students and there was an expectation that students should be informed if there was any deviation from the agreed processes.
- AQEC13.12.16 The Academic Literacy Forum had highlighted that students often sought help in interpreting assessment briefs and practical elements of assessments, such as formatting. It was important that these matters should be made clear when the assessment brief was produced.
- AQEC13.12.17 Members discussed the issue of borderline marks and noted that the timing of Field Boards made it difficult to review the marks once aggregated. Whilst borderline marks should always be carefully considered the Group agreed that marks in the nine range could be valid. This was supported by the student representatives. Care should also be taken not to inflate marks as rounding already took place at the element level. Guidance on this issue would be welcomed as it was currently only available at element and component level.
- AQEC13.12.18 Consideration was given to exploring more computer based assessment and marking and incorporating guidance on this into the assessment journey. It was also suggested that the Assessment Setting section of the document be amended to include information on levels and a link to the level descriptors. The information regarding collaborative provision would also need to be clarified to take into account the differences between the franchise and validation models. It was agreed that references in the document to SharePoint would be updated to name the specific sites.
- AQEC13.12.19 Consideration was given to the accompanying Assessment Process template which was cautiously welcomed as a formalisation of existing practice in providing evidence of moderation to EEs. However, there were a number of concerns about the practical implementation of the template and process and it was agreed that consultation on the assessment journey would be undertaken with relevant committees to seek advice on the best means of implementation.

- AQEC13.12.20 **External Examining Annual Report** – The Group welcomed the report and thanked the authors for their work. The highlighting of good practice was appreciated as were the useful meetings conducted with Associate Deans.
- AQEC13.12.21 The report and its recommendations were discussed and the following specific points raised:
- ‘Turnitin’ was a text matching tool which could help in identifying plagiarism but it must be emphasised that software should not be wholly relied upon in this matter.
 - Caution should be exercised in the wording of the guidance around EEs meeting students. Whilst opportunities could be made available, the purpose of such meetings should be clearly identified.
 - Guidance should be issued on seeking EE feedback for draft assessments rather than formalising this and incorporating it into the proposed Assessment Process template.
 - Reference to the method for providing documentation through SharePoint in Section 4 should be clarified and an appropriate action identified.
 - The contents of Appendix 3 would be more appropriately referred to as comments from EEs than actions.
 - The data tables, along with details of how the data was generated, should be made available to Faculty ASQCs and Hartpury College.
- Action: Data to be made available to ASQCs and Hartpury College Examination Feedback Form to be circulated to the Group Report to be amended in line with the Group’s comments**
- AQEC13.12.22 **Academic Calendar** – An HR-related working group had been convened to consider introducing a three teaching block academic year. It had established that this was possible to achieve within existing staff contracts through negotiation and management. However, it was recognised that this would have implications for matters such as estates work and Summer Schools, particularly if January intakes continued to increase. The experience of start of year activities for January intakes was also a matter for concern as it was not seen to be comparable to that of September intakes. This paper would be referred to Academic Board for approval.
- AQEC13.12.23 **QAA Event: Students’ Expectations of Higher Education** – The report had recently been published of a QAA commissioned research project into student expectations and perceptions of the quality of their learning experience and the academic standards of their chosen programmes of study. Particular themes emerging from the research included a lack of clarity around what was covered by students’ fees; contact time and the desire for Technology Enhanced Learning to be additional to, rather than replacing, contact time. The full report could be found [here](#).
- AQEC13.12.24 **Report from the Library on progress with the skills work implementation** –The Group received and discussed the updated remit for the Academic Literacy Forum (ALF). The Group was to undertake an audit of current academic support skills provision

across the University to identify strengths and areas for development and improve coordination.

- AQEC13.12.25 There was an evolving virtual presence and there were plans for a physical co-location with the Centre for English Language and Academic Skills, although this was dependent on the masterplan. It was recognised that the physical presence of skills support was less prominent on satellite campuses and work was underway to develop appropriate spaces. Members suggested that this should be added to the ALF remit.
- AQEC13.12.26 An ALF event would be held in conjunction with the 2014 Summer Schools and members were invited to contribute ideas and suggestions.
- AQEC13.12.27 **Update on QAA Institutional Review 2015** – Both the Institutional Review (IR) Project Manager and Administrator were now in post. Work was ongoing in meeting with colleagues who had undertaken the mapping of the Quality Code chapters and drawing up action plans for each Chapter. Collaborative Provision had been identified as a priority area and the IR Team were working closely with the Academic Partnership Development Team and Faculties. An IR webpage had been developed and communications would go out through the Managers E-Zine and the Voice magazine.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- AQEC13.12.28 **QAA Research Report: Student Engagement in Learning and Teaching Quality Management** – Members noted the report which comprised:
- an overview report summarising key research findings and implications for policy and practice.
 - detailed research findings.
 - a good practice guide for institutions and students' unions.

The full details could be found [here](#).

- AQEC13.12.29 **UWE Link Tutor and Partnership Lead Role Descriptions** – These critical roles had been developed as part of the Academic Partnerships Project. Link Tutors were appointed at programme level, whilst the Partnership Lead took oversight of the entire partnership. These new roles had been integrated into the annual monitoring processes and work was also being undertaken on student representative roles within partnerships.
- AQEC13.12.30 **Executive Summary from Faculty ASQCs** – It was noted that not all Faculties had provided summaries and those that were provided were insufficiently detailed.
- Action: AQEC Officer to communicate this to ASQC Officers**
- AQEC13.12.31 **Employability and Enterprise Management Group** – The Group noted the dates of the 2013/14 meetings.
- AQEC13.12.32 **Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Steering Group** – The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October were received.

- AQEC13.12.33 **Learning 4 All Hub Group** – Dates for the 2013/14 meetings were noted.
- AQEC13.12.34 **Institutional Review Group** – The minutes of the meeting held on 24th October were received.
- AQEC13.12.35 **Widening Participation (Schools and Colleges) Partnership Group and Widening Participation Operations Group** – The minutes of the meetings held on 16th and 30th October were received.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- AQEC13.12.35 The Members thanked Becky Smith, who was soon to take maternity leave, for her work as Officer to the Committee. The Group also thanked Paul Gough, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, for his contribution to the Committee and wished him well in his new role.

*AQEC Minutes: L Connors
Unconfirmed: 13th December 2013
Confirmed: 9th April 2014*

**ACADEMIC QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT GROUP – ACTION SHEET FROM
THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER 2013**

Minute	Substance	Actioning Officer	Reporting/other deadline
AQEC13.12.08	External Examiner workload update paper to be circulated to Faculty ASQCs	Senior External Examiner Officer	Next ASQC Meeting
AQEC13.12.21	External Examiner Report data to be made available to ASQCs and Hartpury College	Senior External Examiner Officer	Next Meeting
AQEC13.12.21	Examination Feedback Form to be circulated to the Group	Senior External Examiner Officer	Next Meeting
AQEC13.12.21	External Examiner Report to be amended in line with the Group's comments	Senior External Examiner Officer	Next Meeting
AQEC13.12.30	Communicate AQEC comments to ASQC Officers	Officer	Complete

**ACADEMIC QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT GROUP – ACTION SHEET FROM
PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Minute	Substance	Actioning Officer	Reporting/other deadline
AQEC13.10.04	Update the wording of the membership as appropriate	Governance Team	Complete
AQEC13.10.07	Obtain formal feedback to the External Examiner Summary Report Action Plan from the SAT Manager	Curriculum Enhancement Manager	Complete
AQEC13.10.08	Update members on progress against proposal for teaching observation to be put in place for all staff	PVC (Academic)	Complete
AQEC13.10.10	Share paper on Peer Observation system	Hartpury Associate Dean: Teaching and Learning	Complete
AQEC13.10.14	Graduate School Committee would be requested to consider whether the Word Count Policy should be added to the Code of Practice for Post Graduate Research students	Graduate School Director	February Meeting
AQEC13.10.19	Refer issue of the inclusion of pass/fail outcomes for standard modules at level 2 and above to Regulatory Review Group	Officer	Complete
AQEC13.10.37	Provide demonstration of Echo360 to Group	Chair	Complete
AQEC13.06.22	The comments made by AQEC would be fed into the final versions of the programme and module handbook templates.	DAR	Complete but templates to be reviewed for 2014/15
AQEC13.06.23	To develop an implementation plan for the new Student Attendance and Engagement Policy.	PVC / Working Practices group	Ongoing
AQEC13.06.28	Fitness to Study - Further work to be undertaken to confirm when different policies should be used.	Student Services	Ongoing – guidance & training in development
AQEC13.06.30	The Chair agreed the recommendations regarding the External Examiner Workload would be opened up to Associate Deans for consideration with a deadline of a week to provide any comments. The Chair would then consider providing endorsement under delegated authority.	AQEC	Complete



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ACADEMIC QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting date: Wednesday 4th December 2013

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR FACULTY ASQCS**

- The proposal for teaching observation to be put in place for all staff was progressing with discussions between the DVC (Academic), HR and the PVC Teaching & Learning and Student Experience.
- An update on recommendations regarding the External Examiner Workload was discussed and a paper suggesting a revised fee structure would be presented to Academic Board.
- The Survey Enhancement Group was continuing to monitor the identified priority subject areas with the aim of increasing survey scores beyond the sector mean in each area.
- The Moderation Task and Finish Group had mapped the student assessment journey with a view to providing a comprehensive moderation guide available in both paper and electronic formats. The draft mapping document was discussed by the Group and would be opened up to further consultation at relevant committees.
- The External Examining Annual Report was discussed and its recommendations for enhancement actions endorsed.
- The proposal for a three teaching block academic year was discussed with concerns raised about the equity of the start of the year experience for non-standard intakes.
- The report had recently been published of a QAA commissioned research project into student expectations and perceptions of the quality of their learning experience and the academic standards of their chosen programmes of study. Particular themes emerging from the research included a lack of clarity around what was covered by students' fees; contact time and the desire for Technology Enhanced Learning to be additional to, rather than replacing, contact time.
- The Academic Literacy Forum (ALF) had an updated remit and would be undertaking an audit of current academic support skills provision across the University to identify strengths and areas for development and improve coordination. Suggestions for a joint ALF and Summer School event in Summer 2014 were invited.
- Both the Institutional Review (IR) Project Manager and Administrator were now in post. Work was ongoing in meeting with colleagues who had undertaken the mapping of the Quality Code chapters and drawing up action plans for each Chapter. Collaborative Provision had been identified as a priority area and the IR Team were working closely with the Academic Partnership Development Team and Faculties. An IR webpage had been developed and communications would go out through the Managers E-Zine and the Voice magazine.

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