

SEC/2013/3/0093

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee:
minutes of a meeting held on Friday 15 February 2013

- Present: Professor A G Chetwynd (Chair)
Professor G Blower
Dr G Brown
Mr I Denny
Professor L Hendry
Professor G Johnes
Dr R Lauder
Professor C G Rogers
- In attendance: Mr A R Okey
Mrs Fan
Ms K Fenton
Ms N Read
Dr Zhu
Ms A McFarlane (Secretary)
- Apologies: Professor J Balogun, Mr R Clark, Professor A Rashid, Mrs
L M Wareing,

Section A: Introductory items

ASQC/2013/01 Terms of reference and membership

Documents: SEC/2013/3/0051, SEC/2013/3/0052

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the committee.
- 1.2 The committee **noted**:
- (i) its terms of reference and membership
 - (ii) a draft business plan for 2013.

Members requested that the July meeting of the committee be scheduled for after the meeting of Committee of Senate on 9 July, so that a report could be made. Members were invited to email the committee secretary regarding any items that they felt should be timetabled for particular meetings during the year.

Section B: Items for discussion

ASQC/2013/02 Undergraduate Annual Teaching Reviews: Faculty reports 2011/2012

Documents: SEC/2013/3/0053; SEC/2013/3/0054; SEC/2013/3/0055; SEC/2013/3/0056; SEC/2012/3/0360

- 2.1 The committee received faculty summaries of annual teaching review reports. Each report was introduced by an Associate Dean from a different faculty, who had scrutinised the report in advance of the meeting:

Faculty ATR

Management School

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Faculty of Health and Medicine

Faculty of Science and Technology

Scrutineer

Dr Bob Lauder

Professor Linda Hendry

Professor Gordon Blower

Professor Colin Rogers

- 2.2 Introducing the discussion, the Chair drew the attention of the committee to the importance of the following:

- ensuring that all ATR reports had been completed as required, and that appropriate actions had been identified in an action plan;
- noting progress made against the previous year's action plan;
- highlighting institutional level issues.

The Associate Deans confirmed that all the faculty reports they had scrutinised showed that faculties had completed the ATR process as required and had produced clear and appropriate action plans.

Each report was considered in turn and the following points were made.

- 2.3 Management School

- 2.3.1 The annual teaching reviews for the Sunway and Goenka international partnerships had not been received in time for consideration alongside the Lancaster campus programmes and would therefore be considered at the March meeting of the faculty

undergraduate teaching committee. The School felt that it would be beneficial if all ATRs could be considered at the same point in the cycle in future and LUMS' Director of International Partnerships was working with Sunway and Goenka to achieve this.

2.3.2 Members noted the following areas of good practice arising from the previous year's action plan:

- inclusion of the module OWT.250-Research@Work in the curricula for all students going out on placement;
- introduction of on-line study skill materials through development of zero credit weighted modules (Department of Marketing);
- review of Plagiarism Framework and support given to plagiarism officers in the faculty;
- contribution of alumni with respect to careers advice and events.

2.3.3 Some external examiners had commented that they needed to see an evidence trail of internal moderation to help them in assessing the marks awarded against grade descriptors. An example of good practice in this respect had been cited by an external examiner for Management Science.

2.3.4 The Periodic Quality Reviews of the Departments of Marketing and Management Science had taken place in academic year 2011-2012. Both departments had received a judgement of 'full confidence'.

2.3.5 The School's maintenance of accreditation visit by AACSB (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) had recently taken place, and reaccreditation by EQUIS would be considered at a review in May 2013. A formal response for AACSB was awaited.

2.3.6 Members were interested to hear of the success of the LUMS Learning and Teaching fora in engaging colleagues in debate on key topics related to teaching.

2.3.7 In relation to NSS scores, members from other faculties supported LUMS comments about student expectations and understanding how students were interpreting and answering the NSS questions.

2.3.8 Assessment and feedback continued to be an area of concern within LUMS. Much work had been done by departments and faculty but did not appear to have had a positive effect in terms of the NSS. Members welcomed a suggestion from LUMS that an

institution-wide forum for discussion of such issues would be helpful, particularly in relation to sharing good practice with departments that performed well in this respect. The faculty Associate Deans were asked to consider this further.

Action: Faculty ADTs

- 2.3.9 The committee was interested in LUMS' comments in relation to English language support for students, and noted that LUMS had appointed an additional Student Learning Advisor to focus support on undergraduate students. Members reported high levels of demand for such support within their own faculties.
- 2.3.10 The lack of an electronic attendance monitoring system and the amount of staff time needed to maintain manual registers remained a concern for departments.
- 2.3.11 It was confirmed that LUSI programming for assessment regulations for Economics would be undertaken this year.
- 2.3.12 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that a review of Undergraduate Study Abroad had recently been completed.
- 2.3.13 It was noted that work was being done to address the problem of poor acoustics in County South lecture theatre.

2.4 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

- 2.4.1 The establishment of the Faculty Teaching Forum was welcomed.
- 2.4.2 The committee noted comments regarding increasing demand for English language support, in particular from overseas undergraduates. With the move to faculty-based student learning support, departments no longer had access to a central team of advisors and their full range of expertise. The faculty Associate Dean was discussing the issue with student support colleagues.
- 2.4.3 In response to questions about the Lancaster Award, the Chair clarified that there was no limit on student numbers.
- 2.4.4 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that he was working with Facilities to respond to the request for the creation of a Moot Room for the Law Department.
- 2.4.5 With respect to the introduction of the letter grade marking system and the extent to which student transcripts could easily be understood by potential employers, the committee noted that the Law Department's concerns had now been addressed. Members

reported that they were aware of a number of other UK Universities that were moving to grade point average systems.

- 2.4.6 The committee heard that the FASS teaching committee had recently discussed the idea of providing formal feedback to students on examinations, as well as on coursework. The issue had been raised by external examiners in reports for the last two years (though there was no consensus in their opinions) and was the subject of some debate in the sector. Attention was drawn to work by Warwick University, which indicated that where students mentioned a lack of feedback, they had in mind examinations as well as coursework.
- 2.4.7 The committee noted with interest the analysis being done by the FASS TQSO to achieve a better understanding of NSS scores, including how students interpreted the NSS questions. Members noted the work being done by LUSU to help students understand the NSS and its aims.

2.5 Faculty of Health and Medicine

- 2.5.1 The phased transfer of the degree in Medicine from the University of Liverpool was proceeding and had been approved by the GMC. Lancaster would admit the first students to its own MBChB in autumn 2013.
- 2.5.2 The committee was concerned to hear that problems regarding lift access within the Faraday Building had yet to be resolved, and that a firm timetable for improvement works had yet to be received. Members agreed that an urgent resolution to this problem was needed. The Chair undertook to raise the issue again.

Action: Chair

- 2.5.3 The committee noted the uncertainty arising from the 'Modernising Scientific Careers' process with respect to Biomedical Science students. The process, which was government driven, had long term implications for the way graduates entered employment in NHS pathology laboratories. The present impact was that placement opportunities were reducing and would be discontinued in due course.
- 2.5.4 With respect to the development of new programmes in collaboration with Sunway University, members commented on the importance of putting in place processes for moderation in time for the first intake.

2.6 Faculty of Science and Technology

- 2.6.1 The committee noted the faculty's comments on the challenges presented by the international teaching partnerships in terms of integrating them into faculty and quality assurance systems.
- 2.6.2 Engineering had assigned a staff member to provide 'transition support' to direct entrant second year students from overseas.
- 2.6.3 An expansion of student numbers was leading to concerns about availability of large teaching spaces and pressures on laboratories and equipment. It was noted that a lack of large lecture theatres had also been identified as a problem by LUMS.
- 2.6.4 Members were interested to note that field-trip modules had received good feedback from students. Within FST such modules were integrated within the academic discipline and this was considered an important factor.
- 2.6.5 In relation to entrants with higher grades, members felt that ensuring able students were sufficiently stretched at Part I (and beyond) was likely to be an issue across the university and merited further attention. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that in the review of Part I recently undertaken it had been difficult to find common ground in this respect. Members agreed that this issue needed to be addressed in the departmental context and it was agreed that Associate Deans would take forward discussion within their own faculties.

Action: Faculty ADTs

- 2.7 The committee **noted** for information the report on themes and issues arising from the Undergraduate External Examiner reports from 2011/2012. Members heard that the report had been considered by DUGS-AG at its meeting on 19 October 2012 and appropriate actions had been identified.

ASQC/2013/03 Report on Annual Review Process in the Regional Teaching Partners

*Documents: SEC/2013/3/0057; SEC/2013/3/0058;
SEC/2013/3/0001; SEC/2012/3/0761*

- 3.1 The committee received summary reports on the outcomes of the annual monitoring processes undertaken in relation to Blackpool and The Fylde College and Blackburn College. Members heard that an annual programme review process was conducted by the colleges within guidance provided by the university. Each college

then submitted a report to the university's Collaborative Provision Teaching Committee (CPTC), where it was discussed alongside summaries of external examiner reports and course consultant reports.

- 3.2 The committee **noted** the actions arising from the annual monitoring processes. Members drew attention to the action related to monitoring staffing resources, and the importance of ensuring that staff were afforded time for scholarship.
- 3.3 The committee **noted** for information the issues and themes arising from the external examiners reports on Blackpool and The Fylde College and Blackburn College. Members heard that the reports had been considered by the CPTC at its meeting on 18 January 2012, and appropriate actions had been identified.

ASQC/2013/04

New Periodic Quality Review procedures and schedule

Document: SEC-2013-3-0059

- 4.1 The committee received a proposal for modifications to the periodic quality review process and an amended schedule of reviews.
- 4.2 It was noted that Senate had agreed an amended process for the periodic monitoring of teaching quality and standards at its meeting in May 2012. Following this, the detail of the process had been extensively discussed by the PG and UG Associate Deans for Teaching at meetings of DOGS-AG and DUGS-AG. All had agreed that the process as set out was not workable and that modifications needed to be made. These modifications had been discussed and agreed by the ADTs and the proposal now being presented set out an amended process in its entirety, including the relationship between periodic and annual monitoring.

The main differences between this modified approach and the one set before Senate were as follows.

- (i) It was proposed that PG and UG would be combined together for the purposes of PQR.
- (ii) Because of the logistical difficulties associated with timing issues, PQR and ATR would be kept as separate procedures, with the standard ATR pro-forma to be used as per normal in the PQR year.
- (iii) Given the above, it was proposed that PQR would take place every four years rather than every three.

4.3 The committee welcomed the proposed modifications to the review process. The following points were made in discussion:

- the Review Panel would be chaired by an internal assessor from Lancaster;
- guidance would be given to departments on what needed to be covered in the away-day during a PQR year, and on the output from the away-day;
- review of PGR should form a key part of the new process and the PG ATR pro-forma should be revised to provide more opportunity to discuss PGR provision;
- wider involvement of students in the review process would be valuable and could be achieved via departmental student representatives.

The committee supported the change to a 4 year cycle for PQR. It was noted that some further adjustments might be needed to the timings of the reviews for CETAD, IEED and Economics, and it was agreed that these should be discussed with the relevant ADTs outside the meeting.

4.4 Subject to the points noted at **4.3** above, the committee

- (i) **approved** the proposed Periodic Quality Review and related ATR procedures;
- (ii) **approved** the proposed PQR cycle and schedule of reviews;
- (iii) **noted** the subsequent actions still to be taken.

ASQC/2013/05 Amendments to regulations governing postgraduate provision

Document: SEC-2013-3-0060

5.1 The committee received a proposal from the Dean of Graduate Studies to approve amendments to the postgraduate regulations, as set out in document *SEC-2013-3-0060*.

Members recalled that the postgraduate taught and postgraduate research regulations had been approved by Senate in June 2012. Further amendments were now proposed to respond to issues arising following the implementation of the revised regulations. The amendments had been discussed by DoGS-AG.

5.2 The following points were noted.

5.2.1 The committee was advised that the second sentence of the amendment to regulation 2J.3 of the Postgraduate Taught Regulations should read

Only students who have achieved a condonable mark for all modules at the first attempt are eligible for the classes of merit and distinction.

- 5.2.2 Attention was drawn to the proposed amendment to fees eligibility that would make provision for students who wished to remain on full fees once the minimum registration period had expired. Typically these were students holding sponsorship for more than the minimum registration period. The committee was reassured that there was no change to eligibility for payment of a reduced composite fee where students continued to be registered but made no demands on the facilities of the University apart from strictly limited supervision during the last stages of thesis preparation.
- 5.3 The committee **approved** the amendments for immediate implementation, in order that current students might benefit from the changes.