

SEC/2013/3/0695

**LANCASTER UNIVERSITY**

Academic Standards and Quality Committee:  
minutes of a meeting held on 5 September 2013

**Present:** Professor A G Chetwynd (Chair)  
Professor G Blower  
Dr G Brown  
Mr I Denny  
Dr C Edwards  
Professor L Hendry  
Dr R Lauder  
Professor C Milligan  
Mr J O'Neill  
Professor M Shackleton  
Mrs L M Wareing

**In attendance:** Mr C Cottam  
Ms K Fenton  
Dr M Mukerji  
Ms A McFarlane (Secretary)

**Apologies:** Professor G Johnes, Dr J Howard, Mr A R  
Okey, Professor C G Rogers

**Section A**                      **Introductory items**

ASQC/2013/24                      Minutes

*Document: SEC/2013/3/0520*

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2013 were confirmed as an accurate record.

ASQC/2013/25      Matters arising

25.1      Regulations for the Lancaster Medical degree

*Minute ASQC/2013/19.2 refers*

It was reported that draft regulations for the Lancaster Medical degree had been received by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and once finalised would be forwarded for approval by chair's action on behalf of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (as previously agreed).

25.2      Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures 2013/2014

*Minute ASQC/2013/3/12 refers*

It was noted that the 2013-14 edition of the Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures (MARP) would be available from 20 September. MARP was updated each academic year to incorporate any changes to regulations and procedures agreed during the year. As previously noted by the committee, the structure and format of MARP had been revised slightly for 2013-14.

ASQC/2013/26      Report on Chair's Action

The Committee noted the following proposal approved by the Chair on behalf the Academic Standards and Quality Committee since the meeting on 10 July.

Approval of Revisions to Associate College Undergraduate Assessment Regulations

- Addition of Regulations for the Professional Certificate in Education (PCE) and the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).
- Regulations on final year reassessment for unclassified programmes where condonation is not permitted.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies had approved the revisions.

ASQC/2013/27      Terms of reference and membership

*Documents: SEC/2013/3/0532, SEC/2013/3/0533*

- 27.1 The Committee reviewed and noted its terms of reference and membership.
- 27.2 The Committee reviewed a draft business plan for 2013-14, noting that further items were expected to come forward as the year progressed.

**Section B                      Items for discussion**

ASQC/2013/28      Issues identified in faculty ATRs; working groups for 2013/2014

- 28.1 Summary of responses to institutional issues identified by faculties

*Document: SEC/2013/3/0535*

The Committee received a summary of the actions taken and planned in response to institutional issues identified in faculty annual teaching reviews. The Committee discussed further actions and priorities and it was agreed that an updated report on progress against actions would be made to the next meeting.

- 28.2 Working groups and thematic reviews for 2013/2014

The Committee noted its responsibility (within its terms of reference) for commissioning time-limited groups to address learning teaching and assessment issues and make recommendations as appropriate. Within this context, members also heard that the University had for several years conducted a series of thematic reviews, for which it had been commended by the QAA. The Committee was asked to consider whether it wished to commission any such reviews or working groups for 2013-2014 in light of the discussion noted above (minute 28.1).

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that he had already been asked to lead two working groups: one on computer provision for students, and another on teaching space; and it was noted that Professor Chetwynd was leading a review of the role of Committee of Senate. Dr Brown recommended that other issues raised could usefully be brought together into a single overarching review on the theme of "How do we ensure that all students, wherever they are studying, achieve to their highest potential". Such a review would be able to look at the concerns identified regarding learning and language support, alongside linked issues

such as retention and attainment, in an integrated manner. The Committee welcomed this recommendation, with the advice that the remit of the review should be carefully scoped and realistic timescales put in place. It was agreed that further work would be done and a draft work plan for the review would be brought to a later meeting.

**Action: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Secretariat**

28.3 Annual teaching reviews from International teaching partners

*Document: SEC/2013/3/0534*

At the February meeting of the Committee, LUMS had reported that annual teaching reviews for Sunway and Goenka had not been received in time for consideration by the faculty teaching Committee at the usual time. It had been agreed that faculties would consider any reviews received after the normal point in the cycle through their teaching committees and would report to the September meeting of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

The Committee received a report from LUMS. It was noted that review reports from the international teaching partners had been discussed at the LUMS undergraduate teaching committee on 13 March 2013 and that detailed comments were available in the minutes of the meeting. Constructive feedback had been given to the partners, however it had been recognised that further guidance and training was needed in relation to the ATR process. LUMS TQSO had therefore developed a presentation for discussion with the ITPs, which would support them to develop documents that would meet the required standards for the 2012-13 ATR. This was welcomed by the Committee.

The Committee emphasised the importance of the ATR process and agreed that partners should be supported to conduct the process to an appropriate standard. The Committee asked to be kept informed of progress in this area.

ASQC/2013/29

Report from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies on the new undergraduate assessment regulations

- 29.1 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies gave a verbal report on the graduation results of the first cohort to complete under the new undergraduate assessment regulations, and areas for review.

29.2 The Committee heard that overall no widespread concerns appeared to have arisen from the application of the new classification regulations, and this view was supported in external examiner feedback. The proportion of students achieving 1<sup>st</sup>/2.1 classifications had increased in line with the improvement in students' entry qualifications, and was now 73%. Around 100 students had been offered final year resits, the majority of whom would be able to qualify for a 2.2 or 3<sup>rd</sup> class degree, if successful. The number of outright fails at this stage stood at 21, though this would increase once the resit results were complete, since not all students would be successful in re-assessment.

29.3 Though there was no indication of widespread problems, there were some areas that warranted monitoring. The Committee noted that a report had been made to Senate in October 2012, including recommendations for further work once the 2012/2013 undergraduate assessment cycle was complete. These were:

- analysis of the fails
- review of the grading scale
- review the approach of requiring resits.

In light of experience in 2012/13, the following actions were proposed and agreed by the Committee.

- (a) Analysis of the fails. It was agreed that an analysis of fails should be undertaken as part of the review proposed above (minute 28.2) to determine whether there were particular groups at risk of failure and whether there were actions that could be taken.
- (b) Review of the grading scale. During the drafting of the regulations there had been discussions with departments and faculties regarding the granularity of the scale, particularly the number of discrete grades in the first class and fail ranges. The Committee noted that there was no evidence that this had been an issue of concern since the introduction of the regulations, and it was agreed that a review of the grading scale was not necessary.
- (c) Review the approach of requiring resits. The regulations currently require students to attempt a resit before a failed module may be condoned. Views of colleagues were mixed, but it was agreed to review the data again in two years time, before deciding whether it necessary to make changes.

- 29.4 Other areas commented on by colleagues and external examiners included: some evidence of unevenness in attainment across the board, managing borderline cases, the role of examination boards and the Committee of Senate, exit velocity and the weighting of final year marks. It was noted that some of the issues raised would be taken forward through the reviews noted above (28.2). The Dean of Undergraduate Studies would continue to provide the Committee with updates.
- 29.5 Proposals for modifications to the scaling range and limits on condonable credits would be brought to a future meeting.
- 29.6 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that he had written to colleagues in the Student Registry and the LUSI team to thank them for their support in implementing the new regulations; the Committee asked that their thanks also be placed on record.

**Action: Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
to provide updates to the Committee  
on the implementation of the undergraduate  
assessment regulations**

ASQC/2013/30

External input into course approvals

The Committee recalled that at its May meeting it had considered a proposal on external input into the course approval process. The Committee had asked faculty teaching committees to discuss the issue further at their June meetings. Feedback from teaching committees had since been received by the Chair.

From the start of the 2013-2014 academic session, when proposing new or significantly modified programmes departments would be required to include external consultation. This might be with:

1. a current external examiner, **or**
2. an academic from outside the University, **or**
3. someone from business or a public sector organisation (as appropriate);

and must be documented. Feedback from faculties had stressed the importance of a flexible and workable approach.

The Committee agreed that the Secretariat be asked to draft a form that could be used by an external assessor to answer key questions, and that this input be considered at Stage One of the

approval process. An amendment would be required to the online course approvals and information tool (CAIT) in order to record the external's response.

**Action: Secretariat to draft a form for use by external assessors**

ASQC/2013/31

COMSATS: dual degree Business Studies programmes

The Academic Registrar reported that concerns had been raised by external examiners at the end of the first semester in relation to some modules within the Business Studies dual degree programmes offered at COMSATS. The University had investigated and work had been done in response during the second semester. The University had written to the external examiners explaining the course of action it was taking and the external examiners had subsequently expressed their confidence in the University's approach.

The Committee noted and endorsed the approach being taken and asked to be kept informed of progress. The Committee emphasised the importance of safeguarding academic standards and ensuring equivalence across all the University's provision, wherever delivered.

ASQC/2013/32

International Masters in Practicing Management (LUMS): proposal for grade conversion

*Document: SEC/2013/3/0536*

The Committee received a proposal for a revised grading scheme for module assessment in the IMPM programme. The Committee noted that the IMPM programme was run in conjunction with McGill University, Montreal. The programme involved a series of modules run at different locations globally, culminating in students undertaking a dissertation with either Lancaster or McGill for the award of a Master's degree. Marks for the modules contributed to the overall mark for the Master's degree. The external examiner had expressed difficulty in interpreting the grades used for module assessment in the current grading scheme, and following consultation with McGill, a revised scheme had been developed.

The Committee supported the proposal in principle but a query was raised about how the grade conversion would operate in practice. The Committee agreed that the proposers should be asked to provide clarification for approval by chair's action.

**Action: Ms Fenton and Professor Shackleton to consult the proposers**

ASQC/2013/33

Approval of Foundation programme in Ghana

*Document: SEC/2013/3/0530*

The Committee noted that as part of the Lancaster University Ghana development in Accra, Lancaster had partnered with Transnational Education Ltd (TNE) to deliver a one year full-time Foundation Programme to students who did not have the necessary A-level or equivalent qualifications to enter directly into the first year of degree programmes. The Committee received a brief report on the approval process undertaken by the University.

The Committee noted that TNE had a successful record of delivering foundation level programmes in Dubai (for Murdoch University) and elsewhere. A steering group of Lancaster academic colleagues led by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies had worked with TNE on shaping the foundation programme to ensure it provided a good primer for the Lancaster degree programmes to be offered in Ghana. The progress of students admitted via the foundation programme would be monitored.

ASQC/2013/34

Pilot of online elections for departmental student representatives

Mr O'Neill (LUSU Vice-President Education) reported on a pilot of online elections for departmental student representatives that LUSU proposed to run during 2013/2014, with a view to full implementation in 2014/2015, if successful. LUSU were seeking at least one department in each faculty to participate in the pilot. It was noted that LUSU would be writing to departments.

ASQC/2013/35

Date of next meeting

Dates of further meetings of the committee in academic year 2013-2014 are as follows:

7 November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

28 January 2014 at 10.00 a.m. (Faculty UG ATR reports)

6 May 2014 at 10.00 a.m. (Faculty PG ATR reports)

9 July 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

All meetings will take place in the **John Welch Room**.