

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Minutes of a meeting held on 4 September 2014

Present: Professor A Chetwynd
Professor G Blower
Professor L Hendry
Professor S Huttly (Chair)
Dr R Lauder
Professor C Rogers
Professor M Shackleton
Mrs L Wareing

In attendance: Ms J Anstee (Secretary)
Mr A Okey
Mr G Schofield (*for agenda 5.2*)
Ms J Ward

Apologies: Mr C Cottam
Mr S Cresswell
Mr I Denny
Dr C Edwards
Ms K Fenton
Professor C Milligan
Mr J O'Neill
Professor M Wright

SECTION A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

ASQC/2014/35 Welcome and introductions

Professor Huttly introduced herself as the new chair of the Committee and welcomed new members to the meeting. It was noted that Professor Rogers, in addition to attending in his own capacity, would be deputising for the Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies) for FASS (Professor Skogly) until she took up post later in the term.

ASQC/2014/36 Minutes

Document: SEC/2014/3/0541

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014 were **confirmed** as an accurate record subject to the following corrections.

- 36.1 *Minute 22.5.2:* add in the action for the Committee to consider extending the University's policy on the marking and return of undergraduate coursework to postgraduate coursework.
- 36.2 *Minute 24.3.12:* amend "... the Standing Academic Committee" to: "... the Committee of Senate".

Action: Secretary

ASQC/2014/37 Matters arising

- 37.1 *Extension of University policy on the marking and return of coursework to PG work (minute ASQC/2014/22.5.2 refers)*

The Academic Registrar noted that, with regard to the current policy on marking and return of undergraduate coursework within a four week-period, there was still some confusion as to whether or not University closure days were included in this period. It was agreed this needed to be resolved. It was also noted that any extension of this policy to postgraduate coursework should include postgraduate research (PGR) coursework where this was being assessed as part of the taught element of a PGR programme.

Action: Director QA&E

- 37.2 *Updating of guidance on assessment of group work by OED (minute ASQC/2014/22.6.2 refers)*

The Committee noted that OED was planning a Sharing Practice Event focused on assessing group work (planned for December), following which OED hoped to develop new guidance and materials. The Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will be kept informed of progress.

- 37.3 *New Plagiarism Framework: additional guidance and training requirement (minute ASQC/2014/26.5 refers)*

The Committee noted that a report from the Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement on the additional guidance and training requirement of the revised Plagiarism Framework would be brought to the November meeting of the Committee.

Action: Director QA&E

- 37.4 *Students' Union review of its documentation on plagiarism (minute ASQC/2014/26.6 refers)*

The Committee noted that the Students' Union had revised its guidance on plagiarism to align it with the new Plagiarism Framework. As it was not clear what the nature of this guidance was, Professor Chetwynd agreed to look into the matter.

Action: Provost

ASQC/2014/38 Report on Chair's Action

The Committee noted the Chair had taken action since the last meeting to approve minor amendments to the assessment regulations for the Associate Colleges.

ASQC/2014/39 Terms of reference and membership 2014/15

Document SEC/2014/3/0520

- 39.1 The revised membership of the Committee was noted consequent upon the changes to a number of senior posts within the Vice-Chancellor's Office. Professor Shackleton reported that, temporarily, Ms P Hewell would be attending as the TQSO for LUMS in place of Ms K Fenton.
- 39.2 No change was proposed to the terms of reference. The Chair noted that one of the tasks of the Committee was to make an annual quality report to Senate and that the report for the academic year 2013/14 would be made to the November meeting of Senate.

Action: PVC

SECTION B ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

ASQC/2014/40 Annual Teaching Review (ATR) reports 2012/13
(agenda items 5.1 and 5.2)

Documents: SEC/2014/3/0543; SEC/2014/3/0549

- 40.1 The Committee received the updated summary list of institutional issues raised in faculty undergraduate and postgraduate ATR reports for 2012/13. Further updates were reported in the meeting.
- 40.2 Items 1, 4, 16, 17, 22, 24 and 25: actions were now complete for these matters.
- 40.3 Review of UGAR (Items 2 and 3): the Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will instigate a review of the UGAR at the end of the 2014/15 academic year when three cohorts will have graduated under the new regulations.

Action: Director QA&E

- 40.4 Electronic attendance monitoring system (Item 5): a report on the potential for introducing such a system will be included in the business of the Committee for 2014/15.

Action: Head of Student Registry

- 40.5 Provision of English language skills support and related student support matters (Items 6 and 7): the PVC (Education) will take this area forward and tie up related student support issues being raised in other fora. ASQ will investigate the reference to the VC's Student Retention Working Party.

Action: PVC; ASQ

- 40.6 Estates matters: Items 8-13: Mr G Schofield, Head of Project Development and Delivery, Facilities, attended this part of the meeting to speak to the report provided by Facilities on estates-related issues raised in the ATR reports. He thanked members for giving him the opportunity to attend the meeting.

- *Provision for large lecture theatre accommodation*: the Space Management Group was reviewing this requirement. Initial provision had been made in the capital programme for a 250-seater (approximate) facility. Should the demand be confirmed, delivery would be for summer 2016.

- *Provision of suitable teaching laboratories:* the new build and refurbishment projects which will improve FST and FHM specialist teaching laboratory provision and which were currently in progress or planned for delivery 2014-16 were noted.
- *Impact of the Faraday refurbishment on recruitment, the student experience, the NSS and the University's reputation:* some disruption was inevitable; however this was taken seriously by the project team and Facilities were working hard to minimise the disruption. Comments in the NSS concerning disruption caused by building works during the quiet period were noted. Here the Provost reported that she had met with the Director of Facilities in the summer term and as a result some amendment had been made to the requirements for the scheduling of work. A key aspect was to ensure that communications to students included full information on what would be happening and what students could expect.
- *Needs and concerns of laboratory-based disciplines in estates planning:* Mr Schofield noted this general comment and referred to the new build and refurbishment projects detailed in the report. He confirmed that Physics had provided a clear brief to Facilities on their requirements for undergraduate teaching laboratories.
- *Capacity requirements for FHM:* work was underway to refurbish Faraday for Chemistry. The Medical School's Clinical Anatomy Learning Centre facility was due to be relocated from Faraday to a new facility in the Engineering building by September 2014. It was **confirmed** that teaching could continue to take place in Faraday until the new facility was ready. Future growth will be assessed through the annual planning cycle.
- *Delivery of new lift in Faraday to address accessibility issues:* the goods lift in Faraday was due to be replaced with a passenger lift to access all floors as part of the Faraday refurbishment. It was **confirmed** that Easter 2015 was the planned completion date for this work.
- *Provision of suitable teaching space for both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in LUMS:* a space brief was being developed with stakeholders as part of a feasibility study for the redevelopment of LUMS teaching accommodation. Consultation meetings with LUMS on this were planned for

10-18 September. Following this, a workshop with LUMS would be held to develop ideas further. A feasibility study drawing on this work would then be produced for consideration by the Capital Planning Group.

- Professor Rogers enquired about progress on the provision of a moot room for Law. It was not clear if this was an active project being considered by the University. Mr Schofield agreed to investigate the matter.

Action: Facilities

[Secretary's note: following the meeting Facilities have provided a report to the Chair on this matter. The Moot Court has been designed and costed. However, Law offered to fund the project themselves, as a result of which Facilities are awaiting confirmation of the funding source.]

- 40.7 Academic timetabling and space allocation (Item 14): Professor Hendry reported on discussions with the Director of Student Based Services regarding Part I module registration in LUMS. The matter had now been referred to Planning for resolution. FASS's ATR had highlighted the difficulties associated with module registration for Part II. The Committee noted that similar issues around academic timetabling and module choice were under consideration in other fora.
- 40.8 NSS 2013 scores on Library and IT provision (Item 15): the Provost reported on initiatives undertaken by the Library and ISS in relation to NSS 2013 feedback. The success of the changes made was reflected in improved scores for these aspects in NSS 2014.
- 40.9 Exam board arrangements (Item 18): it was reported the Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement would be undertaking a review of exam boards arrangements to determine any requirement to update these.

Action: Director of QA&E

- 40.10 Standing Academic Committee (SAC) (Item 19): it was reported the Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement would be undertaking a review of the timeliness of SAC procedures.

Action: Director of QA&E

- 40.11 PGR completion data (availability and timeliness) (Item 23): the Chair reported she would follow up on this matter.

Action: PVC

40.12 Collection and use of alumni data (Item 26): ASQ had been tasked with investigating with LUMS the nature of the problem and reporting back to the Committee.

Action: ASQ

40.13 Provision of a University distance learning policy (Item 27): the Chair reported she would follow up on this matter. The Academic Registrar reported that ASQ had undertaken some preliminary work on this which could be utilised. Further work would need to be synchronised with the *Digital Lancaster* project.

Action: PVC

40.14 Encryption procedures for assessed work (Item 28): the Associate Dean (UG) for FHM reported the action was now complete.

ASQC/2014/41 Periodic Quality Review (PQR) reports 2013/14

Document: SEC/2014/3/0535

41.1 Reports on the following PQRs for 2013/14 were presented to the Committee: Biological and Life Sciences; Natural Sciences; Politics, Philosophy and Religion; and Sociology. PQR reports for the Division of Health Research and LEC would be considered at the November meeting. The Committee received comments from the readers assigned to individual reports and noted general and individual review matters over the course of the discussion.

41.2 *Judgements*

The Committee noted that, for all departments, the following judgement had been made:

- (i) the University can have full confidence in the department's approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of the educational experience offered to students; and
- (ii) revalidation of the department's programmes and modules was recommended to the faculty.

41.3 *General comments on process and reports*

A number of general points concerning the PQR process and the reports were made.

- The new PQR process had run reasonably smoothly. Consistency of approach had been enhanced, and the methodology had proved to be less burdensome for departments. There would be some refinements for the next round to enhance the process.
- Overall it was felt that the reports were well-written and provided good summaries, although the Committee noted that use of the evidence base to support the panel's conclusions could be made more transparent in future reports. Minor adjustments to the report format were recommended to provide contextual information on staff and student numbers and any departmental restructuring/changes. It would also be helpful to list the programmes covered in the review in the Appendices.
- It was **confirmed** that the NSS results had been considered as part of the evidence base for all the reviews, mainly as part of the desk-based analysis stage. It was noted, however, that this element could be made more visible in future reports.
- The Academic Registrar reported that with regard to the quality and accessibility of public information this was being considered at an institutional level (section 7 in the reports).
- Departments and faculties were required to consider the recommendations of panels and provide a response to these within a set time-scale. In the meantime, a summary report on the PQR process and findings for 2013/14 would be considered by the Committee at its November meeting, for onward transmission to Senate in the New Year.

Action: ASQ

41.4 *Division of Biomedical and Life Sciences*

The review showed the department to be well-organised, with thorough processes and procedures. Peer observation and the sharing of good practice were highlighted as positive examples of good practice (with international teaching partnerships included in the latter). Issues highlighted for Faculty/Institutional attention were: (i) the availability and coordination of research training and the availability of funding for postgraduate research (PGR) students; and (ii) the balance of leadership in teaching in the department. In response to (i), the Associate Dean (UG) for FHM noted that the faculty found the provision of PGR training challenging given the small size of the faculty, but that this area

was being reviewed. With regard to (ii), the department was reflecting on this observation. The Chair noted that it would be appropriate to refer the issue of PGR training to the Postgraduate Studies Advisory Group for consideration.

Action: Secretary

41.5 *Natural Sciences*

It was noted that Natural Sciences was an administrative unit not a department (reference to 'department' would be corrected in the report), with contributions to teaching drawn from a number of different departments. The panel had met with staff from the contributing departments as well as the Director and administrative staff supporting the unit, and had been impressed with their enthusiasm for and commitment to the programmes. This had been mirrored in the meeting with students who had been very positive about the flexibility of choice provided by the Natural Sciences curriculum. This had been cited as a main reason for applicants choosing Lancaster over other institutions.

The report provided a number of interesting recommendations and commendations and highlighted the importance of the role of the Natural Sciences Director in coordinating the work of the unit. The one issue highlighted for faculty/institutional attention was the recommendation that a Deputy Director be appointed. The Committee noted that some of the recommendations may have been worded too prescriptively where matters were not entirely within the control of the unit. The chair of the review noted that it may be more difficult for Natural Sciences to address issues arising out of review processes given the nature and size of the unit. The Associate Dean (UG) for the faculty noted, however, that Natural Sciences was now being treated as an entity for planning purposes and that, organisationally, the unit was expanding and student numbers were increasing. He confirmed that they were in the process of appointing a Deputy Director (addressing the one Faculty/Institutional issue in the report).

41.6 *Philosophy, Politics and Religious Studies*

The Committee noted the recent restructuring involving the merger of three departments had been managed well and that the department had demonstrated to the review panel a positive and honest approach in its PQR. The recommendations of the panel were relatively minor and concerned issues the department was mainly aware of. One less minor matter concerned the process for producing the Annual Teaching Review report and the view of the panel that there should be a reflective discussion across the whole department rather than leave the production of the report to a

small number of colleagues. The Committee also noted the recommendation that the department review its use of subject benchmarking for Religious Studies.

The Committee considered the two issues referred by the panel for Faculty/Institutional consideration. In regard to the provision of examination feedback, the Committee **agreed** to refer this matter to the two Associate Deans' Advisory Groups for discussion.

Action: Secretary

In relation to the issue concerning quality and standards of international teaching partnerships, the Chair noted that a lot of work was already being undertaken on this and that progress would be monitored.

41.7 *Sociology*

The provision of contextual information in the report was helpful, and the evidential base for the panel's conclusions was clear. The panel had concluded that the department had managed recent mergers well and had demonstrated a commendable responsiveness to student feedback. This was indicative overall of genuinely reflective processes and practice within the department. A range of examples of good practice were highlighted in the report. In relation to the recommendations made, the Committee noted the panel's finding that the department should review the overall assessment load on students and seek to diversify assessment methods in some areas.

The panel had recognised the strong research culture within the department; however there appeared to be some disconnect between departmental postgraduate training provision and that provided by the faculty, with students commenting on what they perceived to be a lower standard of faculty provision compared to that of the department. The Committee noted this as an issue for the faculty to address. The Associate Dean (UG) commented that whilst the faculty had a well-established research training programme there were challenges in providing this in a faculty which incorporated a wide range of disciplines.

In regard to the second issue highlighted by the panel for faculty/institutional consideration, concerning the admission of overseas students to the University's programmes via articulation arrangements, it was noted that there was likely to be a number of

reasons underpinning these students' difficulties in engaging with the curriculum when at Lancaster. It was agreed this matter should be added to the action list for the Committee.

Action: Director QA&E

ASQC/2014/42 University's Plagiarism Framework

42.1 *Minor edits to the new Plagiarism Framework*

The Committee noted that minor edits to the new Plagiarism Framework had been made by the Dean for Undergraduate Studies and circulated to members for comment. As a result, the Plagiarism Framework was now approved; effective from 1 October 2014.

42.2 *Revisions to University Rules*

Document: SEC/2014/3/0550 (not circulated)

The Chair reported work was ongoing on the revisions to the University Rules consequent upon the new Plagiarism Framework. The Committee **agreed** that Chair's Action could be taken to approve these revisions.

Action: PVC

ASQC/2014/43 Amendment to procedure for postgraduate taught reviews, appeals and challenges

Document: SEC/2014/3/0548

The Committee **approved** the proposal, as laid out in the document, to amend the procedure for postgraduate taught reviews, appeals and challenges in order to bring this into line with the undergraduate procedures whereby the Head of Student Registry would undertake an initial review of cases where the student was challenging on procedural grounds the class of degree awarded, to determine if there was a *prima facie* case to proceed.

ASQC/2014/44 Addition of BEng programmes at Goenka GD World Institute

Document: SEC/2014/3/0553

The Committee **approved** the proposal, as laid out in the document, to provide a BEng award for GD Goenka World Institute students who do not meet the criteria for the award of the MEng but do meet the requirements for the award of a BEng. This was in line with established policy and practice at Lancaster. It was noted that as was currently the position with the suite of MEng programmes offered at GDGWI, the BEng programmes would not be accredited by the UK professional engineering institutions.

ASQC/2014/45 QAA report: Strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education (TNE) (May 2014)

Document: SEC/2014/3/0553

The Committee noted the QAA report on the quality assurance of TNE provision which included an action plan for the QAA. TNE was regarded within the sector as generally being high-risk. It was agreed the Committee would need to keep the report in view in the context of the University's international collaborative provision.

ASQC/2014/46 ASQC business plan 2014/15

Document: SEC/2014/3/0553

- 46.1 The Committee received a draft plan for the Committee's business in 2014/15. At the moment this comprised mainly of annual standing items. An updated plan would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Action: PVC

- 46.2 The Committee **agreed** that a report on the relevant quality and standards aspects of the annual Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey should be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Action: PVC; Provost

SECTION C

ITEMS TO NOTE

ASQC/2014/47

HER Steering Group notes: 14 July 2014

Document: SEC/2014/3/0539

The Committee received for information the notes of the HER Steering Group meeting held on 14 July. It was noted that, to date, no communication on the date of the HER had been received from the QAA.

ASQC/2014/48

Date of next meeting

6 November 2014, 2.00 p.m. to be held in the **John Welch Room**.