

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee:
minutes of a meeting held on 6 May 2014

Present: Professor A Chetwynd (Chair)
Dr G Brown
Dr C Edwards
Mr C Cottam
Dr J Howard
Professor G Johnes
Dr R Lauder
Professor C Milligan
Mr J O'Neill
Professor M Shackleton
Mrs L Wareing

In attendance: Mr S Cresswell
Mr A Okey
Ms J Anstee (Secretary)

Apologies: Professor G Blower
Ms K Fenton
Dr L Hendry
Professor E Rose

Section A Introductory items

ASQC/2014/11 Minutes

Document: SEC/2014/3/0074

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 were confirmed as an accurate record.

ASQC/2014/12 Matters arising

12.1 GTA Framework (minute ASQC/2014/9 refers)

It was reported that the GTA Framework document would now be included in a wider review of the University's policies and guidelines documents, currently held on the ASQ website.

12.2 It was noted that the list of common themes arising from the Committee's consideration of the UG Annual Teaching Reviews (ATRs) at the January meeting would be drawn up in conjunction with a list of those arising from consideration of the PG ATRs (*minute 14.8 below refers*) and brought to the July meeting.

ASQC/2014/13 Report on Chair's Action

The Committee noted the following proposal approved by the Chair on behalf of the Committee since the meeting held on 28 January 2014.

BA (Hons) Social Work; MA Social Work: Amendment to assessment regulations

The changes approved were to the programme regulations as detailed in Appendix 6 of the UG Assessment Regulations and Appendix 2 of the PGT Assessment Regulations. The amendments constituted a clarification/refinement of the professional body requirements for assessment in relation to examinations for specified modules. In addition, for the MA Social Work, a rule for the limit of condonation which may be applied when considering progression from year 1 to year 2 has been specified (30 credits). These changes are to be introduced with immediate effect (for the academic year 2013/14).

Section B Items for discussion

ASQC/2014/14 Postgraduate Annual Teaching Reviews: Faculty Reports 2012/13

*Documents: SEC/2014/3/0235; SEC/2014/3/0236;
SEC/2014/3/0237; SEC/2014/3/0238*

14.1 The Committee **considered** faculty summaries of ATR 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

Scrutineer

Faculty of Health and Medicine	Dr Chris Edwards
Faculty of Science and Technology	Professor Christine Milligan
Management School	<i>Not available</i> (presented by the Associate Dean)
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	Professor Mark Shackleton

14.2 The Associate Deans confirmed that all the faculty reports they had scrutinised demonstrated 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 made.

14.3 **Health and Medicine**

14.3.1 Dr Edwards confirmed this was a suitably reflective report from the Faculty. External examiner reports for the departments were very positive and good practice had been identified. He highlighted the following issues of significance arising out of the report.

- (i) *Faculty Student Learning Advisor (SLA) support.* This had been identified by the Faculty as being in need of augmentation. The Dean reported that the outcome of the bid put forward in the current planning round for additional SLA support was not yet known.
- (ii) *Increase in PGR student numbers – Department of Health Research.* There had been a significant increase in PGR student numbers in the Department as a result of the introduction of a new distance learning doctoral programme with four streams. This was a five-year (part-time) programme which required individual supervision of students' project work for three out of the five years. The volume of students (currently 120 on course, with increasing numbers projected as new cohorts were recruited) was a challenge for the Department in terms its capacity to provide supervision on such a large scale. The Dean reported that the Department was reviewing recruitment to the programme to ensure only the highest quality applicants were admitted. In addition it was looking carefully at the research areas of applicants to make sure

there was a good map to staff expertise. In terms of staffing, it was reported that two new appointments had been made. Whilst this would help, there would still be approximately 15 students per member of staff.

- (iii) *Laboratory space – Department of Biological and Life Sciences.* New teaching laboratories were scheduled for completion for the 2014/15 academic year). The new facility to be built was scheduled for completion by January 2015. Professor Lauder reported there was a contingency plan in the eventuality that there was a delay in completion of the new build and the project group was well aware of the tight time-scale.
- (iv) *Policy on use of APL/APEL credits on continuing education development programmes – CETAD.* CETAD were leading the way on the use of work-based learning in their continuing education programmes, and it was reported an increase in the University's allowance for APL/APEL credits would be of benefit. Lesley Wareing reported that ASQ were hoping to bring a proposal to the July meeting of the Committee but it would be useful to identify comparator policies from other universities. A number of other universities permitted a higher percentage of APL/APEL than Lancaster.

14.4 Science and Technology

14.4.1 Professor Milligan noted that the Faculty had submitted a clear report. She drew attention to a number of key issues arising out this.

- (i) *PGT registrations.* A small number of students were spread over a large portfolio of programmes, which raised a question about the viability of these programmes. The increasing numbers of Integrated Master's students did, however, help to sustain the viability of shared modules with the PGT programmes, and the University's impending review of PGT provision would help to address this issue.
- (ii) *Late fee setting.* This was a problem recognised by all faculties. The late setting of fees by the University had a knock-on effect on budgeting for scholarships and fee waivers and affected departments' ability to recruit the highest quality applicants. Members noted the need to start the fee setting process in June/July and to finalise the standard fee by 1 October at the latest (although it was

noted that earlier setting of non-standard fees was also important). It was noted additionally that timely fee information was important in terms of public information requirements.

- (iii) *Student Learning Advisor (SLA) support.* The Faculty reported a similar concern as for Health and Medicine.
- (iv) *Postgraduate scholarships – strategy and funding.* The Committee noted the need for a discussion on the University’s strategic approach to scholarships, in particular funding for these. It would be appropriate to refer this to the review of postgraduate taught provision.

14.4.2 The Committee noted the example of good practice highlighted in the report on the STOR-i Doctoral Training Centre internship programme run over the summer in the Faculty. This was proving to be highly successful, resulting in PhD applications from participating students.

14.4.3 The Committee **agreed** that the Chair should write to the Target and Fee Setting Group suggesting that the basic postgraduate fee at least is finalised by 1 October. In addition, the Chair to ensure the matter of timely fee setting and the funding of scholarships was referred to the review of postgraduate taught provision.

14.5 **Management School**

14.5.1 Professor Shackleton presented the report for LUMS. He outlined the areas of growth and competition for the School which were driving priorities; in particular the MBA was a very competitive area, influencing rankings and reputations across the sector.

14.5.2 Three University-level issues in particular were highlighted by Professor Shackleton.

- (i) Fee-setting and scholarships. The School shared a common concern with the other faculties in relation to fee-setting and scholarship issues.
- (ii) *External examiner reports.* The timely receipt of external examiner reports to enable these to be considered in time for the ATR cycle was a problem. The Chair noted the need for the University to continue to support external examiners so that reports were submitted in good time. It was also noted the OED was currently developing online resources for external examiners which would help with this.

- (iii) *Space requirements.* Provision of adequate and appropriate space in which to deliver premium PGT courses remained an issue for the School. It was confirmed that the School was reviewing its requirements with Facilities.

14.6 Arts and Social Sciences

14.6.1 Professor Shackleton drew attention to a number of areas for note and the Committee discussed a number of other matters arising from the report, as follows.

- (i) *Programme viability.* The Faculty was addressing matters of scale and size in its PGT provision by looking at synergies between programmes.
- (ii) *Dissertation workload.* Professor Shackleton advocated the early allocation of dissertations to staff to help with workload planning.
- (iii) *Distance learning programmes.* The allocation of resources to such programmes was an important consideration given the costs associated with developing and running them. Andrew Okey reported that such programmes were an effective way of increasing student numbers and the Faculty had been very successful in this regard. The delivery of distance learning programmes was, however, complicated and time-consuming; for example coping with the logistics of delivery across multiple time zones. Good practice was being shared across the Faculty through the FASS Teaching Network; however a University distance learning strategy would be helpful to support work in this area of provision.
- (iv) *Monitoring PhD student progression* – several FASS departments had raised a concern that the automated PGR progress monitoring system was not fit for purpose. Geraint Johnes reported that a new system would be put in place this year which would be more user-friendly.
- (v) *Support for overseas students* – as overseas student numbers increase, English language skills support for these students was highlighted as something that, in the Faculty's view, would be more effectively and efficiently provided centrally by the University. The University might also be more involved in supporting overseas students' academic skills. The Committee noted that this was an example of outcomes from ATR reports which could usefully be fed into the academic planning process.

- (vi) *Postgraduate marketing advice* – Departments in the Faculty reported they needed better marketing advice from Communications and Marketing. Lesley Wareing noted that the new Director would be actively linking up with departments to obtain their views.
- (vii) *Return of marked coursework* – the Committee noted that History had extended the turn-around time for return of its PG coursework to six weeks on the basis that the four-week rule applied only to UG coursework.

14.6.2 The Committee **noted** that whilst the University's requirement for coursework to be marked and returned within four weeks was documented only in relation to UG provision, it may wish to consider extending this requirement formally to PG programmes also.

14.6.3 It was **agreed** that it would be useful for the Director of Communications and Marketing to be provided with the ATR reports for information.

14.7 In addition to the discussion on individual faculty reports, the Committee considered the following general points arising from these.

- (i) How the two processes of monitoring and review and academic planning are connected, and what improvements could be made to ensure that planning and resource allocation addressed in a more holistic way issues identified in ATR reports as impacting on quality and standards. It was noted that the ATR process was a source of evidence which could be fed into the planning process. The Chair noted that the planning process was being reviewed and that it would be appropriate for the Committee to feed its views into this review.

It was **agreed** the Chair should write a note from the Committee, for use in the review of the academic planning process, drawing attention to the need to incorporate relevant outcomes from monitoring and review into the planning process.

- (ii) With regard to the University's impending review of PGT provision, it was noted that consideration of quality and standards issues should be part of this. Geraint Johnes confirmed that the review group would be reviewing the provision in the context of the whole student life-cycle.

- (iii) In addition to the purely academic issues associated with the nature of distance learning provision, there were also resource implications such as the impact of increasing student numbers on the capacity of academic staff to cope with the volume of student assignments and the need for adequate levels of administrative and technical support to be provided. It was again noted that generic support needs across the University for such provision could be considered as part of the academic planning process. With regard to the sharing of good practice across the institution, it was noted that the University had a distance and flexible learning forum organised by Hilary Thomas from ISS.

14.8 The Chair thanked the departments and faculties for their reports and **confirmed** that the University actions highlighted in them would be collated with the UG ATR actions into a summary report for the Committee to consider at its next meeting.

ASQC/2014/15 Postgraduate external examiner reports 2012/13: Institutional analysis

Document: SEC/2014/3/0218

15.1 The Committee **received** the analysis of the external examiner reports for PGT provision 2012/13 presented by the Dean of Graduate Studies. It was noted that, overall, external examiners were happy with the quality and standards of the University's PGT provision.

15.2 The issues identified in the analysis for further consideration by the University were reported as follows.

- (i) *Assessment of group work* – the need to continue to share good practice in the assessment of group work, especially in relation to how the contribution of students is recognised in the group mark.
- (ii) *Language skills* – the written English skills of international students continued to be an area of concern for some examiners.
- (iii) *Guidance to examiners on data protection and the importance of deleting electronic copies of students' work and any personal information* – the Committee was unsure why examiners were being asked to download students' work, given other methods which were available for providing electronic access, such as Moodle and the Student Portal.

- 15.3 It was **agreed** that the matter of assessing individual students' contribution to group work should be referred to DOGS-AG for discussion and that it would be helpful to have input from DUGS-AG on this.
- 15.4 It was noted that the issue of written English skills was the same as had been highlighted in the ATR reports and that this would be followed up at institutional level.
- 15.5 It was **agreed** that the circumstances by which external examiners were being asked to access students' coursework by downloading electronic copies should be investigated by the Secretariat.

ASQC/2014/16 Amendment to Undergraduate Assessment Regulations – Integrated Master's programmes

Document: SEC/2014/3/0239

- 16.1 The Committee **received** a proposal from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to amend the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations for Integrated Master's programmes as set out.
- 16.2 It was noted that it was custom and practice to award a classified Honours Bachelor's degree to students who were registered for an Integrated Master's degree and who do not complete their Level 7 final year (either because they withdraw during the year or because they fail to achieve the requirements for the award of the Integrated Master's degree at the end of the year). The proposed regulation was, therefore, intended to fill a gap in the regulations rather than introduce a new principle. The faculties had been consulted and had agreed to the proposal.
- 16.3 It was noted that all students who progress to the final year of an Integrated Master's would, by virtue of the progression rules, have fulfilled the criteria for the award of the Bachelor's degree.
- 16.4 It was also noted that the transcript provided for such students would be the standard one for Bachelor's degrees and that if a student wished to have a record of any success in final year modules this would need to be produced separately.
- 16.5 The Committee **approved** the regulation for Integrated Master's programmes as set out, for immediate implementation.

ASQC/2014/17 Amendment to regulation on postgraduate fees for students who have not reached their expected period of submission

Document: SEC/2014/3/0243

The Committee **approved** the proposal to amend the regulation on postgraduate fees (8.2.5 in MARP) as set out; for immediate implementation.

ASQC/2014/18 PQR schedule 2013-17: Amendment to schedule

Document: SEC/2014/3/0242

18.1 The Committee **received** a request from the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology to reschedule the PQR for the Department of Computing and Communications from 2014/15 to 2015/16. The Department of Computing's last PQR had been held in March 2012.

18.2 The Committee **approved** the rescheduling of the PQR for the Department of Computing and Communications from 2014/15 to 2015/16.

Section C Items to note

ASQC/2014/19 Higher Education Review Steering Group

Documents: SEC/2014/3/0240; SEC/2014/3/0241

The Committee **received and noted** the terms of reference and membership of the Higher Education Review (HER) Steering Group and the notes from the first meeting of the Group held on 21 March 2014.

ASQC/2014/20 Date of next meeting

Dates of further meetings of the Committee in academic year 2013/2014 are as follows:

- 9 July 2014, 2.00 p.m.
- 4 September 2014, 2.00 p.m.

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