

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Minutes of a meeting held on 26 November 2015

Present: Dr A Collins
Mr I Denny
Dr C Edwards
Mr B Harper
Professor N Hayes
Professor S Huttly (Chair)
Dr R Lauder
Dr P McKean
Professor C Rogers
Professor M Shackleton
Professor S Skogly
Mrs L Wareing
Professor M Wright

In attendance: Miss P Ainsworth
Ms J Anstee (Secretary)
Mr C Cottam

Apologies: Professor A Chetwynd
Mr S Cresswell
Dr J Howard
Mr A Okey

SECTION A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

ASQC/2015/79 Minutes of the last meeting

Documents: SEC/2015/3/0880; SEC/2015/3/0794

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2015 were confirmed as an accurate record.

ASQC/2015/80

Matters arising from the minutes and outstanding actions

Document: SEC/2015/3/0799

80.1 The Committee noted the reports on the matters arising from the minutes and outstanding actions.

80.2 Goenka attendance policy (item 17)

The Head of Student Registry confirmed he would liaise with Goenka over the development of a revised attendance policy following the termination of the previous one. The matter could also be discussed at the next meeting of the Partnership Management Group.

80.3 PG student survey data and action planning (item 19)

The PTES and PRES data had been circulated to departments and faculties and the Planning Support Unit was undertaking analysis of the data to support action planning.

ASQC/2015/81

Chair's Action

Document: SEC/2015/3/0879

The Committee noted the Chair's Action taken over the summer to approve the following matters.

(i) *School of Computing and Communications PSRB accreditation requirements:* approval of rules for progression and award for PSRB accredited programmes (amendments to previously approved text for Appendix 6 of the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations for MARP 2015).

(ii) *Procedures to be followed for revisions to modules and programmes, including Minor and Major change definitions:* approval of final text for procedures, following discussion by the Committee at the September meeting (MARP 2015).

(iii) *Amendments to Lancaster University's Assessment Regulations for the Associate Colleges:* approval of amendments to align with changes to the University's Undergraduate Assessment Regulations.

ASQC/2015/82 Schedule of Business: 2015/16

Document: SEC/2015/3/0838

The Committee received the latest version of the schedule of business for 2015/16. It was noted this should be updated to include the Higher Education Review (HER) report and action plan.

SECTION B ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

ASQC/2015/83 Higher Education Review

83.1 'Key Findings' letter

Document: SEC/2015/3/0894 (RESTRICTED ITEM)

[RESTRICTED MINUTE]

83.2 Students' Written Submission

Document: SEC/2015/3/0882

83.2.1 The Chair formally noted the University's thanks to the Students' Union for the Student Written Submission (SWS) and for their contribution to the HER. She noted that the Colleges and Student Experience Committee had also received the SWS.

83.2.2 The VP Education thanked the PVCE and the HER team for their support in preparing for the HER, and commented that the experience had been a very useful one from the Students' Union perspective and the SWS had been well-received by the HER panel. He reported on the methodology for putting the document together and for arriving at the recommendations contained in it. Data from a variety of sources had been utilised, including NSS, PTES, PRES and data-gathering exercises such as carousels and road-shows. The Director of QAE reported that he found the SWS recommendations to be constructive. Several of these would need further discussion with the Students' Union and the Committee **agreed** it would be helpful for the VP Education and the Director of QAE to meet and review the recommendations, reporting back to the Committee with an action plan which should include an agreed timescale for addressing actions.

83.2.3 The Students' Union noted that it would be useful to continue to produce something similar for internal consumption on an annual basis. The Chair agreed this would be helpful.

Documents: SEC/2015/3/0892; SEC/2015/3/0884

- 84.1 The Committee received the institutional summary report on PQRs undertaken in 2014/15, together with the individual PQR reports and the heads of departments' responses to these. Readers had been assigned to individual reports and their contributions would be taken in conjunction with the summary report.
- 84.2 The Director of QAE presented the summary report, highlighting a number of issues and recommendations for discussion (see M.84.3 below). Committee members also highlighted items for discussion. The recommendations (listed in Appendix 1 of the report) were directed variously at departments, faculties and the University.
- 84.3 Recommendations made to departments
- 84.3.1 **Recommendation 6 (CETAD): development of online provision.** The department had been recommended to bid for resource to develop online part-time and work-based provision. The UG ADT for FHM reported that a number of initiatives were being developed, and the Chair noted this was apparent from the current planning round submissions. The Committee noted that there were pockets of good practice/development work around the University but that, for the purposes of supporting initiatives, the area was complex and a clear infrastructure against which resource could be allocated was currently lacking. The Chair reported that there would shortly be a UMAG discussion to consider the issues. Implementation of the outcomes of the PGT review may also support planned development, as would an Education Strategy.
- 84.3.2 **Recommendation 10 (Economics): peer observation of teaching.** The department had been recommended to explore the introduction of peer observation of teaching for all staff in the spirit of supporting the identification and sharing of good practice. The Director of QAE commented that the University's policy on peer observation was out of date and although not formally laid down had effectively lapsed. However peer observation continued to be practised in departments, albeit in different forms. The Committee noted differing practice in the sector around peer observation and that there was not a generally accepted view on its purpose; i.e. whether it should be used primarily for reviewing individual staff teaching or for the development and sharing of good practice. The Committee **agreed** that the policy on peer observation should be reviewed by the Director of QAE and that amendments to refresh this should be proposed to the Committee.

It noted that the policy should encourage rather than suppress initiative in teaching.

84.3.3 **Induction of teaching staff.** The UG ADT for LUMS raised this as a theme which was threaded through a number of the PQR recommendations and also in several of the LUMS ATRs for this year. The issue, for him, concerned a lack of transparency of the University's requirements for induction of teaching staff and the need for examples of good practice to be provided. It was also noted that induction was not just for new staff – existing staff who take on new departmental roles needed to be inducted into these. The Chair noted that the University's requirements were becoming clearer in the implementation of the procedures on probation. The UG ADT for FST reported on a FST induction checklist provided for departments. The Committee **agreed** it would be useful for him to share this with the other ADTs.

84.3.4 **Recommendation 25 (European Languages and Culture): use of students as volunteers.** The department had been asked to consider the possibility of using students as volunteers (or as part of the Lancaster Award) to extend staffing of the DELC resource centre. The Director of QAE queried whether it was appropriate to use students in this way. The Committee acknowledged the potential advantage for students' personal development in the provision of such volunteering/work experience opportunities but was also cognizant of possible exploitation and inequitable treatment of different groups of students. There was some University guidance on this but members felt this was open to interpretation and, in practice, it was often hard to make a distinction between internships which were paid and unpaid volunteering/work experience. The PGT ADT for FHM reported on his faculty's current discussions on this matter with their faculty Human Resources representative. The other ADTs commented they would welcome clarification on this matter in order to avoid anomalies and inequity, although clarification should not be at the expense of stifling initiatives at departmental level. The Committee **agreed** that it would be helpful for:

- (i) the FHM ADTs to report to the next meeting of the Committee on progress made with Human Resources on the clarification of University guidance on this matter;
- (ii) the Students' Union to make a report to the next meeting detailing their views on this matter.

84.3.5 **Recommendation 29 (LICA): portfolio development.** The department had been recommended to review its strategy of portfolio diversification in favour of one of consolidation around well-established and successful programmes. The Committee noted that the focus of the University's business planning process

on portfolio management supported departments in such considerations and that this was particularly important for departments which had recently merged.

- 84.3.6 **Recommendation 32 (LICA): gaps and inconsistencies in the provision of department student information.** The department had been asked to address gaps and inconsistencies in student information in module and programme handbooks. The Committee noted that the Law School had a Director of Communications whose job it was to ensure consistency of information across the department. The Chair also noted that the remit of the Working Group on the Provision of Information was relevant here.
- 84.3.7 **Recommendation 32 (LICA); 28 (DELC); and 19 (English and Creative Writing): use and communication of assessment criteria.** A number of recommendations had highlighted the need for departments to make clear to students the assessment criteria being used. The Committee noted that this was still an NSS issue for the University and that communication and dialogue with students was essential in ensuring they understood the criteria used to mark assessments.
- 84.3.8 **Recommendations 35 (LICA); and 36 (Law): training for GTAs who teach.** In both departments there had been a lack of clarity over the University's requirements for the training of GTAs who teach. The Chair noted that the GTA code of practice would be updated in due course; LUSU were considering a number of relevant matters to bring to UMAG.
- 84.3.9 **Recommendation 37 (Law): postgraduate student representation.** The School had been asked to review its arrangements for postgraduate student representation and consider whether or not the undergraduate model could be replicated. The PG ADT for FASS commented that she was surprised by the recommendation as postgraduate student representation was in place in the School and that the problem may be that the representatives were not engaging with the system. The comment was made that student representation was not necessarily needed for each postgraduate programme; rather it was the quality of the representatives' engagement with their postgraduate community which was more important. The VP Education noted that the issue of postgraduate student representation was a recommendation in the SWS. It was also noted that departments with distance-learning provision and part-time students needed to think about the ease of engagement with student representation matters. It was noted that Accounting and Finance had been commended in their PQR for the use of Moodle in students' engagement with their student representation system.

84.4 Commendations

The Director of QAE reported that all the commendations were department-specific.

84.5 Recommendations made to the faculty/University

84.5.1 **Recommendation 1 (Accounting and Finance): increase in student numbers and the provision of new posts.** The Chair reported that this recommendation had been addressed.

84.5.2 **Recommendation 2 (Accounting and Finance): availability of mentoring support, particularly for international students.** The Committee noted this was an important area which was already being addressed by the University through the action plan arising from the Thematic Review of Student Learning Support. The PG ADT for LUMS voiced his concern regarding the possibility of faculty-based support moving to the centre, and the UG ADT for FASS noted the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities for student support at different levels. The Learning Support Implementation working group, to be chaired by the UG ADT for FASS, would oversee development of the new support model.

84.5.3 **Recommendation 3 (Accounting and Finance): the University to consider the impact of new ITPs on accreditation issues and reputation.** The Committee noted this was an institutional issue and that such issues had surfaced over the last 12 months in relation to two ITPs. In this context it was noted that one of the HER recommendations was to strengthen the risk assessment procedures in the development of new partnerships. The University was, therefore, actively reviewing this aspect of its partnership working.

84.5.4 **Recommendation 4 (CETAD): the University to assist the department with the identification of new markets particularly in the area of work-based learning.** The Committee noted that University-level discussion on this was already in progress.

84.5.5 **Recommendation 5 (CETAD): the University was encouraged to consider the CETAD module on the recognition of prior learning as a model of good practice for use elsewhere in the University.** This was linked to Recommendation 4 above and was also related to the review of postgraduate taught provision, and CETAD was involved in both.

- 84.5.6 **Recommendation 6 (DELC): the University to consider utilising the department's expertise to support its internationalisation agenda, for example in the provision of a 'language centre'.** The Committee noted that discussions were already underway in the faculties about support for the University's internationalisation strategy. This matter was also relevant to the development of the Education Strategy. The importance of cultural education as well as language teaching was also noted in this context.
- 84.5.7 **Recommendation 7 (DELC): the need to improve the efficiency of exam board procedures for joint degrees.** The Committee noted the Director of QAE already had an action to review this area in the New Year.
- 84.5.8 **Recommendation 8 (DELC): the need to maintain current levels of research-led teaching.** The Committee noted that this related to the size and shape of the Department's complement of teaching staff and that this was something for the faculty to monitor.
- 84.5.9 **Recommendation 9 (Law School): the provision of financial support for a mock court room.** The Committee noted that the matter was being considered by the Space Management Group and the Capital Planning Group and that there was general support for this.
- 84.5.10 **Recommendation 10 (Law School): the content of student transcripts.** The Committee noted the recommendation related to the experience of the Law School finding that, following the introduction of the new grading system, employers were confused by the format of the student transcript where three different types of mark were now included on the transcript. The Committee **agreed** that this matter could be picked up in the forthcoming review of the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations, whilst noting the need to take account of any sector-wide discussions on the use of a Grade Point Average system.
- 84.5.11 **Recommendation 11 (Law School): survey fatigue.** The Committee noted that this could be incorporated into the remit of the working group looking at the possibility of introducing a second-year survey.
- 84.5.12 **Recommendation 12 (LICA): the Faculty to review the level of technician resource in the Department.** The UG ADT for FASS reported this had already been undertaken by the Faculty.

- 84.5.13 **Recommendation 13 (LICA): booking of LICA practice space for non-LICA activities.** The Committee noted that this was primarily a problem during the main assessment period when LICA space was used for examinations although it was also used for other purposes such as faculty open day activity. The Head of Student Registry reported that University examinations could not be run without utilising this space. It was noted that the room booking policy was under revision, and where major conflicts of interest arose the matter would be referred to the PVC Education for a decision.
- 84.5.14 **Recommendation 14 (LUMS UG consortial programmes): the difficulty of interpreting and taking action on NSS results for multi-disciplinary programmes.** The Committee noted this was a difficulty for other similar multi-disciplinary programmes, (e.g. Natural Sciences), where teaching, learning and assessment was delivered by departments outside the administering department/unit. It was agreed that this was a matter to be addressed at faculty-level.
- 84.5.15 **Recommendation 15 (LUMS UG consortial programmes): the need to encourage students to engage more with the Academic Tutor system.** The Committee noted that although the recommendation had been made to the faculty, the University system was still bedding in and that more work generally needed to be done here. Departments had been asked to report on progress on this matter in their ATRs and guidance on the system was sent out on an annual basis.
- 84.5.16 **Recommendation 16 (OED): resourcing of OED programmes in the context of increasing demand.** The Committee noted this was a resourcing matter which was being addressed through the business planning process.
- 84.5.17 **Recommendation 17 (OED): the structural location of the unit.** The Committee noted that this was kept under review by the PVCE and the Head of Professional Development.

84.6 PQR process

The Committee noted that, generally, departments had been happy with the PQR process and that they appreciated the 'lighter touch' approach, although English and Creative Writing had particular criticisms of its PQR experience. Professor Collins commented on the usefulness of the standard set of PQR questions (PQR 'Lines of Enquiry'). The Committee noted that some of the faculty/University recommendations were not worded clearly in relation to the level at which the recommendation was directed

and it would be helpful if the panel secretaries could ensure this was the case for future PQRs.

84.7 PQR schedule

The Committee noted that although there were sector-wide discussions on the future form of quality assessment, it would not be appropriate at this point to substantially change the University's methodology or schedule for the current cycle of PQRs.

ASQC/2015/85 Academic Appeals report 2014/15

Document: SEC/2015/3/0895

85.1 The Committee received and noted the report made by the Head of Student Registry on academic appeals for the 2014/15 year. This was the first annual report as required under the new Academic Appeals procedures. Next year's report would contain historical data and would therefore be able to provide more analysis and evaluative comment.

85.2 The Head of Student Registry reported that the new Academic Appeals procedures were being implemented with effect from 2015/16 and that whilst these presented some challenges for Registry, particularly on the resourcing side, it was planned to review processes and ways of working to enable appeals applications (which were now submitted online) to be dealt with in the most efficient way.

85.3 The Head of Student Registry requested clarification on PGR appeals under the new procedures and it was **confirmed** that these would continue to be allowable only at post-viva stage and only in those cases where a student had received a lower degree than registered for or no degree at all. Appeals against re-submissions would not, therefore, normally be allowable.

85.4 The Committee noted that it would be helpful for the data in next year's report to be presented in tabular form across all provision to enable comparisons with teaching partners to be made more easily. The inclusion of longitudinal data would also be helpful. It was also suggested that the chairs of review panels should be asked to provide comments on any institutional lessons, for inclusion in next year's report.

Document: SEC/2015/3/0898

- 86.1 The Committee received a revised proposal for the introduction of a repeat year for first year undergraduates. This opportunity has been available on an exceptional basis only as part of the review and appeal procedures and for those students who present mitigating circumstances. The proposal was to provide a right to a repeat of the first year to those students who, after resit and condonement procedures have been applied, fail to qualify to proceed to the second year. The proposal paper noted the advantages of this for students and clarified the differences between external resit and repeat of the year; in particular that students undertaking a repeat year would be retaking the whole year as a full-time student with marks and credit for assessments they had previously passed being discounted. It was noted that, given such students are often relatively weak academically, even with the repeat year they would not be placed in a position of significant advantage over the rest of the new cohort.
- 86.2 The Head of Student Registry reported that such students would be placed on academic probation in their repeat year and the question of how their academic progress would be managed and monitored within departments was a matter for further discussion.
- 86.3 The Committee also noted the importance of guidance and support for such students both prior to, and during, the repeat year. This was an action on the Committee's schedule of matters arising/outstanding actions (**item 13 refers – Provost and Head of Student Registry**). The Students' Union commented they would welcome the opportunity to contribute to discussion on this aspect and the Committee noted that, as part of this discussion, the status of academic probation for these students should be clarified.
- 86.4 The undergraduate ADTs for FHM and FASS reported there was still a view from some academic staff in their faculties of the danger of 'recycling' problems for the academically weaker students. The Chair noted, however, the need to provide greater transparency in the regulations on this matter and that the provision of student support and guidance would be important in ensuring students would not be disadvantaged by undertaking a repeat year.
- 86.5 The Committee **approved** the proposal to offer first year students the opportunity to undertake a repeat of their first year, as detailed in the paper; **with effect from 2015/16**. The Committee's decision would be formally reported to Senate.

Document: SEC/2015/3/0903

- 87.1 The Chair noted that the Committee was being asked to consider the quality assurance arrangements for this new type of teaching partnership, which would result in the award of three separate degrees to students – one from each of the partners – whatever modules and specialist pathway they studied. Potentially, therefore, a student could be awarded a Lancaster degree with only a small amount of Lancaster credit (or none). It was noted that the Collaborative Provision Oversight Committee had approved the individual partners (Ecole de Management, Lyon and Ludwig Maximillians University, Munich) and Senate had approved the new award category of a Triple Degree. Professor Shackleton was thanked for the paper, which provided a clear exposition of the progress to date with the proposed partnership programme, and for his work with Student Registry on exploring logistical matters concerning students coming over to study at Lancaster from the other partner institutions.
- 87.2 In developing the QA arrangements for the programme, the faculty reported it would address the requirements as laid out in MARP for this type of partnership. It was reported that there was currently a programme board for the programme and that this could be shaped to ensure it helped to secure Lancaster's requirements for the quality assurance of the award, and that it fed into Lancaster's department/faculty structures and processes. A key area for the faculty to address would be access of Lancaster's external examiners to samples of assessed work wherever the modules were delivered, and that this would need to be negotiated with the partners.
- 87.3 The Committee noted that the previous UK partner had been Aston University, who had withdrawn. It was reported that Aston had not engaged in the delivery of the first year of the programme and so had had limited opportunity to influence the design and management of the programme. It was noted that LUMS intended to provide a full first year as well a second year, which would give it a significant stake in, and influence over, the design and running of the programme. LUMS was already, during the current academic year, providing service teaching on the modules delivered by Lyon and this was helping to build up a relationship with the partner as well as develop an understanding of the quality and standards of the programme. The intention was to commence the Lancaster part of the programme in 2016/17, recruiting into the first year and taking existing students into Lancaster's second year at the same time. The Committee was comfortable with this proposal, noting however, that the faculty should consider setting

conditions for year 2 entrants, for example a language requirement, which may also be required for year 1 entrants.

- 87.4 The Committee noted the importance of the programme board, which currently operated only as an exam board. LUMS reported it wished to expand the scope of the board's role and responsibilities and for it to meet on a termly basis to oversee the operation of the programme.
- 87.5 It was noted that Lancaster would need to assure itself of the quality and standards of the programme, including its constituent modules and assessments, and that, notwithstanding previous discussion at the faculty teaching committee, the Programme Director should submit the programme and modules to the faculty committee for approval, together with terms of reference for the programme board. Institutional sign-off for the programme would be provided as per the standard procedures. It was noted that Lyon was now able to provide information on a set of core modules for the programme, which would assist with the production of the scheme of study; optional modules could, if necessary, be approved at a later date.
- 87.6 The Chair emphasised that the principles underpinning Lancaster's oversight of the whole programme should inform the detail of the QA arrangements. The Academic Registrar stressed that the expectation was that Lancaster's external examiners would have oversight of the whole programme in order to be able to judge quality and standards. The Committee **agreed** that, in addition to the programme being considered by the faculty teaching committee, the faculty would need to bring to the Committee proposed terms of reference for the programme board and an outline of the key QA processes and procedures designed to secure quality and standards. This would need to be done as quickly as possible and prior to arrangements being made for year 2 students coming to Lancaster in 2016/17. ASQC would be able to assist with this.

SECTION C

ITEMS TO NOTE

ASQC/2015/88

Revised terms of reference for ASQC

Document: SEC/2015/3/0904

The Committee noted its new terms of reference which had been approved by Senate alongside the institution of a new Education Committee. ASQC would become a sub-committee of the Education Committee.

- ASQC/2015/89 New QAA Qualification Characteristics Statement
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/characteristics-statements>
- The Committee noted the new Qualification Characteristics Statement for *Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body*, published by the QAA in October 2015.
- ASQC/2015/90 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Green Paper
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/higher-education-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice>
- The Committee noted the Government's Green Paper, *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching excellence, student mobility and student choice*, published in November 2015. The Chair reported a discussion meeting with ADTs on the Green Paper had been arranged.
- ASQC/2015/91 HER Steering Group
Documents: SEC/2015/3/0897; SEC/2015/3/0896
- The Committee noted the minutes of the HER Steering Group meeting held on 8 July 2015.
- ASQC/2015/92 Any other business
- 92.1 NSS 2015 – faculty action plans
- The Chair reminded undergraduate ADTs and the TQSOs of the need to produce a faculty response to the NSS 2015, together with an action plan, for consideration by UMAG before Christmas.
- 92.2 Retirement of the Academic Registrar
- The Committee noted that, with her retirement at the end of the calendar year, this would be the last ASQC meeting for the Academic Registrar and recorded its warm thanks for her contribution to the work of the Committee since its inception.

ASQC/2015/93

Dates of meetings 2015/16

The remaining dates of the Committee's meetings for the academic year 2015/16 were noted as listed below. All meetings will be held on a Thursday morning and take place in FASS Meeting Room 1.

21 January 2016

10 March 2016

5 May 2016

7 July 2016