

SEC/2015/3/0297

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee
minutes of a meeting held on 7 May 2015

Present: Professor A Chetwynd
Dr A Collins
Mr I Denny
Dr C Edwards
Professor L Hendry
Professor S Huttly (Chair)
Dr R Lauder
Professor C Milligan
Mr J O'Neill
Professor C Rogers
Professor M Shackleton
Professor S Skogly
Mrs L Wareing
Professor M Wright

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

Apologies: Ms R White

SECTION A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

ASQC/2015/27 Minutes

Documents: SEC/2015/3/0269; SEC/2015/3/0183

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Document: SEC/2015/3/0222

Members received the updated report on progress with matters arising and outstanding actions. The following matters were noted in particular.

- 28.1 *Item 4: Plagiarism Framework.* Following on from the plagiarism workshop held in March, ADTs were asked to seek views from departments on the new Framework in its first year of operation and bring verbal reports on this to the July meeting of the Committee.
- 28.2 *Item 9: Study skills support.* The report of the Thematic Review on Student Support would be brought to the July meeting, together with an action plan to be developed by a working group chaired by the Head of Student Based Services.
- 28.3 *Item 39: Student information on External Examiner details, reports and Head of Department responses.* The Director of QAE reported that, following the last meeting, the matter of where this information should be published had been reviewed and that the original decision (that this information should be published by departments on Moodle) should stand.
- 28.4 *Item 48: Workload allocations for CAP.* Data on this was being collected by OED.
- 28.5 *Item 51: Student access to Turnitin reports.* This was being followed up by the PVCE and Director of QAE as part of the work for Digital Lancaster.
- 28.6 *Item 58: Use of Twitter as a study requirement.* The Committee noted that it was possible for students to engage with Twitter as part of their studies without requiring them to have a Twitter account. Students can view Twitter feeds and links to resources without an account and only need to open one if they wish to respond to a tutor's tweets. The VP Education reported the Students' Union did not have an objection to tutors using Twitter in this way as long as students were not required to have their own account. The Committee agreed it would be useful for guidance to be provided to tutors on this as part of work on Digital Lancaster.

ASQC/2015/29 Schedule of Business: 2014/15

Document: SEC/2015/3/0236

The Committee received the updated schedule of business for the year.

SECTION B ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

ASQC/2015/30 Principles and Guidelines for Student Academic Representation

Document: SEC/2015/3/0266

- 30.1 The VP Education introduced proposed amendments to the student academic representation system. This followed a review by the Students' Union of the current system, benchmarking practice against Chapter 5 of the *Quality Code* on student engagement. The review had included extensive consultation both within the Students' Union and with academic departments and faculties following the Committee's endorsement earlier in the year of the survey proposals.
- 30.2 The results of the review showed that, overall, the system was working and that no major revisions to this were felt to be needed. In particular it was felt that rather than attempting to standardise arrangements too much across the University, a flexible approach was necessary in order to accommodate variations in type of provision and department structures.
- 30.3 The review had, however, provided the opportunity for the principles underpinning the student academic representation system to be restated and clearly benchmarked against sector expectations. It was considered that the principles and guidelines together provided clear mechanisms and pathways for communication and feedback on the student experience for both students and staff and represented a strengthening of the partnership between the Students' Union and the University. The Chair thanked the Students' Union for the work which had been done.
- 30.4 It was noted that with the exception of two changes the existing principles and procedures had been reworked rather than substantially changed. The changes comprised, firstly, a proposal for an Advisory Group to meet annually to review the system and make any recommendations for enhancement. It was envisaged the Group could be constituted by a number of Students' Union officers and staff together with key University/faculty staff (for

example a number of ADTs, the Provost, the PVCE, Director of QAE). The second change, which had already been implemented in agreement with faculty Deans and ADTs, was the move from having one faculty student academic representative to having separate ones for UG, PGT and PGR students. It was suggested the proposal for Senate should include an Introduction or cover note to indicate the document was largely codifying current practice, highlight where changes were introduced and indicate the consultation undertaken to produce it.

- 30.5 The Committee discussed the engagement of non-campus-based students with the student academic representative system, particularly distance learning and part-time students, and felt that there should be more acknowledgement of this aspect in the proposal. It was **agreed** that the guidance as to how the system could work/be adapted for such students should be strengthened prior to onward transmission of the proposal to Senate.
- 30.6 The latter part of the statement under 1.8 that "... it is recognised that Academic Representatives are representatives first-and-foremost of their peers *and the Students' Union*" was discussed. The VP Education confirmed that in addition to acting on behalf of their student constituency, representatives could be mandated by the Students' Union on particular matters. It was suggested that this statement could be amended to make a more general reference to the position of academic representatives within the Students' Union.
- 30.7 It was noted that the recommended ratio of academic representatives per year for departments was the same as in the current guidance and that the training requirements associated with such numbers were already being met. The recommendation for two staff-student committee meetings per term was also discussed as to whether or not this was too many. However it was noted that quite a few departments were already convening this number of meetings and the Students' Union emphasised this facilitated the timely discussion of issues and feedback to students.
- 30.8 Two minor changes in wording were agreed to paragraph 1.4:
- "All courses should have..." to be amended to "All programmes should normally have.." ("normally" being inserted to account for situations where, for example, a programme being taught out had a very few students registered).

- 30.9 Subject to the amendments agreed, the Committee supported the proposal for the joint partnership arrangements between the University and the Students' Union for the student academic representative system and **recommended** that it be taken forward for approval and formal adoption by Senate in June.

ASQC/2015/31 Part I Review

Document: SEC/2015/3/0265

- 31.1 The Director of QAE proposed a review of Part I as detailed in the paper, with the main objective of the review being to answer the question: "How can the University make the Part I experience more challenging, enjoyable, valuable and attractive for students?"

The proposal followed on from initial informal discussions at faculty level and in USAG.

- 31.2 Committee members welcomed the proposal and noted the review would build on discussions already taking place and mesh with other initiatives in the University, such as the OED "Sharing Practice" workshop in July on student transitions, and also with the development of an education strategy.

- 31.3 The Committee **agreed** to set up the Working Group as proposed, with an initial scoping meeting to be held in May. An interim report should be made to the Committee in December on the specific considerations to be taken into account (for example resource and timetable implications of any changes). Membership of the Group could be widened as necessary to include experts in particular areas. It was **agreed** that a representative from Student Registry should be invited onto the Group. The ADTs were asked to provide the Director of QAE with appropriate nominations of academic staff from their faculties.

- 31.4 The Academic Registrar would investigate the allocation of a secretary to the Group from within the Secretariat.

ASQC/2015/32 Student Satisfaction and Experience Surveys 2014: Update on Action Plans

Document: SEC/2015/3/0279

- 32.1 The Committee received an update from the PVCE on action plans arising from the 2014 student satisfaction and experience surveys. A summary of ideas on how to improve the student academic experience was appended. These ideas had been shared with

departments as part of the discussions held by the PVCE and Provost with departments over the course of the year on the NSS, and were felt to be useful.

- 32.2 The Committee considered how timely dissemination and early discussion of data for the 2015 surveys could best be effected. It was **agreed** the PSAG meeting in July and USAG meeting in September would be the best mechanisms for an early discussion of the 2015 PRES/PTES and NSS results respectively.

ASQC/2015/33

Student Evaluation of Programmes

Document: SEC/2015/3/0280

- 33.1 The Committee received a summary of the principal surveys used to evaluate the academic and wider student experience. All students have the opportunity to provide feedback at module level. For UG students, whilst they encounter the University's Student Experience Survey at least once during their first or second year, their first main opportunity to provide feedback on their academic experience more holistically, i.e. at programme-level, is the NSS. PGT and PGR students provide programme-level feedback at least once during their period of study through the PTES and PRES respectively.
- 33.2 The Committee discussed whether a programme-level survey of UG students earlier in their studies would be of benefit. Although there was some concern about survey fatigue, members agreed that such a survey would be useful. It may be preferable to run it at the end of the second year, rather than the beginning as this would enable students to reflect more on their Part II experience (and students could be asked how well Part I had prepared them for this).
- 33.3 It was noted that some departments already ran such surveys, or had plans to, and that it would be important not to lose any good practice at departmental level.
- 33.4 The Committee **agreed** to set up a working group of ADTs (or their nominees) to collect information on departments' survey practice with a view to the development of a University programme-level survey of second year students. Professor Collins agreed to co-ordinate the collation of information by the group for a further discussion at USAG in June.

Documents: SEC/2015/3/0277; SEC/2015/0256

- 34.1 The Committee received an institutional analysis of the ATR reports submitted by ITPs for 2013/14. The ITPs concerned were:
- GD Goenka World Institute
 - COMSATS Institute of Information Technology
 - Sunway University (report for the 2013 calendar year)

There were no reports from Lancaster University Ghana as only the TNE-managed Foundation Programme was taught at the Ghana campus in 2013/14.

- 34.2 The report highlighted issues raised by the partners and examples of effective practice. It also drew out themes and issues for the University, as follows:

Staff communications – two partners had commented on low levels of communication with Lancaster staff on the business programmes. The Committee noted the importance of face-to-face communication in enhancing partnership working. It was **agreed** that faculty Teaching Committees should encourage the use of Skype (or equivalent) by Lancaster tutors in their interactions with partner staff.

i-CAP programme – the ATR reports reinforced the importance of the i-CAP programme for partner staff. The University's staff development programme for ITP staff included a visit to Lancaster as well as the delivery of iCAP at the partner institution. The Committee noted that delivery of iCAP had been temporarily suspended at Goenka and COMSATS. It was not clear why this was the case at Goenka. The Academic Registrar agreed to investigate this with OED.

Admissions and entry qualifications – Entry requirements for students registering for Lancaster degrees at the partner institutions are set lower than at Lancaster. Despite this, admissions to Goenka programmes are declining. The Committee noted the comments from Goenka departments on competition from the new Goenka University. Sunway had expressed some concern about the lowering of entry grades to improve admission rates. The Committee noted that the Partnership Management Groups (PMGs) are required to monitor entry standards and the Academic Registrar agreed to ensure that the PMGs received the relevant data on entry grades to support their work on the monitoring of standards and quality.

Withdrawal rates – Withdrawal rates varied widely at each institution. There were some links between high rates and low entry grades and/or poor academic performance; however a particular factor for COMSATS was also possibly the admissions system in Pakistan where students gain entry to multiple universities and only make their final choice after registration.

Quality assurance processes – the Academic Registrar queried the statement that partners were unclear about appointment and report processes for external examiners, as procedures for this were clear and were communicated to partners. She agreed to investigate this with the PMGs.

ASQC/2015/35

LUMS Proposal to Amend Summer Term Delivery (Dissertation) of its 1+1 Master's Partnership Programmes

Document: SEC/2015/3/0270

- 35.1 The Committee considered a proposal from LUMS to change the dissertation arrangements for some of its '1+1' partnership Master's programmes. For this type of partnership, the partner institution accredits the LUMS Master's programme as the second year of its degree programme, enabling students to graduate with a Lancaster Master's qualification as well as its own. Currently some students choose their topic in LUMS but return home for the supervision of the dissertation by the partner institution. LUMS staff second mark these dissertations and they are also examined by the LUMS External Examiner.
- 35.2 LUMS were seeking permission to vary the summer term delivery arrangements to allow the dissertation to be wholly delivered and assessed by the partner institution with the dissertation mark converted to Lancaster's grading system. LUMS would maintain oversight of standards by sampling assessed work.
- 35.3 The Academic Registrar queried how LUMS would ensure that the quality and standards of the summer term delivery would continue to meet Lancaster standards. It was noted that the proposed new arrangements would only apply to particular partnerships which LUMS considered to be suitable for this arrangement. LUMS also considered that as the listed partners were accredited by the same global accreditation bodies, quality and standards were comparable. LUMS suggested they could approve dissertation proposals at the outset.

- 35.4 The Committee **approved the proposal subject to** a clearer explanation as to how quality and standards will be maintained for the summer term delivery including how the global accreditation systems referred to will contribute to this.

ASQC/2015/36 External Examiner Procedures: Proposals for Amendments

Document: SEC/2015/3/0260

- 36.1 The Committee considered proposals for a number of new/amended external examiner procedures:
- (i) the appointment of Programme External Examiner in those cases where examiners are appointed on a module-only basis, in order to provide oversight of the full programme/programmes;
 - (ii) the appointment and role of an Overview Examiner for International Teaching Partnership programmes for the analysis and comparison of all ITP programmes within a particular subject area at all delivery sites;
 - (iii) the role of the External Assessor for Regional Teaching Partner re/validation events;
 - (iv) amended MARP wording to clarify the allocation of external examiners to module and programmes;
 - (v) amended MARP wording to clarify the nature of the sample to be provided to external examiners.
- 36.2 It was confirmed that Joint Honours programmes would need a Programme External Examiner. It was also confirmed that existing examiners could be appointed to undertake this role in addition to their examination of modules.
- 36.3 For the Overview External Examiner it was again confirmed that existing examiners could be used for this role. It was queried whether or not ITPs would need an Overview External Examiner in addition to the Programme External Examiner. The Academic Registrar confirmed the importance of ensuring there was equivalence of standards across the provision wherever it was delivered. Following further discussion, the Chair requested that further clarification be provided on the proposal for the Overview External Examiner and brought back to the July meeting for consideration.
- 36.4 In relation to the External Assessor for re/validation of RTP programmes, the Committee noted the principle of the appointment of these Assessors had been previously approved by ASQC and that the details of the role were now proposed.

- 36.5 Amendments to MARP wording for items (iv) and (v) had been discussed and recommended to ASQC by USAG and PSAG at their March meetings.
- 36.6 With the exception of item (ii) (appointment and role of Overview External Examiner), the Committee **approved** the new/amended procedures for external examiners as detailed, to take effect from 1 August 2015.

ASQC/2015/37 PGT Assessment Regulations: amendment to resit procedure

Document: SEC/2015/3/0257

The Committee **approved** the proposed amendment to the PGT Assessment Regulations, as detailed, with effect from 2014/15. This amendment permitted students to choose whether or not they wished to undertake reassessment in failed modules (for modules where the fail mark was in the condonable range).

ASQC/2015/38 Procedures to be Followed for Revisions to Modules and Programmes: Student Information on Courses

Document: SEC/2015/3/0263

- 38.1 The proposal was to tighten up the wording in MARP on procedures for programme and module changes to ensure that guidance to departments and faculties was more explicit in the context of the University's contractual relationship with students.
- 38.2 After discussion, the Committee noted the need to ensure the University's definitions of major and minor amendment were provided alongside these changes and that there was a clear understanding of the nature of the student consent which was required before changes could be made. Whilst the Committee did not intend to dilute any proposal, it was **agreed** that further work needed to be done on it to ensure there was clarity about what was being proposed. It was **agreed** to bring revised wording back to the Committee in July.

Document: SEC/2015/3/0281

- 39.1 The Provost introduced proposals to amend the University's complaints and appeals procedures. These had been developed via a working group and were designed to ensure compliance with both QAA and OIA guidelines.
- 39.2 The Committee noted that wholesale amendment to the procedures was not being recommended; rather a streamlining of process and consistency of approach between the two procedures was proposed. There were, however, a number of changes which went beyond minor procedural amendments. A key change in relation to appeals was that the current procedure whereby all failures were reviewed would be discontinued and instead the procedure would apply to those failures where a case for appeal is made. The term "review" would henceforth apply to a review of an appeal or complaints judgement.
- 39.3 It was suggested that where the VC was required to make appointments to the Stage 2 that these appointments should be made on the nomination of the local Dean.
- 39.4 The Academic Registrar noted that the statement in the appeals procedure under 1.3 on the application of the appeals procedure would need to be amended to take account of the fact that students registered on programmes delivered by partner organisations are covered by a clause in the relevant Memorandum of Agreement. Wherever possible, the University's procedures were used, however in some cases the University approved the partner organisation's procedures as being suitable for use in place of the University's.
- 39.5 The Committee suggested a number of minor adjustments to the proposal:
- (i) *Complaints procedure* – add in to the procedure (and into the proposal cover paper for Senate) reference to the availability of support for staff who are the subject of a student complaint and to the principle that they should be kept informed as to progress with the complaint.
 - (ii) *Appeals procedure* – make more explicit the fact that Stage 2 of the procedure represents the application of Statute 21.

- (iii) *Appeals procedure* – amend 1.3 in relation to the applicability of the procedure to programmes delivered by partner organisations (see M.39.4).

Subject to these amendments, the Committee endorsed the revised procedures for appeals and complaints and **recommended** these for approval by Senate.

ASQC/2015/40 Department Response to PQR Report: Revised Procedure and Timeline

Document: SEC/2015/3/0267

- 40.1 The proposal from FST to amend the procedure for the provision of a department's response to their PQR was intended to clarify responsibility for the commissioning of the report and the associated timescale.
- 40.2 The Committee noted that the final version of the report was agreed by the review chair and ASQ and that the department's input here related to the correction of factual inaccuracies only. It also noted that once the final version of the report was agreed by the chair it would be published, i.e. sent to the department and posted onto the ASQ website. ASQC review of the report and of the recommendations set by the PQR would come after the faculty had considered the report and the department's response. The template for the department's response would be produced for the current round of PQRs.
- 40.3 The Committee **approved** the proposed amendment to the PQR procedure, as detailed, for immediate implementation.

SECTION C ITEMS TO NOTE

ASQC/2015/41 Regional Teaching Partnerships Annual Quality Report 2013/14

Document: SEC/2015/3/0271; SEC/2015/3/0264

The Committee received for information the Annual Quality Report 2013/14 for the Regional Teaching Partnerships, which was monitored by the Collaborative Partnerships Teaching Committee.

ASQC/2015/42 Update Report on ATLAS Teaching Recognition Scheme

This item was deferred to the July meeting.

ASQC/2015/43 HER Update: HER Steering Group Notes and Other Matters of Report

Documents: SEC/2015/3/0272; SEC/2015/3/0186; SEC/2015/0241

The Committee received for information the notes of the HER Steering Group meetings held on 18 February and 18 March 2015.

ASQC/2015/44 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 13 July 2015 at 2.00 p.m. in FASS Meeting Room 1.