

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Minutes of a meeting held on 5 May 2016

Present: Dr A Collins
Dr C Edwards
Professor N Hayes
Dr R Lauder
Mr P Maggs
Mrs A Mullan
Professor C Rogers
Professor M Shackleton
Professor S Skogly
Professor M Wright (**Chair**)

In attendance: Miss P Ainsworth
Ms J Anstee (Secretary)
Mr S Cresswell
Mr C Cottam
Ms C Duff
Mr T Leonard (for item under M.40)

Apologies: Professor A Chetwynd
Mr I Denny
Mr B Harper
Dr J Howard
Dr P McKean

SECTION A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

ASQC/2016/31 Minutes of the last meeting
Document: SEC/2016/3/0182

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2016 were confirmed to be an accurate record.

ASQC/2016/32 Matters arising from the minutes and outstanding actions
Document: SEC/2015/3/0129

The Committee noted the reports for matters arising from the minutes and outstanding actions, in particular on the following items.

32.1 *HER Action Plan (MM.20.3 and 20.4):* Both actions had been completed and the HER Action was now published on the web.

- 32.2 *Good practice in the recording of lectures (M.21.8)*: This was being considered as part of the diversity work arising from changes in the Disabled Students Allowance.
- 32.3 *Good Practice in the development and assessment of key skills (Medical School, Professional Practice, Values and Ethics module) (M.21.8)*: The Director of QA&E would be liaising with the Medical School over the dissemination of good practice in this module.
- 32.4 *Pilot of separate PG ATR pro-formas in FST (M.22.3.1)*: Action to implement separate PGT and PGR ATR reports for 2015-16 had been taken by the Director of QA&E and Head of ASQ (M.36.1refers).
- 32.5 *Destinations data (M.22.3.7)*: The Director of QA&E had contacted Careers about this. A report would be made to the next meeting.
- 32.6 *English language admission requirements (M.23.2)*: ADTs had been asked to investigate departments' English language admission requirements for PGT programmes, following external examiner comments on the standard of English exhibited by overseas students. The PG ADT for FASS reported that the Faculty was addressing this problem through its review of the PGT portfolio and was considering increasing the IELTSs score from 6.5 to 7.0. It considered this to be the only option in the absence of additional resource for sessional support. The problem was also manifest at UG level and the Chair noted that two of the Committee (Colin Rogers and Paul Maggs) were members of the Learning Support Thematic Review Implementation Group. He asked them to raise the matter with the Group and noted that they could report the Committee's support for additional resource in this area.

Action: UG ADT FASS/Director of Library Services

- 32.7 *Annual report on student complaints (M.24.1)*. The Director of QA&E reported that the Senior Assistant Secretary who provided the annual report would in future attend the ASQC meeting in order to provide contextual information and answer any queries from the Committee.
- 32.8 *Second year survey (M.25.4)*. This would now open earlier than previously suggested, on 6 May, and would close in Week 8. ADTs had been circulated with information about this. The September meeting of the Committee would assess the survey and consider the results.
- 32.9 *Use of Twitter for study purposes (item 10, Outstanding actions report)*: The University guidance on the use of Twitter was noted. Staff should not require that students sign up to Twitter for teaching and learning purposes - alternatives are available.
- 32.10 *Development of joint degrees (item 42)*: A summary report from FASS would be coming to the July meeting of the Committee highlighting any University-wide issues concerning joint degrees.

- 32.11 *Standards at Sunway and Ghana (item 45):* The UG ADTs for LUMS and FST reported the standards issues raised in external examiner reports for 2015 relating to ITP delivery for Marketing at Sunway and Psychology at Ghana were being actively addressed by the departments concerned.

ASQC/2016/33

Schedule of business: 2015-16

Document: SEC/2015/3/0188

The Committee noted the latest version of the schedule of business for 2015-16, which had been updated since the last meeting.

SECTION B

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

ASQC/2016/34

Annual Teaching Review 2014-15

- 34.1 LUMS Postgraduate ATR 2014-15 (*Reader: Dr C Edwards*)

34.1.1 The report was well-written and comprehensive, although good practice could perhaps have been threaded through the report more. Overall, external examiner reports were positive for the year.

34.1.2 *Best practice in company projects:* two departments were extensively involved in the use of company projects, and the Faculty was seeking to ensure the dissemination of good practice in this area as part of a reorganisation of the way external engagement activities were supported across the Faculty.

34.1.3 *Conversion rates:* An increase in fee levels had partially checked recruitment to PGT programmes; however the Faculty was actively working to improve conversion rates through better coordination of conversion activities between departmental and faculty admissions teams.

34.1.4 *Scholarships and cohort diversity:* The Faculty was working to ensure an even distribution of scholarships across the admissions year to avoid any distortion in allocation to particular student groups.

34.1.5 *Good practice - LUMS Connect:* LUMS Connect was an external software tool which LUMS had commissioned to manage their alumni data and which was proving very useful in utilising social media sites. Niall Hayes reported that alumni relationship management was being considered by the Employability Thematic Review Group and that ISS were putting a proposal together on this in collaboration with Careers.

34.1.6 *PQR of LUMS Postgraduate Office:* The PG ADT reported that the recent PQR had gone well, with a judgement of full confidence made. The Office had received a commendation for its handling of its recent restructure and the PQR schedule had been amended to take this into account.

- 34.2 Annual Teaching Review 2014-15: 'Special issues' for report

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee in July.

ASQC/2016/35

International Teaching Partnerships (ITP) 2014-15: Lancaster summary reports

Documents: SEC/2016/3/0236; SEC/2016/3/0237

- 35.1 The Chair noted that these separate reports on ITP external examiner reports and ATR reports for ITP provision had been put together to provide a cross-partner analysis for the purposes of highlighting generic issues in partnership working. Overall, whilst there were no surprises from these reports, members felt that the cross-partnership analysis was useful as it was only when this was explicitly done that themes across institutions/partnerships would become apparent.
- 35.2 The Committee agreed that the need for better communication was a key theme which emerged across all partnership working and that whilst improvements had been made here, more could still be done. In this regard the Partnership Management Groups and the new position of ADT International would be key, although the role of the latter had still to be worked out in any detail. It was also noted that the committee structure supporting partnership working was also being reviewed and would be considered at the next meeting of CPOC.
- 35.3 A second theme was that of standards for programmes delivered by partners and the need to ensure that these were considered alongside LU provision at the appropriate points and in the relevant fora.
- 35.4 The Committee noted that faculties were active in working with partners on their ATR reports and on requests for curriculum change but that it often took several iterations for these to be presented in an acceptable format. Improvements were being made on a developmental basis but this took time and changes in partner staff could impede progress.
- 35.5 It was noted that the level of detail in the Sunway ATR action points for Biological Sciences was far in excess of what was needed and in places inappropriate. The UG ADT for FHM reported this would be taken up with Sunway.

ASQC/2016/36

Annual Teaching Review 2015-16: Report proformas

- 36.1 The Director of QA&E and the Head of AS&Q had worked on drafts of the new proformas in the light of the FST pilot for separate PGT and PGR reports. Drafts of these had been circulated to faculties for discussion and comment for the Committee to sign off final versions at the July meeting.
- 36.2 Members were invited to propose any 'special issues' for inclusion in the 2015-16 report and to bring ideas to the June ADS-AG meeting, for referral to ASQC in July. One such item could focus on Part I transition and retention, given the number of initiatives being taken on this around the University.

37.1 The Committee received a report from the Working Group on UGAR and GPA, set up to review the impact of the new UGAR introduced in 2011-12 and the possible introduction of a GPA system. The report included a number of recommendations for change to the UGAR which would need to be endorsed by Education Committee for final consideration at the June Senate.

37.2 **Section 1 of the report:** This provided a review of the UGAR and concluded that the changes introduced with these new regulations had been broadly successful and were with some exceptions generally accepted by staff and external examiners. The Committee **agreed to recommend to Education Committee:**

Proposal 1: The changes to UG assessment regulations implemented in 2011-12 should be retained, subject to changes as detailed in Section 2 (Proposals 2 to 7).

Action: Director QA&E

37.3 **Section 2 of the report:** This incorporated proposals 2 to 7 recommending changes to the UGAR. The Committee discussed in particular the following proposals.

(i) *Proposal 3 (raising the condonation threshold at Part 2 from 4.0 to 7.0 Aggregation Points).* The UG ADT for FST reported a difficulty with the application of this rule change to students in Physics. Modelling of the impact of the proposed change on previous results had indicated that some students who had achieved a 2(ii) or even a 2(i) classification would, under the proposed rule, have failed. This was due to inherent characteristics of the discipline whereby individual student performance could span a wide range of marks.¹ The Committee noted the particular difficulty in this discipline of applying the proposed change and **agreed** that the Director of QA&E and the UG ADT for FST should meet with Physics to discuss the matter further. Possible solutions were to approve programme-specific regulations for Physics and/or to combine module marks for modules with small amounts of credit.

Action: Director QA&E and FST UG ADT

¹ QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Physics, Astronomy and Astrophysics (QAA, 2008): *The performance of an individual student may vary significantly between modules and the student's marks on some modules may not be commensurate with their overall performance. This is an inherent feature of the discipline and reflects both its conceptual difficulty and the need to solve quantitative problems. In assessments that include significant amounts of problem solving, frequently requiring extensive use of mathematics, marks often span the entire range (0-100 per cent). Students towards the lower end of the performance range may fail some modules while still meeting the overall learning outcomes of the programme. Assessment regulations should be flexible enough to take account of the variability and institutions should allow examiners to judge the overall performance against the learning outcomes for the programme.*

- (ii) *Proposal 6 (percentage of assessment required by formal written examination)*. In the light of ongoing pedagogic concerns with the current regulation and also difficulties in enforcing it at the level of individual student choice, the Working Group had recommended that more flexibility be permitted to departments on assessment by formal examination. The Group agreed with the amendment to the wording noting that further guidance would need to be provided to departments on what constituted supervised individual assessment. It was also noted that the regulation operated at the level of the programme and should be monitored through faculty teaching committees' consideration of course proposals. The Working Group had, however, agreed to pursue the development of a function in LUSI which would enable automatic compliance checks to be carried out at student level as part of the module enrolment procedure.
- (iii) *Proposal 2 (reassessment rules for students on Regional Teaching Partnership programmes in their final year of study for Level 5 programmes)*. The Committee noted the proposal applied only to students in the Regional Teaching Partnerships and to those studying on Foundation Degree and Ordinary Degree programmes.
- (iv) The Committee **agreed to recommend to Education Committee Proposals 2 to 7:**

Proposal 2: For the second year of a two-year degree, where a student has undertaken a reassessment for a module and the module aggregation score after reassessment is an improvement on the original score, the reassessment score will count subject to a cap of 9.0 aggregation points; otherwise the original aggregation score will stand. The resulting aggregation score will count towards the overall aggregation average used for degree award and classification.

This will take **immediate effect**, i.e. it will apply to those currently in the second year of a two-year degree.

Proposal 3: The lower threshold for condonation at Part 2 should be raised from 4.0 to 7.0 aggregation points. This will take effect in 2016-17 for students entering Part 2 at Lancaster and for new enrolments at the RTP Colleges. *[Secretary's Note: following the meeting it was agreed, by correspondence with Working Group and ASQC members to recommend that this proposal should also apply to level 4 assessment at the RTPs only.]*

Proposal 4: Final-year students will have the right to resit all failed modules, whether or not they are condonable. However, if a student applies within five working days of results being known, condonation will be applied, where consistent with the regulations, without the need for resubmission. If a student does not so apply, it will be assumed that resubmission has been

chosen, though it will not be compulsory, in the sense that condonation will be considered where appropriate after the resubmission period, whether or not a student has taken advantage of the resubmission opportunity.

This will take effect for students entering their final year in 2016-17.

Proposal 5: Where final-year reassessment is undertaken, the resulting aggregation score for the module (capped at the pass mark i.e. 9.0), if it is an improvement on the previous module aggregation score, will be used to calculate the overall average aggregation score. This will take effect for students entering their final year in 2016-17.

Proposal 6: Replace the following paragraph from MARP:

“10.1.2 For all programmes of study leading to an Honours degree, at least half of the Part II modules in credit equivalence (i.e. 120 credits out of 240 or 180 out of 360) should be assessed by a formal written examination which counts for at least 30% of the total assessment for the module. This restriction may be waived with approval by the body or officer with delegated authority from Senate on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty Associate Dean for Teaching.”

with:

“10.1.2 For all programmes of study leading to an Honours degree, at least 50% of the Part 2 modules (in credit equivalence) taken by a student should involve supervised individual assessment counting for at least 30% of the total assessment for the module. This is to be checked by Departments; students whose enrolment does not satisfy this requirement will not be disadvantaged in any way, and in particular will not be debarred by this regulation from qualifying for a degree. Programme exemptions from this regulation on pedagogical grounds may be approved by Faculty Teaching Committees.”

Proposal 7: Two-year Lancaster University degrees (delivered at our Regional Teaching Partner institutions) should operate a year weighting of 30% for the first year and 70% for the second year when calculating the overall average aggregation score for the degree. This will take effect for students starting these degrees in 2016-17.

Action: Director QA&E

- 37.4 **Section 3 of the report:** This detailed those issues which had been discussed by the Group and where the recommendation was that no further or immediate action was needed. The Committee **agreed** with the conclusions in this section of the report.

- (i) *Conversion of Study Abroad grades* – the matter was complex, with departments supporting a variety of approaches. The Group had agreed this merited further more detailed investigation.
- (ii) *Differential year weighting* – in consultation with departments and faculties, it had not been possible to secure a consensus on this and therefore no proposal had been made.
- (iii) *Grade Point Averages* – the Group had given preliminary discussion to issues around the introduction of a GPA system, and once the national position was clearer it would be possible to pick this up again.

ASQC/2016/38

Condonation and programme learning outcomes

Document: SEC/2016/3/0234

- 38.1 The Committee received a proposal from the Director of QA&E which addressed the HER recommendation that the University should articulate how learning outcomes were met in cases where condonement is permitted. The proposal was to ensure that each programme: (i) had a set of programme learning outcomes (PLOs) which could be met by students irrespective of module choice; and (ii) defined those modules which must be passed in order to meet the PLOs; i.e. those modules which could not be condoned (for example where a PLO was only testable in one module such as a major project/dissertation). As part of the proposal, it was recommended that the number of PLOs be significantly reduced - to a maximum of eight - as most programmes had far too many (particularly joint degree programmes).
- 38.2 The new requirements could be met for new and amended programmes and modules by revising the approval templates. For existing programmes and modules, changes would need to be made as part of a wider curriculum review exercise. The Committee discussed how best this could be done given the volume of work; e.g. through a staged/rolling cycle approach informed by priorities such as PSRB accreditation and PQR cycles and/or starting with existing examples of good practice within the faculty.
- 38.3 It was noted that whilst the review of PLOs might be a relatively simple piece of work, the mapping of modules against these would be more time-consuming. The provision of clear and simple guidelines to faculties and departments would assist with the process.

Action: Director of QA&E/Head of AS&Q

- 38.4 The Committee agreed it was difficult to estimate how long the curriculum review exercise would take and that it would be helpful to set a date for a review of progress. The Committee **agreed: (i) that the proposals contained in the paper be approved; (ii) that the review of existing programmes and modules should commence in September 2016 on a rolling basis;** to be managed by faculties and with a review of progress by the Committee to be undertaken at the end of the 2016-17 academic year.

Action: ADTs

ASQC/2016/39

Academic Contact Policy
Document: SEC/2016/3/0235

- 39.1 The Committee received a final version of a proposal to make changes to the Academic Contact Policy (ACP). An earlier version had been discussed at ADs-AG and at faculty teaching committees and some adjustment to the proposal had been made following feedback. The proposal would need to be endorsed by Education Committee before referral to Senate for consideration.
- 39.2 Members noted the difficulties of tracking at programme level incremental changes in contact hours consequent upon module approvals, and also the potential impact on workload models consequent upon a move away from accepted University benchmarks. The Committee **agreed that (i) the proposal should be recommended to Education Committee** and (ii) that in the meantime ADTs should bring the proposal to the attention of their Dean and Heads of Department prior to the Senate discussion so that the implications for workload models could be considered in advance of this.

Action: Director QA&E (Education Committee)/ADTs

ASQC/2016/40

Departmental referencing guidance: Report from LUSU and the Library
Document: SEC/2016/3/0240

- 40.1 The Committee received the joint report from the Library and LUSU on departmental referencing systems which reviewed current practice and made a number of recommendations. The key finding was the significant variation in referencing styles used across the University and in the level of information and support provided to students. Some departments did not name the referencing style they recommended which made it difficult for students to look up additional guidance.
- 40.2 The Committee agreed that whilst diversity in styles between departments was acceptable, it was important that there was consistency across the University in the provision of information by departments to students on referencing, and this would also enable the Library to better support students and departments in the provision of its own guidance in this area. The Committee **endorsed** the report and **agreed** that the Library should produce guidance to departments based on the report's findings.

Action: Tim Leonard, Library

SECTION C

ITEMS TO NOTE

ASQC/2016/41

Student satisfaction and experience surveys 2015: Update on action plans
Document: SEC/2016/3/0238

- 41.1 The Committee noted the update provided by the PVC(E) on action plans arising out of the student satisfaction and experience surveys for 2015.

ASQC/2016/42 Beijing Jiaotong University (BJTU): Progress report on programmes to be delivered through the new international teaching partnership
Document: SEC/2016/3/0214

- 42.1 The Committee noted the report on progress to date with the development and approval of programmes to be delivered as part of the new ITP partnership with Beijing Jiaotong University.

ASQC/2016/43 Faculty teaching committee minutes
Document: SEC/2016/3/0239

- 43.1 The Committee noted the faculty teaching committee minutes (confirmed) of meetings held since the beginning of the Lent Term. From now on the Committee would receive these as a standing item.

ASQC/2016/44 ADs-AG meeting 11 April: Actions on ADTs
Document: SEC/2016/3/0239

- 44.1 Arising from the ADs-AG meeting of 11 April, ADTs were reminded that they had been asked to investigate practice in their faculties in the following areas; for report to the Director of QA&E and to be discussed at the July ASQC meeting:

- (i) Peer observation of teaching
- (ii) Internal vetting/moderation and external examiner consultation for draft assessments (exam and coursework).

ASQC/2016/45 Any Other Business

The Committee's thanks were extended to Ben Harper who would shortly be finishing his term of office as LUSU VP Education.

ASQC/2016/46 Dates of meetings 2015-16

The remaining meeting date for the Committee in the academic year 2015-16 was 7 July 2016; to take place in FASS Meeting Room 1.