Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

St George's
University of London

Wednesday 15th January 2020

Minutes

Present: Prof Deborah Bowman (Chair); Dr Fran Gibson; Ms Pippa Tostevin; Dr Carwyn Hooper; Derek Baldwinson; Verity Allison; Dr John Hammond; Jenny Laws; Dr Vanessa Ho; Dr Aileen O'Brien; Dr Rosie MacLachlan

In attendance: Glen Delahaye (clerk)

1.   Apologies for absence

Reported

1.1   Apologies for absence were received from: Prof Roberto Di Napoli; Dr Marcus Jackson; Syed Islam; Dr Saranne Weller; Dr Mark Bodman-Smith; Prof Jane Saffell; Dr Ahmed Younis; Prof Jane Lindsay; Beth Ward; Dr Rachel Allen

2.   Minutes
To receive and consider: the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2019.
Paper QAEC/19-20/4/A

Agreed

2.1   The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.   Action points and matters arising not covered elsewhere
To receive and consider: the action points arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere.
Paper QAEC/19-20/4/B

Agreed

3.1   **13th Nov 2019 ref 5:** Degree outcomes – the findings of the T&F group would be formulated into an Action Plan and presented to QAEC for approval in February 2020. **Action: DB**

3.2   **10th Dec 2019 ref 3.1:** Prof Iain Beith was leading on the action plan arising from his degree classification investigation. A number of the actions had already been addressed within the Faculty. Prof Bowman would contact Prof Beith to agree how and when he could report back to QAEC on the progress against the action plan. **Action: DFB**

4.   Annual Report on External Examiner session 2018-19
To receive and consider: the annual report on external examiner session 2018-19
Paper QAEC/19-20/4/C

Noted

4.1   The columns "Attended Board" and "Report Received" within the Annex A table had inadvertently been swapped over, but would be corrected. **Action: DB**

Reported

4.2   A supplementary report on External Examiner reports for postgraduate programmes for 2018-19 would be provided to the March 2020 QAEC meeting.

4.3   The external examiner reports were largely programme-specific and generally didn't highlight any horizontal issues across assessment practice within the University.

4.4 The Registry recognised that there were issues within their department in relation to the administration of external examiners and they were addressing this. QAEC would welcome an update on this work.

4.5 A web page was being developed to provide a better resource for external examiners to locate the forms and information necessary for them to complete their role.

4.6 There continued to be administrative weaknesses within the administration of external examiner reporting. Reports had not been made available to QPD or to programme teams. As a result, critical reports were not responded to with urgency. This specific concern should be addressed as part of the Registry-led review of processes and efficiency.

4.7 An external examiner commented on whether a 21 point mark scheme, with associated criteria for that mark, would be useful in general. A number of HEIs had used mark schemes of this kind in their internal consideration of issues linked to grade inflation.

4.8 There wasn't currently a forum for institutional assessment matters to be discussed, such as the external examiner's proposal to consider a 21 point mark scheme.

Agreed

4.9 To consider how the administration of external examiner reporting could be improved and to report back to QAEC in April 2020. **Action: JL**

4.10 To write to Prof Jane Saffell to request on behalf of QAEC that she consider where discussions about assessment across the whole institution could be held, as part of her ongoing work in relation to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. **Action: DFB**

5. **Validation and review processes: evaluation**
   To receive and consider: a report on validation and review activity in academic year 2018-19
   Paper QAEC/19-20/4/D

   Reported

5.1 The purpose of the report was to confirm that procedures relating to validation and review were operating as intended, as well as to provide insight into recurring themes across programmes.

5.2 QAEC members were thanked for taking part as Panel members in the high number of Validation, Review and QAEC scrutiny events throughout the 18-19 academic year.

5.3 There had been some difficulties in recruiting to QAEC scrutiny panels, which are a required stage of the validation process. The membership pool was limited to QAEC members and members of the relevant monitoring committee.

5.4 Staff applying for fellowship require experience in quality assurance and gain this through panel events, which might be extended to include QAEC scrutiny meetings.

Agreed

5.5 It was agreed that QAEC scrutiny panels could consist of three members rather than four, as had been indicated in the quality manual.

5.6 Membership of scrutiny panels could be widened to include members from outside of QAEC and monitoring committees. Staff, in particular those applying for fellowship, would be able to benefit from the experience. These opportunities would be communicated to staff, including through IMBE, as part of QPD's annual call for validation and review panel members.

5.7 On an annual basis, QPD seeks new members for validation and review panels and offers training.

6. **Quality Manual 2019/20**
   To receive and consider: revised section of the Quality Manual on modifications
   Paper QAEC/19-20/4/E
   Reported

6.1 The Committee was invited to consider a revised modification process for the 2019 reissue of the Quality Manual.

6.2 The proposed changes to the process were part of the work of the Operational Excellence project to review timescales for QA processes.

6.3 The key change to the process would be that the deadline to approve a modification for the following academic year (minor or major) would be the second Friday of December, allowing a longer lead-in time. The revised deadline aimed to ensure that modifications could be facilitated earlier and without impacting the student experience.

6.4 It was suggested that course directors might find the longer lead-in times restrictive and would not likely respond well to the proposed new deadline.

6.5 Programme teams take proposed modifications through a number of stages ahead of submitting them to monitoring committees, including consultation at their course committees. The proposed December deadline would mean that course committees would need to consider changes more than one year in advance.

6.6 It was acknowledged that attempting to implement modifications at a very late stage posed a risk to the student experience. However, there was also a concern that if modifications could not be made, then the risk imposed could be even greater, as problems would remain unaddressed for a longer period of time.

Agreed

6.7 The proposed modification process was not approved in its current form, as the concerns about proposed changes were significant. As such the proposed new approach could not be approved by QAEC without further discussion.

6.8 QAEC requested that the process be mapped out in greater detail, modelling how it might work and consulting further with key stakeholders. **Action: QPD**

To receive and consider: a paper on the timelines for the implementation of changes arising from revalidation and periodic review events.

Paper QAEC/19-20/4/F

Reported

6.9 A revised timeline for validation was agreed at the December 2019 QAEC meeting, meaning that programmes would be validated a minimum of twelve months before launch. It was proposed that the lead-in time for a revalidated programme be extended to twelve months to be consistent with the validation process.

6.10 Additionally, QAEC members were invited to consider which of the six stages of the validation process should be applicable programmes being revalidated.

Agreed

6.11 That the lead in times for revalidation would be the same as for validation. For example, a programme going through revalidation in 2019-20 would launch in its revalidated form in 2021-22.

6.12 Programmes going through revalidation and periodic review would require a business case approval to confirm resource was in place to offer the programme as proposed.

6.13 It was acknowledged that writing a business case could seem excessive for well-established programmes. Course directors could therefore emphasise the aspects of their programme that were relevant to the review. For example, Medicine would not likely be expected to comment on the market demand.

7. **UK Quality Code for Higher Education – advice and guidance**
To receive and consider: mapping of SGUL practice against the UK Quality Code advice and guidance on course design and development

Paper QAEC/19-20/3/G

Reported

7.1 The QAA published [advice and guidance](#) to help providers maintain effective quality assurance practices. The Advice and Guidance is divided into 12 themes for which there are separate chapters. As a condition of registration with the OfS, providers in England must confirm that they meet the Expectations of the UKQC, have adopted the core practices and considered the common practices. There is an ongoing effort by QPD to map the code, to confirm compliance and to identify any areas for improvement, by answering the Reflective Questions that are set out within each Theme.

7.2 The [Advice and Guidance on "Course design and development"](#) mapped well against SGUL practices, with the exception of only one Reflective Question: "How does monitoring and feedback on course design, development and approval processes inform the strategic development of your approach to portfolio management?"

Agreed

7.3 Although there wasn't currently a relationship between the monitoring of the validation process and the University's portfolio of programmes, QAEC members didn't consider this to be relevant to the way in which SGUL identified which programmes to offer, as the number of courses on offer was relatively low compared to other providers and catered to a very specific market. The response on the mapping document should be adjusted to reflect this. **Action: GD**

8. Committee effectiveness review
To receive and consider: the results of the survey sent to QAEC members

Paper QAEC/19-20/3/H

Reported

8.1 As part of the schedule of business, QAEC members were invited to complete a short online survey to reflect on the effectiveness of the committee during the 18-19 academic year. Eight responses were received and were generally positive.

Agreed

8.2 It would be helpful for QAEC Papers to indicate more clearly the reasons why they were being presented at QAEC and what was being asked from its members.

8.3 QAEC members were encouraged to consider if they wished to have the opportunity to attend briefings, conferences and formal courses through QAEC. The Committee could arrange for its members to take part in events/workshops as a group, which could focus on specific themes, such as the UKQC, assessment or marking.

8.4 Any opportunities to attend conferences that might be relevant to members would be highlighted to QAEC members, as they arose.

8.5 Any additional comments or suggestions from members would be welcome at any time and could be forwarded to GD.

8.6 The survey had been a helpful exercise and could perhaps be extended to other Committees. This suggestion could be forwarded to Senate. **Action: DB**

9. Any other Business

Reported

9.1 There were no further items of business.

10. Dates of Meetings in 2019-20

12 February 2020
10 March 2020
21 April 2020

20 May 2020
23 June 2020

10.1 All meetings will start at 2pm and will be held in H2.5.

GD/Jan 2019