

Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee



Wednesday 12th February 2020

Minutes

Present: Prof Deborah Bowman (Chair); Dr Aileen O'Brien; Derek Baldwinson; Dr Marcus Jackson; Prof Jane Saffell; Jenny Laws; Prof Jane Lindsay; Ms Pippa Tostevin; Dr Rachel Allen; Dr Vanessa Ho; Verity Allison; Dr Godfrina McKoy; Dr Rosie MacLachlan; Dr Mark Bodman-Smith; Sally Mitchell

In attendance: Glen Delahaye (clerk); Prof Iain Beith

1. Apologies for absence

Reported

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from: Syed Islam; Dr Carwyn Hooper; Dr Saranne Weller; Dr Fran Gibson; Dr John Hammond; Beth Ward; Dr Ahmed Younis
- 1.2 The Committee welcomed Sally Mitchell, who had been appointed interim Head of CIDE and would hold the position until May 2020.

Agreed

- 1.3 There had not been a student present at QAEC since the November 2019 meeting. DFB would contact the student members to ensure they could be involved in future meetings. **Action DFB**

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, subject to Dr Rosie MacLachlan being added to the attendance list.

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/19-20/5/B

Reported

- 3.1 With regard to the external examiner overview report, which had been tabled at the previous QAEC meeting, there were still a number of responses to external examiner reports outstanding, including for Biomedical Science and MBBS.
- 3.2 **15th Jan 2020 ref 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.* - This would be taken into account when developing the Strategy, which would be received by QAEC in April. Input from Derek Baldwinson and Rachel Allen in relation to their findings from the Degree Classification Group and Assessment IQA would be valued.
- 3.3 **15th Jan 2020 ref 6.8:** QPD was continuing to work on the modification process with input from stakeholders and would devise an approach that met needs and didn't constrain staff.

4. Update on actions from the QAEC report on Paramedic Science degree classification

To receive and consider: an update from Prof Iain Beith on the progress against actions

Paper QAEC/19-20/5/C

Reported

- 4.1 The investigation had been completed separately from the Degree Classification Task and Finish Group and had been initiated following a significantly high number of good degrees on the Paramedic Science programme identified in the OfS data published in December 2018.
- 4.2 There were a number of similarities between the recommendations of Prof Beith's action plan and those of the DCG.
- 4.3 The need to ensure a single source of valid student data continued to be a risk factor across the institution. This would also be raised in the report on student procedures (agenda item 5)
- 4.4 Independence of exam board Chairs would be ensured by appointing Chairs that had no direct interest in the delivery of the programme. Heads of Department would chair each other's exam boards.
- 4.5 The success measure for the action plan overall would not be determined by changes in the number of good degrees awarded, but by increased awareness and understanding of the rationale for the number of good degrees awarded in any given year.

Agreed

- 4.6 Prof Beith would report to QAEC again in the future on progress against actions, in particular those related to SGUL.

5. Report on student procedures (appeals, complaints, F2P)

To receive and consider: the annual report on student procedures

Paper QAEC/19-20/5/D

Reported

- 5.1 There had been a 5% increase in the student population (3378 in 2017-18 and 3547 in 2018-19) and a far greater increase in the number of cases considered by the Student Conduct and Compliance Team.
- 5.2 The report highlighted:
 - a 51% increase in the total number of students being considered for a third attempt at an assessment from 2018 to 2019
 - an increase of approximately 86% in the number of academic appeals submitted
 - an increase of approximately 65% in assessment irregularity cases
 - an increase of roughly 16% in the total number of concerns raised regarding fitness to study and practise
 - an increase in the number of allegations made under the Disciplinary Procedure; in 2017-18 there were 9 cases and in 2018-19 there were 15 cases
 - an increase in the number of concerns and complaints raised to Student Conduct and Compliance: the total number increased from 19 in 2017-18 to 34 in 2018-19
 - an increase in the number of students requesting to extend their maximum period of study; there were 4 applications submitted in 2017-18 in contrast to 8 applications in 2018-19
 - In 2017-18, 9 Disclosure and Barring Service Applications cases were logged in contrast to 29 in 2018-19. This increase was a result of improved processes following a project between the Head of SC&C and Assistant Registrar (Admissions) and better reflects the number of disclosures that would be expected from applicants and continuing students.
- 5.3 Unitu could be useful in resolving broader concerns raised by students and could reduce the likelihood of them reaching a formal stage.
- 5.4 Complaints from students against other students are typically managed informally, but additional trained mediators may help.
- 5.5 Student record-keeping remained an issue and record-keeping processes differed between courses. In some cases, student records were still kept in physical files. Staff were not always aware either of the existence of the files or that there was an expectation to log information in them.

- 5.6 Progress was being made in setting up courses on SITS in a consistent manner. The Operational Excellence project reviewing Schemes of Assessment was expected improve consistency further.
- 5.7 There was a need to remind students continuously of the student processes available to them.
- 5.8 The majority of appeals submitted on the grounds that there had been extenuating circumstances were unsuccessful as the circumstances could have been disclosed prior to ratification of results. In 2019, the Student Union launched a campaign around the 'fit-to-sit' policy to encourage students to disclose mitigation in a timely fashion.
- 5.9 The presence of the Student Welfare Officer within the Student Union had made it easier for students to access consistent advice.

Agreed

- 5.10 There continued to be a need to standardise record keeping across the institution. Jenny Laws would raise this through SEOG. **Action: JL**
- 5.11 There was scope for increased communication between the Student Conduct and Compliance Team and academic staff, particularly in relation to overlapping university-wide projects and practices (e.g. in relation to academic writing, plagiarism and referencing practices).
- 5.12 Training for programme teams from the Student Conduct and Compliance Team would be welcomed.

6. Degree classification action plan

To receive and consider: the action plan arising from the Degree Classification Task and Finish Group

Paper QAEC/19-20/5/E

Reported

Action Plan

- 6.1 In March 2019, QAEC constituted a task and finish group to review changing patterns in the proportions of good degrees awarded in the period from 2010-11 to 2017-18. The group was constituted in response to data published by the Office for Students showing an increase in the proportion of good degrees.
- 6.2 The Group agreed its findings and, linked to those findings, a series of recommendations. These were presented to QAEC as an action plan and included actions across a variety of areas.

Degree outcomes statement

- 6.3 Degree awarding bodies would be expected to publish a degree outcomes statement before the end of the 2019/20 academic year.
- 6.4 UKSCQA published guidance on what the degree outcomes statement, typically between two and three pages, should cover. An approach to the production of the statement was provided to QAEC.
- 6.5 Once completed, it would be submitted to Council in July 2020. There was also an intention to invite external examiners (for L6 awards) to comment on the statement before it was published.

Agreed

- 6.6 The action "The staff development and training needs for assessment at L6 to be reviewed and appropriate training offered" would be led by the Head of CIDE. It should be preceded by an audit to determine the level that staff were currently at.
- 6.7 QAEC endorsed the action plan and the approach to the degree outcomes statement.

7. Apprenticeships

To receive and consider: a paper on whether the current quality assurance frameworks need to be developed to accommodate apprenticeships

Reported

- 7.1 SGUL was offering three apprenticeships. These had been approved within SGUL's existing validations procedures.
- 7.2 The administration of the current apprenticeships was heavily dependent on a single individual, which posed a high risk. There was a need to train a greater pool of staff.

Agreed

- 7.3 QAEC agreed that the current quality assurance framework needed to be developed to accommodate apprenticeships, taking into account the relationships with employers, assessment and other aspects which could differ.
- 7.4 DFB and QPD would meet to begin outlining the next steps to adapt and implement processes for the approval, monitoring and review of apprenticeships. **Action: DFB and QPD**

8. Programmes under development – monitor

To receive and note: an annual update on programmes currently under development

Agreed

- 8.1 It was not clear if the conditions of validation for the MSc Heart Failure would be met on time to allow a September 2020 launch. It was agreed that the Director of the Molecular and Clinical Sciences Research Institute, to whom the programme's course directors report, should be contacted to agree the next steps. **Action: DFB to contact CH to progress in his capacity as Lead for Taught PG Programmes**

9. Any other Business

Agreed

- 9.1 A number of reports had been received by QAEC throughout the academic year and there had been recurrent themes within them. It would be useful to review reports received by QAEC so far in the current academic year to identify these themes and to determine ways to address them at an institutional level. A future meeting of QAEC would be an opportunity to reflect on these reports and the next steps to be taken as a result. **Action: DFB and QPD**

10. Dates of Meetings in 2019-20

10 March 2020
21 April 2020
20 May 2020
23 June 2020

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