

Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

Thursday 25th March 2021 2.00pm-4pm



Minutes

Present: Prof Rachel Allen (Chair); Baba Sheba; Prof Iain Beith; Dr Carwyn Hooper; Derek Baldwinson; Dr Fran Gibson; Dr Godfrina McKoy; Syed Islam; Prof Jane Saffell; Dr Marcus Jackson; Dr Mark Bodman-Smith; Philippa Tostevin; Prof Jane Lindsay; Dr Aileen O'Brien; Sally Mitchell; Sarah Jones; Dr Rosie MacLachlan; Dr Vanessa Ho; Jenny Laws

In attendance: Glen Delahaye (clerk); Soosan Atkins

1. Apologies for absence:

Reported

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from: Dr John Hammond; Dr Saranne Weller

2. Minutes

To receive and consider: the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2021.

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/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/20-21/6/B

Reported

18th January 2021 ref 6.8: To complete a further reflection on items discussed at QAEC to determine how our QA framework could ensure such concerns are addressed more efficiently in the future.

3.1 A meeting had been arranged on the 15th April 2021 between QPD and RA to discuss this item.

4. Programme Proposal Form

To receive and consider: the proposed *MSc Anatomical Sciences* course for further development

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/C

Reported

4.1 As part of St George's Validation process, QAEC is responsible for initial academic approval of proposed programmes. This represents Stage 3 of the validation process.

4.2 The proposed Master's in Anatomical Sciences was being developed for a September 2022 launch.

4.3 Georga Longhurst was the lead for the programme's development and presented the proposal to QAEC.

4.4 There had been delays to the development. Stage 2 of the validation process (strategic approval at ESSC) had been completed in March 2020.

4.5 The programme would include tailored optional modules to encourage students to apply their anatomical knowledge and dive deeper into relevant areas of their interest. Modules in advanced neuroanatomy and embryology and development would be offered alongside modules in pedagogy, comparative anatomy and humanities. The humanities module would be available through the open spaces extracurricular programme, which was a collaboration between St George's and Birkbeck, University of London.

- 4.6 QAEC welcomed the proposed optional modules, but noted that humanities disciplines would require staff with an academic background at an appropriate level to ensure the modules would be credible.
- 4.7 The majority of the optional modules would be 15 credits. The humanities module titled 'Finding a Leg to Stand on' would be 30 credits, which QAEC noted might affect whether students would take it. It was suggested that the module could be split across two semesters.
- 4.8 As part of the development process, exit qualifications should be considered for students who may not complete the full Master's.
- 4.9 It would be important to consider UKVI requirements to ensure that the blended approach would meet the minimum number of contact hours per week.
- 4.10 QAEC praised the proposed Master's approach to inclusivity.

Agreed

- 4.11 The proposal was approved, subject to the following:
 - a. Ensure that the team that would be responsible for delivering the course is sufficiently qualified to deliver a credible level 7 course and has the relevant experience to deliver humanities or in cases where members of the team may not hold these qualifications, provide a rationale for why this should not be cause for concern.
 - b. Cross reference the programme with other MSc programmes to allow the sharing of modules and resource where possible. QAEC suggested that it may be possible to share the new modules being developed for the MSc with other programmes, as the number of students taking them would be relatively low.
 - c. The collaborative agreement between St George's and Birkbeck requires there to be an equal number of students from both institutions. It will be important to ensure that St George's did not breach the agreement.

5. Faculty Quality Committee Annual Programme Monitoring Overview Report

To receive and consider: the annual overview report for 2019-20.

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/D

Reported

- 5.1 Two courses had expressed concerns about the level of academic staff resources for their programmes. IB, as Head of Centre, reported that this was in hand and that the staffing was now in place. Realigning the provision during the pandemic had been particularly challenging.
- 5.2 The Physiotherapy teaching rooms continued to be in urgent need of refurbishment.
- 5.3 The BSc Paramedic Science course director predicted that it was likely Covid-19 would impact upon student outcomes in 2021 and expected to see the number of firsts rise again. The upcoming revalidation of the programme would provide an opportunity to consider the assessment regimen and whether students were being tested at criticality levels and not only knowledge levels.
- 5.4 An ongoing problem that had not yet been solved was the management of the Healthcare Practice suite of programmes, which students joined at various points throughout the whole year. This made that administration of the programmes particularly complex, and Alison Sidebottom was working to streamline it.

6. UMBEC Annual Programme Monitoring Overview Report

To receive and consider: the annual overview report for 2019-20.

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/E

Reported

- 6.1 Considerable effort had gone into the development of online learning over the last year and this area of activity would be a focus of enhancement for the next year, building on expertise and content that had been developed to date.
- 6.2 The impact of remote teaching on staff workload and differing aptitude/access to technology and infrastructure to do this, as well as staff shortages and problems in recruiting to programme-level academic roles were cross-cutting issues in the UMBEC APMRs.
- 6.3 There continued to be communication problems between Registry and the course teams over External Examiner reports, which were not being forwarded on time. One report was received by Registry on the 2nd July 2020, but not forwarded to the course team until 15th January 2021. These concerns had already been considered by QAEC in January 2021 and Registry was aware of them.
- 6.4 Problems with SOLTS/Evasys data were reported, such as low student engagement, an onerous process for distributing survey data, process for communicating with module leads and issues with the closing-the-loop process.
- 6.5 Email templates to be used for closing-the-loop processes had since been developed and further developments were in progress.
- 6.6 It was noted that SOLTS data had been highly valuable in conversations to determine Education Excellence Awards, as well as in providing oversight across all areas of provision.
- 6.7 Some courses had reported an increase in good degrees. The OfS was already expecting to see an increase in good degrees this year, due to Covid-19 and the measures taken to mitigate its impact. However, this would need to be addressed in the long-run.
- 6.8 There had recently been a meeting between DB and SM to consider how to incorporate the QAA's recently published degree descriptors. The next step would be to identify programmes to begin mapping them to the descriptors.

7. Taught Postgraduate Courses Committee Annual Programme Monitoring Overview Report

To receive and consider: the annual overview report for 2019-20.

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/F

Reported

- 7.1 Course teams had achieved a remarkable feat in ensuring that the quality of courses was not adversely affected by the pandemic.
- 7.2 Courses had been taught online for the past year and the learning from this would be taken forward to the next academic year.
- 7.3 Course directors reported that their workload significantly increased during the third term of the last academic year and this increased workload has continued through the first and second terms of this academic year. There were concerns over staff exhaustion.
- 7.4 The number of postgraduate courses had been growing at a rapid rate and this was creating a burden, including on the APMR process.
- 7.5 Although course directors had been encouraged to take a lighter touch approach to completing the APMRs, they had provided very detailed responses when completing the APMR forms. The same was reported for UMBEC.
- 7.6 The TPCC meetings where APMRs were discussed provided a helpful opportunity to discuss good practice and concerns across programmes, but it was difficult for course directors to devote sufficient time to properly scrutinise all of the APMR forms.

Agreed

- 7.7 An alternative APMR form could be considered for the next annual monitoring cycle. This might make it more difficult to compare with past years, but could be less burdensome overall.

- 7.8 There may also be more effective ways to consider and approve individual APMR forms to avoid overburdening monitoring committees.
- 7.9 There were a number of common points between the UMBEC, FQC and TPCC Overview Reports. Dedicated time would be allocated to discuss them in QAEC's meeting on the 20th April 2021.

8. Research Degrees Committee Annual Report

To receive and consider: the annual report for 2019-20.

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/G

Reported

- 8.1 There continued to be good engagement with the supervisors training.
- 8.2 A Postgraduate research student resilience and wellbeing course had been developed and ran in 2019-20.
- 8.3 A website was being developed to promote academia to the wider population and would provide podcasts and interviews with a wide range of academics, both at St George's and outside, to inform the student population of the academic 'world' and to raise awareness of its importance. This would lead on to the work being developed with the EDI & WP group formed in December 2020.
- 8.4 A meeting would take place between MBS, CH and the QPD team to consider the introduction of a periodic review of PGR provision.
- 8.5 Extensions were offered to all students to mitigate the impact of Covid-19.
- 8.6 During 2020, and as a result of Covid-19, viva voce examinations were moved online and this proved very successful. This process opened up more flexibility with regards to timing and location, and also facilitated the inclusion of overseas examiners with relevant expertise.

9. Modifications

To receive and consider: the early implementation of modifications to Frontiers in Human Health Summer School

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/H

Reported

- 9.1 Small changes were proposed to the module outline following a three-year review. The External Examiner, John Tregoning from Imperial, had been consulted and was supportive of the changes made.
- 9.2 The changes had been approved by TPCC through Chair's action.

Agreed

- 9.3 QAEC approved the modifications to Frontiers in Human Health Summer School for early implementation.

To receive and consider: modifications to mitigate the shortage of placements available for BSc and MSc Physiotherapy students

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/I

Reported

- 9.4 Three changes were proposed to the BSc and MSc Physiotherapy programmes:
- A reduction in placements in response to a large shortfall in confirmed Physiotherapy placements in May 2021;
 - a modification to the rules of progression;
 - an International Placement Procedure to allow international students to complete their placements in their home country.
- 9.5 The changes were considered to be compliant with [HCPC's information on supporting student progression during the pandemic](#).

Agreed

- 9.6 It was not clear to QAEC if the facility for international students completing placements outside of the UK was new or if a previous iteration had already existed. Further clarity was required on how this would work and whether there was a limit on how many placements students could complete outside of the UK. The placement checklist and agreement template would be made available for QPD to review. **Action: IB and DB**
- 9.7 A correction was requested to the modification form, which suggested the approval had been approved by BCP Education through Chair's action. The form was not officially considered or approved by BCP Education. **Action: IB**
- 9.8 The changes were not agreed and would be considered through Chair's action, once the above correction had been made and the circumstances of international placements had been considered by QPD.

10. External Examiner Update

To receive and note: an update on the development of webpages to support External Examiners

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/J

Reported

- 10.1 The webpage to support External Examiners was still in development and a draft version was available: <https://preview-stgeorges-uni.cloud.contensis.com/for-staff/teaching-and-student-experience/external-examiners>
- 10.2 A single External Examiner job/role description and a single annual report template had been developed to replace the current multiple course versions of these documents. The aim being to streamline the maintenance and administration of these documents.
- 10.3 A review of Examiner fees was needed and Registry proposed consulting colleagues with a view to updating these for the 2021/22 academic year. There was a lack of clarity around which budget the fees should come from. It would need to be equitable across undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

11. Any other Business

To receive and consider: a list of committees/groups/leads who would share the responsibilities of a self-assessment exercise on mental health

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/L

Reported

- 11.1 In March 2021, QAEC had agreed that the UUK Self-Assessment Tool would be used, with the questions acting as prompts for reflection and charting progress and good practice.
- 11.2 VH and AO had collated a list of committees, groups and leads who would share the responsibilities of the self-assessment exercise on mental health.

Agreed

- 11.3 The document would be uploaded to Microsoft Teams, where members could comment on it.
Action: ALL

12. Dates of Meetings in 2020-21

20 April 2021
19 May 2021
22 June 2021

All meetings will start at 2pm and will take place online until further notice.

Matters for Report

13. Deferral of Periodic Reviews (approved through Chair's Action)

To receive and note: the deferral of MRes Clinical Research Periodic Review and the deferral of the BSc Paramedic Science and BSc Occupational Therapy Revalidations

Paper QAEC/20-21/4/A

Paper QAEC/20-21/6/K

GD/April 2021