

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the Meeting held on 16 April 2025

**Present:** Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Will Barras, Selma Carson (*from item 3*), Nadia DeGama, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, Lois Gall, Mark Grant, Faye Hendry, Jacqui dHutchison, Chukwuadinula Kachikwu (*from item 3*), Alex Menshykov, Piotr Niewiadomski, Gareth Norton, Miles Rothoerl, Fiona Stoddard (*from item 5*), Thanga Thevar, with Scott Carle, Darren Comber, Debbie Dyker, Lucy Leiper (*from item 6(i)*), Ann Simpson, Emma Tough and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

**Apologies:** Isla Callander, Flora Groening, Rachel Smith.

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/001)*

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meetings, which took place on (i) 19 February 2025; (ii) 5 March 2025; and (iii) 6 March 2025.

**MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/002)*

- 2.1 Senate Vacancies (*minute 5.1 refers*): The Committee was advised that one vacancy still existed, and to contact clerk with expressions of interest.
- 2.2 ITR Good Practice (*minute 4.2 refers*): The Committee noted that an update will be brought to a future meetings.
- 2.3 Articulation Pathways (*minute 3.1 refers*): It was agreed that follow-up would take place following the meeting.
- 2.4 Graduation Dates (*minute 10.1 refers*): The Committee noted that ongoing discussions are taking place with Registry and Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing regarding the publication of graduation dates. It was noted that complications arose regarding predictions as a result of the Student Record System.
- 2.5 University of Bergen Partnership Report (*minute 12.1 refers*): It was agreed that follow-up would take place following the meeting.
- 2.6 Articulation Guide: The Committee noted the Articulation Guide, provided by the Business School, and was advised that, as with all good practice, the guide should be shared with Schools who may have articulated students.

**POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/003)*

*[Clerk's Note: Megan McFarlane joined the meeting for this item.]*

- 3.1 The QAC heard a summary of the proposals in the paper, noting that the ultimate goal was general standardisation and consistency across Schools. The Committee was advised that the proposed approach was to lower the requirement for a Second Class (Division One) to a Second Class (Division Two) for most degrees. Additionally, it was advised that the proposals would widen the pool of applicants and, hopefully, improve PGT enrolment figures. The Committee

was advised of a caveat that there may be good reason to have higher entry requirements, e.g. for accreditation reasons, and that these cases should be discussed with Global Engagement, Marketing and Recruitment colleagues. Further, it was suggested that if approved, the currently rejected offers would be reviewed.

- 3.2 Discussion ensued regarding the proposals, for which general support was shared. In discussion, clarity was sought regarding the number of rejected applications, and what share of the market the University can gain. In response, it was suggested that the proposals would allow the University to compete more aggressively with competitor institutions whose requirements are already Second Class (Division Two). Additionally, it was noted that all applications must be reviewed in light of any decision taken. It was suggested that the requirements will be advertised going forward and will hopefully lead to a higher number of applications.
- 3.3 Some concern was expressed in relation to the ability of students to cope with the workload and content of the programmes, if they are accepted with a lower entry requirement, and that additional support would likely be required for these students. An example was provided in relation to maths requirements for Engineering programmes. In response, it was noted that all Universities in the sector are looking at their requirements in order to enhance their enrolment figures. Further, it was advised that supporting students should be an utmost priority, and that it would be up to Schools to ascertain the levels of support required. It was suggested that the taster courses on the TDM platform might be an option in this area. Additionally, discussion ensued regarding higher entry requirements on academic grounds. In response, it was suggested that discussions should take place with Global Engagement, Marketing and Recruitment colleagues in order that a list of programmes with alternative entry requirements can be devised and scrutinised. **Action: KK**
- 3.4 Clarity was sought in respect of previously agreed arrangements, for example, where applicants having lower than a Second Class (Division 2) degree but with appropriate work experience are accepted. It was clarified that these arrangements would remain in place.
- 3.5 Following discussion, the Committee was content to approve the proposals.

### **QATAR ADMISSIONS PROTOCOL**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/020)*

*[Clerk's Note: Lyn Batchelor joined the meeting for this item.]*

- 4.1 An overview of the paper was provided to the Committee, noting that the Admissions Protocol had been updated in line with previously approved articulation arrangements with three partners in Qatar. It was noted that the partners act as a bridge between High School and University, and that there are not enough University places in the public education system; as such, the Qatar campus is seeking to attract those students. In discussion, it was noted that the contacts list should be updated to remove colleagues who have left the institution.
- 4.2 Subject to amendment, the Committee was content to approve the Qatar Admissions Protocol.

### **ABERDEEN INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE: MEDICAL SCIENCES PROGRAMME**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/004)*

*[Clerk's Note: Keir Harper-Thorpe joined the meeting for this item.]*

- 5.1 A summary of the proposed programme was provided to the QAC. The Committee was advised that significant interest had been expressed in Medical Sciences, and as such, Study Group had worked with Schools and other Study Centres to develop the programme. It was noted that nine student applications were awaiting decision, with the proposed start date of September 2025

at Study Group, with the students arriving at the University in September 2026. The collaboration in respect of laboratory work was noted.

- 5.2 In discussion, the Committee sought clarity with regards to workload for students. In response, the English language components were noted as a visa requirement. Additionally, the intense small group teaching nature of the cohorts was noted, as well as the full timetable that the students undertake. The Committee was advised that the largest cohort was 25 students.
- 5.3 The Committee was content to approve the proposals.

## **EDUCATION POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW**

### **(i) ASSESSMENT TAXONOMY**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/005)*

*[Clerk's Note: Kirsty Kiezebrink and Jason Bohan joined the meeting for this and the subsequent items.]*

- 6.1 The Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting the feedback which had been received. A summary of the key changes was provided, including the monitoring of changes to the taxonomy via the curriculum approvals route, and the examples provided in Part B.
- 6.2 In discussion, general support was expressed for the taxonomy. Clarity was sought in respect of the difference between 'pre-released' and 'unseen' assessments, noting that some assessments may have elements of both. In response, it was noted that it is the decision of the academic as to whether it is unseen or pre-released. It was suggested that 'or topics' was added following 'questions' to ensure that clarity. Further, it was suggested that 'normally' was added in Part B for the word counts to increase flexibility.
- 6.3 Clarity was sought in relation to specific assessments and as to which component of the taxonomy they would be classed. Examples given were brief writing language tasks and practical experiment reports. In relation to the reports, it was advised that the category was dependent on what was being assessed (e.g. practical versus writing skills). It was agreed that discussion would take place outside of the meeting regarding the brief writing language tasks.
- Action: KK / IE**
- 6.4 The Committee queried whether the changes made will be accessible to students, and whether all courses would be required to update the Course Catalogue. In response, it was noted that a suite of resources and toolkit would be developed for both staff and students, with Schools input to increase student assessment literacy. In respect of the Course Catalogue, it was noted that courses would be updated as and when course changes were received in recognition of staff workload.
- 6.5 Subject to amendment, the Committee was content to approve the taxonomy.

### **(ii) ONLINE ASSESSMENTS GUIDANCE**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/006)*

- 7.1 An overview of the paper and changes was provided to the Committee, in particular the additional guidance provided in respect of the use of lockdown browsers. The Committee noted that the Guidance has been considered by a number of Committees and feedback has been provided at each. It was noted, in respect of next steps, that the Guidance will be included as part of the Academic Quality Handbook and will be circulated to Schools to raise awareness and ensure the relevant information is available to them. Additionally, the role of the Centre for Academic Development was highlighted to provide support to Schools in setting up assessments.

- 7.2 The Committee was content to approve the guidance, subject to the removal of point 3.9, which appeared to be included in error.

### **(iii) EXAMINERS' MEETINGS PROCEDURES**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/007)*

- 8.1 The Committee heard a summary of the paper and its key changes, noting a number of documents had been consolidated into the Examiners' Meetings Procedures. The Committee noted that there were no substantive amends. In discussion, the definition of internal examiners was queried. Responding, it was noted that the wording had been consistent with Ordinance 404, however, that this could be updated if required. Additionally, it was noted that it was the discretion of the Convenor of the Examiners' Meeting as to who can attend and participate. It was suggested that the list was updated to include 'for example'.
- 8.2 Subject to amendment, the Committee was content to approve the paper.

### **(iv) RESOLUTION FOR CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/008)*

- 9.1 The Committee heard a summary of the changes to regulations, noting in particular: (i) the amendment of the Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) regulations to allow for greater compensation; (ii) new regulations for the MA and BSc in Liberal Arts and Science, recognising the interdisciplinary nature of the programme; and (iii) updates to the Science regulations to amend the project weighting for the MEng, particularly in relation to the Computing Science programme.
- 9.2 The Committee was content to approve the paper.

### **REGULATORY MATTER IN THE AWARD OF CREDIT**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/009)*

- 10.1 The Committee heard of an issue that was dealt with by a particular School that should have been referred to the QAC for consideration and input. The background was summarised for the Committee. In discussing the paper, the Committee was reminded that where anomalous situations arose around assessments or awarding marks/credit, it is imperative that discussion is undertaken with QAC to ensure Schools can be supported in their decision making. The willingness to work with Schools to identify solutions to any potential issues was stressed. The ability to engage as early as possible to provide the necessary support was highlighted.

### **ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE: VACATION PERIODS FOR STUDENTS**

- 11.1 The Committee was advised that an issue had arisen with respect to the academic year structure, and specifically, the vacation periods for students. It was noted that the issue had arisen via discussions with the International Advice and Compliance team. The Committee was advised that the issue pertains to the period of marking following the Term 2 assessment diet, and prior to Term 3 (PGT) starting. The visa requirements for students was highlighted. Feedback was sought from Schools as to what activities students are undertaking during this period. It was noted that there was not a consistent approach across all Schools. It was highlighted that if the period is to be designated as study time, students will require to be monitored. It was highlighted that where students are not expected to be in teaching time, it is designated as such to allow them to work more hours per week, particularly in relation to the cost of living crisis.

- 11.2 In discussion, members of the Committee noted that during the marking time, there are no activities for students to engage in, in some Schools. Some Schools noted that students are engaged with their supervisors during this period for dissertations. It was suggested that something be added in respect of private study time for students. It was further suggested that there was no intention of changing the dedicated marking time for staff.
- 11.3 Clarity was sought regarding regulations governing vacation periods. Responding, it was advised that there were no regulations; only that the University is committed to teaching time, rather than vacation time. Additionally, it was highlighted that, dependent on funding body, there may be requirements in relation to the number of teaching weeks required, e.g. US students funded by the Federal Government.
- 11.4 In relation to next steps, it was suggested that an email is circulated to all Schools to gather information around the activities taking place in individual Schools. It was noted that once collated, further discussion can be undertaken. The Committee was reassured that there is not a steer from the University in either direction; the information is sought in order that a decision can be made. **Action: Chair / Clerk**

## **EXTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW**

### **(i) UPDATE ON TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (TQER)**

- 12.1 In respect of TQER, the Committee was advised that a presentation and short paper will be presented to Senate at its May meeting. The Committee was advised that the review was scheduled for February 2026 (w/c 2 February), with preparations ongoing to start collating documentation and discussions taking place with the Students' Union regarding student engagement in the preparation for submission for the TQER process. The Committee noted that the scoping meeting for the review will take place on 12 June 2025, with the deadline for the submission of documentation w/c 29 September, and the initial review in December 2025. Members were advised that the QAC will be kept updated with information pertaining to the review and will have the opportunity to feed into the preparation as is relevant and appropriate. It was noted that the intention was for engagement to take place widely across the University.
- 12.2 In relation to the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), submitted in December 2024, the Committee noted the feedback received from Scottish Funding Council (SFC). In particular, the following was highlighted: (i) the length of submission was positive; (ii) the use of data was welcomed; (iii) student engagement was generally positive; and (iv) suggestion that there should be more evaluation and analysis, over process. The Committee noted the feedback provided to SFC regarding the guidance provided and the usefulness of the action plan. Further, the Committee noted that an Institutional Liaison Meeting was scheduled for 8 May 2025 with the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland to discuss the content of the SEAP. It was highlighted that the timing of TQER was positive for the University as it would provide a helpful reference point for future SEAPs.

### **(ii) UPDATE ON SCOTLAND'S TERTIARY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (STEP)**

- 13.1 The QAC heard an update in respect of the STEP, noting that 3 of the 4 discovery days had taken place already. The Committee noted that project ideas had started to be developed for Years 2 and 3, with evaluation taking place in Year 4. It was highlighted that a STEPs So Far bulletin would be circulated when available. The University's input to a Regional Tertiary Enhancement Network project was noted. The opportunity to contribute to and be part of other projects was highlighted, noting that details of these projects would be shared as soon as they are available. It was highlighted that the Annual Academic Symposium will be used to highlight the other STEP projects, and as a way of encouraging colleagues from across the University to get involved.

## **DEADLINES FOR THE REFUSAL OF CLASS CERTIFICATES (2025/26)**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/010)*

- 14.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the deadlines for the refusal of class certificates in academic year 2025/26, subject to amendment of 'half-session' to 'term'.

## **CREATION OF THE GRADUATION GOWN FOR THE HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY (DDS)**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/011)*

- 15.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the creation of the graduation gown for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS).

## **GRADUATION IN-ABSENTIA DATES**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/012)*

- 16.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the proposal to amend the In-Absentia graduation dates to combine the February and April graduations, to one single In-Absentia graduation in March.

## **REPORT FROM ACADEMIC POLICY AND REGULATIONS GROUP**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/013)*

- 17.1 The Committee noted the report from the Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG).

## **PGT PORTFOLIO REVIEW**

*(copy filed as QAC/160425/014)*

- 18.1 The Committee noted the paper in respect of the PGT Portfolio Review.

## **PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES**

- 19.1 The Committee noted the matters pertaining to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies as follows:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (i) Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Register | <i>(copy filed as QAC/160425/015)</i> |
| (ii) Royal Society of Biology                              | <i>(copy filed as QAC/160425/016)</i> |
| (iii) Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy  | <i>(copy filed as QAC/160425/017)</i> |
| (iv) Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales | <i>(copy filed as QAC/160425/018)</i> |

## **MATTERS APPROVED BY CONVENOR'S ACTION / BY CIRCULATION**

- 20.1 The Committee noted the matters approved by Convenor's Action and by Circulation as follows:

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (i) Contextual Admissions Policy | <i>(copy filed as QAC/160425/019)</i> |
| (ii) Summer Graduations 2025     |                                       |

*A minor amend was suggested in relation to moving the MBChB and BDS ceremony, originally scheduled for Monday 30 June at 3pm, to Friday 4 July 2025 at 3pm.*

- (iii) Business School Entry Requirements

*Following a discussion at the School Executive on Tuesday, 25th February, a decision has been made to adjust the entry criteria for **all** Business School PGT programmes. The new criteria will allow applicants with a UK undergraduate degree (or a degree from a non-UK institution judged by the University to be of equivalent worth) to enter any PGT programme. The previous requirement was of a UK 2:2 or, in some cases, a 2:1 honours degree (or equivalent).*

*A few programmes have additional experiential criteria, which will remain unchanged, with only the degree classification being adjusted. For example, the MBA will continue to require a minimum of two years' work experience.*

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 21.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 2:05pm in Committee Room 2, University Office or via Microsoft Teams.