

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the Meeting held on 5 March 2025

**Present:** Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Will Barras, Isla Callander (*to item 4(ix)*), Selma Carson (*to item 2(iv)*), Nadia DeGama, Lois Gall, Flora Groening, Faye Hendry (*to item 4(iv)*), Jacqui Hutchison, Alex Menshykov, Piotr Niewiadomski, Gareth Norton, Miles Rothoerl, Rachel Smith, Thanga Thevar, with Scott Carle, Darren Comber, Lucy Leiper, Morag MacRae and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

**Apologies:** Debbie Dyker, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, Mark Grant, Chukwuadinula Kachikwu, Ann Simpson, Fiona Stoddard, Emma Tough

**OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP REPORTING**

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and thanked members for their flexibility and commitment during this busy period for quality assurance at the University.
- 1.2 The Committee heard a summary of the proposed approach in relation to partnerships reporting and the way that the meeting will proceed. The Chair highlighted that any areas of good practice should be disseminated to Schools and Service Areas via the members of the Committee.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PROVISION ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2023/24**  
**(i) SOUTH CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (JOINT INSTITUTE)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/007)*

- 2.1 The Committee heard a summary of the South China Normal University (Joint Institute) report, noting that the Institute had completed its third year of operation. In particular, the following was highlighted to the Committee: (i) the positive performance statistics, with a high mean CGS grade for a large number of courses; (ii) the increased student recruitment efforts with approx. 90-100 on each programme; (iii) the lowest marks appear to occur on discursive courses; (iv) some identified concerns in relation to English language provision, whereby the Institute has developed a proposal for students to withdraw from the Aberdeen degree should they not meet this requirement but continue on the SCNU degree; and (v) the campus exchange was a positive for the student experience. The Committee noted the future plans in respect of further mobility, consideration of EDI and a review of block teaching. Following consideration, the Committee was content to approve the report.

**(ii) STUDY GROUP LTD.**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/002)*

- 3.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Study Group Ltd. report, noting that it relates to the partnership with Study Group for the delivery of the Aberdeen International Study Centre (ISC). The Committee noted the positive recruitment and low attrition rates for the ISC, while also noting the ongoing work in relation to induction and transition for these students. The Committee noted the changes in staffing at the ISC, but that the report was robust and thorough in identifying staff responsibilities. The Committee noted the positive quality assurance mechanisms in place to measure quality performance. In particular, the positive improvement in relation to the moderation process for physical sciences was noted, as was the ability for students to consistently provide feedback. The Committee queried whether this feedback was provided by way of the Course Feedback and Reflection Form system, which would be followed up. In discussion, the Committee noted the new programme in Psychology and Medical Sciences; it was clarified that Psychology programme would not be running at least in the first instance due to accreditation requirements. It was further clarified that in relation to CPD for staff,

all ISC staff are offered the same support as University staff. Following discussion, the Committee was content to approve the report. **Action: Clerk**

**(iii) TRINITY COLLEGE BRISTOL**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/003)*

- 4.1 The Committee heard an overview of the report for Trinity College Bristol, noting the partnership was well-established. The Committee noted positively the recruitment and retention of students, and that the College are bringing into line processes with the University. The Committee was pleased to note that the College is working well with the University's PGR College and that supervision is generally well received. The Committee discussed the pastoral support offered to students, particularly in relation to the large number of suspensions of study; the monitoring processes to appropriately support students back into study were noted. The professional and personal development of PhD students was commended. The Committee discussed queries arising from the report in respect of (i) the requirement for mandatory training and (ii) the volume of emails that students receive. It was agreed that this would be followed up with the PGR College. Following discussion, the Committee was content to approve the report. **Action: Clerk**

**(iv) UNIVERSITIES OF GLASGOW AND STRATHCLYDE**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/004)*

- 5.1 The Committee heard a summary of the report pertaining to the Precision Medicine and Pharmacological Innovation (PMPI) partnership with the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde. The Committee noted that the partnership was not being continued due to a lack of funding. The high pass rates were noted, as was the positive support for students. The Committee noted the additional support in place recognising the nature of the partnership, with much better integration and sufficient opportunity for the cohort to collaborate. As in previous years, it was noted the provision of projects in Aberdeen is less well-served but this will not be an issue for future years. In discussion, it was clarified that Glasgow is the primary owner of the programme with Aberdeen, Strathclyde, and formerly, Dundee, as partners. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(v) AL FALEH GROUP FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC SERVICES**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/005)*

- 6.1 The Committee heard a summary of the report for AFG College with the University of Aberdeen, noting the licence to operate was renewed in July 2023. The impacts of loss of academic staff were highlighted, noting the support provided by the Business School. The transition to AFG staff teaching on postgraduate taught programmes was noted. The Committee noted the challenging numbers in student recruitment, which is an ongoing action. Additionally, some issues were identified in respect of student attendance at SSLC meetings, particularly for postgraduate taught, which is an ongoing action for 2024/25. The number of staff undertaking CPD is noted as low, with increased engagement an action for going forward. The Committee discussed the exchange opportunities between Qatar and Aberdeen, noting a proposal for outbound mobility will return to the Committee in due course. Further, in discussion, the Committee noted the challenges with attendance monitoring and the new system being implemented. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(vi) SOUTH CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (ARTICULATIONS)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/006)*

- 7.1 The Committee heard a summary of the South China Normal University (Articulations) report, noting the various articulation arrangements. The sharp decline in student recruitment was noted, as were the range of actions being undertaken in this regard. The Committee noted the positive student performance on the programmes, highlighting

the enhanced induction process for partnership students. The Committee noted the access of the partnership students to the Language Centre for English language support. The Committee noted the opportunities for student feedback. In terms of future plans, the Committee noted the proposed 4+0 model which would require all teaching to be delivered in China, for which discussions were ongoing. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(vii) CHONGQING INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN STUDIES**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/008)*

- 8.1 The Committee heard an overview of the Chongqing Institute of Foreign Studies (CIFS) report, noting the positive performance by students. The Committee noted the decline in recruitment, but also that work was underway to address the recruitment of students working alongside agents and enhanced marketing. The Committee noted that communication was clarified in respect of assessment and reassessment rules, particularly in light of the cultural differences between the Chinese and UK higher education systems. The Committee noted that the partnership was showing positive signs, and was content to approve the report.

**(viii) SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY (BUSINESS)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/009)*

- 9.1 The Committee heard a summary of the report in respect of Shandong Normal University for the Business School. The Committee noted the increase in student numbers, but a decrease in the performance of these students. Further, the use of Personal Tutors was highlighted. The Committee commended the Articulation Guide for partners within the Business School, and agreed that it would be sought in order that the Committee might be able to share this good practice. The Committee highlighted the personalised and bespoke induction approaches. Additionally, the Committee noted that the School would like more contact with SDNU in future. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**Action: Clerk**

**(ix) SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY (BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/010)*

- 10.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Shandong Normal University report for Biological Sciences, noting the increase in student numbers for this academic year. The Committee noted that student performance is strong with performance akin to the SDNU student performance. The small number of graduating students was noted. The collaboration between Aberdeen and SDNU was noted, in particular the exchange of ideas between the institutions. In respect of enhancement, it was noted that SDNU hoped that teaching and learning materials from years 1 and 2 could be shared with the students in order that their expectations can be managed for their arrival in Aberdeen. This was noted as excellent practice. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(x) HARBIN ENGINEERING UNIVERSITY**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/011)*

- 11.1 The Committee heard an overview of the Harbin Engineering University report, noting that the first cohort of students graduated in Summer 2024. The performance of students was noted as positive, however, the Committee queried the breakdown of classifications as the numbers appeared to display a typo. It was agreed this would be followed up with the School. The proposed expansion of English language provision was welcomed. The Committee commended the student handbook specifically designed for this programme, as well as the attempts to streamline the invigilation procedures to ensure consistency with Aberdeen. The Committee noted the change in the means of classifying students, using both year 3 and 4 marks. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**Action: Clerk**

**(xi) UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/012)*

- 12.1 The Committee heard a summary of the report for the University of Bergen, noting that there had been no enrolments in the previous academic year. The Committee noted the longstanding relationship with Bergen, and other collaborations between Bergen and Aberdeen, but sought further clarity in respect of the marketing strategy for the partnership. It was agreed that the marketing strategy and potential competitors would be sought from the School. The Committee noted that there was a gap between agreements. The Committee was content to approve the report. **Action: Clerk**

**(xii) CHINA UNIVERSITY OF GEOSCIENCES**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/013)*

- 13.1 The Committee heard an overview of the China University of Geosciences report, noting that no students had ever been enrolled on the partnership, which was initiated prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Committee noted that the partnership was effectively concluded, given there had not been much engagement from the partner. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(xiii) UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/001)*

- 14.1 The Committee heard an overview of the report for the University of the Highlands and Islands, noting this would be the final report received as the final student has now graduated. In particular, the Committee noted the following: (i) the strengthened link with UHI North, West and Hebrides; (ii) supervisor development and training; and (iii) the New Deal for PGR students and the alignment therein. Some discrepancies with respect to numbers in Figure 1 was highlighted, which will be fed back. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORTING**

- 15.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Internal Teaching Review follow-up reporting. The Committee noted that reports were not expected from the following Schools who had recently undergone or were currently undergoing an ITR: (i) School of Education; (ii) School of Engineering; and (iii) School of Natural and Computing Science. Committee members were reminded to share good practice identified within their Schools or University areas.

**INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW FOLLOW-UP REPORTS**

**(i) BUSINESS SCHOOL**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/014)*

- 16.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Business School ITR follow-up report, noting the majority of actions appeared to be completed. The Committee noted the restructuring and reviews which had taken place following the ITR. The Committee commended the achievement of EQUIS accreditation in February 2023, which appears to be a cornerstone of the School's strategy. The ongoing work in respect of feedback and use of rubrics was noted. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(ii) SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/015)*

- 17.1 The Committee heard a summary of the School of Biological Sciences ITR follow-up report, noting a range of actions across the themes of (i) teaching and learning experience; (ii) teaching spaces; (iii) support offered to students; and (iv) student experience. The Committee noted that the School agreed with most recommendations,

with a range of actions undertaken in response. The School was in partial agreement with actions related to the use of block teaching, noting that their priority across the next few academic years is the development of postgraduate programmes, within which consideration of block teaching will take place. It was suggested that the use of block teaching could be a light-touch review, for example, seeking feedback through the usual feedback mechanisms. It was agreed that this will be fed back to the School. The Committee was content to approve the report. **Action: Clerk**

**(iii) SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY & ART HISTORY**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/016)*

- 18.1 The Committee heard an overview of the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History ITR follow-up report, noting many of the actions were progressed and underway. In particular, the Committee highlighted the following: (i) the funding provided by the Development Trust Student Experience Fund which will be beneficial for community building; (ii) good example of Art History fieldtrips; (iii) increased support for personal tutors; (iv) employability across the School, including review of assessment through the TESTA process; and (v) an internal DHPA Development Academy for research students and early career researchers. The Committee noted that programme review will take place over the coming years. The workload for the administrative team was highlighted, noting the continued review of this. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(iv) SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/023)*

- 19.1 The Committee heard a summary of the School of Social Science ITR follow-up report, noting the array of actions taken following the review. The Committee noted the situation regarding staffing levels, which had been in a positive place but have subsequently been impacted by the University's financial situation. The Committee noted that some programmes have been amended due to staffing changes. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the new innovative approaches in some courses. Student support was highlighted, in particular the allocation of Personal Tutees for new staff and training. Employability was highlighted as positive by the Committee. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(v) SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/017)*

- 20.1 The Committee heard an overview of the follow-up report for the School of Geosciences, noting the various themes. The Committee noted the desire to broaden the interdisciplinarity of the School, with new programmes developed in response and a curriculum review underway. The Committee further noted the challenges with recruiting course representatives, and the development of a School Handbook. The Committee discussed the implications of workload on the teaching and learning experience. Equality, diversity and inclusion was highlighted as positive, with working groups identified to take forwards various workstreams. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(vi) SCHOOL OF LAW**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/018)*

- 21.1 The Committee heard a summary of the School of Law follow-up report, noting that all actions appear to be in order. The impacts of the recruitment freeze and the University's financial situation was highlighted in respect of staff-student ratios. The Committee noted the positive improvements in respect of communication and feedback with students. The Committee commended the training provided to new members of staff, and the clear communications in respect of academic integrity, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence. Further, the Committee was pleased to hear the positive impacts

of the ongoing employability work to prepare students for the competitive job markets. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(vii) SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, MUSIC AND VISUAL CULTURE**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/019)*

- 22.1 The Committee received an overview of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture follow-up report, noting the number of actions underway. The Committee noted the following, in particular: (i) the positive work undertaken in respect of COIL and student exchange; (ii) raising awareness and training in respect of Generative AI; (iii) significant work undertaken to ensure the preparedness for in-person exams throughout the School; (iv) significant work in respect of the PGR student community to increase collaboration and professional development; (v) positive work in respect of employability. The Committee noted that two actions were on hold, in respect of (i) software access for students; and (ii) the Gaelic Summer School has been withdrawn; both of which were cited due to funding. Investigating alternative sources of funding was ongoing. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(viii) SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION (MEDICAL SCIENCES)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/020)*

- 23.1 The Committee heard an overview of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition follow-up report in respect of Medical Sciences programmes, noting most actions were complete or ongoing. In discussion, the Committee noted the following: (i) a new assessment lead had been appointed for Undergraduate programmes; (ii) the role descriptors for professional services staff were being reviewed; (iii) the loss of staff due to the University's financial position; (iv) the course content was modified in response to student feedback; (v) guidance in respect of employability; and (vi) through the BSc review, work undertaken to review the workloads associated with 15 and 30 credit courses for students, encouraging course coordinators to use the first lecture of a course to set expectations. The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(ix) SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION (HEALTHCARE)**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/021)*

- 24.1 The Committee heard an overview of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition follow-up report in respect of Healthcare programmes, noting the significant work undertaken to date. The work in relation to mental health was highlighted, whereby a research group has been established to collaborate and share good practice. The increased support for students on placement was highlighted, as was the funding available for clinical placements. An issue was raised in respect of accommodation quality, but that some renovations had been undertaken. The Committee was pleased to hear of the streamlining of administrative and technical processes, and that the Students' Union now had an office at Foresterhill. In discussion, the Committee noted the system for logging student behaviours (Form2), which had recently been replaced (Sparks). The Committee was content to approve the report.

**(x) SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/022)*

- 25.1 The Committee heard an overview of the School of Psychology follow-up report, noting that most actions identified were complete or nearing completion. The Committee noted the positive improvements in relation to PGR student support, development and community, particularly in relation to the exciting initiative for early career researchers, Academic Concordat. The Committee noted that reviewing the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment was ongoing. The use of awaydays to focus on development and approaches to assessment was commended. The impacts of the mode of delivery

on the cohort was highlighted, particularly in relation to On Demand students. In respect of employability, the Committee noted the positive work in respect of authentic assessments and the Programme Advisory Board. The Committee was content to approve the report.

#### **COLLABORATIVE PROVISION REGISTER**

*(copy filed as QAC/050325/024)*

26.1 The Committee noted the Collaborative Provision Register.

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

27.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 16 April 2025 at 2:05pm at University Office, Committee Room 2 and via Microsoft Teams.