UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 25 November 2015

Present: Professor K Shennan (Convener), Dr P Bishop, Ms K Christie, Dr D Comber, Dr M-I Ehrenschwendtner, Dr W Harrison, Dr M Hole, Dr S Lawrie, Professor D Lurie, Ms E Hay (Clerk)

Apologies: Dr M Beaton, Ms G Clarke, Mr L Fuller, Dr D Hendry

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2015
(copy filed as QAC/251115/001)

1.1 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 20 October 2015, subject to the inclusion of the following paragraph, numbered item 9.4:

9.4 Members of the Committee expressed, with regards to the Jump Digital proposal, concern with regards to the Business Case as approved by the Institution. Members of the Committee noted concern regarding the 80/20 revenue split with Jump Digital and the lack of Further or Higher Education Institutions listed as partners with whom the company had previously interacted. The Committee did, however, for its part, approve the Academic Quality elements of the proposal.

Action: Clerk

Clerk’s Note: The minute of the meeting held on 20 October 2015 has now been amended.

MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Committee was informed that both the Business School and the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) had been approached with regards to membership on the Committee. The Convener thanked Dr Darren Comber for his attendance and requested that, where possible, a deputy attend when teaching commitments do not allow for his attendance.

Action: Clerk

Clerk’s Note: Approval of this method communicated to Sarah James, who will communicate with UHI directly.

2.2 The Committee noted the revalidation of the Area of Energy as scheduled by the University of the Highlands and Islands. Members of the Committee noted that, regrettably, no member could attend the date scheduled but agreed to consider the revalidation by way of paper exercise.

Action: Clerk

Clerk’s Note: Approval of Sustainability communicated to Sarah James, who will communicate with UHI directly.

2.3 The Committee noted the submission of the proposal to revalidate the Area of Sustainability by the University of the Highlands and Islands. The Committee agreed to the proposal in principal, pending a revalidation event.

Action: Clerk

Clerk’s Note: Approval of Sustainability communicated to Sarah James, who will communicate with UHI directly.

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW (ITR)
3.1 The Committee noted the lack of submission of response from the College of Life Sciences and Medicine Graduate School. The Committee agreed that the School should be reminded of the requirement to submit their response and would ask that they do so in time for its consideration at the meeting to be held on Monday 15 February 2016.

**Action: Clerk**

*Clerk’s Note: An email confirming this requirement has been sent to the CLSM Graduate School.*

3.2 The Committee acknowledged the one year follow up report as provided by the School of Engineering. The Committee wished to express their thanks to the school for the report returned. Members of the Committee raised the following specific points with regards to the report:

- Regarding the report as a whole, the Committee were content with the general overview as provided.
- The Committee noted that the school had given consideration to a student representative forming part of the School Teaching Committee. The Committee noted regret that it had been determined this was not appropriate.
- The Committee noted point 6.7 regarding moderation and would ask the School refer to the recently approved Moderation procedures for clarity on this matter.
- With regards point 6.9, the Committee acknowledged the difficulties faced by Schools in promoting the recognition of quality teaching. The Committee noted the importance of the sharing of good practice within the school, and beyond, as integral to this. The Committee recommended the recognition of quality teaching at Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs), staff attendance at Teaching Fellow events, engagement with the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching and engagement with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as ways of highlighting the importance of teaching to staff.
- The Committee noted point 15.7 and the appointment of a retention officer. The QAC noted concern over the delay in this appointment.
- Finally, again with regards to point 15.7, the QAC acknowledged the ongoing implementation of OneSource. The Committee would note the distribution of all retention data to the School of Engineering, as is issued to other schools.

**Action: Clerk**

*Clerk’s Note: An email confirming this feedback has been sent to the School of Engineering.*

**ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW (APR)**

4.1 The Committee discussed the Summary Course and Programme Review Reports for 2014-15 as provided by Heads of Discipline/School. The Committee noted that Dr Beaton had been unable to complete a summary of activities in the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry and Medical Sciences as a consequence of absence. Drs Bishop and Harrison agreed to look at these on behalf of Dr Beaton.

**Action: Drs Bishop and Harrison**
4.2 Overall, the Committee noted reflective feedback from the Disciplines/Schools concerned and acknowledged that where issues did arise, solutions had been identified to resolve these. The Committee noted that each School would receive feedback on their submissions.

**Action: Clerk**

*Clerk’s Note:* Schools have now received copies of individually tailored feedback based on the returns as provided.

4.3 The Committee discussed the process for Summary Course and Programme Review as followed for 2014-15 and agreed with the general view that the process had worked effectively. The Committee noted that the process had been approved by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and as a pilot exercise. The Convener agreed to take the process back to UCTL to report on its successes and to seek permission to continue it into 2015/16 and beyond.

**Action: Convener**

4.4 Acknowledging the success of the APR exercise, the Committee further agreed to pursue the review of the Internal Teaching Review exercise to incorporate the ACR and APR processes.

**Action: Convener and Ms Christie**

**ANNUAL COURSE REVIEW (ACR)**

*(copy filed as QAC/251115/004)*

4.5 The Committee noted the Annual Course Review sampling, as carried out across 6 of the University’s 13 Schools for the second half session of Academic Year 2014/15. The Committee again noted an overall satisfactory approach to the completion and return of forms.

**Action: Clerk**

*Clerk’s Note:* Schools have now received copies of individually tailored feedback based on the returns as provided.

4.6 Members of the Committee note recurring negative feedback with regards to the requirement for Enhanced Study at levels 3 and 4. Members of the Committee were informed that this issue had been raised at UCTL and that Enhanced Study as a whole would be further discussed at a future meeting.

4.7 Members of the Committee expressed concern over the percentage feedback returns received to the Student Course Evaluation Form exercise. Members of the Committee expressed their concern at the validity of the exercise in such circumstances and queried whether a review of the process was required. Members further noted some concern over the Student Representatives system, expressing concern over how the system was operating. The Convener agreed to further discuss this issue with the Students’ Association President for Education.

**Action: Convener**

**EXTERNAL EXAMINING**

5.1 There were no matters arising pertaining to this agenda item.

**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

6.1 There were no matters arising pertaining to this agenda item.
7.1 There were no matters arising pertaining to this agenda item.

8.1 The Committee noted that the Undergraduate and Postgraduate regulatory changes for 2016/17 would follow for their approval in due course.

9.1 The Committee noted the approval of the following items by Convener’s action since the April 2015 meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee.

Collaborative Proposal:
Renewal of Agreement between the University of Aberdeen Dental School and the University of Dundee Dental School 
(copy filed as QAC/251115/007)

9.2 Members of the Committee note that a list of all Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses and programmes approved since the October 2015 meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee can be found on SharePoint here.

10.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 13 January 2016 at 2pm in the Court Room, University Office.

11.1 The Convener informed the Committee that a validation event would likely take place in 2016 involving an external provider and the School of Education. The Convener informed the Committee that representation of the QAC would be required on the validation panel and that further information would follow in due course.

11.2 In discussing collaborations with the School of Education, members of the Committee again noted the MSc provided in Mindfulness. Members of the Committee noted feedback from a student regarding the ‘Buddhism heavy’ nature of the programme and agreed to follow up on this. Members of the Committee were reassured of the viable nature of the programme and that, as with all programmes of the University, it remains under review.

Action: Convener

11.3 Members of the Committee discussed whether or not there existed an Institutional policy governing the required retention of hard copy course assessments, such as essays or literature reviews. While noting clear guidelines on the retention of dissertations, the Committee noted varying practices amongst Schools. The Committee noted the benefits of MyAberdeen and the electronic submission of work which automatically archives work, avoiding any need for hard copy archiving. The Clerk agreed to confirm the position with regards to policy.
11.4 The Committee noted that Dr David Hendry was now retiring from the University and his role as a member of the Committee. The Committee expressed their regret that Dr Hendry would no longer form part of the Committee and their sincere thanks to him for his contribution to the work of the Committee.