UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 13 March 2013

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Dr R Bernard, Ms J Bjorkqvist, Professor G M Coghill, Ms A Desilligny, Dr D C Hendry, Dr S Lawrie, Professor D Lurie, Mr J Wyllie, Ms Emma Hay (Clerk)

Apologies: Ms M Beaton, Dr D Comber, Professor P McGeorge

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2012 AND 8 FEBRUARY 2013
(copy filed as QAC/130313/001)
(copy filed as QAC/130313/002)

1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 28 November 2012 and 8 February 2013 subject to one or two minor typographical revisions. The Committee agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of discussions held.

RESPONSE TO ITR REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
(copy filed as QAC/130313/003a)
Summary report copy filed as (QAC/130313/003b)

2.1 The Committee noted the submission of a response from the School of Medical Sciences to their Internal Teaching Review Report. The panel considered the response to be appropriate, and look forward to receipt of the one year follow up report.

2.2 The Committee agreed to circulate points relating to other areas, such as the Centre for Academic Development or the College of Life Sciences and Medicine.

2.3 The panel specifically identified the following areas within the report as requiring further comment or action.

- **Point 4.4**: The Committee would seek clarification on this point. The Committee would ask that the School clarify exactly how Technical staff will be represented.
- **Point 4.10**: The Committee would ask that minutes and not just action points are kept as a record of discussions held.
- **Point 4.20**: The Committee noted concern that the School’s response to this point was inaccurate to the experiences of other staff/students.
- **Point 6.2**: The Committee will take action to alert the College to this point.
- **Point 6.8**: The Committee noted concern at the response provided by the School.
- **Point 8.3**: The Committee noted that the panel had recommended this issue was discussed within the School and would encourage the School to take this forward.
- **Point 8.5**: The committee noted the School’s response to this point and would encourage further initiatives such as the use of all staff meetings or away days.
- **Point 12.3**: The Committee noted the School’s responsibility in training demonstrators, aside from the support provided at College level. The Committee would ask the School to consider their role and reflect on this in the one year follow up report.
- **Point 13.4**: The Committee would urge the School to hold SSLCs according to University guidelines, stipulated within the AQH.
- **Point 14.1**: The Committee look forward to a further update on this point in the one year follow up report.
• **Point 20.1:** The Committee noted concern that the perception of the ITR panel was that ‘two schools’ continued to exist within SMS. The Committee would value further feedback on this issue, including the opinion of students and staff from across the School, in the one year follow up report.

**RESPONSE TO ITR REPORT FROM THE BUSINESS SCHOOL**

*(copy filed as QAC/130313/004a)*  
*Summary report copy filed as (QAC/130313/004b)*

**3.1** The Committee noted the submission of a response from the Business School to their Internal Teaching Review Report. The panel considered the response to be appropriate, and look forward to receipt of the one year follow up report.

**3.2** The Committee agreed to circulate points relating to other areas, such as the Centre for Academic Development or the College of Arts and Social Sciences.

**EXTERNAL EXAMINING UPDATE**

*(copy filed as QAC/130313/005)*

**4.1** The Committee noted the proposed update to the UCTL on the 2011/12 External Examining process. The Committee agreed the importance of updating the UCTL as part of the process and agreed that a paper provided by the QAC should be submitted to the UCTL, in addition to the DoTL reports. The Committee agreed that the work of the QAC should not duplicate that of the DoTL but act in support of it.

**4.2** The Committee noted with concern the varying responses received from the DoTLs and agreed that further guidance should be provided to ensure a detailed and useful response. The Committee agreed the significant importance of the DoTL response and their clear demonstration of their understanding of the External Examining position in their respective Colleges. In this vein, the Committee approved the tabled paper, proposing amendments to the DoTL External Examiner report form with the following amendments:

- There should be an undergraduate and postgraduate form returned for each school, with the Heads of Graduate School asked to complete the postgraduate form
- A section should be added to the form, to allow for comparison to comments made by the QAC in previous years

**4.3** The Committee agreed that before a report summarising External Examining during the 2011/12 academic year could go to the UCTL, the DoTLs for Physical Sciences and Life Sciences and Medicine should be asked to review their returns.

**REGULATORY CHANGES**

**PhD in Artwork**

*(copy filed as QAC/130313/006a)*

**5.1** The Committee considered the proposal for the introduction of a PhD in Artwork. The Committee noted the proposal with concern and identified the following points as areas which must be addressed before its approval could be considered:
The Committee expressed concern over a lack of academic content and the lack of a significant contribution to knowledge and understanding provided by the programme.

Members of the Committee voiced concern over the award of a PhD and felt the consideration of an MPhil may be more appropriate.

The Committee requested further information of the expertise within the University to support this programme.

The Committee were concerned by the word length of the thesis proposed.

5.2 The Committee agreed to refer the proposal back to the Postgraduate Committee for further discussion.

CHEATING IN EXAMINATIONS

6.1 The Committee considered the issue of cheating in examinations following feedback received from a member of staff and separately from a student, by way of formal complaint to the University, regarding the issue of students cheating in examinations during toilet breaks.

6.2 The Committee acknowledged the feedback received and noted the difficulty of resolving such an issue. The Committee noted the importance of vigilance by invigilators and recommended that, where possible, students were escorted to toilets. The Committee agreed that invigilator training should raise the issue and encourage vigilance.

6.3 The Committee noted that the issue would also be referred to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees for comment.

Master of Science (MSci) Degrees

7.1 The Classification of Degrees

7.1.1 The Committee considered the issue of the classification of Master of Science (MSci) degrees and in doing so noted inconsistency across the Institution. While some Schools classify on the basis of a student’s third and fourth years of study, others take into account the fourth and fifth (often a placement year) in calculating classification. The Committee noted concern and agreed that consistency of approach should be required across the Institution.

7.1.2 The Committee requested a summary of practice both internally and in other HEIs before determining the consistent practice to be recommended to UCTL for approval.

Action: Clerk

7.2 Level Descriptors

7.2.1 The Committee considered the issue of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Masters level descriptors and noted concerns raised over the issue of how postgraduate and undergraduate (integrated) Master’s degree course descriptors are related. The Committee recognised that while both the University and the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) stipulate that these should both be at levels 5 and 11 respectively, an inconsistency of approach exists across the Institution.
7.2.2 The Committee agreed that Schools and Colleges should be reminded that the expectation of the Institution is that a course taught at level 5, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, should be at the same level and therefore the same level descriptors should be used.

MATTERS ARISING

8.1 The Committee discussed the issue of students applying to take a resit examination after graduation and whether or not it would be possible to invalidate a class certificate upon graduation. The Committee agreed that this course of action would not be possible and that students may wish to resit as a requirement of employment. The Committee agreed that if a class certificate remained valid, a student would be entitled to apply to take a resit examination. The Committee did note, however, that the cost of resit examinations for students and graduates would be considered as part of the fees debate.

8.2 The Committee discussed the issue of the number of arts courses a science student is permitted to take as part of their degree programme. The Committee acknowledged that where an arts course forms part of a degree prescription, this may impact upon a student’s ability to study any other arts course. The Committee agreed to review the Science regulations in this regard.

FOR ROUTINE APPROVAL

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW (ITR) DOCUMENTATION
(copy filed as QAC/130313/007)

8.1 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) Documentation subject to one or two minor typographical revisions.

FOR INFORMATION

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)
(copy filed as QAC/130313/008)

9.1 The Committee noted the update on ELIR.

COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

9.2 A list of all Undergraduate courses and programmes approved by Convener’s Action since the November meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee can be found at the following link: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/ascreport/undergraduate.php.

A list of all Postgraduate courses and programmes approved by Convener’s Action since the November meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee can be found at the following link: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/ascreport/postgraduate.php.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16 May 2013 at 10am, Committee Room 2, University Office.