UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 16th January 2014

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Miss M Beaton, Professor G M Coghill, Dr P Bishop, Ms K Christie, Dr M-l Ehrenschwendtner, Dr D Hendry, Mr R Henthorn, Dr S Lawrie, Professor D Lurie, Ms Emma Hay (Clerk), Ms Clare McWilliams (Minute Secretary),

Apologies: Dr D Comber, Professor P McGeorge

ANNUAL COURSE REVIEW FORMS

1.1 The Committee discussed the ACRs submitted following the second half session of the 2012/13 academic year. The Committee noted that good practice varied considerably between schools as did the variant levels of SCEF response rates, with some schools enjoying noticeably higher levels of response than others. The Committee also noted that some ACR forms were still lacking detail, particularly in response to external examiner comments on courses and when identifying aspects of good practice. The Committee was informed that an app, which students could thus use during class time, is being considered in an attempt to improve student response rates. The Committee noted the lack of comments from Heads of School in some areas however the Committee was very pleased in particular with the very reflective comments provided by the Head of School of Natural and Computing Science.

1.2 The Committee noted that as yet no ACRs from the School of Geosciences had been received. The clerk would liaise with the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching regarding non-submissions.

Action: Clerk

1.3 The Committee noted specific examples of good practice, including the School of Psychology’s use of a ‘Friday email’ summarising the week to come which was appreciated by students and the use of a ‘flipped lecture’ where students learn new content after having read notes prior to the lecture as found in the School of Natural and Computing Sciences. The course co-ordinator for CS3024 is to be contacted for further details regarding the use of ‘flipped lectures’.

Action: Professor G M Coghill

1.4 The Committee discussed the significance of the level of student enjoyment when analysing a course. The Committee agreed that there would only be a cause for concern where low student enjoyment was found in conjunction with a low pass rate.

1.5 The Committee agreed that schools are to be provided with feedback in relation to annual course review forms. Committee members were informed that they would be advised when late annual course review submissions were received.

Action: Clerk

AMENDMENTS TO THE ACR PROCESS

2.1 The Committee was reminded of the already approved proposal that the requirement for student representative signatures on ACR forms is to be removed. The Committee agreed with the sentiment that asking Heads of Schools to write on each form led to unsubstantive
responses and placed a heavy burden upon them particularly in the School of Language and Literature given the vast number of courses in the school each half-session. The Committee agreed therefore, to recommend to UCTL (i) the introduction of a School/Discipline Analysis summary sheet to be completed by the Heads of Discipline, (ii) the School Teaching and Learning Committee should consider the summary analysis reports only and (iii) all summary reports must be signed by the Head of School and forwarded to the College for information.

**Action: Clerk**

2.2 In considering the School/Discipline Analysis of Annual Course Review Reports the committee noted the questions asked related to the questions on SCEF forms. The Committee was suggested that the form may be considered negative due to the nature of the questions being asked. It was suggested that questions which will bring about positive responses be included to reduce the negativity of the form.

**Action: Clerk**

2.3 The Committee discussed the use of the word ‘effectiveness’ when ascertaining the quality of teaching enjoyed in a particular course. The view expressed by some members was that there are differing views on what is deemed to be ‘effective teaching’. Further student views will differ depending on the learning style of the students. The Committee agreed that it was necessary to consider responses in the whole and not to view metrics as individual markers.

2.4 The Committee also considered the percentages proposed on the form and agreed that when measuring teaching effectiveness and student enjoyment, the courses that should be listed on the form are those with less than 70%, as opposed to the previously proposed 50%. The Committee also agreed to the following minor amendments:

- The final question is to be amended from ‘Other points of note to be raised at the School TLC’ to ‘Other points of note to be addressed at the School TLC’.
- The final declaration is to be amended from ‘I confirm that I have read and am happy’ to ‘I confirm that I have read and agree with’.

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT**

3.1 The Committee considered the draft Code of Practice on Assessment produced for the purposes of addressing comments raised by Senate in November 2012.

3.2 The Committee discussed the proposed requirement for students to pass all prescribed courses in order to graduate with an Honours degree. The Committee was of the view that the meaning of ‘prescribed courses’ and ‘compulsory courses’ required further clarification. The Committee agreed that only one of these items should be used for the purposes of easing confusion.

**Action: Clerk**

3.3 The Committee did not agree with the view that students failing an Honours course should be required to either pass that course or another at that level in order to graduate with an Honours degree. The Committee was of the view that as long as the student has the required amount of credits to conform to SCQF he/she should be able to take a course at a lower level to gain missing credits.

3.4 The Committee discussed whether honours degrees should be provided as exit routes for accredited degree programmes where specific requirements must be met for graduation
with the accredited degree. The Committee agreed that this should be left to the discretion of individual schools.

3.5 The Committee considered whether it should be a requirement for the award of all Honours degrees that a student has passed their thesis/dissertation. The Committee was of the view this should not be a requirement and that if schools wanted a thesis/dissertation to be compulsory then it should become a prescribed course.

3.6 The Committee considered the proposal that if examiners agree that illness or other good cause has impacted on performance, the assessment should be set aside and the student should be given a further opportunity of assessment with this being considered to be their first attempt. This is different from the previous system whereby examiners could make a judgement about the extent of the impact of mitigating circumstances and could determine the level of compensation to be applied. Concerns were expressed regarding flexibility particularly in relation to those subjects where the only opportunity for re-assessment would be the following academic year. The Committee felt that this was unnecessary for treat students at level 1 and 2, where academic staff exercising personal judgement should be acceptable. It was felt however that having a set mitigating circumstance criteria was helpful to ensure consistency across the institution.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

4.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th March at 2pm, in the Court Room, University Office.