Dr Steven Lawrie

Members expressed their deep sadness at the passing of Dr Steven Lawrie, a long standing, and much valued and respected member of QAC. Steven had brought dedication and huge expertise to the work of the Committee, and would be much missed.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

(cop[y filed as QAC/220217/001)

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2016 were approved, subject to Dr Darren Comber being noted as present.

   Action: Clerk

   Clerk’s Note: The minute has been updated as required.

MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Committee noted that the Convener had met with the former Head of the Life Sciences and Medicine Graduate School with regards to receiving a follow-up report to their Internal Teaching Review (ITR), but that the report remained outstanding.

   Action: Convener

2.2 SENAS (Minute 3.1 refers): The Committee discussed some of the limitations of the SharePoint system, but noted that the new system in development would be addressing these, particularly regarding the issues when QAC members were returning submissions to Schools for amendment, and for keeping track of amendments that had occurred.

2.3 JG queried PG credit tariff rules in regard to a pre-dissertation course with only limited contact time and a short coursework submission. QAC agreed JG should pursue the issue with the School.

2.4 QAC members were reminded to clear any outstanding submissions as soon as practicable.

   Action: ALL

2.5 Examiners’ Meetings (Minute 5.3 refers): The Convener confirmed that the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) supported the idea of a member of Registry or QAC attending Examiners’ Meetings, to provide regulatory advice as required. The Committee noted that current resource levels and the timings of such meetings could not facilitate this proposal this year, but should be investigated for the future. It was agreed that a training session for all Exams Officers prior to the exam diet in May would instead be beneficial.

   Action: Convener
It was also suggested that investigation into practice at other institutions in this regard would be useful.

**Action:** Clerk and Convener

### 2.6 Mindfulness (Minute 7.4 refers)

The Committee noted that the Convener had spoken to the Head of School of Education and would meet with the Programme Director to discuss QAC requirements.

**Action:** Convener

### INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW

#### 3.1

The Committee noted the one year follow up report of the School of Medicine and Dentistry (as was).

*(copy filed as QAC/270217/004)*

#### 3.2

It was noted that it would have been helpful to have also received the original ITR report in order to receive context to the recommendations and actions. It was agreed that ITR reports would be circulated alongside one year follow up reports in future. It was further noted that changes to the QAC SharePoint site in relation to ITR were likely to facilitate this process going forward.

**Action:** Clerk

#### 3.3

The Committee noted that the response and actions therein were considered and appropriate. It was further noted that the Dental School issues had been resolved, and that the GDC had granted sufficiency. The School version of the Academic Quality Handbook, amended to incorporate aspects of GMC and GDC regulations, was still in review, and would be received shortly.

**Action:** Convener to respond to School

**Action:** Clerk to continue to request SMD AQH in advance of next QAC meeting

#### 3.4

The Committee noted that the Chemistry ITR response had not been received. QAC requested that the School be asked to submit a combined response and one-year update to the next meeting of QAC.

**Action:** Clerk

### ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

*(copies filed as QAC/220217/005)*

#### 4.1

The Committee discussed the *postgraduate* Summary Course and Programme Review Reports for academic year 2015/16 as provided by Heads of Discipline/School. Members of the Committee were reminded that a QAC-summary of the Annual Programme Review(s) received from the School(s) for which they have responsibility should be returned to the Clerk as soon as possible. Members were reminded that summaries are sent to the appropriate Head of School.

#### 4.2

The Committee did not identify any significant issues although it was again noted that (i) some Disciplines/Schools are returning APRs by half session and not by academic year, and (ii) some forms had been submitted without Head of School or Discipline signature.

#### 4.4

It was noted that some School submissions were still outstanding, and that some QAC responses from committee members were also outstanding. The importance of assuring our provision was stressed, and it was agreed that this message needed to be emphasised to Schools. It was noted that QAC is not always aware of what APR submissions were to
be expected from Schools, and it was agreed that QAC representatives from each School would identify this to the Clerk, and help ‘chase’ outstanding School submissions.

4.5 Further, it was also agreed of the need to be timelier in regard to QAC member feedback to Schools in regard to both APRs and External Examiner Reports (see below). QAC members were supportive of the idea for member updates to be verbal only at QAC meetings, but that written responses should be made available in advance of meetings.

Action: Clerk to identify and chase outstanding School submissions, with message from Convener to stress the importance of fully complete submissions, cc’ing School QAC reps

Action: Clerk to identify and chase outstanding QAC member responses

Action: QAC members to ensure that responses are submitted to Clerk in advance of next QAC meeting

Action: School QAC reps to provide a list of Disciplines and constituent APR programmes to Clerk

EXTERNAL EXAMINING

(copy filed as QAC/220217/006)

5.1 The Committee discussed the responses to postgraduate External Examiners reports as provided by Heads of School. Members of the Committee were reminded that a response to each External Examiner for the School(s) for which they have responsibility should be returned to the Clerk as soon as possible.

Action: ALL

5.2 The Committee noted the variety of analysis provided by External Examiner in their annual reports; it was noted, for example, that the External Examiner for the School of Biological Sciences was particularly heavily involved in all aspects of the courses. Members noted that StaffNet did provide detailed advice to External Examiners but that this was not always addressed or taken account of. It was suggested that a minimum and maximum word limit being added to External Examiner reports be considered, and that exemplar External Examiner reports could be prepared. The Convener agreed to give this further consideration.

Action: Convener

5.3 The School of engineering required External Examiner reports for accreditation purposes, but its External Examiner had not submitted a report despite chasing from QAC. The Convener agreed that it was appropriate for the Head of School to request the report form the External Examiner directly, whilst QAC would continue to request it formally.

Action: EB
Action: Clerk

5.4 Following discussion of ITR, Annual Programme Reviews and External Examiner Reports the Committee concluded that there was a wealth of information contained therein that should be more widely disseminated, particularly in relation to good practice. It was suggested that an annual digest, in relation to good practice, but also issues for institutional discussion, badged under QAC, might be prepared and submitted to UCTL.
To support this QAC members would be asked to identify such aspects in their Responses to Schools and External Examiners. It was agreed to consider this further.

**Action:** Clerk and Convener

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**PSB REPORTS**

6.1 The Committee received the annual report from the University of the Highlands and Islands, UHI.

*(copy filed as QAC/220217/007)*

6.2 The Committee noted that UHI was close to receiving degree awarding powers for postgraduate research degrees, and was just awaiting confirmation from the Privy Council.

6.3 The Committee agreed that whilst UHI had been working with the UoA it has used our QA procedures and policies appropriately. Our PGR students had been and continued to be very well supported at UHI, and there were no concerns to note, and several examples of good practice in evidence. The Convener undertook to respond to UHI.

**Action:** Convener

6.4 Members were advised that whilst UHI was close to receiving PhD awarding powers, there remained some students for which the UoA would have joint responsibility whilst they completed their PhDs, and thus joint supervision would continue to be required. The issue of recompense to UoA Schools was discussed in this regard, and the Convener undertook to discuss this with UHI.

**Action:** Convener

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**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

7.1 The Committee noted the report of the recent QA visit to Doha, Qatar.

*(copy filed as QAC/220117/0008)*

7.2 It was noted that the University has been in discussions since the end of 2016 with the Al Faleh Group for Educational and Academic Services (AFG) regarding a proposal to set up a branch campus in Doha. Initially Business School programmes would be delivered prior to a second phase whereby further programmes from a wider range of Schools would be added. AFG has been granted formal approval from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of the State of Qatar to deliver UK university education within the region.

7.3 Of particular interest to AFG is providing a wider access to HE for those students who are unable to access the more elitist institutions outside of the public provision of Qatar University. The Committee noted the AFG was very keen to promote the education of women in an area where female HE provision has been lacking. The QA panel that visited Doha was assured of AFG’s commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all students.

7.4 Members noted that AFG will be expected to deliver the University of Aberdeen programmes in accordance with the institutional Delivery Partner Principles and Procedures Handbook. The QA panel found there to be a high level of engagement on the part of the partner and a willingness to ensure that there was full and ongoing compliance with the requisite UK HE/University of Aberdeen standards and to provide sufficient resource to enable such compliance.
7.5 Members were informed that the Business School was clear that it would be able to devote the necessary resource to deliver two Business School Programmes via the Delivery Partner for September 2017, despite AFG expecting more contact from UoA staff than at other branch campuses. The Committee also noted that other disciplines, such as History of Art, might be keen to get involved in the project in future.

7.6 QAC noted that Senas forms were yet to be submitted but would be due soon. The Study Skills Courses would be based within discipline content, and going forward it was likely that discipline foundation pathways would be created.

7.7 Overall, the Committee were content to approve TNE as a provider of Education on behalf of the University, subject to the strict adherence to the University’s Quality Assurance processes and subject to there being no in-country legislation that prevent our QA processes being followed.

7.8 The Committee expressed concern that with increasing TNE provision and the increased level of scrutiny, particularly in the early years, that this would require, would place increased pressure on Committee members. The Convener suggested that a re-arrangement of the work of the Committee members might be beneficial in this regard. It was also noted that whilst the Clerk did a superb job, the administrative workload of the Committee has also increased, and additional support in this regard was also required.

Action: Convener

RESIT EXAMINATIONS

8.1 The Convener raised the issue of Resit examinations, in particular whether it would be beneficial for resit marks to be capped at D3, with the resit mark contributing to the GPA for degree classification purposes. It was agreed to postpone the discussion in full to the next meeting of the Committee. The Convener agreed to circulate a list of points in relation to resits that members could consider in advance of the meeting.

Action: Convener

ITEMS UNDERTAKEN BY CIRCULATION

9.1 The Committee noted the Convener has considered the Omnibus Resolution 2017-18

Copy filed as (QAC/220117/009)

9.2 Course and Programme Proposals

The Committee noted all Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses and programmes approved since the November meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 Members noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 22 March 2017 at 2pm in Committee Room 2, University Office.