UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  

Minute of the Meeting held on 20th March 2014  

Present:  Dr K Shennan (Convener), Dr P Bishop, Ms K Christie, Professor G M Coghill, Dr M-l Ehrenschwendtner, Dr S Lawrie, Ms Emma Hay (Clerk), Dr S Lawrie and Ms Clare McWilliams (Minute Secretary),  

Apologies: Ms M Beaton, Ms M Dunn, Dr D Hendry, Mr R Henthorn, Mr R Henthorn, Professor P McGeorge and Professor D Lurie  

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2013 AND 16 JANUARY 2014  
(copy filed as QAC/200314/001a)  
(copy filed as QAC/200314/001b)  

1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 27 November 2013 and 16 January 2014.  

MATTERS ARISING  

2.1 With reference to QAC/200314/001b, the course co-ordinator for CS3024: Software Engineering and Professional Issues, is to be contacted for further details regarding the use of a ‘flipped lecture’, identified as a specific example of good practice from the Annual Course Review Forms (ACRs) submitted following the second half-session of the 2012/2013 academic year.  

Action: Professor G M Coghill  

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS  
College of Arts and Social Sciences (copy filed as QAC/200313/002a)  
College of Life Sciences and Medicine (copy filed as QAC/200314/002b)  
College of Physical Sciences (copy filed as QAC/200314/002c)  

3.1 The Committee considered the Heads of School and DoTL External Examiner Report summaries submitted following the 2012/2013 academic year. The Committee agreed with the sentiment that there appeared to be a variety of practice and understanding in filling out External Examiner Reports. The Committee agreed to review resources and guidance provided for external examiners, at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.  

Action: Clerk  

3.2 The Committee was informed that reports from the School of Language and Literature were, on the whole, positive. However, the Committee noted with concern the use of referring to students’ personal circumstances on assessment sheets and agreed to feed this back to both the School and External Examiners concerned.  

3.3 With regards to the School of Biological Sciences, the Committee acknowledged discomfort expressed by External Examiners in relation to the non-anonymous marking of honours essays, in addition to the presence of the 1st marker’s comments on exam scripts. The Committee noted the issues raised and discussed how best 1st marker’s comments could be usefully used. The Committee noted that practice elsewhere in the University included comments, along with the rationale for the mark given, are written on a post-it note which
forms part of a discussion after both markers have seen the script. The Committee agreed that there should be a discussion surrounding the standardisation of comments on exam scripts.

3.4 The Committee acknowledged the overall positive response from the School of Social Science subject to a few minor issues. Such issues included the amount of work for those at level 3 on the International Relations degree programme, in addition to concerns regarding the lack of use of discretion at examiner board meetings. The Committee agreed such comments should be fed back to both the School and Examiners concerned.

3.5 The Committee noted the responses from the Schools of Law, Business, and Geosciences were positive on the whole, with minor criticisms raised. The Committee was content with responses confirming that comments are viewed seriously and will be taken on board.

3.6 The Committee noted the positive response received from the School of Natural and Computing Sciences. In relation to 6th century courses, the Committee noted the concern of External Examiners regarding the level of student video conferencing.

3.7 The Committee noted and wished to thank all three College DoTLs for the overviews provided. The Committee noted the helpful feedback received, however, agreed that feedback received from the College of Life Science and Medicine was not as detailed. The Convener agreed to contact the DoTL for the College regarding this.

Action: Convener

3.8 All Committee members are to forward comments to the Committee Clerk who is to identify which reports remain outstanding.

Action: Clerk and Committee

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW ONE YEAR FOLLOW UP REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY
(copy filed as QAC/200314/003a)
(copy filed as QAC/200314/003b)

4.1 The Committee considered the One Year Follow-Up Report received from the School of Psychology in response to their Internal Teaching Review report. Overall, the Committee was content with the report provided. On the whole, the Committee found the report to be positive and noted that the staff:student ratio had improved. The Committee noted that as a consequence of the recruitment of new staff the Teaching Away Day had been temporarily put on hold, but was scheduled to be resumed.

4.2 The Committee agreed to respond to the School of Psychology, thanking them for their response and for addressing the issues raised by the Internal Teaching Review.

Action: Clerk

STATEMENTS OF INTENT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

Environmental Science (copy filed as QAC/200314/004a)
History (copy filed as QAC/200314/004b)
Theology (copy filed as QAC/200314/004c)
5.1 The Committee considered statements of intent received from UHI for the revalidation of the areas of Environmental Science, History and Theology. The Committee noted their support for these proposals. The Committee noted the need for a member of the Committee to attend each of the revalidation events.

Action: Clerk

5.2 The Convener suggested that she attend the revalidation event for Theology, however, felt that it would be may be appropriate for Dr M-I Ehrenschwendtner to also attend, given her academic expertise. The clerk is to clarify whether or not this could be possible.

Action: Clerk

**REPEATING HONOURS CURRICULUM**

6.1 The Committee was asked to consider Regulation 20.2 from the University’s General Regulations for First Degrees, following a case brought to the attention of the Convener regarding a student who had twice failed 45 credits of courses in his 3rd year, once as a full time student and again at resit as an external candidate. As the student was seeking to again resit the year, an option currently unavailable to students as a consequence of Regulation 20.2, members were asked to review the regulation to consider whether or not it remained true to the University’s aims and objectives.

6.2 Following extensive discussion, the Committee agreed that there was no requirement for the regulation to be amended as a result of one unique individual case. The Committee agreed that the regulation remains fit for purpose and noted potential concern at the implications which could arise at removing the regulation, or allowing an exception in this instance. The Committee noted that the regulation can be waived in instances involving Medical Circumstances or other Good Cause.

6.3 The Committee did agree, however, that it would be useful to ascertain the rationale for the implementation of the regulation. Furthermore, those members who are absent are to be contacted for additional comments.

Action: Clerk

**ANONYMOUS EXAM BOARDS**

7.1 The Committee noted the lack of consistency across the institution in the use of anonymous examination meetings. The Committee requested clarification as to whether or not exam board meetings are required to be conducted anonymously.

[Clerk’s Note: Although it is encouraged, there is no express requirement for exam boards to be conducted anonymously. No stipulation for such a requirement can be found in the University’s Academic Quality Handbook or in the Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education.]

**WRITTEN EXAMINATION SCRIPTS**

8.1 The Committee discussed the rights of students to view written examination scripts. Due to some uncertainty as to what the current position is, the Committee requested clarification as to whether or not students are entitled to view written examination scripts.
[Clerk’s Note: Paragraph 7.7.34 of the Academic Quality Handbook outlines University policy in relation to written examination scripts. This provision stipulates that students can expect to receive feedback on all their performance in all written examinations other than final examinations. The mechanism by which feedback on written examinations should be given is left to the discretion of Schools.]

FOR INFORMATION

ITEMS UNDERTAKEN BY CIRCULATION

9.1 The Committee noted that a record of all items approved by the Quality Assurance Committee by way of Circulation and/or Convener’s Action can be found here.

COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

10.1 The Committee noted the availability of all undergraduate and postgraduate course and programmes as approved since the January meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting will be held Thursday 1 May at 2pm in Committee Room 2, University Office.