UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 September 2011

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Dr R Bernard, Dr A Clarke, Dr D C Hendry, Dr S Lawrie, Professor D Lurie, Mr S O'Rourke, Ms L Sivula (in place on Ms J Bjorkqvist), Ms Emma Hay (Clerk) Apologies: Ms E Clark, Ms J Bjorkqvist, Professor P McGeorge

1. Remit and Composition

1.1 The Convener opened the first meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee for the 2011/12 Academic Year and thanked members for attending.

1.2 A revised version of the Quality Assurance Committee remit and composition was circulated to the Committee. The Committee was informed that a Postgraduate Officer from the College of Physical Sciences had not yet been confirmed.

(Copy filed as QAC/280911/006)

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 May 2011

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2011 were approved as an accurate record of discussions held.

(Copy filed as QAC/280911/001)

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Committee asked the Clerk to follow up with the Clerk to University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) on the progress of matters referred from the May meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee to UCTL.

Action: Clerk to follow up with Clerk to UCTL

3.2 The Committee noted discussions around point 7.3 of the minute of the May meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee, regarding extenuating circumstances, were ongoing.

3.3 The Committee noted the issue of Postgraduate Officers, raised at the May meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee is being taken forward by the Vice-Principal for Teaching and Learning.

4. Proposed Changes to Quality Assurance Processes

(Copy filed as QAC/280911/002)

4.1 The Committee considered the paper written by Professor Bill Long on the proposed changes to Quality Assurance Processes. The Committee acknowledged that Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) returns could only provide part of a much wider picture and that the University should take steps towards focusing on Quality Enhancement.

4.2 The Committee noted the proposal to place the responsibility for course review with Schools and the intention to introduce programme monitoring as recommended in the recent Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The Committee discussed programme review as an annual occurrence which would record data including progression and retention. The Committee noted Schools preparing programme reviews would rely on information provided by the Registry.

4.3 The Committee noted the proposal to change Internal Teaching Review (ITR) to focus on Enhancement and to make use of programme reviews as the basis of the paperwork required. The Committee acknowledged the intention that this issue would now be looked into in further detail by a Sub-group of the UCTL. The Committee agreed that they were happy with the proposal to make changes to the current processes as long as an appropriate level of Quality Assurance would be maintained.

5. Provision of Information about Higher Education

(Copy filed as QAC/280911/003)
Dr Bernard introduced the ‘Provision of Information about Higher Education’ paper to the Committee. The Committee recognised the requirement for English Universities to provide ‘Key Information Set’ (KIS) from September 2012 as part of a move to improve the information provided to University applicants. The Committee noted the importance of the move in light of the change to tuition fees and recognised Scottish Universities were likely to be met with the same requirement.

5.2 The Committee acknowledged that the information required for the KIS is not currently held by the University in a standard format. For example, course assessment methods and programme contact hours. The Committee recognised that students may use the KIS to rate Universities and decide whether or not they feel they are value for money.

5.3 The Committee discussed where the information for the KIS could come from and agreed that while some information would be held on course and programme SENAS forms, an annual return of information from Schools would be required. The Committee discussed the possibility of tying this issue into that of programme monitoring.

6. Review of SENAS

6.1 Following discussions on programme monitoring and the provision of information about Higher Education, the Committee discussed SENAS forms and potential amendments to them.

6.2 The Committee raised the issue of Graduate Attributes. While acknowledging the section for Graduate Attributes is included in the new programme SENAS forms, the Committee discussed whether or not it was appropriate to continue to also include Graduate Attributes on the new course SENAS forms. The Committee noted that the Postgraduate Committee are currently looking at Graduate Attributes and, as such, now would be an appropriate time to make changes to the SENAS forms.

6.3 The Committee acknowledged confusion over the issue of the text ‘some of this information will be included in the Catalogue entry’ included on the new course SENAS form. To ensure consistency and to avoid confusion, the Committee agreed to change the text to reflect ‘all text will be included in the Catalogue entry’.

6.4 The Committee acknowledged a proposal from Graduate Schools to include a business case for new programme on new programme SENAS forms, with an attached proforma business case for consideration. Additionally, the Committee noted a UKBA requirement to include a section asking for detail on ‘employment components’. The Committee agreed that as the UKBA require a programme to include no more than 50% work placement, it is a necessary addition to the new programme SENAS form.

6.5 The Committee agreed that consideration needs to be given to how SENAS forms are considered by the Quality Assurance Committee. While the responsibility currently lies with the Directors for Undergraduate Programmes (DUPs), the Committee agreed to discuss the distribution of the approval process amongst all Academic members of the Committee. The clerk was asked to provide details of how the forms could be distributed to the Convener.

Action: Clerk to take forward with Convener

6.6 The Committee noted difficulties surround the planning cycle. While acknowledging it is not always possible for Schools to adhere to the deadline, the Committee agreed to circulate an email reminding Schools of the 30th November deadline.

Action: Clerk to send email to Colleges/Schools

7. Response to ITR Report from Chemistry

7.1 The Convener introduced the response to the final ITR report received from Chemistry. The Committee agreed the response was satisfactory.

7.2 The Committee noted point 3.2 of the report and the difficulties the department was facing in encouraging students to use the School office.

7.3 The Committee asked the Clerk to respond to Chemistry to thank them on behalf of the Committee for their response and to ask them to specifically address point 3.2 of the final report in their one year follow up report.

Action: Clerk to respond to Chemistry
8. Health Research Degree Validation Event

(Oral Report)

8.1 The Committee noted a request from UHI for a member of the Committee to attend a Health Research Degree Validation Event due to take place in early February 2012. Dr Clarke offered to take part in the event. The Clerk informed Dr Clarke that UHI would now be in touch directly regarding further details.

9. AOCB

9.1 The Committee discussed the issue which arose during Student Progress Committee hearings of students who carry a fail mark from continuing assessment to re-sit examinations, meaning their chance to achieve a pass is minimal. The Committee agreed to pass the concern over this issue to the next meeting of the UCTL.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Convener and UCTL Clerk