UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minute of the Meeting held on 14 March 2012

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Dr R Bernard, Dr A Clarke, Dr G M Coghill, Dr D Comber, Dr D C Hendry, Dr S Lawrie, Professor D Lurie, Mr S O’Rourke, Ms Emma Hay (Clerk)

Apologies: Ms E Clark, Ms J Bjorkqvist, Professor P McGeorge

Mr R Findlay was in attendance for item 3.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2011
(Copy filed as QAC/140312/001)

1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2011 were approved as an accurate record of discussions held with one or two minor typographical revisions.

MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Committee noted that all action points arising from the last meeting had now been addressed.

2.2 The Committee noted a request from the University of the Highland and Islands (UHI) for a member of the Committee to attend a Socio-Legal Studies Degree Validation Event due to take place in June 2012. Dr Shennan offered to take part in the event.

Action: Clerk to follow up with Convener

Clerk’s note: Ms Sarah James will contact Dr Shennan directly regarding this item

2.3 The Convener informed the Committee that the International Christian College (ICC) had now responded to the Committee’s consideration of their annual report. The Committee noted the response but did express continuing concerns over the lack of energetic research profile. The Committee requested that ICC be asked to present an outline for their strategy to improve this in the coming years.

Action: Clerk to contact ICC

REGULATIONS FOR PHD BY PUBLICATION
(Copy filed as QAC/140312/002)
(Mr R Findlay was in attendance to talk to the Committee on this item)

3.1 The Committee noted the prior consideration of this item and approval given in principal to the proposal in November 2011. Mr Findlay introduced the proposed regulations to the Committee and confirmed that they had been considered by the Postgraduate Committee. The Committee noted that in writing the regulations, advice had been gained from other Institutions, including the University of Edinburgh.
3.2 The Committee noted concerns over issues including, a potential drop in student numbers undertaking a PhD and whether the proposed model would fit with all disciplines. Additionally, the Committee noted concern over how many publications would be required to be submitted. While the guidance stated five, the committee noted that this could not apply to all disciplines and agreed that the specific requirements for an individual would need to be set by individual examiners. The Committee agreed that in light of their continuing concerns, the issue should be discussed in further detail. The Committee agreed to refer the issue to the Postgraduate Committee and request that the item return to the QAC for consideration at a later date.

(action: Clerk to refer to Postgraduate Committee
Clerk’s note: This has now been discussed by the PG Committee and is likely to return to QAC in late 2012.

INTERIM REPORT FROM THE UCTL WORKING GROUP ON THE UNDERGRADUATE GRADE SPECTRUM
(to follow, QAC/140312/003)

4.1 The Convener informed the Committee that this item had been postponed.

4.2 The Committee did, however, raise the issue of degree classification and on which courses this should be based. The Committee agreed to ensure this query was raised with the Working Group on the Undergraduate Grade Spectrum to ensure clarity.

(action: Convener to raise at joint meeting of the CAS and GS working groups
Clerk’s note: Meeting was postponed. To be raised at next scheduled meeting

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORM (SCEF)
(Copy filed as QAC/280911/004)

5.1 The Committee discussed the current process of evaluating Student Course Evaluation Forms (SCEF). The Committee agreed that, in line with the new SENAS process being operated, each member of QAC would take responsibility for the initial scrutiny of forms for a particular area of study. The Committee agreed that these areas of study would be divided as with the SENAS approval system, demonstrated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Member of QAC responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>David Lurie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Steven Lawrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divinity, History and Philosophy</td>
<td>Liz Clark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Steven Lawrie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>David Lurie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geosciences</td>
<td>David Hendry</td>
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<td>Language and Literature</td>
<td>Andrew Clarke</td>
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<td>Law</td>
<td>Steven Lawrie</td>
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<td>Medical Sciences</td>
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<td>Medicine</td>
<td>George Coghill</td>
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<td>Natural and Computing Sciences</td>
<td>Kath Shennan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>David Lurie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Liz Clark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 The Committee agreed that some group oversight would remain and that any issues arising from the consideration of SCEFs should be brought to a meeting of the Committee. The Committee agreed that a briefing note on evaluating SCEFs should be provided.

Action: Clerk to make SCEFs available in SharePoint for Committee access.
Clerk to prepare briefing note.

EXTERNAL EXAMINING REPORTS
(Copy filed as QAC/140312/004)
(Copy filed as QAC/140312/005)
(to follow, QAC/140312/006)

6.1 The Committee considered responses to External Examining reports from the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences and Life Sciences and Medicine. The Committee noted that responses from the College of Physical Sciences had not yet been received.

6.2 The Committee acknowledged the College summary provided by Dr John Morrison, Director of Teaching and Learning for the College of Arts and Social Sciences. The Committee agreed that all Colleges should be asked to provide a summary in future submissions as it had proved very helpful to the Committee.

6.3 The Committee noted the following issues, arising from the consideration of responses to reports:

- The Committee noted concern over the number of reports received late. The Committee agreed that deadlines for External Examiners must be enforced as far as possible.
- The Committee was struck by the variability in how responses are handled by Schools. The Committee agreed that it may be useful to develop a proforma for completion.
- The Committee agreed that the importance of good feedback should be stressed to External Examiners, specifically that of highlighting good practice.

6.4 The Committee agreed that the responses provided should be prepared and sent to External Examiners.

6.5 The Committee agreed that future consideration of the responses to External Examiner reports should be handled in the same way as SENAS and SCEF and divided amongst members of the Committee.

Action: Clerk to prepare and send responses to External Examiners

UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ANNUAL REPORT
(Copy filed as QAC/140312/007)

7.1 The Committee considered the annual report submitted by the University of the Highlands and Islands. The Committee wished to pass on its thanks to the College for the submission of the report. Overall, the report was very well received by the Committee.

7.2 The Committee noted that a member of the QAC had previously sat on the UHI Research Degrees Subcommittee (RDSC); however, this position had been vacant since the resignation of Professor Burgess. The Committee agreed that this situation should
be rectified and Professor Lurie agreed to sit on the Committee as a representative of Aberdeen.

7.3 The Committee noted concern that ‘Diabetes and Cardiovascular Science’ appeared to be a non-validated academic area in which research was being carried out. The Committee agreed that the status of this research area should be clarified.

*Action: Clerk to provide feedback to UHI*

**REVIEW FOR EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT REPORT FOR ICC**

*(Copy filed as QAC/140312/008)*

8.1 The Committee acknowledged receipt of the Review of Educational Oversight Report for the International Christian College (ICC). The Committee noted that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had, overall, been happy with its findings.

8.2 The Committee noted that the University would be willing to offer any support necessary to help ICC with any issues raised by the QAA, such as peer mentoring or the dissemination of good practice. The Committee agreed that with regards to improving staff development, the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) should open discussions with ICC.

*Action: Clerk to contact ICC*

*Clerk’s note: ICC has been contacted with the QAC’s response.*

**STUDENTS’ PROGRESS COMMITTEE (MEDICINE & DENTISTRY)**

*(QAC/140312/009)*

9.1 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Students’ Progress Committee for Medicine and Dentistry.

**FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE (MEDICINE & DENTISTRY)**

*(QAC/140312/010)*

9.2 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Fitness to Practise Committee for Medicine and Dentistry.

**CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MEDICINE (MD) AND DOCTOR OF SURGERY (CHM)**

*(QAC/140312/011)*

9.3 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD).

**COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS**

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

A list of all Postgraduate courses and programmes approved by Convener’s Action since the March meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee can be found at the following link: [http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/ascreport/postgraduate.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/ascreport/postgraduate.php).
DATES OF MEETINGS – 2012/13

11.1 It is proposed that meetings of the Quality Assurance Committee will take place during the Academic Year 2012/13 as follows:

   - Wednesday 26 September 2012
   - Wednesday 28 November 2012
   - Wednesday 13 March 2013