UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minute of the Meeting held on 28 November 2012

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Ms M Beaton, Ms J Bjorkqvist, Professor G M Coghill, Dr D Comber, Ms A Desilligny, Dr D C Hendry, Dr S Lawrie, Mr J Wyllie, Ms Emma Hay (Clerk)

Apologies: Dr R Bernard, Professor D Lurie, Professor P McGeorge

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 OCTOBER 2012
(QAC/281112/001)

1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2012 were approved as an accurate record of discussions held, with one minor typographical revision.

SENAS APPROVAL PROCESS
(Oral Update)

2.1 The Committee noted the submission of SENAS forms for the 2013/14 Academic Year had begun. The Committee were informed that guidance on the SENAS approval process is now available through the QAC SharePoint site here. The Committee were asked to consider forms awaiting their approval.

Action: Committee

2.2 The Committee noted concern that the SENAS process remains out of sync with the Admissions system for advertising or removing degree programmes.

2.3 The Committee were informed that it was anticipated that the revalidation under Curriculum Reform of Postgraduate courses and programmes would begin in advance of the 2014/15 academic year. The Committee agreed that the submission of SENAS forms for level 5 undergraduate courses would not be required until 2014/15; however, Schools wishing to submit early would not be prevented from doing so.

CHANGES TO THE EXTERNAL EXAMINING PROCESSES
(QAC/281112/002)

3.1 The Committee considered the tabled paper on proposed changes to the External Examining process. The Committee agreed to the approval of the actions as laid out within the paper. The Committee did note concern at revealing the names and details of External Examiners to students, however, agreed that the University had an obligation to do so.

Action: Clerk

3.2 The Committee noted that the role of the External Examiner should be made clearer to Examiners upon taking up post at the University. The Committee noted that the recommendation for appropriate training had previously been agreed at a meeting of the QAC and that discussions were ongoing as to how this should be delivered.

Action: Clerk

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORMS
(Oral Update)
4.1 The Committee noted the action to return feedback on the Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) exercise for the School(s) for which they have responsibility. Those members of the Committee, who had yet to do so, were asked to return feedback in advance of the January meeting of the QAC.

Action: Committee

4.2 The Committee noted that not all Schools had returned their SCEF data for QAC consideration. The Committee noted that Schools who had yet to do so had been asked to do so no later than January to allow for consideration at the next meeting of the QAC.

4.3 The Committee noted that feedback from some Schools and students had reflected dissatisfaction with the online system used for SCEF and lower response rates. The Committee agreed that SCEFs should never be considered in isolation and were only represented one way of gathering student feedback.

RESPONSE TO ITR REPORT FROM THE SCHOOL OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
(to follow, QAC/281112/003a)
Summary report available as (QAC/281112/003b)

5.1 The Committee noted concern that despite reminders to do so, the School of Medical Sciences had yet to submit their response to their Internal Teaching Review report. The Committee noted that this was the second meeting of the QAC that the School had failed to submit their report to. The Committee agreed that the School should be urged to submit as a matter of urgency.

Action: Clerk

RESPONSE TO ITR REPORT FROM THE BUSINESS SCHOOL
(to follow, QAC/281112/004a)
Summary report available as (QAC/281112/004b)

6.1 The Committee noted concern that despite being asked to do so, the Business School had failed to submit their response to their Internal Teaching Review report in time for consideration by the Committee. The Committee agreed that the School should be reminded to submit as a matter of urgency.

Action: Clerk

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE (ICC) AND UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS (UHI) ANNUAL REPORTS 2011/12
(QAC/281112/005)

7.1 The Committee noted the annual reports received from ICC and UHI for the 2011/12 academic year.

7.2 Discussing the UHI submission, the Committee noted their contentment with the report and its content. The Committee wished to express their thanks to UHI for the timely and comprehensive submission.

7.3 The Committee did note, however, that the report made reference to a lack of appropriate administrative contact at the University. The Committee noted that this was Ms Sarah James and that UHI should be reminded of this. The Committee also noted that the report made reference to the lack of a representative of the University on their RDSC. The Committee confirmed that this representative was Professor David Lurie, as previously confirmed.
7.4 Discussing the ICC submission, the Committee also noted their contentment with the report and its detailed content. The Committee wished to express their thanks to ICC for the timely and comprehensive submission.

7.5 The Committee did note concern as to the pressures placed on the Academic Registrar and agreed that this should be monitored closely. The Committee noted that ICC had raised issues similar to those raised in agenda item 3 and the role of an External Examiner. The Committee agreed that guidance should be provided to ICC.

7.6 The Committee noted concern over the extent to which ICC was making use of external lecturers. The Committee noted that this was an issue they wished to keep under review.

7.7 The Committee noted that ICC had expressed concern over the receipt of External Examiner reports. The Committee agreed that these should be sent directly to ICC and the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy.

**PROPOSED POLICIES ON THE CAS AND THE GRADE SPECTRUM**

(QAC/281112/006a) (QAC/281112/006b)

8.1 The Committee noted the proposed policies on the Common Assessment Scale (CAS) and the Undergraduate Grade Spectrum (GS). The Committee noted that the principal of changing both systems had been approved at Senate, further to the discussion of details such as the proposed policies.

8.2 Members of the Committee noted concern that the proposed CAS was unsuitable for postgraduate students and that pass marks across the institution do vary – particularly from undergraduate level 5 to postgraduate level 5. The Committee noted that this was a particular issue that should be addressed at the next meeting of the QAC.

*Action: Clerk*

8.3 The Committee noted concern that both the CAS and GS documents had become corrupted and that specifics included in the tables in Annex A of the CAS paper and page 2 of the GS paper should be revised.

*Action: Clerk*

8.4 The Committee noted that the proposed CAS represents a stricter system of compensation than currently exists. The Committee noted that a senior honours student who receives an ‘F1’ would be eligible for compensation but that currently those students who receive a CAS 6, 7 or 8 would be eligible. The Committee recommended the addition of F4 to allow F2 to also for compensation, or the addition of an ‘E’ subset, which would represent the marks for under which compensation could be given.

8.5 Considering the proposed GS policy, the Committee noted that paragraph 8 should be extended. The Committee expressed confusion over whether the paragraph referred to third year students or third and fourth year students. The Committee felt further information on re-sits and graduation opportunities would be useful.
9.1 The Committee noted the paper on Annual Course Review and the approval of the paper at Senate in early November 2012.

9.2 The Committee noted concern over the process of having to include information, such as withdrawal rates, on a course over the past 3 years. The Committee noted that this would be labour intensive and, in many cases, impossible to gather.

9.3 Members of the Committee expressed concern over the exercise and the fact that it may prove to be labour intensive. The Committee were reassured that steps would be taken to provide data centrally, however, the Committee noted concern that the exercise had not been evaluated for cost, such as that of staff resource.

9.4 Members of the Committee expressed concern over the involvement of class representatives in the process. The Committee acknowledged, however, that it was important for a class representative to sign the report to show agreement to its content.

9.5 The Committee noted concern at the inclusion of withdrawal data, stating that the information was not relevant and that many students withdraw within the first two weeks of teaching.

10.1 The Committee noted the paper on Annual Programme Monitoring. The Committee were advised that the proposals were in their early stages and had been written in response to ELIR recommendations.

10.2 The Committee agreed to forward their thoughts on the paper to the Clerk.

Action: Clerk

MATTERS ARISING

11.1 The Committee noted concern regarding the issue of Postgraduate Resits as discussed at the last meeting of the QAC. The Committee noted that the issue had been raised at UCTL, where the decision was taken not to follow recommendations as laid out by the QAC. Members of the Committee noted concern that issues relating to Quality should be considered by the Committee and that they should not be overruled. Members of the Committee asked that these issues be raised with the Convener of the UCTL.

Action: Clerk and Convener

FOR ROUTINE APPROVAL

REGULATORY CHANGES

Undergraduate Degree Regulations (QAC/281112/009a)
Postgraduate Degree Regulations (QAC/281112/009b)
PhD by Publication Regulations (QAC/281112/009c)
12.1 The Committee approved the Undergraduate and Postgraduate regulatory changes for 2013/14.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE (EDUCATION)
(QAC/281112/010)

12.2 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Fitness to Practise Committee for the School of Education.

FOR INFORMATION

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)
(QAC/28/1112/011)

13.1 The Committee noted that, in line with the Quality Assurance Agency’s timetable for review, the University will undertake ELIR during 2013/14. The Part One visit by the Review Panel will take place on 9 & 10 October 2013, with the Part Two visit being during the week commencing 18 November 2013. The Part Two visit is usually between three and five days in duration.

AL-MAKTOUM INSTITUTE SIX MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2011 – MAY 2012
(QAC/281112/012)

13.2 The Committee noted the report submitted by Al-Maktoum, available here. The Committee was advised that the University’s validation agreement with Al-Maktoum has now concluded and arrangements to transfer any remaining PhD students to the University are ongoing.

BRITISH UNIVERSITY IN EGYPT

13.3 The Committee noted that following the October meeting of the Committee, where the proposed validation of the British University in Egypt (BUE) was discussed, BUE have since notified the University that they have found an alternate validation partner and, therefore, the University will no longer be pursing this course of action.

COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

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

A list of all Postgraduate courses and programmes approved by Convener’s Action since the October meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee can be found at the following link: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/ascreport/postgraduate.php.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 30 January 2013 at 11am, location to be confirmed.