Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2014

Present: Dr K Shennan (Convener), Mr P Bishop, Ms K Christie, Professor G M Coghill, Dr M-I Ehrenschwendtner, Dr D Hendry, Mr R Henthorn, Dr S Lawrie, Ms E Hay (Clerk), Ms C McWilliams (Minute Secretary)

Apologies: Ms M Beaton, Ms E Beever, Dr D Comber, Professor D Lurie, Professor P McGeorge

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER AND 14 NOVEMBER 2014
(Copy filed as QAC/031214/001a)
(Copy filed as QAC/031214/001b)

1.1 The Committee was informed that changes submitted by way of email have been made to the minute of the meeting held on 24 September 2014.

1.2 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 24 September and 24 November as accurate representations of discussions held. The Committee noted an amendment required in section 10.1 relating to the acknowledgement of registration week. The minutes are to be amended accordingly.

   Action: Clerk

MATTERS ARISING

2.1 With reference to QAC/031214/001b, the Committee was informed that the Head of the Graduate School for the College of Life Sciences & Medicine is referring the proposal for resit assessments for postgraduate taught courses to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL).

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW

One Year Follow-Up Report from the School of Biological Sciences (Copy filed as QAC/031214/002a)
One Year Follow-Up Report from the School of Education (Copy filed as QAC/031214/002b)
Final Report from the Department of Computing Sciences (Copy filed as QAC/031214/002c)

3.1 The Committee considered the One Year Follow-Up Report from the School of Biological Sciences in response to their Internal Teaching Review Report. Overall, the Committee was content with the report provided. The Committee found the report to be positive on the whole noting the School’s detailed responses to the recommendations of the Panel in particular the procedures the School is now following in relation to external examiners.

   Action: Clerk

3.2 The Committee considered the One Year Follow-Up Report from the School of Education. Overall the Committee was encouraged by the report provided and appreciative of the School’s efforts to address the Panel’s recommendations particularly in relation to teaching loads. The Committee was informed that although the MSc in Studies in Mindfulness has been identified by the school as an ‘income generator’, this programme is currently under review.

   Action: Clerk
3.3 The Committee considered the Final Report from the Department of Computing Sciences. The Committee noted the disparate nature of the School of Natural and Computing Sciences disciplines, acknowledging in particular the lack of consistency of approach within the department secretariats. The Committee was of the view that it was important that there were consistencies amongst the disciplines and agreed that procedures should be reviewed by each department. Overall, the Committee was encouraged by the report provided.

*Action: Clerk*

3.4 The Committee discussed the recommendations of the ITR Panel to the Department for Computing Sciences to have a school/discipline exams officer. The Committee discussed a number of solutions that may help ensure consistency in the application of the University’s regulations including having someone from a different faculty attend Exam Board meetings. The Committee requested that improvements to the monitoring of University regulations be investigated.

*Action: Clerk*

3.5 The Committee noted the letter from the BCS, The Chartered Institute of IT confirming the continuing accreditation of the degree programmes offered by the department.

3.6 The Committee discussed the rationale behind the Department for Computing Sciences being reviewed in isolation of the other departments within the School of Natural and Computing Sciences. It was suggested that it may be better for the School to have been reviewed in its entirety. The Committee requested clarification as to the rationale behind this decision.

*Action: Clerk*

**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION**

*(Copy filed as QAC/031214/003b)*

4.1 The Committee noted that the annual report received from the University of Highlands and Islands had not yet been received. The Committee agreed that UHI should be reminded that this report was now due.

*Action: Clerk*

4.2 The Committee considered the annual report received from the International Christian College (ICC). The Committee was grateful for the effort ICC had invested in the preparation and submission of this report and their continued efforts to produce a high quality experience for their students. The Committee noted the comments regarding the limited critical analysis of students’ responses but was content with the efforts being made to address this issue. The Committee noted this would be the last validation of the ICC and wished to express their appreciation to the ICC for the way in which they are approaching the closure of their programmes and commended their efforts to ensure that current students are either seen through to the end or transferred to other institutions.

*Action: Clerk*

4.3 The Committee noted the proposal for a collaborative partnership with Trinity College Bristol and the requirement for a validation panel. The Convener agreed to convene the validation panel on behalf of the QAC. Additional members would now be sought from related disciplines.

*Action: Clerk*
5.1 The Committee discussed the Annual Course Review (ACR) disciplinary summary forms as submitted following the 2013/14 academic year. The Committee noted the changes made to the ACR process including the introduction of a discipline summary sheet. Members of the Committee acknowledged the notable lack of engagement with the process with some schools submitting a minimal response and others only submitting responses for only one half-session. The Committee agreed that unless the process was fully engaged with, and detailed responses submitted, it would not be possible for the Committee to assure the quality of the University’s courses.

5.2 The Committee agreed that the issue should be discussed at the Undergraduate Committee for the purposes of emphasising the importance of reflective commentaries in the summary sheets.

5.3 The Committee was asked to consider the use of the box for feedback from External Examiners. The Committee acknowledged that this section was often left blank by Schools and that such issues are dealt with by way of school responses to External Examiners reports. The Committee therefore agreed to the removal of this section.

**Action: Clerk**

5.4 The Committee discussed the significance of the level of student enjoyment when analysing a course. Members of the Committee noted that although this is not always reflective of the academic environment; the question of enjoyment should remain as it is reflective of academic experience, particularly in relation to the National Student Survey.

5.5 The Committee agreed that it would be useful for all ACR discipline submissions and QAC responses to be considered so to ensure the process is being followed properly and there is uniformity in QAC responses.

**Action: Clerk**

5.6 The Committee discussed the ongoing issue of Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) return rates. Members of the Committee agreed that more could be done to communicate best practice examples that exist within the institution. A number of known examples were mentioned including the School of Natural and Computing Science who have implemented compulsory SCEF questions to try and improve the rate of return. Another example discussed was that of the School of Engineering who have implemented ‘mini-SCEF forms’ distributed half-way through a course. The Committee was informed that there are plans for SCEF forms to be developed so that they will be accessible through mobile phones and tablets.

5.7 The Committee considered the current format of Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). It was suggested that it may help student engagement if the staff-student ratio in these meetings was equal. It was felt, however, that it was important for staff to attend to show engagement and interest in the student perspective. The Committee agreed that the efficiency of these meetings is dependent upon circumstances which may be specific to a particular school and to impress uniformity across the institution may be detrimental to the success of these meetings.

**POSTGRADUATE REGULATORY CHANGES**
6.1 The Committee approved the Postgraduate regulatory changes for 2015/16 and noted that the Undergraduate revisions would follow.

ITEMS UNDERTAKEN BY CIRCULATION

7.1 The Committee noted all items approved by the Quality Assurance Committee by way of Circulation and/or Convener’s Action since the last meeting of the Committee.

COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

7.2 The Committee noted the list of all Undergraduate courses and programmes approved since the last meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 The next meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee is scheduled to take at 2pm Wednesday 14th January in the Court Room, University Office.