

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 13 December 2023

Present: Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Will Barras, Qiang Cai, Selma Carson, Isabel Crane, Nadia DeGama, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, Lois Gall, Mark Grant, Faye Hendry, Jacqui Hutchison, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Laura McCann, Gareth Norton, Fiona Stoddard, Jo Vergunst, with Darren Comber, Lucy Leiper, Gillian Mackintosh, Morag MacRae, Ann Simpson and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

Apologies: Sanaa Al-Azawi, Scott Carle, Rhiannon Ledwell, Colin North, and Thanga Thevar.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(copy filed as QAC/131223/001)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held in October 2023.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as QAC/131223/002)

- 2.1 Vacancies on APRG and Senate (minute 7.2 refers): The Committee was advised that there remains three vacancies on the Senate.

[Clerk's Note: it was advised that there is a further vacancy on the APRG; it has been confirmed that all vacancies are now filled.]

- 2.2 Difference between MRes and MSc by Research (minute 7.2 and 7.6(i) refers): It was advised that this action remains ongoing and hopes to report back to a future QAC meeting.

- 2.3 Student Membership of QAC and APRG (minute 3.1 refers): It was advised that this action is now complete.

- 2.4 Engaging Decolonising the Curriculum Leads (minute 4.2 refers): It was advised that this action remains ongoing.

- 2.5 Decolonising the Curriculum Session with Qatar Campus (minute 4.3 refers): It was advised that this action remains ongoing.

- 2.6 AFG College Annual Report 2021/22 (minute 11.2 refers): It was advised that this action remains ongoing.

[Clerk's Note: following the meeting, this action has subsequently been completed and will be reported at the next QAC meeting in February 2024.]

QAA INSTITUTIONAL LIAISON MEETING DOCUMENTATION

- 3.1 The Committee heard a summary of the interim quality arrangements process by Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS) and was advised that the documentation would be circulated before the Winter break. In relation to the Institutional Liaison Meeting, it was advised that a small group would be invited to discuss with a QAA Officer. It was noted that the documentation required has already been considered at one stage or other by the QAC.

EDUCATION DATA

(i) APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS DATA 2022/23

(ii) ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE DATA 2022/23

- 4.1 The Committee was advised that the data for (i) Appeals and Complaints and (ii) Academic Discipline) was in progress, and as such, will follow to a future meeting of QAC for discussion, which will allow for any trends to be discussed and actions that require to be addressed as a result. Clarity was sought in relation to the level of granularity of the TNE data; in response, it was advised that the academic discipline data had TNE cases highlighted specifically, however, the appeals and complaints did not.

(iii) EDUCATION DATA REPORTING SCHEDULE

(copy filed as QAC/131223/006)

- 4.2 The Committee heard a summary of and noted the Education Data Reporting schedule for 2023/24.

INSTITUTIONAL REGISTER OF STAFF ACTING AS EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

(copy filed as QAC/131223/007)

- 5.1 The Committee heard a summary of the proposals, noting the requirement from the Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code to avoid reciprocal arrangements with External Examiners. It was noted that the proposal was discussed at the Academic Policy and Regulations Group, which recommended the proposal for approval at QAC. It was highlighted that some Schools are already collating this information, and as such, it is anticipated that it should not be too cumbersome to collate University-wide.
- 5.2 Clarity was sought regarding the reason for avoiding reciprocal arrangements. In response, it was advised that it is the University's responsibility to ensure that, in appointing External Examiners, that there is true independence and no reciprocity created with another University. It was also highlighted that it is a requirement of the Quality Code. It was suggested that a statement be added regarding conflict of interest and the University's understanding of what that means in practice.
- 5.3 Discussion ensued regarding the granularity of the reciprocal arrangements, particularly in relation to where it is not obvious that a reciprocal arrangement might be created. It was suggested that the proposed register aims to assist with management of appointing External Examiners.
- 5.4 Practically, clarity was sought regarding how this information would be obtained when appointing an Examiner. It was advised that the School Administration Manager would have access to the register and would be able to obtain the information.
- 5.5 It was highlighted that the proposal contained in the paper relates only to taught provision at undergraduate and postgraduate taught; not for postgraduate research Examiners. It was agreed that this distinction would be clarified in the paper.
- 5.6 A question was asked in relation to whether this proposal would be applicable to Qatar staff. In response, it was advised that some advice would be required in order to make an informed decision.

- 5.7 The Committee approved the proposal, subject to the addition of a statement in relation to conflict of interest, clarification that it relates to taught provision only, and guidance being provided in relation to Qatar staff.

UPDATE ON UK QUALITY CODE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The Committee heard an overview of the current consultation of UK Quality Code development. It was advised that, in the consultation sessions that the Chair has attended, various sections have been discussed. The Committee noted that a survey regarding the Quality Code is open at present and the Chair aims to submit a University response. It was agreed that members of the Committee should provide any comments to the Clerk by close of play on 15 December 2023 to allow the response to be submitted in good time.

Action: All

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PROVISION: SOUTH CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY JOINT INSTITUTE UPDATE

(copy filed as QAC/131223/008)

- 7.1 The Committee heard a summary of the update report on the South China Normal University Joint Institute. It was advised that much work has been undertaken in respect of degree prescriptions; Students' Progress Committee; English language support; degree classification; and student academic supporter.
- 7.2 In relation to the student academic supporter role, clarity was sought as to whether this was equivalent to that of a personal tutor. In response, it was advised that the academic supporter was similar, however, there are a number of roles within the Joint Institute which focus on both pastoral and academic support. Further, it was suggested that the role had not been called personal tutor to avoid any potential conflict. In response to a query regarding whether students had a personal tutor, it was confirmed that they did not.
- 7.3 An update was provided in respect of the Chinese Ministry of Education in relation to dissertation requirements, which the University must adhere to given the dissertation is used for both SCNU and Aberdeen degrees. Further, it was advised that the Joint Institute will undergo Ministry review in 2025. It was clarified that students only complete one dissertation as part of their degree.
- 7.4 The communication with students was emphasised, ensuring that students are communicated with effectively, particularly given the differences in the manner in which the Joint Institute operates.

TERM DATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

(copy filed as QAC/131223/009)

- 8.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the Term Dates for Academic Year 2024/25.

QAA QUALITY CODE MAPPING

(i) SECTION 4: COURSE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

(ii) SECTION 8: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

(copy filed as QAC/131223/010 and QAC/131223/011)

- 9.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments to Sections 4 and 8 of the Quality Code Mapping.

UPDATES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

(i) ACADEMIC POLICY AND REGULATIONS GROUP

(ii) STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEE

(copy filed as QAC/131223/012 and QAC/131223/013)

- 10.1 The Committee noted the updates from the (i) Academic Policy and Regulations Group, and (ii) Students' Progress Committee.

EXTERNAL QUALITY REFERENCE POINTS

(i) FUNDING PLAN FOR QAA SCOTLAND

(ii) LTEP PROJECTS

(copy filed as QAC/131223/014 and QAC/131223/015)

- 11.1 The Committee noted the updates provided in respect of (i) the funding plan for QAA Scotland, and (ii) the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme projects.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 12.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 27 February 2024 at 2:05pm at Committee Room 2, University Office, and by Microsoft Teams.