

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 6 March 2024

Present: Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Will Barras, Qiang Cai, Selma Carson, Isabel Crane, Nadia DeGama, Lois Gall, Faye Hendry, Jacqui Hutchison, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Rhiannon Ledwell (from Item 4), Laura McCann, Gareth Norton, Fiona Stoddard, and Jo Vergunst, with Lucy Leiper (from Item 4), Gillian Mackintosh, Morag MacRae, Ann Simpson and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

Apologies: Sanaa Al-Asawi, Scott Carle, Darren Comber, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, and Mark Grant.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(copy filed as QAC/060324/001)

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Committee was content to approve the minute of the previous meeting.

MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG

- 2.1 Action Log *(copy filed as QAC/060324/002)*

2.1.1 Vacancies on Senate and APRG: The Committee was advised that there remained 3 vacancies on the Senate. **Action: All**

2.1.2 MRes and MSc by Research Degrees: The Committee was advised that this action will be included as part of the review of the Postgraduate Regulations, which is forthcoming.

2.1.3 Decolonising the Curriculum (DtC): It was noted that an update will be provided in respect of the Annual Monitoring documentation at the next meeting. Further, it was noted that a representative was sought from Qatar to join the DtC Community of Practice. **Action: KK**

- 2.2 AFG College Annual Report Addendum (2021/22) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/003)*

2.2.1 The Committee noted the addendum provided to the AFG College Annual Report for 2021/22. It was advised that the addendum clarified the position with respect of student monitoring data. Clarity was sought regarding the training provided to staff in light of the data. In response, it was suggested that there remain some processing delays due to resource challenges, however, generally the process has improved. The process will remain under review as new annual data become available. **Action: Chair**

- 2.3 Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) with QAA Scotland

2.3.1 The Chair provided an update on the Institutional Liaison Meeting with the QAA Scotland. It was noted that the ILM was a follow up to the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) which took place in February 2023. The Committee noted that the ILM covered: (i) work-based learning, (ii) self-evaluation of the Outcome Agreement, (iii) generative artificial intelligence, (iv) student partnership, (v) ELIR and QESR action plans, (vi) Tertiary Enhancement Topic on blended learning, and (vii) student involvement and representation. It was noted that the discussion was positive, with some follow-up received further to the meeting. It was agreed that the meeting note will be shared QAC when received. Further, the Committee noted that the University's QAA Liaison Officer had changed from Caroline Turnbull to Laura Porter.

Action: Clerk

CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

(copy filed as QAC/060324/004)

- 3.1 The Committee heard a summary of the proposed changes to the contextual admissions requirements, noting the changes follow approved changes to the undergraduate entry requirements, previously approved by QAC. As a result of these changes, it was noted that the gap between the standard offer and the contextual offer had been narrowed. In order to reach the widening access target, it was proposed that the contextual admissions requirements be reviewed.
- 3.2 Clarity was sought regarding whether the proposed changes might impact the number of students admitted from SIMD backgrounds. In response, it was advised that sector intelligence does not provide clarity in this regard. It was noted that it is hoped that the proposals will increase numbers. Further, it was asked whether the change in admission requirements might impact workloads. It was noted that the workloads will likely remain as present, however, the messaging will be clearer to applicants.
- 3.3 Relatedly, clarity was sought regarding alignment with other institutions in the sector. It was suggested that, in terms of Ancient Universities in Scotland, the University would be below others. In terms of other Universities, it was noted that publication of their entry requirements is forthcoming.
- 3.4 Clarity was sought regarding the impact of these proposed changes on the Qatar campus. It was highlighted that the Qatar campus operate a separate admissions protocol and as such, this proposal did not alter the protocol.
- 3.5 The Committee was content to approve the proposed changes, in line with the delegated authority schedule, on behalf of Senate.

MARKING AND MODERATION PROCEDURES

(copy filed as QAC/060324/005)

- 4.1 The Committee heard a summary of the proposed changes in respect of the Marking and Moderation Procedures, noting the proposed changes in order to simplify the marking and moderation process and in light of workload pressures.
- 4.2 Discussion ensued regarding the proposed amendments to the Procedures. The tenets of which were:
 - Clarity was sought regarding the definition of 'broad agreement' and whether it should be determined in terms of CGS grade points or grade boundaries. A variety of views were expressed in this regard. Some members sought the flexibility for markers to allow a discussion to come to agreement. However, other members noted the workload associated with a discussion would be cumbersome. Concerns were expressed that discussions may not take place and markers may revert to seeking the middle grade, rather than seeking agreement. Further, it was suggested that this stage might take place via email, as opposed to a meeting. Some members advised that it was important a rationale was noted as to why a grade was agreed. On the contrary, other members noted the workload concerns in this regard. It was noted that there was an opportunity for training of staff in this regard. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that, should double marking result in markers providing CGS grades one mark apart (i.e. one marker awarding a CGS B1, and one marker awarding a CGS B2), the higher would stand. Where there is more than one CGS mark between the two markers, agreement should be reached.
 - In relation to postgraduate taught dissertations/projects, a suggestion was made in respect of a discussion between markers to agree the mark given the dissertation/project is

weighted at a third of the programme. It was suggested that there might be variation for PGT dissertations/projects. It was noted that at PGT-level, the dissertation/project is a determinant for the final classification.

- In relation to the double marking of dissertations/projects, it was noted that blind marking is only possible if a marker has had no prior involvement with the assessment in question. It was further noted that provided one marker has had no prior involvement with the assessment, this would provide the necessary assurance.
- Clarity was sought regarding what is meant by moderation as the process is interpreted differently by each individual, discipline and School. It was noted that the process for moderation need not be overly extensive.
- In relation to the definition of a sample, clarity was sought regarding the proposal that assessments weighted at 10% or more would be moderated. A suggestion was made that this was increased to 15% weighted assessments at levels 1 and 2. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the assessment weighting should be increased at levels 1 and 2 to 15%, with 10% remaining at levels 3 and 4. A caveat should be added regarding any courses which contain multiple weighted assessments at 10% or 15%.
- Further, in respect of whether all borderline fails should be captured as part of a sample, the Committee agreed that all fails marked in as a CGS E-banded grade should be included. Additionally, the Committee agreed that there was no requirement for all borderline passes (i.e. those assessments marked at CGS D3) to be included in the sample.
- In relation to moderation with multiple markers, the Committee agreed that a caveat should be included with respect of the threshold required for the number of assessments to be moderated. Further, it was suggested that clarity was provided in respect of where a systematic error was identified, such as a marker missing a page in an assessment in marking, that all assessments should be checked. However, if there was an anomaly in marking, if the moderator deemed to be appropriate, a further sample should be sought.
- In relation to the release of grades prior to the moderation process, a variety of views were expressed. Some members suggested that it was important that grades were returned as early as possible in order to provide feedback to students in good time, particularly where there is further assessment for the course. It was noted the statement pertaining to release of marks currently exists in the Code of Practice on Assessment. Others noted that it would not be appropriate to release marks prior to the marking and moderation process taking place as a result of student expectations. It was suggested that a caveat be included to students that grades are provisional until all processes are completed, and that may result in changes. However, it was highlighted that this would not provide the best student experience.
- A suggestion was made to add a note on the appendices to highlight that, where a Head of School (or nominee) has required to be involved in resolving disagreements in marking, that the assessment should be reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

4.3 Following the meeting, it was agreed that the Procedures would be updated and amended in light of the Committee's discussion. Thereafter, it would be issued to the Committee for approval by circulation. Following Committee approval, it will be presented to Senate for approval on 27 March 2024.

EDUCATION DATA

(i) APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS DATA 2022/23

(copy filed as QAC/060324/006)

5.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Appeals and Complaints Data for Academic Year 2022/23. The Committee noted the ongoing work in relation to the review of the Policy on Student Appeals which aims to reduce workload associated with appeal cases, and reduce the

number of C7 appeals which account for a large proportion of cases. The Committee noted that there were only a very small number of appeals (5) related to the marking and assessment boycott. Additionally, it was highlighted that there are a growing number of cases which extended beyond the advertised timescales.

- 5.2 Clarity was sought in relation to frontline appeals/complaints and what this meant in practice. It was advised that frontline resolution refer to those which were handled informally by Schools directly.
- 5.3 Further, clarity was sought regarding the data for the Qatar campus and whether this could be provided. It was noted that this was not currently available for 2022/23, but going forward, the data would be presented to committee for TNE campuses.
- 5.4 In relation to training, it was asked whether training will continue to be rolled out. It was confirmed that this was the case.

(ii) ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE DATA 2022/23

(copy filed as QAC/060324/007)

- 6.1 The Committee heard a summary of the Academic Discipline Data for Academic Year 2022/23. The Committee noted that despite a peak in 2021/22, the volume of cases appears to be decreasing, which might be attributable to the ongoing work in this regard. It was noted that the majority of cases related to plagiarism, but a number of cases related to contract cheating and cheating in an exam. It was suggested that the increase in the number of contract cheating cases might be due to the better levels of detection of misconduct. Additionally, it was noted that training for international and postgraduate students in particular was important given the cultural differences pertaining to academic integrity. It was suggested that students would rather information is shared with them at the point of assessment as opposed to the start of the academic year.

OMNIBUS RESOLUTION 2024/25

(copy filed as QAC/060324/008)

- 7.1 The Committee heard a summary of the proposed changes to various degree regulations as part of the Omnibus Resolution 2024/25. The Committee noted the process by which changes to degree regulations are required to obtain approval.
- 7.2 In discussion, the Committee sought amendments to the regulations for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery; the Bachelor of Dental Surgery; and the Master of Science in Physician Associate Studies (hereafter referred to as the "MMSN regulations"), in respect of a number of administrative errors which appear to have been retained. The Committee agreed that further work will be undertaken in respect of the MMSN regulations, and will return to the Committee for approval at a future point.
- 7.3 The Committee approved, for its part, the Omnibus Resolution, with the exception of the MMSN regulations, for onward consideration by Senate.

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, MUSIC AND VISUAL CULTURE INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW REPORT

(copy filed as QAC/060324/024)

- 8.1 The Committee heard a summary of the report for the Internal Teaching Review of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture. In particular, the Committee noted the positive impressions of the panel for the review, in spite of the current context regarding

modern languages provision. The Committee was advised that the cluster structure was working well, and was still bedding in, and that there was excellent practice in light of assessment and feedback; in terms of Staff-Student Liaison Committees; and in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion, particularly Decolonising the Curriculum. The Committee noted the areas for enhancement as part of the action plan. It was suggested that all Schools should disseminate the good practice via School Education Committees.

8.2 The Committee was content to approve the report.

TERM DATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26

(copy filed as QAC/060324/009)

9.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the term dates for academic year 2025/26.

STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEE REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as QAC/060324/010)

10.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments made to the Students' Progress Committee Remit and Composition.

QAA QUALITY CODE MAPPING

(i) SECTION 1: ADMISSIONS, RECRUITMENT AND WIDENING ACCESS

(ii) SECTION 5: ENABLING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

(iii) SECTION 11: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

(copies filed as QAC/060324/011, 012 and 013)

11.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments made to Sections 1, 5 and 11 of the UK Quality Code Mapping.

UPDATES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

(i) ACADEMIC POLICY AND REGULATIONS GROUP

(ii) STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEE

(copies filed as QAC/060324/014a and 014b)

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

MATTERS APPROVED BY CONVENOR'S ACTION / CIRCULATION

13.1 The Committee noted the following matters approved by Convenor's Action or Circulation:

(i) Changes to Undergraduate Entry Requirements *(copy filed as QAC/060324/015)*

(ii) Summer Graduations 2024 *(copy filed as QAC/060324/016)*

GUIDANCE FOR DISABLED PGR STUDENTS AND FOR STAFF SUPPORTING PGRs

(copy filed as QAC/060324/017)

14.1 The Committee noted the Guidance for Disabled PGR Students and for Staff supporting PGR students.

PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES

15.1 The Committee noted the following matters pertaining to Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies:

(i) Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Register *(copy filed as QAC/060324/018)*

- (ii) General Medical Council Annual Summary (MMSN) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/019)*
(iii) Association for Project Management (Engineering) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/020)*
(iv) Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (Business) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/021)*
(v) Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Business) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/022)*
(vi) National Committee for Qualifications and Academic Accreditation (Qatar) *(copy filed as QAC/060324/025)*

**ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEWS
(QESR) CONDUCTED DURING SESSION 2022/23**

(copy filed as QAC/060324/023)

- 16.1 The Committee noted the analysis provided by QAA Scotland related to the QESR Reviews conducted during session 2022/23.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 17.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 9 May 2024 at 2:05pm (UK Time) at Meeting Room 1, Floor 7, Sir Duncan Rice Library or via Microsoft Teams.