

**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP**  
**CONFIRMED minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

**Present:** C Symonds (Chair) B Dyer, R Chater, J De Vekey, J Edwards, J Freeman, K Fisher, A Main, C Merrett, G Roushan, R Stafford, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), R Rogers (Clerk)

**In attendance:** K Randall, M Frampton (Observing)

**Apologies:** J Gusman

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**1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2013**

1.1 The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**2 MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 Minute 1.2.1 (17.10.13) and Minute 3.2 (04.07.13) - Rounding of marks: Completed.

QASG had previously made several recommendations to ASC (29.07.13).

- i. Marking should be carried out to a whole number, where possible, or to one decimal place where not;
- ii. Marks should be entered into the Student Records System as a whole number, where possible, or within one decimal place where not.

QASG was advised that in both instances, ASC had approved the recommendations based on the one decimal place being changed to two decimal places to ensure student performance was captured as accurately as possible.

2.2 Minute 3.2.3 (17.10.13) – Communication and Implementation Plan: Ongoing.

SUBU, EDQ and Gillian Bunting were working together to develop a more transparent route to the Rules and Regulations section on the Student Portal. SUBU, EDQ and Learning Technology were also working towards a similar approach on myBU.

2.3 Minute 3.3.2 (17.10.13) – Mitigating Circumstances – Exceptional Personal Circumstances: Ongoing.

A Religion and Belief Policy was currently being developed within the University and was due for circulation in March.

2.4 Minute 3.3.5 (17.10.13) - Mitigating Circumstances – Additional Learning Support: Ongoing.

This would be carried forward to a future QASG agenda.

**Action:** EDQ to take this forward to a future QASG meeting for consideration by QASG.

2.5 Minute 4.2 (17.10.13) – School updates on assessment briefs and assessment feedback: Completed

It was confirmed that the Media School was aligning with the University processes.

2.6 Minute 4.2 (17.10.13) – School updates on assessment briefs and assessment feedback: Completed

It was confirmed that Partners were advised to use the relevant School standard assessment brief and assessment feedback templates; this had resulted in queries from Partners who had programmes with more than one School.

2.7 Minute 5.2 (17.10.13) – Any Other Business: Completed

This item was listed on the QASG agenda separately under Matters arising (see 2.9).

- 2.8 Update on the new capping rule - Kirsty Randall advised QASG that the new capping rule within the University's standard assessment regulations (implementation September 2013) would not impact upon Assessment Board Reports. Reassessments would be displayed as (R) and Repeat units would be displayed as (Rpt). It was expected that the changes would be completed by the end of February 2014.
- 2.9 Assessment Board discretion - ASC (14.02.13) previously agreed the QASG recommendation that Assessment Board discretion may be given to allow a late submission, which would have been a pass had it been submitted on time, to be carried forward as the capped resubmission mark. QASG heard that Assessment Boards had not yet taken place where this process had been implemented. It was agreed that it was too early to reflect upon this and it would be added to a future QASG agenda following the next cycle of Assessment Boards.

**Action:** EDQ to take this forward to a future QASG meeting for consideration by QASG.

- 2.10 Aligning the new Student Records System with the standard assessment regulations - A number of changes to the standard assessment regulations would not come into effect until September 2015 but would need to be approved in advance to allow the new Student Records System (SRS) to be set up to accommodate these changes. It was agreed that ASC could approve changes as required but any requiring Senate approval would be received collectively. QASG heard that the SRS implementation plan had not yet been signed off but Student Administration would keep the relevant departments updated on this to ensure Committee timescales could be met.

### **3 CONFIRMATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

- 3.1 The Chair of QASG had now joined Academic Services as the Head of Quality & Academic Partnerships. Whilst she would still continue to Chair this committee, she was now unable to represent the School of Tourism. Philip Ryland would now join QASG as the School of Tourism representative.
- 3.2 The School of Applied Sciences and the School of Design, Engineering and Computing had now merged to form the Faculty of Science and Technology. Representatives from both Schools would continue to be part of the QASG membership for the remainder of the academic year.

### **4 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ANNUAL REPORT (2012-13)**

- 4.1 Following completion of the 2012-13 academic year, EDQ undertook a revised approach to reporting on its quality assurance and enhancement activity to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). The annual report now combined a number of key areas of activity which were previously reported on separately, including:
- Evaluation Events: Review, approval, closure and modifications
  - Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
  - Annual Monitoring and Central ARFM Audit
  - External Examining
  - Academic Offences
- 4.2 Previously ASC received a separate annual report on external examining activity from QASG which considered the effectiveness of the University's external examining arrangements. This was now contained within this report. QASG was asked to provide feedback on all areas of the report, but with particular focus on External Examining arrangements.
- 4.3 It was clarified that the number of Academic Offences within 2012-13 did not include Fitness to Practise panels. This was reflected in the report.
- 4.4 QASG discussed the external examining arrangements within the report including current EE profiles and issues raised via their reports for 2011-12 and 2012-13.

- 4.4.1 Section 6.2: It was noted there were slightly less EE reports received in 2012-13. One EE report remained outstanding within HSC. This had been chased.
- 4.4.2 Section 6.7: The increase in the number of reports with raised concerns was noted. QASG heard that a number of these were under headings that had not previously been reported on. It was noted that the number of 'Yes but with reservations' for Standards, Student Performance/Comparable Standards and Processes for Assessment/Awards was substantially lower than previous.
- 4.4.3 QASG noted that all outstanding issues from the 2011-12 reporting year had been resolved. QASG was provided with the detail of the responses to the issues identified in the 2011-12 report.
- 4.5 QASG discussed Appendix 2 of the report – Update on outstanding EE issues 2012-13, which Schools had provided updates on.
- 4.5.1 AECC: There was no representative from the AECC at QASG to provide any updates. AECC do attend ASC where any matters of concern could be addressed.
- 4.5.2 Applied Sciences: QASG heard that a number of concerns raised were from EEs whose appointments had now finished. A particular concern related to accessing online assessments. Whilst a generic session for online assessments was now included within the EE Briefing Seminar held at BU, it was identified that some Schools took different approaches to managing this and not all EEs would have been able to attend a briefing seminar for online assessments.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** Schools ensure that relevant support is provided to all EEs who need to access assessments online.

- 4.5.3 Business School: It was noted that an EE for FdA Business and Management had not been provided with the necessary detail to understand which statistical data related to which location. A number of reservations had been identified by the EE for the MSc International Business finance provision. QASG heard this had now been resolved as that particular member of staff had left the University and mechanisms for assessment had been changed. Geli Roushan (the BS representative) was asked to provide some updated wording confirming this.

**Action:** An updated School response be provided to EDQ by Geli Roushan.

- 4.5.4 Design, Engineering and Computing: There were no further updates for QASG.
- 4.5.5 Media School: There were no further updates for QASG, but the School representatives were unsure if some of the issues raised had been addressed through the Team's responses to EEs. Robin Chater would clarify this.

**Action:** Robin Chater to clarify if the EEs had received responses from the framework/programme teams.

- 4.5.6 Tourism: There were no further updates for QASG.
- 4.5.7 Health and Social Care: EEs within the School had not raised any concerns. However QASG heard that there had also been some issues with EEs accessing assessments online. (This was also raised under 4.5.2.)
- 4.6 Schools and Partners, via their SQRs and PQRs, were invited to identify any common themes arising from the EE Reports for further consideration by QASG.
- 4.6.1 Whilst there were no issues raised that would impact upon academic standards, one particular issue was noted from the School of Tourism. Three of their EEs had raised different concerns about the BU profile regulation (80 credits) being too generous or not generous enough. Whilst QASG acknowledged this feedback did not require any further action, it was noted that other HEIs add

additional information on the Board report showing the student's overall performance based on their profile or similar regulation. Student Administration would consider alternative ways of showing the BU profile regulation (80 credits) within the new Student Records System.

- 4.6.2 An issue with accessing online assessments within the School of Applied Sciences was highlighted. QASG noted this had already been considered as part of the discussion.
- 4.7 QASG was asked to consider the outstanding actions from the EE Action Plan 2011-12.
- 4.7.1 Whilst it was agreed that the outstanding actions should be closed, the following action warranted further discussion: Make greater use of positive comments, particularly the ones on assessment, when discussing the reports with student reps and consider using quotes in University publicity or daily notices on campus plasma screens.

It was agreed there was value in using positive EE comments particularly for open days and on marketing materials. However it was not apparent whether EEs would agree for their feedback to be used in this way.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** The EE report template is amended to allow EEs to agree (or otherwise) for their feedback to be used for open days and marketing purposes.

## 5 ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDARD ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

- 5.1 To inform the current review, feedback was invited from chairs, secretaries and independent members of Assessment Boards. Matters brought directly to the attention of EDQ were also included in the review. SQRs were scrutinised for issues arising from external examiner reports as part of the EDQ annual review. Consequently, the discussion pertaining to external examiner views on the University's profile regulation is recorded in section 4.6.1 above. QASG was asked to agree to the following proposed changes for consideration by ASC.

NB The recommendations to ASC are detailed in a separate paper (see paper for ASC agenda item 3.2).

### 5.2 **Pass Mark:** Clarification of Pass/Fail elements of assessment:

- 5.2.1 Currently *6D - Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure* refers to the use of Pass/Fail assessments. Additionally, where Pass/Fail assessments have been designed to measure the achievement of intended learning outcomes, they are listed in the relevant unit specification(s) and programme specification. Where Pass/Fail assessments are associated with an elevated pass mark for professional body and/or public safety purposes, these are also recorded in the programme specification as formally approved exceptions to the standard assessment regulations. However, *6A - Standard Assessment Regulations* and *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* do not include reference to Pass/Fail assessments and there are no student-facing regulations, policies or procedures which explain these terms, their purpose, relevance, or implications in terms of assessment outcomes.
- 5.2.2 QASG agreed to the proposed change.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:**

- i) to recommend to Senate that this section of *6A – Standard Assessment Regulations* (all awards) be amended to include reference to Pass/Fail assessments (see Appendix A, Section 6.2 for the proposed wording);
- ii) to give in-principle approval for associated procedural updates to *6L – Assessment Board Decision-Making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*.

5.3 **Progression/Awards:** Completion of postgraduate placements as a progression/award requirement

- 5.3.1 Current postgraduate regulations do not refer to placements as a progression/award requirement. Currently at least one extant programme includes a compulsory non-credit bearing short placement.
- 5.3.2 Whilst ASC (04.12.13) had previously agreed that Postgraduate provision should not contain non-credit bearing, mandatory placements (unless stipulated by the PSRB), QASG agreed it would be a sensible addition to the regulations for students, until which time the provision is modified/reviewed to align with this requirement.
- 5.3.3 It was noted that none of the other standard assessment regulations make reference to non-credit-bearing short placements as an award requirement so this should be added for completeness.
- 5.3.4 QASG agreed to the proposed change.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:**

- i) to recommend to Senate that the completion of placements is included as a progression requirement for postgraduate programmes in *6A - Standard Assessment Regulations* (postgraduate awards) (see Appendix A, Section 8.1 for the proposed wording);
- ii) to recommend to Senate that the completion of placements is included as an award requirement in *6A - Standard Assessment Regulations* (all awards) (see Appendix A, Section 10.6 for the proposed wording);
- iii) to give in-principle approval for associated procedural updates to *6L – Assessment Board Decision-Making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*.

5.4 **Classification:** The profile regulation and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

- 5.4.1 The profile regulation awards higher classification to students who have performed at a higher classification than their aggregate mark in at least 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of their final level credits. Although *3P - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Policy and Procedure* states that credits received through APL do not contribute to award classification, it does not make it explicit that the number of credits on which the profile regulation will be based is fixed and cannot be adjusted in order to apply the '2/3<sup>rd</sup>s credit rule' to the remaining units studied at BU. Similarly, *6A - Standard Assessment Regulations* and *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* also make no reference to APL in this context.
- 5.4.2 QASG agreed that this should be clarified but no further changes made.

5.5 **Classification:** The profile regulation and outgoing exchange students

- 5.5.1 Currently outgoing exchange students' credits, but not marks, contribute to final classification in line with *7H – Student Exchange: Policy & Procedure* but it does not state that any APL credits will be discounted from classification calculations under the profile regulation. Again, *6A - Standard Assessment Regulations* and *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* make no reference to exchange students in this context.
- 5.5.2 QASG noted this may need to be looked at in the future as part of a discussion re ECTS but should not be changed currently.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** to approve the proposed procedural updates [outlined in 5.4-5.5 above] to *3P - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Policy and Procedure*, *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*, and *7H – Student Exchange: Policy and Procedure* to make it explicit that the profile rule is not adjusted for APL students or outgoing exchange students.

5.6 **Provision for failed candidates:** Failure and reassessment, reassessment limits

- 5.6.1 The standard assessment regulations specify the entitlement for reassessment for whole levels; consequently students who bring in credits from outside the programme (e.g. through APL or a student exchange), may fail a greater proportion of their BU study than other students on the same programme. Similarly, the standard postgraduate regulations do not differentiate between the number of credits students may fail as part of the awards of PG Cert, PGDip, and MA/MSc. However, where a PG Cert is designed as a terminal award, EDQ has to date approved formal exceptions to stipulate a maximum reassessment limit of 20 credits for this award.
- 5.6.2 QASG noted that the reassessment credit limits were stipulated because that volume of work was manageable. It was also unclear how the new capping rule would impact on this.
- 5.6.3 QASG agreed that this should not currently be changed.

5.7 **Provision for failed candidates:** Repetition of units, the 'unofficial placements policy'

- 5.7.1 This process allows a student to repeat up to 40 Level I credits during their placement year as long as the student has secured a placement before a reassessment Board. Academic staff have suggested that Board decisions should be guided by the Board's knowledge of the student's academic ability to repeat Level I units alongside a placement. Whether the student has received confirmation of a placement by this time should not have a bearing on the decision as students would normally have until December to secure a placement.
- 5.7.2 Also, it has been noted that the 'unofficial placements' policy, which was originally developed to help ensure parity between Board decisions, pre-dates the current University definitions. It is therefore proposed that the title in *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* be amended and that the word 'policy' is removed from the documentation.
- 5.7.3 QASG agreed to the proposed changes.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:**

- i) to clarify in *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* that a decision to allow the repetition of units of up to 40 credits alongside a sandwich placement should be based on the Board's knowledge of a student's academic ability.
- ii) to remove the word 'policy' from *6L – Assessment Board Decision-making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* to accurately reflect the purpose of the document.

5.8 **Other issues:** Board Discretion:

- 5.8.1 Feedback from one School indicated that academic staff who attended more than one Board did not always feel that discretion was applied consistently across the School. Another School asked QASG to consider whether the provision of further central guidance on the parameters of Board discretion would be useful, e.g. to help Boards to determine when discretion may be applied to carry forward a capped pass mark for the formal element as the resubmission mark.
- 5.8.2 Following some detailed discussion, QASG agreed that this should not be changed but should be kept under review.

**6 4K – PLACEMENTS: POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

- 6.1 A new document: *4K - Placements: Policy and Procedure* was presented to ASC (04.12.13) for approval to support the development, design and management of placements. The production of this document resulted in a number of recommendations being made to ASC from a working group to

enhance current practices pertaining to placements. Three of these recommendations were referred back to QASG for decision, to subsequently be considered and approved by ASC (February 2014).

6.2 **Recommendation 1 from ASC:** QASG decides what constitutes the successful completion of a 40 week placement in terms of minimum weeks and/or hours required and considers the parameters of Board discretion for the minimum number of weeks and/or hours required in determining the award e.g. in the sandwich mode of delivery e.g. 1200 hours.

6.2.1 QASG members advised that it was quite exceptional for students not to successfully complete their 40 week placement. Various options were discussed however these were felt to be either unworkable or inappropriate. It was agreed that a 40 week placement should be specified by a full-time position equating to the requirements of the role and that any exceptions should be considered by the Assessment Board.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** a 40 week placement should be specified by a full-time position equating to the requirements of the role and any exceptions should be considered by the Assessment Board.

6.3 **Recommendation 2 from ASC:** QASG decides whether all placements which are non-credit bearing should have clearly defined and appropriate aims, learning outcomes and assessment. If not, how is 'successful completion' of these programme elements determined? Should all placements be credit bearing?

6.3.1 Whilst assessment and learning outcomes were generally favoured by QASG, for non-credit bearing placements different Schools had different opinions, particularly in terms of how 'successful completion' would be determined. It was noted that in addition to any assessment associated with placement activity, use of placement learning in Level H learning and assessment was widespread and on this basis there was no current advantage to making any further changes to the current practice. This will be kept under review.

6.3.2 QASG agreed it was perhaps premature to require all placements to be credit bearing but that this should be considered when programmes are reviewed.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** current practice within Schools in terms of placement aims, learning outcomes and assessment is not changed, but is kept under review. Placements remain credit bearing or non-credit bearing but will be considered by Schools during programme review.

6.4 **Recommendation 3 from ASC:** QASG decides whether a University wide *Raising Concerns Protocol* document is developed.

6.4.1 The School of Health and Social Care has a specific document for students to raise concerns that may arise during their placements. This is primarily aimed at malpractice (or equivalent) in the work place and is a requirement within the health care profession.

6.4.2 QASG agreed that a University-wide document would not be developed. Schools should ensure their current processes for raising concerns are clearly communicated to students.

**RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** A University-wide Raising Concerns Protocol should not be developed. Schools should ensure their current processes for raising concerns are clearly communicated to students.

## 7 MIDYEAR STUDENT PROGRESS REVIEWS

7.1 Schools provided an update for QASG outlining how they formalised midyear progress reviews to counsel students on the implications of failure. Their approaches were similar.

- 7.2 QASG noted the paper and agreed it was too early in the cycle to determine if this was working effectively.

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 8.1 The issue was raised about exchange students taking units abroad. There was no end of semester Boards for these students and it was questioned whether midyear progress reviews could be utilised for these students. It was noted that this had been raised elsewhere and it was agreed that this would be added to the next QASG agenda.

**Action:** EDQ to take forward midyear progress reviews for exchange students to the next QASG meeting for consideration by QASG.