

## QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP

### Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013

**Present:** P Rouse (Chair), B Dyer, J Edwards, K Fisher, J Freeman, A Main, G Roushan, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), M Simpson, C Symonds

**Apologies:** J Edwards, C Merrett, R Stafford

**In attendance:** K Randall

#### 1 Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013

1.1 The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

1.2 The following were reported under matters arising:

1.2.1 Minute 1.1.1: See agenda item 2.

1.2.2 Minute 2.2.1: In February, Academic Standards Committee (ASC) had approved the Quality Assurance Standing Group's (QASG) recommendation to provide greater flexibility with regards to the timing of reassessment between levels for students with mitigation during the resit period. Currently the advice was that students with valid reasons for poor performance should not formally enrol before making good the failed units. In April it came to light that this was not fair on the students as provisional enrolment did not activate their funding. The Student Processes Manager reported that four Schools enrolled students as Live (rather than Provisional) within Unit-e for this reason advising students that they 'enrolled at risk'. Those progressing on this basis signed to say they had understood the implications of failure at the previous level. It was confirmed that students who had to be subsequently withdrawn would not be eligible to pay the standard 25% of the fees as the matter would come under mitigation within the Fee's Policy.

**ACTION:** 6L – *Assessment Board Decision-Making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* to be amended by Educational Development and Quality (EDQ) to include the above and a BU-wide sign-off form template (*NB the earlier recommendation to allow greater flexibility with regards to the timings of reassessment remains unchanged*).

1.2.3 Minute 2.2.4: See agenda item 3.

1.2.4 Minute 3.1.5: It was reported that QASG's recommendation to adopt Option 1 to help implement the proposed new capping rule for 2013-14 had been approved by ASC.

1.2.5 Minute 3.1.6: The recommendation that all students would qualify for reassessment regardless of the total number of credits failed within a level had been endorsed by ASC for recommendation to Senate.

1.2.6 Minute 3.1.7: The recommendation that Boards should exercise academic discretion when determining reassessments and repeat decision for individual students had been endorsed in principle by ASC but was referred back to QASG to produce guidance for Assessment Boards which would then be forwarded to Senate for approval (see agenda item 3).

1.2.7 Minute 3.1.8: Action ongoing. EDQ would arrange training for chairs of Assessment Boards following the June meeting of Senate.

1.2.8 Minute 3.2.2: ASC had endorsed the revised definition of self-plagiarism subject to minor amendment.

1.2.9 Minute 3.2.3: The action to enhance student-facing guidance on self-plagiarism was ongoing.

1.2.10 Minute 3.2.5: The change to the standard assessment regulations for postgraduate programmes to allow an Assessment Board to determine whether a failed Dissertation or Final Project would be retrievable had been endorsed by ASC for recommendation to Senate.

1.2.11 Minute 5.1.1: The recommendation to allow an Academic Offences Panel/Board to request additional information in exceptional circumstances was approved by ASC.

- 1.2.12 Minute 5.1.2: the recommendation for teams to present additional evidence subject to student consent was rejected.
- 1.2.13 Minute 5.1.3: It was noted that Human Resources were currently working on a new policy and procedure around references. EDQ would enquire regarding the legal position of individuals writing references and raise concern on behalf of QASG regarding the potential for inequity in relation to the requirement to disclose academic offence in response to a reference request or, to decline a request to provide a reference.
- 1.2.14 Minutes 5.1.4-5.1.6: ASC approved the recommendations to expand the list of examples of academic offences, to change the wording in penalties 1 and 2, to introduce a central record of 'no case to answer' decisions and to clarify that a student has had a 'no case to answer' outcome from previous panel, this should not influence the panel decision in any way.
- 1.2.15 Minute 5.1.7: EDQ had contacted School Academic Offences Panel chairs to remind them of the need for subsequent follow-up support to students who have been found guilty of committing an academic offence.
- 1.2.16 Minute 5.1.9: EDQ would amend *6H – Academic Offences: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards* to incorporate the approved changes.
- 1.2.17 No other ongoing actions were carried forward to July.

## **2 Changes to QASG membership**

- 2.1 It was confirmed that Robin Chater would re-join QASG as the Programme Administrator representative on his return to the Media School in June.

## **3 Review of standard assessment regulations: implementation of the proposed capping rule and Board discretion**

- 3.1 ASC had asked QASG to provide guidance to Assessment Boards regarding cases which would require Board discretion to determine both reassessment and repetition decisions for individual students. Due to the timing of committee meetings, the guidance would be included in a paper submitted directly to Senate on the proposed changes to the University's standard assessment regulations. EDQ had prepared the paper which included examples of how a Board may arrive at its judgement. It was emphasised that it was not possible to document all cases when academic judgement may be required and that it was intended that the guidance would help achieve a level of consistency across the institution. Members acknowledged this and recommended that the examples be forwarded for Senate approval.
- 3.2 It was confirmed that all reassessments, including resit papers and assignment briefs, were written for approval at the same time as the main assessment papers so this would not be an issue in affecting decisions regarding reassessment or repetition.

**ACTION:** Recommended to Senate that *6L – Assessment Board Decision-Making, including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* amendments to include guidance on the parameters of Board discretion as per above.

## **4 Request for a formal exception to the standard assessment regulations: DEC Undergraduate Computing Framework**

- 4.1 The School of Design, Engineering and Computing (DEC) had put forward a request for a formal exception to the University's standard assessment regulations for its Undergraduate Computing Framework to allow students to be reassessed in the 60-credit Level H Project where the unit mark did not fall below 30%. The School's QASG representative presented the request noting that it had been put forward as the current regulations allowed reassessment only up to 40 credits at Level H. It was reported that although the requirements and implications for failure were made explicit and explained

to all students some still failed to appreciate the consequences. It was confirmed that all three of the School's undergraduate frameworks included a 60-credit project but the other two frameworks had not put forward requests for exceptions.

- 4.2 Members queried whether the unit could be split into 20 and 40-credit units but it was explained that this was not possible for pedagogic reasons. It was noted that currently the University allowed formal exceptions to its standard assessment regulations specifically on the basis of professional body requirement. In addition, some professional programmes had restrictions regarding the pass mark or compensation in particular due to patient safety. Members expressed concern regarding parity of treatment between programmes if these students were to be treated differently from other undergraduate students who failed 60 Level H credits. Members noted that this would be a major change to the current principle in the regulations and suggested that the School carries out sector research to find an alternative resolution.

**ACTION:** Recommended that the School investigate sector practice to find a resolution to the above issues.

- 4.3 A separate discussion took place regarding capping reassessments and reassessment limits with some members expressing a view that both were unnecessary.

## **5 AOB**

- 5.1 This was Murray Simpson's last QASG meeting as the Students' Union representative. The Chair thanked him for his valuable contribution during his membership and wished him well in his new role as the Students' Union President.

- 5.2 Members noted a range of issues relating to the early identification of academic offences, choosing appropriate penalties and obtaining proof in suspected cases of commissioning which was becoming more prevalent in the sector. The chair reported that the Business School Deputy Dean (Education) was in the process of establishing a working group to look into commissioning and was expected to report its finding to ASC in due course.

## **6 Date of next meeting**

- 6.1 The next meeting will be scheduled for July, date tbc.