**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP**

**UNCONFIRMED minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2015**

**Present:** C Symonds (Chair), A Chapman, R Chater, J De Vekey, E Mayo-Ward, S McLawrence, P Mathews, A Mercer, R Rogers (Clerk), P Ryland.

**In attendance:** N Finnes (Agenda item 5 – section 6), A Morrison (Agenda item 7 – section 8), M Frampton (Observing)

**Apologies:** P Alexander, B Dyer, G Jordan, A Main, C Merrett, H Mitchell, K Phalp, N Silvennoinen

**1 Minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2015**

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

**2 Matters arising**

2.1 **Minute 4.3 (14.01.15) QASG membership update** – QASG academic representatives to propose three Faculty academic representatives (to the Chair of QASG) with the assumption that normally 2 of them would attend QASG - **Ongoing**

(Update 23.03.15) Still awaiting confirmation from the Faculty of Media and Communication (1 member confirmed). (Update 27.04.15) This was raised at the Faculty Academic Standards Committee (FASC) on the 22.04.15, but two further members were not yet confirmed. (Update 22.09.15) Two members have been confirmed, one is still outstanding.

2.2 **Minute 6.2.3 (14.01.15) – Review of assessment regulations and associated procedural change** - Student Processes and Educational Development and Quality (EDQ) to determine how the process of Late Submission will be best managed for the purposes of Assessment Board reporting - **Ongoing**

(Update 27.04.15) This was still subject to Senate Chair’s Action, but discussions were ongoing within Academic Services. (Update 22.09.15) Senate approval was given on the 72 hour Late Submission ruling within *6A Standard Assessment Regulations* for implementation in 2015-16. Further updates were still required within *6L - Assessment Board Decision-Making, Including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure* which would be published to the *Academic Regulations, Polices and Procedures (ARPP)* shortly.

2.3 **Minute 6.4.1 (14.01.15) – Review of assessment regulations and associated procedural change** - EDQ to further clarify in *ARPP 6L* that where students were reassessed they must achieve a formal element mark that was sufficient to ensure they pass the unit overall - **Completed**

(Update 27.04.15) An updated version of *ARPP 6L* would be republished shortly prior to the Assessment Boards as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle. (Update 22.09.15) This was concluded in May 2015 as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle.

2.4 **Minute 6.5.1 (14.01.15) – Review of assessment regulations and associated procedural change** - EDQ to clarify in existing guidance in *ARPP 6L* that partially failed units should be chosen over fully failed units - **Completed**

(Update 27.04.15) An updated version of *ARPP 6L* would be republished shortly prior to the Assessment Boards as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle. (Update 22.09.15) This was concluded in May 2015 as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle.

2.5 **Minute 9.1 (14.01.15) – Assessment Practice update** - QASG to send any feedback on enhancing Assessment and Feedback to the Chair of QASG - **Ongoing** - QASG agreed this should remain ongoing to allow new QASG Faculty academic representatives the opportunity to provide feedback.

(Update 22.09.15) There were no further updates to add to the feedback previously recorded in QASG minutes.

2.6 **Minute 2.5 (27.04.15) – SUBU Survey** - It was noted there had been a student survey in the University shop asking: Is receiving feedback via Turnitin better than paper feedback. QASG was keen to hear the results of this survey- **Completed**

SUBU advised that the results were inconclusive. 50.7% of students who responded said it was better and 49.3% said it was not. SUBU advised that the key message coming from students was that feedback should be useful, detailed and timely.

2.7 **Minute 4.3 (27.04.15) – Sitting exams at an alternative Higher Education Institution (HEI)** – EDQ to research similar processes at other HEIs to help inform current BU procedures relating to sitting exams at alternative HEIs in the UK - **Completed**

 Research was undertaken by EDQ and considered by Student Processes. Based on this, it was confirmed that BU was aligned to other HEIs and no further action was required.

2.8 **Minute 4.3 (27.04.15) - Sitting exams at an alternative HEI** – EDQ to provide guidance in *5A – Welcome Guide and Programme/Level Handbooks: Procedure* for students unable to sit exams due to mitigating circumstances - **Completed**

 This was concluded in June 2015 as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle.

2.9 **Minute 5.1.3 (27.04.15) – *4K – Placements: Policy and Procedure*** – EDQ to review *ARPP 4K* to reflect discussion at QASG in relation to completing semester 1 and semester 2 assessments whilst studying abroad – **Completed**

 EDQ updated this within *6C – Assessment Design, Handling and Submission: Policy and Procedure* as part of the 2015-16 *ARPP* republication and cross referenced from *ARPP 4K*.

2.10 **Minute 7.1 (27.04.15) – External Examiner’s response form** – EDQ to produce a draft version of an External Examiner’s response form and circulate to QASG for feedback – **Completed**

 A draft version was circulated to QASG following the April meeting. It was added to *5C - Monitoring of Taught Academic Provision and ARFMs: Policy and Procedure* in May 2015 as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle.

2.11 **Minute 8.1.1 (27.04.15) – Late Submission student letter** – The Programme Administrator representative to share the student letter relating to Late Submissions of assessment with EDQ – **Completed**

 This was sent to EDQ following the April meeting of QASG.

2.12 **Minute 8.4 (27.04.15) – Academic Levels** – EDQ to provide wording for the transition to Academic Levels 4-8 as part of the off-cycle *ARPP* republication – **Completed**

 This was concluded in May 2015 as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle. However, when the University agreed to remain with Unit-E for one further academic year, this change was subsequently deferred until Sept 2016. As part of the *ARPP* republication, students were advised that during this transitional period some of their documentation may reflect both types of Levels but their 2015-16 transcripts would incorporate Levels C-D.

SUBU queried how they should address this in 2015-16 student surveys and it was agreed that they should refer to both Academic Levels (e.g. C/4).

**3.0 UPDATES ON RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY QASG TO ASC AND SENATE**

3.1 The recommendation relating to the 72 hour Late Submission ruling had been approved by Senate for implementation in 2015-16.

**4 CONFIRMATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR 2015-16**

4.1 The QASG Terms of Reference were noted.

**5 UPDATES TO QASG MEMBERSHIP**

5.1 Shenel McLawrence and Phil Mathews were welcomed to QASG as new Faculty of Media and Communication academic representatives.

**6 EVALUATION EVENT PROCESS / SECTION 4 OF THE *ARPP***

6.1 A number of proposed changes to the Evaluation Event process (within section 4 of the *ARPP*) were presented to QASG for discussion before submission to ASC in October for approval. QASG heard that some of the changes were necessary due to Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA) requirements and that Legal Services had worked closely with EDQ on matters relating to these. An overview of the key proposed changes were discussed as per 6.2 – 6.8 below.

6.2 Faculties would take more ownership of the process with more emphasis placed on the new Faculty structures including Heads of Department (HoD) and Department Heads of Education (DHoE). For new programmes, Faculty Executives would be required to formally consider the extent to which the programme would align with University/Faculty strategy, the market and approve any additional resourcing requests. There would be shorter timescales stipulated between the Planning Meeting and the completion of the Evaluation Event including the response to the outcomes, as well as a shorter ASC proposal form. The purpose of the ASC proposal form was raised and it was explained that currently it contained a lot of information that was required to inform Course Search on the BU website, which was made live/updated following ASC approval. However due to CMA requirements, this information would no longer be required at this stage of the process and programmes would only be advertised on the BU website following successful completion of the Evaluation Event. (However, an expression of interest page would be available for potential applicants who may be interested in seeing which new awards were currently under development.) ASC would therefore only receive an overview of the programme to help inform their discussion.

6.3 Also due to CMA requirements for programme reviews, including any award undergoing a title change, the website would flag these as undergoing review and they would need to include the expected date of completion. Proposed changes would need to be highlighted too although subject to the timing of reviews, applicants may need to be contacted outlining the changes being made.

6.4 It was proposed that Planning Meetings would now include HoDs and DHoEs and allocated Faculty administration support. Following this, the Design Phase stage would be replaced with an Internal Faculty Consideration stage; the size and volume of which would be determined within the Faculty. This part of the process would have its own checklist to work through and would primarily focus on internal requirements and areas such as rationale and market. The Faculty would also be responsible for checking the documentation prior to submission to the Panel.

6.5 The Evaluation Event itself would be called the External Panel Meeting and would allow more focus to be placed on the curriculum: units, assessments and learning outcomes, the student experience and staffing. QASG welcomed this and noted that often time was spent discussing internal BU strategies with external panel members who were not familiar with them. It was intended that a more thorough scrutiny of the curriculum would also reduce the number of modifications made following approval/re-approval. There would also be a shorter time scale to complete and respond to conditions and recommendations, but this may vary dependent upon Professional Body requirements (as would any of the timescales documented). This would allow both the curriculum to be built into the Student Records System and for the final Programme Specification to be available to applicants a lot earlier.

6.6 Documentation would now be provided to Panel members electronically. The Briefing and Resources document template had been reviewed so it only asked for key essential information. The Course Costings form had been redesigned and a new Programme Specification template had been developed and streamlined which, for example, merged the previous Programme Diagram and Programme Profile into one accessible format that would reduce duplication and the potential for error. QASG particularly praised and welcomed the new Programme Specification template.

6.7 It was proposed that the current *4A – Framework and Programme Specification: Procedure* and *4B – Unit Specifications: Procedure* would be removed from the *ARPP*, but their relevant templates (including completed examples) would be incorporated into the new ARPP *4A – Programme Approval, Review and Closure: Policy and Procedure* (currently known as *ARPP 4D*) as hyperlinks*.*

6.8 Evaluation Events for September 2016 entry would also need to be completed earlier in the academic year than would have been required previously. Further work on timescales for events beyond this date was still ongoing to ensure they were approved / reviewed in a timely manner to ensure potential applicants had as much detail about them in advance.

6.9 QASG welcomed the proposals and was mindful that a number of the proposed changes were inevitable due to CMA requirements. Additional feedback to enhance the proposed process was provided at the meeting and would be incorporated into the documentation submitted to ASC. The Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships was also attending Faculty Executive meetings to outline the proposed changes and to seek feedback from them. QASG was invited to provide any further feedback to EDQ on the process prior to submission to ASC.

**7 *6D – MARKING, MODERATION AND INDEPENDENT MARKING: POLICY AND PROCEDURE***

7.1 Following consideration of BU assessment practices against the *UK Quality Code Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning* in March 2014, QASG subsequently recommended to ASC (May 2014) that the current Independent Marking Plan (IMP) be amended to incorporate Internal Moderation as an alternative to Second and Double Marking. ASC supported the proposal in principle but asked that QASG produce a fully revised IMP for University approval. Senate (June 2014) subsequently received a paper on the related policy changes but asked that these be put on hold until a fully revised procedure became available for ASC and Senate scrutiny. Sector research was undertaken by EDQ and a revised version of *ARPP* *6D* was presented to QASG (January 2015) which included Internal Moderation as an alternative to Second and Double Marking. This new process was welcomed by QASG and it was recommended that it proceed to ASC (February 2015) for approval, alongside further clarifications and updates. Unfortunately the proposal for this alternative marking model was rejected by ASC, although the other clarifications and updates were welcomed and would remain.

7.2 Following this meeting of ASC, EDQ met with three ASC members and *ARPP 6D* was discussed in more detail. It was agreed that Internal Moderation as an alternative marking model to Second and Double Marking should be removed and we should continue with Second and Double Marking only, although further clarifications for transparency of the process were also proposed for inclusion. QASG heard that where the term Internal Moderation was now used, this only referred to the checking process within Second Marking which confirmed proper application of the assessment process (which was not new) and was not linked in any way to its prior incantation. QASG was asked to consider the updated version of *ARPP 6D* and approve it for inclusion within the *ARPP*.

7.3 The updated version of *ARPP 6D* was well received by QASG. However, section 4.1.3 was questioned with regards to what ‘by suitably qualified staff’ and ‘new staff should not carry out independent marking’ mean, although it was explained that the former had come from a QAA definition. Section 8 (Moderation by Link Tutors) was also questioned and further clarity may also be required explaining that Link Tutor moderation happens before External Examiners moderation. EDQ would revisit 4.1.3 and section 8 in light of this feedback before republishing to the *ARPP*.

**ACTION**: EDQ to revisit section 4.1.3 and section 8 of *ARPP 6D* to consider QASG feedback before republishing to the *ARPP*.

**8 FACULTY STUDENT EXCHANGE ARRANGEMENTS**

8.1 A review had been undertaken by Academic Partnerships relating to student exchange arrangements. The key areas identified related to Faculty approval and oversight of exchange programmes and associated curriculum mapping requirements. It was explained that QAA and Erasmus+ stipulate that the University must ensure all information presented to students for exchange opportunities is accurate and regularly reviewed. This was deemed particularly important as numbers for incoming and outgoing students were increasing as were the number of links with Erasmus and Non-Erasmus partners.

8.2 It was proposed that each Faculty should have in place a Study Abroad Coordinator who would effectively coordinate Faculty exchange arrangements with students (incoming and outgoing), academic staff and Academic Partnerships. It was anticipated that this would improve the student experience and would reduce the number of queries and students who subsequently withdraw from the process due to lack of clarity over unit choices. The review also recommended that a formal approval process for curriculum mapping (based on the template currently used for recognition/progression routes) be established requiring scrutiny and approval at FASC or its sub-group. FASC approval would ensure that units available to BU students undertaking exchanges at partners were compatible to the equivalent BU units. It would also provide a clear audit-trail of scrutiny in the case of individual academics no longer being involved in exchanges or leaving the University. If the curriculum mapping revealed any areas of incompatibility or gaps in the learning outcomes, consideration would need to be given to resolving this. It was also recommended that Academic Partnerships would hold and maintain a central Student Exchange Register.

8.3 QASG considered the proposed recommendations and was concerned by the potential volume of work for the Study Abroad Coordinator. The proposed curriculum-mapping template also seemed to be too in-depth for the task in hand and there were further concerns that the mapping may identify ‘gaps’ that might be seen to discourage mobility, although QASG heard that this was not the intention. QASG felt that clear communication to the students to manage their expectations was a key element, and more engagement with Programme Leaders relating to incoming students would also be welcomed. It was agreed that there should be two streamlined curriculum-mapping templates, one for outgoing students and one for incoming students which would also be appropriate for Erasmus students. A working group to further discuss the proposals with Faculty experts was suggested.

 **ACTION**: Academic Partnerships to consider setting up a working group with Faculty experts to further discuss the arrangements for Faculty Student Exchanges.

8.4 QASG agreed that FASC would be an appropriate forum for the consideration of Student Exchange arrangements.

**9 FUTURE APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND (HEFCE CONSULTATION)**

9.1 QASG noted the University’s response to this consultation.

**10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 In light of the change to numerical Academic Levels (Levels 4-8), it was queried whether the University intended to change terminology from ‘units’ to ‘modules’ to align with other HEIs. QASG heard there were no plans to do this as ‘modules’ tended to refer to modular schemes which were not currently offered at BU.

**11 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

11.1 The date of the next QASG meeting was scheduled for 9th November 2015.