**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP**

**UNCONFIRMED minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2015**

**Present:** C Symonds (Chair), P Alexander, R Chater, J De Vekey, E Mayo-Ward, J Freeman, G Jordan, H Mitchell, A Mercer, K Phalp, R Rogers (Clerk), P Ryland, N Silvennoinen

**In attendance:** E Jackson (Agenda item 3 – section 4), KL Berry (Agenda item 4 – section 5)

**Apologies:** A Chapman, B Dyer, S McLawrence, A Main, C Merrett

**1 Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd mARCH 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 for 2014-15** – 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 Faculty of Media and Communication (1 member confirmed). (Update 27.04.15) This was raised at the Faculty Academic Standards Committee on the 22.04.15, but two further members were not yet confirmed.

2.2 **Minute 6.2.3 (14.01.15) – Review of assessment regulations and associated procedural change** - Student Processes and 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 is still subject to Senate Chair’s Action, but discussions have been ongoing within Academic Services.

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 are reassessed they must achieve a formal element mark that is sufficient to ensure they pass the unit overall. **Ongoing**

(Update 27.04.15) An updated version of *ARPP 6L* will be republished shortly prior to the Assessment Boards 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. **Ongoing**

(Update 27.04.15) An updated version of *ARPP 6L* will be republished shortly prior to the Assessment Boards 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 Faculty members the opportunity to provide feedback.

* (Update 23.03.15) It was noted that mid-cycle feedback should be managed effectively and in a timely manner, for example mid unit, to ensure students had undertaken an appropriate level of learning before providing feedback. Whilst SUBU advised that giving feedback was perceived as a positive process by students, QASG noted that students report survey fatigue and do not always understand the rationale for the various surveys. It was noted that this was being considered by the Student Voice Committee.
* (Update 27.04.15) Some further feedback had been received by the Chair of QASG and Faculties were invited to discuss how processes were working this academic year. Health and Social Sciences (HSS) was putting together a template for use within Turnitin covering the key assessment categories, for example: subject-specific skills. The Faculty of Management (FM) had standard templates but was seeking to streamline where possible. Approximately 60% of all assessments were submitted online, with approximately 90% of all eligible assessments being submitted online. This continued to be a work in progress. The Faculty of Science and Technology (SciTech) had a large proportion of their assessments submitted online. Within the Faculty of Media and Communication (FMC), there did not appear to be any changes from the previous practice. Faculties, overall, were positive about assessment practice and current processes helped engage discussion within framework teams and reduce pressures on individuals. Business School paper boards to peer review assessment briefs were noted as good practice and would be incorporated across FM.

It was noted there was currently a survey in the University shop for students asking: Is receiving feedback via Turnitin better than paper feedback. SUBU would share the results with QASG in due course.

**ACTION**: SUBU to share results from a recent survey for students asking: Is receiving feedback via Turnitin better than paper feedback.

2.6 **Minute 5.5 (23.03.15) – Consultation - *The future of quality assessment in Higher Education*** – EDQ to add the University’s response to the April Agenda. **Completed**

2.7 **Minute 6.2.1 (23.03.15) – Evaluation event feedback to help streamline current processes** – No further feedback was received other than that provided at the meeting. This has been fed back to EDQ. Feedback would be sought at the forthcoming meeting with EDQ. **Completed**

2.8 **Minute 6.3.2 (23.03.15) – Update Terms of Reference for Framework Management Team meetings and provide link to *ARPP 5C*** – This was updated by EDQ. **Completed**

2.9 **Minute 6.4.1 (23.03.15) – To clarify with ASC if the level of detail recorded on External Examiners within the EDQ Annual Report is required**– ASC agreed at its April meeting that this information was no longer required. **Completed**

2.10 **Minute 6.4.5 (23.03.15) – Guidance within *ARPP 4D* relating to supporting students following programme closure** – EDQ has checked the wording and is confident the guidance adequately covers vulnerable and repeating students following programme closure. **Completed**

2.11 **Minute 6.4.5 (23.03.15) – Bridgwater College’s standard External Examiner response** – EDQ to add this to the April Agenda for consideration as good practice. **Completed**

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

3.1 An update on the recommendation made by QASG for Senate was noted. Late Submission of written coursework was awaiting Senate Chair’s Action.

**4 SITTING AN EXAM AT AN ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTION IN THE UK**

4.1 An academic complaint was recently received within FM, whereby a student was not able to sit one of his exams in January because he needed to attend a funeral. He submitted mitigating circumstances and was given special permission to sit the exam at an alternative institution in England close to where the funeral was taking place, enabling him to sit the exam and go to the funeral in the same day. Unfortunately, the necessary arrangements were not put in place in time for this to happen and the student would now be sitting the exam (as though for the first time) in the August resit period. The student had raised this with SUBU and questioned whether there could be alternative examinations points within the year.

4.2 It was discussed whether the move to semesters had resulted in this, although it was noted that January exams had been in place for a long time. Student Administration explained that the student had been given several options, including sitting the exam the day before and signing a disclaimer form. However at that stage the student had expressed a wish to sit the exam at another University. The student was given the same form that students sitting exams abroad completed, with the proviso that it would apply in this particular situation. The student was required to make the arrangements and initially contacted the host University but the process of sitting his exam was not finalised because the student was unsure of his responsibilities. Although QASG heard that the same process worked successfully for students sitting exams abroad, SUBU noted that the process was challenging with a lot of emphasis on the student, especially a student with mitigating circumstances. It was noted that a student with mitigating circumstances would not normally resit an examination in this way, but would be considered through the Circumstance Board consideration prior to the main Assessment Board.

4.3 QASG was advised that the website had already been updated in light of this scenario, but potentially more could be done in the future to improve communication and consistency and to reduce confusion; although over a period of ten years it was anticipated that this had only affected two or three students. Due to such small numbers, it was agreed that students should be dealt with on a case by case basis, although any process suggestions from SUBU would be welcomed. QASG was also interested to hear what other Universities do in similar situations. *5A - Welcome Guide and Programme/Level Handbooks: Procedure* was due to be republished imminently and it was suggested that advice on speaking to the programme team could be added to this ARPP document to ensure consistency for students unable to sit their examinations due to mitigating circumstances.

**ACTIONS**:

1. EDQ to research similar processes at other Universities to help inform current BU procedures.
2. EDQ to provide advice in *5A - Welcome Guide and Programme/Level Handbooks: Procedure* for students unable to sit examinations due to mitigating circumstances.

**5 STUDENT MOBILITY**

**5.1 Students completing semester 1 assessments whilst studying abroad during semester 2**

5.1.1 It had been brought to the attention of EDQ, that during the academic year, Faculties were agreeing a range of alternative assessments for students completing semester 1 assessments whilst studying abroad during semester 2. The Faculty view was that this was essential to facilitate study abroad activity. Whilst EDQ had been unaware of this practice, it was agreed that this should be discussed to ensure consistency and transparency for managing students in this situation. Examples of alternative assessments discussed included sitting exams abroad or during the reassessment period as if for the first time, undertaking a piece of coursework instead of an examination or submitting written coursework prior to the submission date.

5.1.2 QASG heard that this was only an issue at a small number of overseas partners where their semester dates did not match those at the University. The general advice should be that assessments should take the same format and undertaken at the same time, however due to a number of factors, for example: settling into a new environment and accessibility of resources abroad, it was agreed that flexibility would be required. However meeting the required Level Learning Outcomes would be the key consideration. FM advised that within some of their provision, providing alternative assessments would not be an option due to Professional Body requirements. It was agreed that where assessments needed to be different, and it was anticipated that this would only be in a small number of cases, this should be discussed with the Head of Department (or equivalent) and documented in order to advise the Assessment Board.

5.1.3 It was noted that in cases where assessment was managed by group work, this may be harder to manage if a group member went abroad to study. It was suggested that student’s contribution could be marked based on their involvement until they were no longer able to engage with the assessment. Additional assessment activity may be required in these circumstances to ensure parity and that all learning outcomes could be met. Wording to this effect, could be clarified within students’ Handbooks. It was noted that wording within *4K – Placements: Policy and Procedure* may need to be revisited and cross referenced.

**ACTION**: EDQ to review *4K – Placements: Policy and Procedure* to reflect discussion at QASG relating to completing semester 1 assessments whilst studying abroad during semester 2.

**5.2 Students who do not achieve enough credits whilst studying abroad**

5.2.1 On occasions, students studying abroad may not achieve enough credits to equate to 60 BU credits. Prior to leaving to study abroad a learning contract must be agreed. This includes details of the units/modules along with their associated credit values. However on occasion students find themselves not being given the opportunity or are unable to, for other reasons, to attempt the sufficient number of units or credits abroad. EDQ perceived it was timely to discuss this matter to ensure consistency of approach in this situation and also to provide transparency for students when taking assessment abroad. QASG agreed that students must complete the equivalent of 60 BU credits as they are required to achieve 360 credits for their BU award.

5.2.2 There was already a process in place for students who failed assessments whilst studying abroad. This involved development of an appropriate alternative reassessment which ensured the relevant Learning Outcomes could be met. QASG agreed that meeting the Learning Outcomes was a key component for students who were in the situation detailed in 5.2.2. The learning contract (amended if necessary) would be an effective mechanism for managing this process as it could outline what the student would be required to do abroad and at BU to ensure 60 credits of learning would be successfully achieved. This information should then be available to the Assessment Board.

**5.3 Curriculum mapping for studying abroad**

5.3.1 EDQ posed the question how curriculum mapping was undertaken for student exchanges during and just after partner approval. QASG heard that these concerns were already managed via the Partner Development/Study Abroad processes. This included the development of the learning contract.

**5.4 Assessment implication for Level H students studying abroad**

5.4.1 The majority of students studying abroad would do so during Level I or as part of their one year placement. Exceptionally a student may undertake study abroad during Level H, although it was identified that this could have implications on their overall classification as the Profile Regulation could not be applied in this case. It was agreed that students must be advised accordingly.

5.4.2 QASG discussed this and heard that a student was currently considering a Level H study abroad within SciTech. There were a small number of examples within Sport-related provision within the former School of Tourism where the process had been managed rigorously and successfully. The preference would be for students to undertake a Level H study abroad during semester 1, although again there had been a successful example where a School of Tourism student had gone out during semester 2 and had managed their dissertation too. It was agreed that Level H study abroad should be exceptional and must be well regulated to ensure it added to the quality of the student’s learning experience.

**6 *THE FUTURE OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION***

6.1 QASG noted the University’s response to the recent consultation led by HEFCE. There would be a further consultation following the forthcoming general election. QAA’s contract has been extended for the 2015-16 academic year.

**7 STANDARD EXTERNAL EXAMINERS RESPONSE FORM**

7.1 Within the EDQ Annual Report 2013-14 (and originally noted within the FMC Quality Report), the standard Bridgwater College External Examiner’s response form was identified as good practice. QASG considered this form and agreed that there were some useful elements within it, but it would require amending if the University was to adopt a similar approach to responding to their External Examiners (EEs). EDQ would put together a draft version and circulate for feedback. The second and third boxes were both deemed useful: Response to EE report / Action points required from report process. It was anticipated that one form would accommodate all requirements.

**ACTION**: EDQ to produce a draft version of a standard External Examiner’s response form and circulate to QASG for feedback.

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**8.1 Late Submission (for 2014-15)**

8.1.1 For the 2014-15 academic year, Assessment Board’s would continue to have discretion to allow a piece of written coursework, which had it been a pass if it had been submitted on time, be carried to the reassessment board capped at the pass mark. However there were several incidences during 2013-14 where the Reassessment Board had not known how to manage this in relation to late submissions for reassessment pieces. It would now be made clear that reassessment pieces submitted late would be a zero, unless successfully evidenced by mitigating circumstances. FMC had an example student letter template explaining this which QASG asked to be shared with EDQ.

**ACTION**: The Programme’s Administrator Representative to share the student letter relating to late submissions of assessment.

8.2 **Late Submission (for 2015-16)**

8.2.1 (Subject to Senate Chair’s Action) Assessment Boards must mark written coursework submitted late but within 72 hours of the deadline and accept it as part of the reassessment allowance for the level had it been a pass if it had been submitted on time. QASG discussed what should happen to Late Submissions submitted after 72 hours but within 3 weeks. It was agreed that it should still be marked and feedback given. It would be useful for the Assessment Board to have sight of the original mark to inform their decisions.

**8.3 Mid Unit Student Evaluation (MUSE) and ARFMs**

8.3.1 QASG was advised that an amendment would be made to *5C – Monitoring of Taught Academic Provision and ARFMs: Policy and Procedure* during the forthcoming non-standard ARPP republication cycle for the 2014-15 academic year. The Unit Monitoring Report would be updated to prompt reflection on the MUSE data and to allow for reflection of three years of statistical data, which would be available from Academic Business Intelligence within Student Administration by the end of May.

**8.4 Numerical Levels**

8.4.1 From 2015-16, academic Levels C – D would now be referred to as Levels 4 – 8. Documentation for the evaluation event process during 2014-15 had already been updated, but Handbooks and existing definitive documentation had not yet been revisited. It was agreed that they should be revisited incrementally and EDQ would provide appropriate wording to add as footnotes etc in the meantime. This would be included within the non-standard *ARPP* republication email sent from EDQ to all Faculties and Partners.

**ACTION**: EDQ to provide wording for the transition to numerical Levels (4 – 8) as part of the non-standard *ARPP* republication cycle.

**9 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

There is currently not another meeting scheduled.