

## MINUTES of the 15 January 2018 meeting

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### Present:

Professor Phil Cardew (Chair)

Jeff Abrams

Glenn Bowdin

Jim Durrant

Dr James Milligan

Paul Ratcliff

Caroline Thomas

Melissa Askew

Barbara Colledge

Lesley Earle

Jo Norry

Alan Smith

Ian Truelove

Dr Caroline Bligh

Professor Andrew Cooper

Jack Harrison

Priscilla Preston

Joanna Smith

### In attendance:

Kirsty Curwen

Stuart Morris (Secretary)

Dr Sue Smith

### Apologies:

Professor John Craig

Professor Ruth Pickford

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## Part A: Preliminary Items

### Terms of reference and membership

045.2017.AQS The Committee received a report from the Secretary presenting the current terms of reference and membership (paper reference AQS-2017-035).

### Declaration of interest

046.2017.AQS No declarations of interest were made.

### Minutes

047.2017.AQS The Committee **AGREED** that the minutes of its meeting held on 16 October 2017 were an accurate record (paper reference AQS-2017-036).

### Matters arising

048.2017.AQS The Secretary presented a report on the matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 16 October 2017 (paper reference AQS-2017-037). It was **reported** that:

- (a) *Arising from minute 007.2017.AQS*: The SU had circulated the dates for School Forum meetings to Deans of School and had also invited a representative of LLI to forum meetings.
- (b) *Arising from minute 011.2017.AQS*: Academic Board, at its meeting on 01 November 2017, approved the recommendations that:
- (i) our university's quality assurance framework and processes were effective;
  - (ii) the University's periodic review processes fully involved students and included external peer or professional review;
  - (iii) the management of academic quality and standards for taught provision was sound;
  - (iv) our University was responding to any issues or concerns arising from the outcomes of our processes or from the analysis of associated data;
  - (v) the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and outcomes were, to the best of the University's knowledge, robust and appropriate;
  - (vi) action plans were in place for the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes; and
  - (vii) that our University continued to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).
- (c) *Arising from minute 007.2017.AQS*: Academic Board, at its meeting on 01 November 2017, approved the Policy for Academic Assurance & Enhancement and the University's Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework.

049.2017.AQS It was clarified that the Policy for Lecture Capture would set out that its introduction across the University would be recommended, but not compulsory. It was noted still to be determined whether the choice to implement it would be opt-in or opt-out.

### **Reports from the Students' Union**

- 050.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Vice President of the Students' Union (SU) on the recent work undertaken by the SU along with any key academic issues or developments (paper reference AQS-2017-038).
- (b) The report provided: an outline of the Sabbatical Officer objectives for 2017/18; an update on the work of the SU concerning academic representation at the University; a summary of the decisions made at the annual Student Members' meeting; an update on the work that has been carried out to increase in the number of course-based societies; confirmation that the SU received a rating of 'Very Good' in a recent visit by an auditor from the NUS 'Quality Students' team; confirmation that the Golden Robes awards and the Achieving Excellence Awards would be merged into one award ceremony to take place in May 2018.

- 051.2017.AQS (a) It was **noted** that the merging of the Golden Robes and Achieving Excellence Awards events would reduce the overlapping and duplication of awards and the revised 14 categories of awards would also include more recognition of the role of professional services staff. It was confirmed that further information concerning the awards would be sent out by Human Resources in the next few weeks.
- (b) Academic Librarians had started to be invited to the School Forums and it was highlighted that this was helpful in ensuring that Libraries & Learning Innovation was aware at an earlier stage of any issues raised by students.

## **Chairs' Report**

- 052.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair concerning the external regulatory environment in relation to academic quality. It was noted that the Office for Students (OfS) had become operational and alongside it, a new a tougher regulatory regime for universities to work with and adhere to was being introduced. There was also a new Higher Education Minister and a new Secretary of State for Education.
- (b) The Chair noted that it was likely that a review of HE funding would be carried out and that top of the agenda would be proposals for differential fees for different subjects.
- (c) It was likely that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) would secure the contract for the review of academic quality in the HE sector however the results of the tender process had not yet been announced.
- (d) It was highlighted that with the change in the criteria for gaining degree awarding powers more institutions would be applying for them over the next few years and therefore the HE market was likely to become more competitive.

## **Part B: Quality & Student Matters**

### **Academic Assurance / AQSC Action Plan**

- 053.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Dean of Quality providing a short update on the Academic Assurance (paper reference AQS-2017-039) and a separate report providing an update on the AQSC action plan (paper reference AQS-2017-041).

#### Academic Assurance

- (b) A summary was provided of recent evidence and outcomes for academic assurance relating to the annual report on academic standards: external examiners for postgraduate taught awards, academic appeals and student complaints for 2016/17; and academic quality: first degree classifications an update on enhanced monitoring in 2017/18 and a progress report on module

evaluation for semester 1, 2017/18. The also report provided evidence that supported the affirmation and maintenance of academic standards and quality and that action was underway where needed.

#### AQSC Action Plan

(c) The Committee was informed that good progress being made in completing the actions set out. A particular highlight had been the progress made across all Schools in the implementation of the Attendance Monitoring and Student Engagement and Monitoring tools which was supporting focused and personalised support for students.

054.2017.AQS It was **noted** that our University did not have any concerns regarding HEFCE's reflection on degree classifications in the HE sector and that our University performed well in relation to the metrics for the Teaching Excellence Framework in this area.

055.2017.AQS The Committee **RECOMMENDED** to the Academic Board that that:

- (a) our university's quality assurance framework and processes are effective;
- (b) the University's periodic review processes fully involve students and include external peer or professional review;
- (c) the management of academic quality and standards for taught provision is sound;
- (d) our university is responding to any issues or concerns arising from the outcomes of our processes or from the analysis of associated data;
- (e) the methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate;
- (f) action plans are in place for the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes.

#### **Consultations: Office for Students (OfS) Consultation & Quality Code consultation**

056.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Dean of Quality providing details of the recent consultations relating to the future of regulation for the UK higher education sector and proposed changes to the UK Quality Code. (paper reference AQS-2017-040)

(b) The consultations summarised in the report were those conducting concerning: The Office for Students (OfS); changes to the UK Quality Code; and the proposed developments in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The proposals for changes to the regulation of the UK higher education sector would lead to a significant transformation of the expectations of higher education providers and the outcomes achieved in partnership with students. Our University had taken the opportunity to respond to the consultations being held concerning these proposals. It was confirmed that the University was confident that it was well prepared for any changes arising from the results of the consultations.

## Validation and Review Update

- 057.2017.AQS
- (a) The Committee received a report from the Dean of Quality providing the outcomes of the 2016/17 outcomes from the validation/revalidation cycle and providing institutional oversight of the completion of course validations, re-validations, partner approval and approval of collaborative delivery up to November 2017 (paper reference AQS-2017-042).
  - (b) The report confirmed the outcomes from the 2016-17 validation/revalidation cycle providing institutional oversight of the completion of course validation, re-validation, partner approval and approval of collaborative delivery for those events which took place up to and including 30 November 2017. The report also included the revalidation cycle activity for the next six years which has been shared with Deans of Schools and Academic Services Managers.
  - (c) It was explained that Quality Assurance Services colleagues would work closely with Schools to schedule the validation activity in clusters between January and October, each year and the schedule would be aligned so that it provided good quality and timely information to applicants and students about the University's courses.
  - (d) It was explained that a University Validation Panel had been established to manage validation activity which exceeded the parameters of modification but did not warrant a full validation panel event. Although this was a change from the former faculty/school based administration to one administered centrally by Quality Assurance Services, the transition had so far gone well.

## Part C: Strategy, Policy & Process

### Education Strategy Developments

- 058.2017.AQS
- (a) The Committee received a report from the Chair providing an update on the implementation of the Education Strategy for 2017/18 (paper reference AQS-2017-043).
  - (b) An update on progress in implementing the following areas was provided: The Learning Pathway; DEAP Forum 2017/18; Bespoke learning pathway development; the Student Support and Graduate Employment; staff development.
  - (c) It was reported that Libraries & Learning Innovation (LLI) had worked with course teams to identify key opportunities to deliver academic skills sessions as an embedded element of the curriculum, the aim being to achieve maximum benefit to students in their development as independent learners. LLI staff had delivered an increased number of sessions in Semester 1 2017-18 compared to 2016-17.

- (d) The Committee was informed that Quality Assurance Services (QAS) offered a range of staff development for Schools and Collaborative Partners on academic quality related matters covering the full breadth of the academic cycle from new course proposals, to validation/approval of delivery, monitoring, review, the application of the University's Academic Regulations and external quality review. A new module was also being launched on MyBeckett, titled 'Quality Network' in January 2018 intended for use by Academic Service Managers, academic quality support officers and QAS, the purpose of which was to support consistent communications, provide opportunity for cross School and central interactivity, consultation opportunities and a calendar of key dates in the quality cycle.

059.2017.AQS It was **noted** that the one-day in-house training session on Advice Skills provided by AdviceUK would primarily be aimed at staff in Student Services. Assessor input would be provided by the Associate Director to reduce costs, provide greater local support to the team, and ensure the timescales for members of the team could be more flexible.

### **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Subject Level Pilot**

060.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Dean of Quality providing an update on the progress of the University's participation in the TEF subject level pilot in 2017/18 (paper reference AQS-2017-044).

- (b) It was explained that our University had been selected to participate in Model B of the Pilot which was a 'bottom-up' process based initially on subject level metrics where each subject was fully assessed to give subject-level ratings. These would then feed into the provider-level assessment and rating. Heads of Subject will lead the development of subject-specific narratives and will contribute to the development of the Subject Group submissions.

- (c) It was confirmed that our university's draft institutional submission and subject group submissions would be shared with Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) members as they were produced.

### **External Examiner Appointments**

061.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Associate Director Quality Assurance providing an oversight of the appointment of External Examiners for the coming academic year 2017-18 (paper reference AQS-2017-045).

- (b) It was confirmed that one request for an extension of an examiner had not been approved as it had been discovered that there had been a reciprocal arrangement involving cognate programmes at another institution.

- (c) There remained three appointment requests still ongoing and Quality Assurance Services were working with the School to obtain the necessary information to appoint the Examiner.

062.2017.AQS The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the table of appointments provided at appendix A of the report and to also grant permission for the Chair of AQSC to provide Chair's action for the three outstanding appointments.

## Part D: Annual Reports

### First Degree Classifications

063.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from the Associate Director – Quality Assurance providing an overview of first degree attainment between the academic year 2014-15 and 2016-17 (paper reference AQS-2017-046).

(b) The report included data for the University's: graduating population; degree classification by mode of study; the percentage of good honours attained; and a summary of degree attainment by protected characteristics included, as appropriate to the available data.

064.2017.AQS (a) It was **noted** that the graduating cohort size had increased despite a reduction in the number of students overall.

(b) It was confirmed that there remained a difference between the number of students graduating and the degree classifications in different student populations.

065.2017.AQS The Committee **AGREED** to approve the following recommendations:

(a) That the Race Charter and Access Strategy groups should reflect upon the data across the three-year trend, noting areas of success and areas to support further action.

(b) That the Deans of Schools would be invited to engage with the data using the multi-variant interactive pivot tables and target action to support student attainment.

### Academic Appeals & Student Complaints

066.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received an annual report providing an overview of cases received, investigated and resolved under our university's Student Complaints and Academic Appeals procedures in 2016/17. The report also included information about complaints referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education during 2016/17 (paper reference AQS-2017-047).

(b) It was reported that the 2016/17 report did not include data or analysis on Early Resolution Stage (ERS) complaints as the completion of records had been variable across the University since it began in 2012 and the implementation of the new School structure, and the period of adjustment that followed, has resulted in Schools being unable to report for 2016/17. A

review of the process of capturing ERS complaints would be undertaken in order to determine whether gathering data across every School and Service and reporting it centrally was of any value to the University.

*Secretary's note: minutes 066.2017.AQS (c) to (k) are exempt from publication under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.*

067.2017.AQS (a) It was observed that of the 73% of appeal requests that had been rejected a significant proportion had been due to academic judgement. It was suggested that more might be done to provide students with a clearer understanding of how marks for their work were calculated which in turn could reduce the number of unnecessary appeals.

(b) The Committee discussed the potentially negative impact that the timing of Reassessment Boards in late September were having on student progression as some students did not know whether they could progress until as late as November. It was agreed that further thought should be given to the timing of the Boards.

068.2017.AQS The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the following recommendations:

(a) That a review would be undertaken concerning the purpose and effectiveness of collating this data in future;

(b) That the University revise the timescale for the resolution of complaints from 20 to 30 working days;

(c) That further discussions would be held with senior colleagues in Research & Enterprise in relation to enhancements that could be made to the way in which we deal with appeals from research students. The outcomes of these discussions would be presented to a future meeting of AQSC.

(d) That an executive summary would be produced for the Governance & Nominations Committee to provide it with assurance that student complaints and appeals are effectively addressed and managed, in accordance with the requirements of the HE Code of Governance.

(e) That further consideration would be given to the timing of Reassessment Boards so that they did not have a detrimental effect on the progression of students in the first semester of a new academic year.

(f) That further discussions be held with senior colleagues in Research and Enterprise in relation to enhancements that could be made to the way in which we deal with appeals from research students. The outcome of these discussion would be fed back to a future meeting of AQSC.

- 069.2017.AQS (a) The Committee received a report from Associate Director Quality Assurance providing information on the annual report submitted by external examiners and advisers during 2016/17 (paper reference AQS-2017-048).
- (b) The report provided information on the annual reports submitted by external examiners and advisers during the 2016/17 academic year for postgraduate taught (PGT) courses, including details of the receipt of Examiners' reports and Schools' responses taken from the Quality Assurance Services (QAS) database records as at 02 January 2018. This report also provided an overview of external examiner's feedback relating to on-campus and collaborative provision.
- (c) It was confirmed that all but one report (0.03% of the total of 375 reports received to date) were positive in their responses to the three key questions posed on, Standards Set, Student achievement and Conduct of Processes. The negative report related to Student Achievement in one Franchise delivery and an action-planning process was instigated in accordance with our procedures to address this matter.

070.2017.AQS

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve that:

- (a) Any mitigating circumstances for non-submission of reports is notified to Quality Assurance Services.
- (b) Quality Assurance Services issue termination of contract letters, to postgraduate examiners who have not provided an annual report, where no mitigating circumstances are declared, by 31 January 2018.
- (c) Deans of School ensure contingency measures are put in place to cover external examiner duties, as necessary, and progress replacement appointments as a matter of urgency.

## Part E: Reports from Committees/Groups

### School Academic Committee Reports

- 071.2017.AQS The Committee received the following School Academic Committee Summary Reports:
- (a) Leeds Business School (paper reference AQS-2017-049)
- (b) Leeds Law School (paper reference AQS-2017-050)
- (c) School of Art, Architecture and Design (paper reference AQS-2017-051)
- (d) School of Built Environment and Engineering (paper reference AQS-2017-052)
- (e) School of Clinical and Applied Sciences (paper reference AQS-2017-053)
- (f) School of Computing, Creative Technologies and Engineering (paper reference AQS-2017-054)
- (g) School of Cultural Studies and Humanities (paper reference AQS-2017-055)
- (h) Carnegie School of Education (paper reference AQS-2017-056)
- (i) School of Events Tourism & Hospitality Management (paper reference AQS-2017-057)
- (j) School of Film, Music and Performing Arts (paper reference AQS-2017-058)

- (k) School of Health and Community Studies (paper reference AQS-2017-059)
- (l) School of Social Sciences (paper reference AQS-2017-060)
- (m) Carnegie School of Sport (paper reference AQS-2017-061)

## **Part F: Other Business**

### **Schedule of meetings and business for 2017/18**

072.2017.AQS The Committee received its schedule of meetings and business for 2017/18 (paper reference AQS-2017-062).

### **Date of next meeting**

073.2017.AQS The next meeting of the Academic Quality & Standards Committee would be held at 2pm on Monday 19 March 2018 in room G07, Old Broadcasting House, City Campus.

### **Other business**

074.2017.AQS No other business was raised.

Confirmed by the Committee/Board as a correct record and signed by the Chair:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_