

Academic Quality and Standards Committee 16 October 2017

Summary of Proceedings

The Academic Quality and Standards Committee's proceedings are summarized below. Full minutes will be published on the website once they have been approved by the Committee at its next meeting on 18 January 2018.

Report from the Students' Union (SU)

- 1 The Committee was presented with a report which summarized the recent work undertaken by the SU along with any key academic issues or developments. The report provided an outline of the Sabbatical Officer objects for 2017/18; and a detailed overview of the SU's work concerning the future of academic representation at the University. Of particular note were the proposals to introduce a 'subject level' student representative and also the plans to improve the operation of the Student Forums.

Academic Assurance / AQSC Action Plan

- 2 The Committee was presented with a report which provided an annual summary of evidence and data for outcomes in 2016/17 for institutional oversight and assurance of the academic standards and academic quality of students' higher education and experience and the steps taken for further improvement. The report also confirmed the University's compliance with UK quality expectations and European Standards and Guidelines.
- 3 *The Committee agreed to recommend 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; and*
 - (g) *that our University continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).*
- 4 *The Committee also considered and approved the AQSC action plan for 2017/18 that accompanied the Academic Assurance report.*
- 5 The Academic Assurance report and associated action plan are set out in item C1 of the agenda for the meeting of the Academic Board on 01 November 2017.

Validation and Re-Validation

6 The Committee was presented with a report that provided the forthcoming validation and revalidation activity taking place in the next cycle up to November 2017 along with confirmation of the institutional partner approval activity taking place for collaborative partners during 2017-18 academic year. The Committee was also provided with the final outcomes from validation activity concluded in the 2016-17 academic year which had not been reported at the last meeting of AQSC.

7 *The Committee agreed to approve:*

(a) A final extension to the condition deadline of six months for provision developed in partnership with Rushmore Business School to provide them with the opportunity to meet the conditions set concerning their Rodrigues location.

(b) An extension to the period of partner approval from five to six years for partners in order to cover their exit strategies. This extension would be subject to a satisfactory review of due diligence and performance data and regular meetings to monitor the implementation of the exit strategy including engagement with Senior Managers at the Annual Partnership Board.

Academic Audit

8 The Committee received a report summarising the process and findings of the 2016/17 academic audit activities and the proposed audit areas for 2017/18. *The Committee approved the proposed audit areas for 2017/18 along with a number of recommendations concerning the audit on examinations feedback.*

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body Update

9 The Committee was presented with a report which provided an update on on-campus and collaborative provision professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) activity. *The Committee approved the proposals which formalised a requirement for a copy of all accreditation/ recognition reports received in Schools from PSRBs to be submitted to Quality Assurance Services upon receipt, to strengthen assurance and to allow relevant good practice endorsed by PSRBs to be shared beyond the School.*

Student Surveys Report 2016/17

10 The report provided an overview of the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, International Student Barometer/Student Barometer and the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education survey for 2015/16. It was reported that responses have been encouraging with good outcomes in all surveys. It was confirmed that work to improve student satisfaction for the areas which fall below our average performance would be a key feature of our Education Strategy over the period of our University Strategic Plan.

Module Evaluation Report – Semester 2 Outcomes 2016/17

- 11 The report outlined Semester 2 and Semester 3 (2016/17) outcomes in relation to collected survey data from the Evasys module evaluation. It was reported that progress had been made in terms of initiatives which had already been implemented and the Committee noted the ongoing work to enhance the institutional level approach to module evaluation, using the Evasys software tools. *The Committee approved the planned changes to the process for 2017/18 that it was hoped would strengthen in-year enhancement and feedback for students along with improving the quality of data collected from the surveys.*

Education Strategy Developments

- 12 The report provided the committee with an update on progress with implementation on the following areas: The Learning Pathway; DEAP Forum 2017/18; Bespoke learning pathway development; the Student Support Framework; and Regulatory and process Reform. The Committee discussed the section of the academic regulations related to the potential upgrading of borderline performance where it was confirmed that this regulation was related to the potential for students to upgrade degree classifications only and did not apply to students who may have failed who might wish to be upgraded to a pass. *The Committee agreed to approve the updated Framework for the Management of Placement Activity.*

Policy for Academic Assurance & Enhancement

- 13 Academic Board agreed in July 2017 that the University should review its statement of approach to quality assurance to establish a formal University Policy for Academic Assurance and Enhancement and formalise the Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework. The Committee was presented with a University Policy for the Academic Assurance and Enhancement of our University's Higher Education provision and the University's Academic Assurance and Enhancement Framework which provided a concise summary our University's approach which could be made publicly available alongside our present Academic Regulations and Academic Governance public information. *The Committee recommended that Academic Board approve the Policy for Academic Assurance & Enhancement. This proposal is set out in item C3 of the agenda for the meeting of the Academic Board on 01 November 2017.*

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year 3 and Subject-Level Pilot

- 14 The briefing paper provided an update on the developments in the TEF Year 3 process and the introduction of a TEF Subject level pilot in 2017/18. Further updates would be emailed to the Committee concerning this process as they were received.

Pearson Institutional Review Report

15 The Committee received the Annual Institutional Review Report of Pearson Licensed Centre Higher National Qualifications. The 2016/17 Report relates to all licenced Higher National programmes run as institutional awards under the licence agreement during the 2016/17 academic year. The Committee agreed to approve the report and it would be submitted to Pearson.

External Examiner Appointments

16 This report provided the Committee with oversight of the appointment of External Examiners for the coming academic year (2017-18). Only one proposal was rejected and this was for an extension of a current examiner and it was confirmed that the course team still had time to propose an alternative examiner for 2017-18.

17 It was confirmed that from 2017-18 all nominations for the appointment of External Examiners will be proposed by the Dean of School and submitted to Quality Assurance Services for institutional consideration and where appropriate, recommendation for approval by AQSC on behalf of Academic Board.

Exceptions to admissions criteria

18 The Committee received a report providing a summary of proposals for exceptions to the University's standard University Admissions Criteria that have been received and approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) since the last meeting of the Committee held on 05 June 2017.

Annual Report on Academic Misconduct

19 The report provided a summary of the number of admitted or found cases of students seeking unfair advantage, which were formally dealt with during the 2016-17 academic session. The report covers both on-site and collaborative provision.

20 For on-site provision there were a total of 557 admitted or found cases of unfair practice during 2016-17. This compares to a total of 676 admitted or found cases in 2015-16 and 590 in 2014-15. As a percentage of the total student population 1.96% of students committed an offence during 2016-17. The corresponding percentage in 2015-16 was 2.30% and in 2014-15 was 2.07%.

21 For collaborative provision there were a total of 75 admitted or found cases of unfair practice at collaborative institutions during 2016-17. This compares to a total of 63 admitted or found cases during 2015-16 and 35 admitted or found cases during 2014-15.

22 It was noted that the figures above represented a very small proportion of the University's student population and this was also set in the context that our University's detection rates when compared with competitor institutions were found to be better.

Annual Report on External Examining 2016/17

23 The report provides assurance and oversight on the annual reports submitted by undergraduate external examiners and advisers during the 2016/17 academic year, including details of the receipt of Examiners' reports and School responses. The report also included an overview of external examiner feedback on undergraduate provision for both on-campus and collaborative provision. It was reported that external examiners had provided positive confirmation of standards set, student achievement and conduct of processes in their reports and that the University can be confident that the standards of our awards is assured.

24 *The Committee approved the recommendations that: The Regulations review group review feedback received in respect of our approach to condonement and compensation; where areas of good or innovative practice have been commended these are collated and shared.*