

QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP
CONFIRMED minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2013

Present: C Symonds (Chair) B Dyer, R Chater, J De Vekey, J Edwards, K Fisher, J Gusman, A Main, R Stafford, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), R Rogers (Clerk)

In attendance: M Frampton (Observing)

Apologies: C Merrett, G Roushan, J Freeman

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2013

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

1.2 The following update was noted:

1.2.1 Minute 3.2 (Rounding of marks): QASG had made a number of recommendations to ASC (29th July 2013). The following were revised by ASC:

QASG had previously recommended to ASC (29th July 2013) to carry out marking to a whole number, where possible, or one decimal place where it is not. This recommendation would be enforced from September 2013.

(Extract from ASC minutes 3.1.3) Members agreed that it was very important to capture student performance as accurately as practicable. The group **revised** the recommendation and agreed that work should be marked to a whole number, where possible, and to no more than **two** decimal places where it is not.

QASG had previously recommended to ASC (29th July 2013) to input all marks into the student record system as whole numbers, or within one decimal place i.e. enter the same number format to which the mark was marked. This recommendation would be enforced from September 2013.

(Extract from ASC minutes 3.1.5) Members **revised** the recommendation (in line with decision made for the first two recommendations) and agreed that marks would be entered in the student record system as whole numbers, where possible, and to no more than **two** decimal places where it is not i.e. enter the same number format to which the work was marked. It was highlighted that the provision of entering a mark rounded to two decimal places would be extensive enough to minimise rounding errors happening, and that this in turn was manageable by administrative staff.

2 Confirmation of Terms of Reference and Membership

2.1 The new Terms of Reference and Membership were confirmed. R Rogers had joined the Group as QASG clerk and J De Vekey and J Gusman attended from SUBU.

3 Mitigating Circumstances: short term sickness notification (previously referred to as self-certification)

3.1 Members discussed the process which would allow students to use short term sickness notification for mitigating circumstances in lieu of a GP letter, a medical certificate or other recognised evidence. QASG was tasked by ASC to agree the process for implementation based on the principles agreed by ASC (20th October 2013) and outlined in the paper. The process would initially be on a trial basis and monitored at the end of the 2013-14 academic year.

3.2 QASG recommended that the following be adopted to support the process of short term sickness notification:

- i. The term self-certification should be renamed short-term sickness notification to ensure greater transparency and understanding of the process.

- ii. Short term sickness notification request by student: The student should telephone their Programme Administrator / partner equivalent on the first day they realise that their assessment performance may be affected by their sickness. The request for short term sickness notification must be made up to or on the day of assessment, before the submission deadline/start of the exam, and no later than 4pm¹ on the day of the assessment.

If the student is unable to speak directly to their Programme Administrator / partner equivalent or a designated person within the office who is able to receive the call, then they must leave a message including their name, ID number, telephone number, course and a short summary of the illness.
- iii. Short-term sickness notification form: The Programme Administrator / partner equivalent would complete the Short-Term Sickness Notification Form on the basis of the information the student provides and then email a copy of the completed form to the student. The student would submit this with the standard Assignment Extension / Exam Postponement Request form (or a Board consideration request form if required).
- iv. Retrospective short term sickness notification: The student would not be able to notify the University / partner retrospectively for short term sickness notification purposes.
- v. Sickness lasting more than 5 days: Where sickness lasts more than 5 days, the student must provide a medical certificate / other appropriate independently verified evidence in order for their circumstances to be considered. The date the student notified the University of their sickness is confirmed by the Programme Administrator / partner equivalent on the Short-Term Sickness Notification Form.
- vi. Submitting the Short-Term Sickness Notification Form: The student would submit the Short-Term Sickness Notification Form alongside the completed Assignment Extension / Exam Postponement Request Form. The student may also use it later as additional evidence to seek Board consideration of circumstances if required.
- vii. Limits on short term sickness notification: Limits would not currently be specified, although the Programme Administrator / partner equivalent would monitor the volume of short term sickness notification requests made during the academic year to form part of the monitoring of the process undertaken at the end of the academic year.

3.2 Communication and implementation plan

- 3.2.1 Members were asked if the process should be backdated to the start of the academic year (16th September 2013). As it had been recommended by QASG that the University would not accept retrospective short term sickness notification, then the process should be implemented following republication of *6J – Mitigating Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*. However, Schools may choose to consider students' requests from the start of the academic year in line with the spirit of the changes made if deemed appropriate.
- 3.2.2 QASG suggested the changes should be informed through relevant communications to students and staff making use of Marketing and Communications, Framework Management Team meetings, SUBU, Intranet Staff News and email correspondence.
- 3.2.3 It was discussed that the Rules and Regulations section on the Student Portal was difficult to find as the location did not form part of a transparent navigation route for the user. SUBU agreed to take this forward.

ACTION: SUBU to consider the current location of the Rules and Regulations section on the Student Portal and report back to QASG.

- 3.3 QASG was asked to approve / recommend for approval the following changes / amendments to *6J – Mitigating Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure*.

¹ QASG had originally proposed 12 midday but this was amended to 4pm following discussions with SUBU

3.3.1 Student and staff facing guidance to identifying mitigating circumstances: QASG noted that the student facing guidance was now documented as a point of reference for staff. This was recommended for approval.

3.3.2 Exceptional personal circumstances: QASG was asked to consider cases when an extension, exam postponement or Board consideration would be required due to exceptional personal circumstances (e.g. recognised elite sport commitments or religious holidays). This item would be discussed at the January 2014 QASG.

ACTION: EDQ to take this forward to the January 2014 QASG meeting for further consideration by QASG.

3.3.3 Mitigating circumstances – guidance notes for the student: QASG noted that the student facing guidance now included mitigating circumstances grading, Board consideration and outcome and what students should do if they disagree with the decision. This was recommended for approval.

3.3.4 Reference to Postgraduate Research students: QASG noted that 6J had been crossed referenced with 8A – Code of Practice for Research Degrees. This was recommended for approval.

3.3.5 Additional Learning Support: QASG was asked to consider whether further guidance was required in relation to ALS to clarify retrospective consideration of mitigating circumstances. This item would be discussed at the January 2014 QASG.

ACTION: EDQ to take this forward to the January 2014 QASG meeting for further consideration by QASG.

4 School updates on assessment briefs and assessment feedback

4.1 The Deputy Deans (Education) were asked to provide an update on the Schools' approaches to Peer Review of draft assessment briefs, use of assessment brief templates and use of School-wide assessment feedback forms for the 2013-14 academic year. The outcomes were outlined in the paper. DEC and the Business School provided additional updates on the use of School-wide assessment feedback as this information was not provided at the time of producing the paper.

4.2 DEC had produced some Framework specific Assessment feedback templates but the Psychology and Computing Frameworks would use the same ones. QASG was confident that Schools were aligning with the processes; however it was unclear from the Media School's response whether they were fully aligning with the process.

ACTION: Robin Chater to check within the Media School and report back to QASG.

4.3 Information pertaining to partners had not been requested, although QASG agreed it would be useful to know how this process was being managed at partners.

ACTION: Katy Fisher to check with the partners and report back to QASG.

5 AOB

5.1 QASG discussed the following process which was implemented for the 2013-14 academic year and documented in *6L Assessment Board Decision Making including implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*: Where a student would have passed a late submission had they submitted on time, the Board may use its discretion and choose to carry a capped pass mark for the formal element forward to the following Board as the resubmission mark. Where it is judged to be in the academic interest of the student to do this, the student is not required to do further work for that element.

5.2 Members questioned how this process would be managed and suggested that Schools consider this and report back to the next meeting.

ACTION: Schools to consider how this process would be managed and report back to QASG.

6 Date of next meeting

6.1 The next meeting was scheduled for the 23rd January 2014.