

QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP
CONFIRMED minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2014

Present: C Symonds (Chair) B Dyer, R Chater, J De Vekey, J Edwards, J Gusman, K Fisher, C Merrett, G Roushan, P Ryland, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), R Rogers (Clerk)

In attendance: A Morrison (Agenda item 2/Section 3), K Randall, M Frampton (Observing)

Apologies: J Freeman, A Main, R Stafford

1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH OCTOBER 2013

1.1 The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to amending the terminology 'recorded' to 'displayed' within section 2.8.

2 MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Minutes 4.5.2 & 4.7.1 (28.01.14) – EDQ annual Report: **Completed.**

Quality Assurance Standing Group (QASG) had previously made two recommendations to Academic Standards Committee (ASC) on External Examining

- i. Schools ensure that relevant support is provided to all External Examiners who need to access assessments online. This was approved by ASC (13.02.14).
- ii. The EE report template is amended to allow EEs to agree (or otherwise) for their feedback to be used for feedback and marketing purposes. This was rejected by ASC (13.02.14).

QASG heard that the EDQ Annual Report was well received by ASC.

2.2 Minutes 5.2.2, 5.3.4, 5.5.2 & 5.7.3 (28.01.14) - Annual review of standard assessment regulations: **Completed.**

QASG had previously made a number of recommendations to ASC as part of this review. These were all approved by ASC (13.02.14) and subsequently (where applicable) by Senate (26.02.14).

2.3 Minutes 6.2.1, 6.3.2 & 6.4.2 (28.01.14) – 4K – Placements: Policy and Procedure: **Completed.**

QASG had previously made three recommendations to ASC on Placements. These were all approved by ASC (13.02.14) and 4K has now been published in the *Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures* (ARPP). Further consideration of Study Abroad as part of the 40 week placements is included within Section 3 of these minutes.

2.4 Minute 3.2.3 (17.10.13) – Student-Facing Rules and Regulations

SUBU and Gillian Bunting were working together to develop a more transparent route to the Rules and Regulations section on the Student Portal. **Ongoing**

Educational Development and Quality (EDQ) and Library and Learning Technology were also working towards a similar approach on myBU. **Completed**

2.5 Minutes 3.3.2 & 3.3.5 (17.10.13) – Mitigating Circumstances: **Ongoing**

Exceptional Personal Circumstances and Additional Learning Support would be considered at the May meeting of QASG as part of the 6J – *Mitigating Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure* annual review.

2.7 Minutes 2.10 (26.01.14) - Aligning the new Student Records System with the standard assessment regulations: **Ongoing**

A number of changes to the assessment regulations would not come into effect until September 2015, but would need to be approved earlier by Senate to allow ease of implementation of the new Student Records System (SRS). Student Administration advised that these may need to be approved by the

first Senate during 2014-15. Senate was scheduled to meet again in February 2015 prior to the SRS implementation which would better align with the annual review of standard assessment regulations undertaken by QASG in January. The timing would need to be clarified.

Action: The Chair of QASG to further discuss this matter with Student Administration.

- 2.8 Minute 4.5.3 (26.01.14) - EDQ Annual Report (Business School): **Completed**
Updated wording had been provided by the Business School and included on the EDQ Annual Report.
- 2.9 Minute 4.5.5 (26.01.14) – EDQ Annual Report (Media School): **Completed**
It was confirmed that the external examiners had received responses as part of the annual monitoring process.
- 2.10 Minute 8.1 (26.01.14) – Any Other Business: **Ongoing**
Midyear progress reviews for exchange students would be considered at the May meeting of QASG.

3 STUDY ABROAD AS PART OF THE 40 WEEK PLACEMENT

- 3.1 *4K - Placements: Policy and Procedure* supporting the development and management of placements was approved for publication within the *ARPP* by ASC (13.02.14). ASC members requested that further clarification should be made whether Study Abroad could be included as part of the placement year. This was referred to QASG to discuss this matter and report their recommendations to the May meeting of ASC.
- 3.2 EDQ undertook some sector research which clearly demonstrated that other UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) do allow sandwich degree students to undertake academic study during the placement year.
- 3.3 QASG supported the proposal that Study Abroad could be incorporated into the placement year at Bournemouth University (BU). Student mobility was becoming more established, particularly at Level I, and more overseas HEIs were delivering programmes in English. In addition, Erasmus funding was also available to support this option. However, QASG was mindful of a number of issues which needed to be considered, resulting in a number of recommendations being made to ASC for approval.
- 3.4 **Duration of the Study Abroad**
- 3.4.1 QASG discussed whether there should be a maximum or minimum period of time stipulated for the Study Abroad element if incorporated into the placement year and whether it should only apply to a limited number of programmes in the first instance.
- 3.4.2 Currently, Erasmus operates a minimum period of one semester for Study Abroad, although it was noted that alternative options, other than Erasmus, may also be available. By allowing some flexibility, Schools/Faculties perceived they would be better placed to meet the needs of students and up to one semester would allow this. It was also agreed, in order to ensure parity across all students, that there should not be a limit stipulated on the number of programmes that this option would apply to (whilst acknowledging that not all Schools/Faculties may choose to incorporate a Study Abroad option in the first instance).

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: Schools/Faculties maintain a flexible approach to managing the length of the Study Abroad option but for no longer than one semester, and the option is not restricted to only a limited number of programmes.

3.5 Study abroad outcomes and academic study

- 3.5.1 QASG discussed Learning Outcomes (LOs) and how these might be written for students taking the Study Abroad option. It was noted that placement LOs tend to be employment/industry oriented and

do not currently reflect a Study Abroad option. LOs for the Study Abroad option could be managed using the LOs for the units taken by the receiving institution as documented within their Programme/Unit Specification (or equivalent) documentation. It was noted that assessment strategies for Level H (that may require students to reflect on their 40 week work placement) might also need to be revisited to align with the option of including a Study Abroad option.

- 3.5.2 The placement year is currently non-credit bearing (although credit-bearing assessment may be made through assessments in other units) and does not count towards final degree classification. Students who undertake student exchanges at other Levels currently bring back credit on a pass/fail basis in order to achieve the required credits for the award. QASG discussed how this academic credit would be recognised towards achieving a sandwich award and how to manage reassessment where no credit has been awarded.
- 3.5.3 QASG noted that academic credit achieved during a Study Abroad period could be included on the transcript and the Diploma Supplement in the future thus adding value to the sandwich degree. Members debated whether successful completion of the placement could be otherwise measured where credit has not been achieved. It was suggested that this could be done for instance by including reflection on the study abroad element in the assessment of the overall placement period to ensure that the placement LOs are met.
- 3.5.4 Academic Partnerships also advised QASG that through Erasmus, students were not expected to be assessed again by their home institution so no additional work should be set for students who successfully achieved credit for the Study Abroad period. However it was not clear if Erasmus funding still applied if the student failed their Study Abroad. The Partnership and International Development Manager would advise QASG of this.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: Schools/Faculties to determine what constitutes successful completion of the 40 week placement where a Study Abroad option is included and (in cases of failure) to determine appropriate reassessment.

Action: The Partnership and International Development Manager to advise QASG if Erasmus funding still applied in cases of failure.

3.6 Documenting Study Abroad to students

- 3.6.1 All the HEIs considered as part of the sector research advertised the combined option on their websites and most (where they were accessible) also included details within Programme Specifications. QASG agreed that the Study Abroad website could be updated in due course to accommodate this option. EDQ advised when one year optional/mandatory placements were introduced for all Schools who did not at the time include them within their curricula; this was managed via a streamlined approach using the Modifications process and approved by the School Academic Standards Committee (SASC). A streamlined approach was supported by QASG for the inclusion of Study Abroad, and EDQ was tasked to decide an appropriate way forward for updates to be made to definitive documentation (as required).

Action: EDQ to decide an appropriate streamlined approach to amending Programme/Framework Specifications to include the inclusion of the Study Abroad option and to recommend this approach to ASC.

- 3.7 It was suggested that QASG members provide a short update to the next QASG on how they anticipate the Study Abroad option would be managed within their Schools/Faculties.

Action: Schools/Faculties to report back to QASG on how they intend to manage (or otherwise) the Study Abroad option.

3.8 Management and approval process

- 3.8.1 Currently different processes are required for the management and approval of work placements and Study Abroad. Students who undertake a work placement would need to follow the processes outlined within *4K Placements: Policy & Procedure*. Students who undertake a Study Abroad e.g. through Erasmus would need to follow *7H Student Exchange: Policy and Procedure*. QASG agreed that both processes should be kept separate as it could prove more challenging to manage credit-bearing student exchanges at other Levels with a combined approach.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: That all student exchanges including those taken as part of a sandwich placement are managed in line with *ARPP 7H*.

4 MAPPING OF BU PRACTICE AGAINST QAA QUALITY CODE

Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards

Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of Prior Learning

- 4.1 QASG was advised all the Chapters within the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* had now been published and there was a requirement for BU to map their quality assurance processes against them to ensure the over-arching *Expectation* and *Indicators* were being met. QASG heard that as part of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* review, 'Assessment' and 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) had now been merged together into one Chapter. A working group had previously met (04.03.14) to discuss the mapping produced by EDQ.

- 4.2 A number of sections within the mapping document did not require themselves to recommendations being made to enhance internal quality assurance processes. Where this was the case, QASG was confident that no further action was required. Those requiring further actions are listed below:

4.3 Chapter A1: UK and European reference points for academic standards

- 4.3.1 The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) uses Levels 4-8 to describe higher education levels and this system is in use across most HEIs in the UK. BU has used C (Certificate), I (Intermediate), H (Honours), M (Masters) and D (Doctoral) to describe Levels 4-8 for a number of years. QASG noted that students and externals did not always understand the lettering system and agreed that in order to bring BU in line with other HEIs; it was recommended that the University now aligns with current sector terminology.

- 4.3.2 Current framework documentation e.g. Framework and Unit Specifications would be updated incrementally during the evaluation process. Student Administration would advise QASG of any implications of implementing Levels 4-8 on the SRS and for continuation students.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: To approve the QASG recommendation that the University aligns to Levels 4-8 (as per the current sector terminology within *QAA Chapter A1: UK and European reference points for academic standards*) in line with the new Student Record System.

Action: Student Administration to advise QASG of any implications of implementing Levels 4-8 on the SRS and for continuation students.

4.4 Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning

- 4.4.1 **Expectation** - Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

- 4.4.2 *3P - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Policy and Procedure* outlines the BU principles and processes for managing APL. Currently BU uses the terms 'APL' rather than 'RPL' and the working

group noted that it preferred the word 'recognition' which implied broader learning and would also better apply to research awards which are non-credit bearing. QASG agreed with the rationale to replace 'APL' with 'RPL'.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:

1. To recommend to Senate that the current BU term 'accreditation of prior learning' (APL) is replaced with current sector terminology 'recognition of prior learning (RPL)' and 'UK Credit Transfer' and to reflect this in the Policy section of *ARPP 3P*.
2. To recommend that ASC gives 'in principle' approval for procedural changes to *ARPP 3P* subject to approval by Senate.

4.4.3 Where the credits or qualification have been awarded by a UK HE degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework, such an award is addressed through the process of credit transfer. Such a process does not therefore require assessment within the terms of the current Chapter, although all forms of recognition and credit transfer take place within the degree-awarding body's academic framework and regulations.

4.4.4 BU APL (credit) may be sought for Individual Unit Exemptions and Direct Entry. It also applies to formal Articulation, Recognition and Internal Progression arrangements which provide advanced standing to a BU programme on the basis of credit. All five definitions come under APL as described in *ARPP 3P*. Currently Individual Unit Exemptions, Direct Entry and Recognition may all be on the basis of credits or qualification awarded either by a UK or non-UK higher education institution so any revised process would need to reflect this.

4.4.5 QASG noted that this would be a useful opportunity to streamline processes and, subject to the capability of the new SRS, could potentially be managed through the use of online forms and processes. EDQ would liaise with Student Administration about this.

Action: EDQ to liaise with Student Administration to develop a more streamlined process for managing UK credit transfer as part of the SRS implementation, and to include system efficiencies for the management of RPL (as appropriate).

4.4.6 **Indicator 2** - Assessment policies, regulations and processes, including those for the recognition of prior learning are explicit, transparent and accessible to all intended audiences.

4.4.7 All ARPPs are available through BU's website and the Staff Intranet. Student-facing regulations, policies and procedures are also available on the Student Portal. Additional links from the Schools/Faculty tabs on myBU to the relevant Student Portal pages have also been put in place. Key assessment-related documentation is also included/referenced in the programme handbook.

4.4.8 QASG noted the importance of transparent information on APL to students.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: To improve further availability of student and applicant-facing APL guidance by including information on the admission web pages, the Student Portal and on myBU on the School/Faculty tabs.

4.4.9 **Indicator 3** - Those who might be eligible for the recognition of prior learning are made aware of the opportunities available, and are supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition.

4.4.10 Respective responsibilities of students and staff are clearly articulated in *ARPP 3P*. In addition, an informal guidance note for students has been available for some years and has been used for instance, by the enquiries team. This would be addressed through the recommendation for Indicator 2.

4.4.11 **Indicator 6** - Staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

4.4.12 Whilst a range of mechanisms are in place to promote and advance assessment literacy to ensure that the University broadly meets the Indicator, more could be done to actively encourage students on taught programmes to engage in dialogue with staff. Use of standardised assessment briefs and clearly articulated criteria to help develop students' understanding of assessment requirements; use of formative assessments; and providing appropriate assessment feedback to underpin further learning exemplify current practice. Postgraduate research students have a one-to-one relationship with students which included detailed assessment-related dialogue.

4.4.13 QASG discussed promoting a wider understanding to students of what is meant by 'academic judgement'. QASG heard that students do seek guidance from SUBU Advise for clarification, and clearer guidance would help manage this. It was added that the review on Academic Advisor Research Feedback and the use of CEL would also be useful mechanisms in addition to the use of Peer Reflection on Education Practice scheme and within the PG Cert Education Practice programme.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: Schools to ensure appropriate opportunities for staff to actively engage students and build their understanding of assessment processes and judgements on standards in their chosen subject area (e.g. through the 'Peer Reflection on Education Practice' scheme, PG Cert Education Practice programme, Academic Advisor Research Feedback and Centre of Excellence in Learning).

4.4.14 **Indicator 8** - The volume, timing and nature of assessment enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

4.4.15 The working group had discussed in detail whether students should be able to 'rework' and resubmit a previously failed piece of coursework. The discussion included the nature of reassessments for all types of coursework including in-class tests and online tests that utilise multiple choice questions. It was noted that the latter would be discussed at the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Forum. The working group asked EDQ to carry out sector research and referred the issue to QASG for further discussion. The results from sector research showed that nine out of the eleven HEIs that were picked for the research allowed this practice.

4.4.16 QASG discussed this at length and agreed that the current practice should remain in place, whereby examinations would normally be reassessed with a new 'resit' paper, whilst coursework reassessment would be at the discretion of the Assessment Board.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: To retain current practice as outlined in 4.4.16 above.

4.4.17 **Indicator 9** - Feedback on assessment is timely, constructive and developmental.

4.4.18 The University operates a 3-week service standard in relation to feedback on summative assessments. There is no stipulation for formative feedback but it should be timely and help underpin further learning. BU had produced a student feedback leaflet 'How to get the most out of your assessment feedback' which could be handed out with assignments. Students could also access this information electronically.

4.4.19 Feedback on APL decisions would be covered under the recommendation for Indicator 2.

4.4.20 **Indicator 11** - Assessment is carried out securely.

4.4.21 *6G – Invigilation of Exams: Procedure* outlines the responsibilities and processes for the invigilation of examinations. *6C - Assessment Design, Handling and Submission: Policy and Procedure* outlines the requirements for the safe electronic and hard copy storage of assignment briefs and examination papers and students' work. All Board documents are handled through a secure Assessments SharePoint site.

4.4.22 Whilst the guidelines on the invigilation of formal examinations are comprehensive, the level of written guidance on the regulation of in-class tests should be revised to ensure that the principles to be

applied are clearly articulated (e.g. that all students are treated equitably and fairly and that assessment processes are robust).

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: to update the *ARPP* to include further information on the principles applied to the regulation of in-class tests.

4.4.23 **Indicator 13** - Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.

4.4.24 *6D - Marking, Independent Marking and Moderation: Policy and Procedure* outlines the University's definitions, requirements and procedures for the marking, independent marking, and external moderation of students' work. *Chapter B6* definitions differ from BU's definitions in that the BU term 'second marking' incorporates aspects of what the QAA refer to as 'internal moderation'. It is defined in *ARPP 6D* as follows: 'Second marking requires the second marker to mark with prior knowledge of the first marker's comments. In addition to arriving at a mark, the second marker will also review the proper application of the assessment processes'. BU currently uses the term 'moderation' to refer to external examiner scrutiny of students' work to determine the proper application of the assessment processes; use of criteria; achievement of ILOs; and maintenance of academic standards.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:

1. To recommend to Senate that the University aligns with sector terminology to include Internal Moderation and to include a revised definition for 'second marking'.
2. To recommend that ASC gives 'in principle' approval for procedural changes to *ARPP 6D* subject to approval by Senate.

4.4.25 *ARPP 6B* states that as a minimum, a sample size of assignment briefs for units which are assessed by 100% coursework must be sent for review to the external examiner. Recent sector research concerning 14 institutions revealed varied practice in this regard. However, the working group noted that external examiners should have opportunities to review all assignment briefs and examination/resit scripts prior to assessments being issued to students in order to be able to provide feedback as appropriate.

4.4.26 QASG noted that *ARPP B6* documented that all examinations 'including resit papers' was listed, but all assessment briefs did not include 'reassessment briefs'. This was discussed and QASG was mindful that reassessment briefs may not always be available and Boards had discretion to allow failed submissions to be reworked. Some Professional Bodies required that all assessments are reviewed.

RECOMMENDATION TO ASC: To revise the requirement for external examiners to review assignment briefs to include an opportunity to review all assessments which contribute towards classification therefore normally excluding Level C assessments (but including Level C of Foundation degrees and awards which are designed to terminate at Level C).

5 CONSIDERATION OF PEER TO PEER REVIEW

5.1 Previously, the University had piloted a 'peer-to-peer' review of the academic Schools' activities during the 2012-13 academic year. The review was designed as an informal additional mechanism to help identify good practice, promote new communication channels between Schools, and to complement the School Quality Audit process. It was also intended to provide further assurance of effective school-level implementation of academic policies and procedures and to establish the extent of acceptable operational variations. No significant local variations were identified.

5.2 QASG was asked whether the peer-to-peer review should continue into the 2013-14 academic cycle. QASG confirmed it had been a useful exercise but as a University the currently available mechanisms were fit for purpose and it was not necessary to continue with it further.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 There was no any other business.

6.2 This would be Julie Edwards last meeting and QASG thanked her for her involvement with the committee. Julie attended QASG as a representative of the Academic Administration Managers (AAM). A replacement AAM would be sought through a future meeting of the Academic Administration Team (AAT) meeting.

Action: The AAM representative would bring to the attention of AAT that another AAM representative would need to attend QASG.

7 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 6th May.