**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP**
**Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**Present:** J Taylor (Chair), R Chater, J Edwards, A Ireland, K Leech, C Symonds, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), S Way

**Apologies:** M Barnard, A Diaz, B Dyer, A Main, G Willcocks, A Young

## 1      Minutes of last meeting

1.1      The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

1.2      It was noted under matters arising that time limits on appeals would be referred until the Autumn term. All other actions had been completed or would be completed as part of the annual Academic Procedures updates for 2011-12.

1.3      The Chair reported that all meetings for 2011-12 would be pre-scheduled once the ASC dates are known.

        **Action:** NS to put time limits on appeals on the agenda for the Autumn term and email the 2011-12 meeting dates to Members.

## 2      Assessment feedback

2.1      The Chair outlined the background to the issues on assessment feedback. She reported that Senate had agreed in March to slightly amend the three week benchmark for the turnaround of assessment to 4 weeks to allow in exceptional circumstances. It had been suggested that the quality, as well as timeliness, of assessment feedback should be considered further in order to meet student expectations. An update from the previous Assessment Feedback Project undertaken in 2008-09 had been circulated to the Group and a summary of the recent Student Experience Survey (SES) results in this area. The Chair emphasised that according to the National Student Survey the University continued to perform below student expectations in this area. The first SES results had also clearly indicated assessment feedback as an area for improvement and Members were invited to comment on their experience of the issues identified as problematic by the student body.

2.2      One recurring theme from the SES feedback was around the consistency of feedback. Members considered the pros and cons of the sample assessment feedback forms used within Schools and outlined the current School practice. It was reported that some Schools either used or were moving towards a standard assessment feedback form whilst others used multiple forms. The current systems had had varied success but pockets of good practice were recognised in all Schools. Members agreed that standard feedback forms would help bring consistency in terms of written feedback although other forms of feedback could be more difficult to standardise. The Chair confirmed that in the first instance the Group was considering written feedback forms, noting that the Online Assessment Handling Group would steer future developments in terms of online forms of feedback. Members agreed that whichever form feedback takes, it needs to be explicit and easily recognisable as feedback to ensure it does not get overlooked by students. It was recommended that Schools should adopt standard forms for written assessment feedback either at framework or School level. The generic form should allow feedback to be tailored appropriately for each written assignment and capture relevant extracts of the generic assessment criteria to help pinpoint areas of further development to the student. The most common complaint from the SES feedback was illegibility of feedback and it was therefore strongly recommended that all written feedback be typed and School feedback forms should be designed to encourage electronic completion.

2.3      Members noted that assessment feedback should not be considered in isolation from the initial assignment brief which could be better utilised to capture key assessment information including the form in which the student could expect to receive feedback. Some School already used or were developing generic assignment brief templates and Members recommended that these should be introduced across all Schools to ensure that all students receive the necessary assessment

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information for each assignment in an easily recognisable form and that the method of feedback is clearly indicated.

2.4     It was noted that general information relating to assessment feedback was currently appended to the University Handbook and Members debated whether this information would be more accessible to students long term if it was included in the programme/level handbook or unit guides. One option would be to include a standard reference to the relevant pages in the assignment brief template. Members agreed that introduction of standardised assignment briefs and assessment feedback forms should help address the issues identified by students in terms of assessment and feedback. Standardisation should also help address student perceptions around organisation and management.

2.5     It was noted that the June 2009 version of the *Compendium of approaches to providing feedback* paper had been updated since by the Online Assessment Handling Pilot. The updated version should be circulated to relevant staff in Schools as part of the pilot roll out.

2.6     Members considered whether exam papers should be returned to students with feedback in the same way as coursework. It was agreed that feedback was particularly important where assessments, including exams, underpinned further development and learning. Whilst the benefits to the student body were recognised, the Group noted that introducing a system that supports universal exam feedback would have both academic and administrative workload and process implications which would require further consideration and it was agreed to carry out further research into current sector practice. This should include identification of institutions where students receive feedback on their exams and establishing whether this correlates to those institutions' NSS scores for assessment and feedback.

2.8     It was queried whether smaller groups of students should receive feedback more quickly than the current 3-week standard. The Chair would check the details of the Senate discussion and ensure the next version of Academic Procedure D1 was updated accordingly.  In addition, Section 2 of D1 should make reference to typed feedback being the preferred format wherever possible.

        **Recommendation:** that Schools develop and adopt a generic School assignment brief template.
        **Recommendation:** that Schools develop and adopt generic templates for written feedback either at framework or School level. Where several templates are developed within Schools, these should be based on common headings and typeface to ensure they are easily recognisable to students. The forms should encourage typed feedback. EDQ to identify and circulate current examples of good practice to Schools.
        **Recommendation:** that Schools ensure that where assessment feedback cannot be word processed it must be legible and can be understood by students and external examiners. Where illegible handwriting is identified by the second marker, the issue should be brought to the attention of the Framework Leader.
        **Action:** EDQ to update Academic Procedure D1 as per the discussion subject to ASC agreement to the above recommendations.
        **Action:** EDQ to research current sector practice in relation to assessment feedback on exams in order to establish whether there is link between exam feedback and student satisfaction. Findings to be discussed in the Autumn term at QASG.

**3       Any other business**

3.1     The Chair queried whether Schools had developed policy statements in the use of Turnitin.  BS and ST had such policy statements in place although MS and HSC were not aware of anything at School level.  An overarching policy statement would be added to the Academic Procedures in the next revision.

**4       Date of next meeting**

4.1     To be confirmed as per 1.3 above.