

**QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDING GROUP**  
**Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

**Present:** J Taylor (Chair), B Dyer, J Edwards, A Guttridge, B James, A Main, K Randall, G Roushan, N Silvennoinen (Secretary), M Simpson, C Symonds

**In attendance:** G Willcocks (agenda item 3 only)

**Apologies:** M Barnard, C Merrett

**1 Welcome and Introductions**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Murray Simpson, the Students' Union Vice-President (Education), to the meeting and outlined the remit and purpose of the Group. Introductions were made.

**2 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

2.1 The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record subject to the following amendment: Minute 2.1 iv) to read: '[...]'. Therefore, the *second* marker would not normally record their individual comments on the student's work, only the agreed *mark and* comments'.

2.2 The following were noted under matters arising:

2.2.1 Minute 1.1.5: The Chair provided an update regarding the Quality Assurance Standing Group's (QASG) recommendation to Academic Standards Committee (ASC) back in February to remove the self-certified sickness declaration form from the Mitigating Circumstances, including Extensions: Policy and Procedure for 2012-13. Currently, the revised policy and procedure incorporated this recommendation but Student Support was carrying out sector research to establish how short-term medical/other circumstances for which cannot be independently verified but nevertheless impact on a student's performance in a particular assessment may be defined and documented. It was therefore likely that ASC would consider the issue further in the autumn term.

2.2.2 Minute 1.1.8: This action would be discussed under agenda item 4.

2.2.3 Minute 1.1.10: QASG had noted in March that the Common Academic Structure (CAS) may have implications for mid-level Boards on full and part-time postgraduate and part-time undergraduate programmes. The Chair noted that the work to operationalise CAS was ongoing, including its full impact on Assessment Boards.

2.2.4 Minute 1.11.11: Information regarding fees for accelerated programmes was considered under agenda item 4.

2.2.5 Minute 2.1 iv): It was confirmed that the new *6D – Marking, Independent Marking, and Moderation: Policy and Procedure* now incorporated an independent marking record sheet template.

2.2.6 Minute 2.1 vii): This action relating to oversight of moderation arrangements had been completed.

2.2.7 Minutes 2.2 and 2.3: These actions relating to the proposed changes to *6D – Marking, Independent Marking, and Moderation: Policy and Procedure* had been completed.

2.2.8 Minute 3.3: The Chair reported that Senate had approved the proposed changes to the Standard Assessment Regulations for Higher National awards.

2.2.9 Minute 4.2: The Chair reported that Senate had approved the proposed changes to the University's entry requirements for its CPD provision.

2.2.10 Minute 4.3: It was noted that the action to agree a process to identify CPD applications to Level I and H was ongoing.

### **3 Assessment Boards and Regulations: Flexible Delivery Models**

#### **3.1 Business School proposal for accelerated undergraduate degrees**

- 3.1.1 In March 2012 QASG had considered the University's assessment arrangements in the light of proposed new non-standard modes of delivery and CAS. QASG had recommended then to ASC that a minimum period of one month is required between levels for all programmes to allow reassessments to take place up to one month of the start of the following level and that formal enrolment in the subsequent level should be deferred until the student has achieved the required credits to proceed. ASC had considered the proposal and expressed concern whether this would limit the development of accelerated degree programmes and requested that QASG consider this recommendation further.
- 3.1.2 The University had recently approved accelerated delivery of the extant BA (Hons) Business Studies (BABS) programme at the GTA on this basis. Business School's Deputy Dean (Education) presented a paper to QASG which outlined an alternative model for programme delivery in light of sector research. This model would deliver all of Level C and the first half of Level I before students were reassessed in failed units although the School could hold a Board at the end of Level C. Students could not however trail a fail between academic years and needed to make good failure before progressing to the second half of Level I. Where students failed to make good Level C failure following repetition of units, they would be awarded any credits achieved and could therefore potentially leave with a combination of Level C and I credits achieved but no named award.
- 3.1.3 The Chair noted that Members would need to consider the issue both from the perspective of the GTA programme but also in terms of future models for flexible delivery. The Student Administration representative reported that teaching across levels/ trailing a fail was not an issue from Student Finance England/HEFCE perspective. It was also noted that the maximum fee for home/EU full-time undergraduate student was currently £9,000 per academic year and no additional fee could be charged for accelerated delivery. This did not however concern the GTA. The Chair also reminded Members that previously they had expressed concerns regarding any pre-requisites between levels; students undertaking Level C reassessment alongside Level I units; potentially different mid-level Board decisions on reassessments/repeats; high volume of reassessments between academic years; and students leaving with mixed level credits but no named academic award. Concern was now also expressed regarding student workloads and that ongoing or early resits would not be appropriate or practical for a number of reasons.
- 3.1.4 It was confirmed that none of the Level I units on BABS were underpinned directly by individual Level C units. It was also confirmed that the accelerated version of the programme at the GTA did not have any additional entry requirements but that applicants would be interviewed to establish their commitment to reduce the risk. Concern was expressed regarding areas such as assessment feedback and it was noted that students' expectations of their educational experience would need to be carefully managed.
- 3.1.5 The proposed Board structure for GTA was clarified and it was confirmed that the School could hold an end of Level C Board in April; an end of academic year Board in August when students would need to make good any Level C and I failure from Year 1; an end of Level I Board would take place in January when students would be able to trail a fail; and the final end of Year 2 Board would consider the second half of Level I and all of Level H credits. Concern was expressed that students would be able to proceed to Level H before achieving all of the credits at Level I and Members queried whether there was scope in the proposal for Level I resits before students formally enrol to Level H. It was confirmed that students could start a week earlier in the autumn term. On this basis, Members were willing to support the proposed accelerated route as an exception and agreed that the University would review the implementation of the programme at the GTA in due course. In the meantime, Members agreed that the principles outlined in the recommendation made to ASC in March were sound. However, the University could consider further exception requests as required.
- 3.1.6 **RESOLVED:** to approve the following Assessment Board and reassessment model for the accelerated BABS programme at the GTA: an end of Level C Board to take place in April in order for students to be counselled about any failures; an end of academic year Board to take place in August to consider the first half of Level I and any Level C and I failures to date (students must successfully complete all units before progressing to Year 2); Level I to commence a week early in order to accommodate an end of Level I Board in January to consider reassessments (students must

successfully complete Level I before proceeding to Level H); a final end Level H Board to take place in August.

- 3.1.7 **RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** that the recommendation made by QASG in March 2012 is accepted (see Section 3.1.1 above). Any exceptions to this Assessment Board and reassessment model to be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Manager of Educational Development and Quality (EDQ).

### 3.2 Part-time programme credit structures

- 3.2.1 In March 2012 QASG had considered part-time programme credit structures and made a recommendation to ASC that part-time programmes deliver a maximum of 80 credits per academic year to ensure sufficient distinction between full and part-time provision. ASC had asked QASG to reconsider this credit limit but members noted that the minutes did not make it clear what the issue was. The Chair would therefore seek clarification at the September meeting of ASC and now queried whether Members would support a proposal that part-time programmes deliver up to a maximum of 2/3 of the credits delivered on equivalent full-time programmes (e.g. up to 80 credits on a standard honours degree and up to 120 credits on a masters degree). Members supported this proposal.
- 3.2.2 **RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** that new/revised part-time programmes deliver up to a maximum of 2/3 of the credits delivered on equivalent full-time programmes with effect from academic year 2012-13.

## 4 Board Report calculations

- 4.1 QASG had recommended in January that Student Administration consider moving to a system whereby formal elements of assessment are presented with one decimal fraction on the Board Report. This was due to some concerns concerning the current presentation of marks with two decimal fractions. As the Student Administration representative had been unable to attend the meeting, the item had been deferred pending further discussion after it had been indicated that any changes to the student records system would have substantial workload implications. Members noted that the main issue of concern was the fact that there was mixed practice regarding how marks were input into the system in the first place rather than how they appeared on the Board Report. After some discussion it was agreed that Schools should be advised to round up to one decimal point (rather than to full number) where multiple marks make up a mark for a formal element of assessment. As students were able to access the Grade Centre, a caveat would need to be displayed on myBU to explain this practice.
- 4.2 **ACTION:** EDQ to inform Schools of the above requirement to round formal element marks up to one decimal point where these are made up of multiple sub-element marks and liaises with the Library and Learning Support team with regards to communicating this to students. The Student Administration representative to feed back to the Unit-e tender group that the above issue should be revisited as part of the process of acquiring a new student record system.
- 4.3 Members agreed that aggregate marks which were also displayed in two decimal points cannot be rounded up for the purposes of applying the profile rule. The 3% floor should be read as 3.0%.
- 4.4 **ACTION:** EDQ to clarify the 3.0% floor in the revised *Assessment Board Decision-making, Including the implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure*.

## 5 Academic Offences: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards

- 5.1 EDQ has recently received a number of queries regarding the current *Academic Offences Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards*. In light of the comments received, EDQ had requested feedback from chairs of School academic offences panels and prepared a paper for Members' consideration. The Chair invited QASG to discuss the issues identified to ensure that the policy and procedure reflects and clarifies best practice in academic offences panel/board conduct and decisions. Any changes to the document would require ASC approval in order to be implemented for the new academic year.
- 5.2 The first issue was the penalty of tariffs which some Schools had asked to be revisited, particularly penalty 1 (to resubmit the piece of work uncapped) which was lighter than the penalty for late submission of coursework which had not been plagiarised. It was also problematic if a panel/board

was unaware that a student had failed the piece of work for other academic reasons. It was also noted that students' perception of this penalty was that they 'got away lightly'. Members discussed whether this was an appropriate penalty for an academic offence or unintended but incompetent referencing which was addressed through the 'small errors' outcome from the preliminary hearing which was also available to the academic offences panel/board. It was therefore recommended that Penalty 1 is removed from *Table 2: Tariff of Penalties*. Both 'small errors and 'no case to answer' would be added to the tariff for clarity and guidance to make it clear that the panel/board should advise the student that he/she will receive a mark and feedback for the piece of work shortly through the normal channels.

- 5.3 Varied practice had come to light as to whether academic offences panels/boards received a mark and feedback for the piece of work as part of the case documentation. It was noted that the student did not know at that point whether they had failed. Also, depending on the nature of the alleged offence, it was not always possible to mark the work. QASG had been asked to consider whether there should be a consistent approach to this and Members recommended that there was no reason for the hearing to be in receipt of this information, particularly as the documentation also goes to the student. This could be confusing depending on the outcome. It was therefore proposed that the issue be clarified in the policy and procedure.
- 5.4 One School had raised concern that *Table 1: Responsibility for Resolving Academic Offences by occurrence and Level* did not make it sufficiently clear that a suspected academic offence concerning a dissertation or final/major project should be immediately treated as a potential 'Major School' offence. Members deemed that Table 1 was clear in this regard and did not require any amendments.
- 5.5 QASG had been asked to consider how suspected cases of academic offences in group work should be dealt with in terms of panel/board conduct and outcomes for the group/individual students. Members considered that the policy and procedure should state flexibility in this regard for individual hearings depending on the nature of each case.
- 5.6 Schools had expressed concern that students were increasingly citing mitigating circumstances as a reason for an academic offence and had asked QASG to consider the relationship between the two. Members agreed that the policy and procedure should make reference how panels/boards should address mitigation circumstances for students in this situation as the Assessment Board could not overturn the academic offences panel/board decision at a later date. Although academic offences are not normally condoned on the basis of mitigation, there may be instances when a case had happened because of circumstances. A past case that concerned a psychotic student was cited as an example and Members agreed that the policy and procedure should clarify that students were entitled to present circumstances for panel/board consideration. Whether the evidence presented would be taken into consideration, would depend on the nature of the evidence and its impact on the alleged offence concerning the piece of work in question. Where students were called before a panel/board hearing after an Assessment Board had met, they would also need to submit the hearing evidence of valid reasons for not submitting circumstances to the School within published timescales and through the normal channels. When submitting circumstances directly to an academic offences panel/board, it would not be necessary for the student to complete the circumstances form.
- 5.7 QASG had been asked to clarify whether it was possible for an alleged offence which had been identified during a preliminary hearing as a potential 'minor School' offence to be elevated to a 'major School' offence during a panel hearing if evidence suggested this would be necessary. Members agreed that this should be the case or, otherwise, the preliminary meeting could restrict the panel outcome. The policy and procedure would be clarified to this effect.
- 5.8 Schools had requested flexibility with regards to School representation at academic offences panels/boards as often the unit tutor could present the case so the presence of the programme coordinator/framework leader at the panel/board was unnecessary. QASG agreed, providing that the unit tutor was thoroughly briefed in advance but noted that both should attend the preliminary meeting.
- 5.9 Schools had requested that a more systematic approach to staff training and guidance be given on the use of Turnitin to ensure a consistent approach in terms of Turnitin settings by markers, for instance by excluding bibliographical references/matches of 2% or less. It was suggested that this be fed back to the Library and Learning Support (LLS) team.

- 5.10 **ACTION:** EDQ to provide the above feedback regarding staff guidance on the use of Turnitin for the purposes of identifying potential academic offences to LLS.
- 5.11 **RECOMMENDATION TO ASC:** that the following proposed changes be approved for inclusion in the policy and procedure with effect from academic year 2012-13 (see separate paper).
- i) Penalty 1, which requires resubmission of the piece of work uncapped in accordance with the assessment regulations to be removed from the tariff of penalties. Both 'small errors' and 'no case to answer' to be added to the tariff for clarity. Where these outcomes occur, the panel/board to advise the student that he/she will receive the mark and feedback for the piece of work shortly through the normal channels (see 5.2 above).
  - ii) The policy and procedure to clarify that panel/board documentation should not include the mark awarded to the piece of work or feedback to the student (see 5.3 above).
  - iii) The policy and procedure to clarify that the panel/board should decide on the most appropriate way to deal with students suspected of alleged academic offences in group work, including the conduct of the hearing and its potential outcome(s) for the group on the whole/individuals concerned (see 5.5 above).
  - iv) The policy and procedure to clarify that students are entitled to present circumstances for panel/board consideration. Evidence may be taken into consideration depending on its nature and impact on the alleged offence. Where students fail to submit circumstances within published timescales, they also must submit evidence of valid reasons not to do so. No circumstances form is required by the board/panel. (see 5.6 above)
  - v) The policy and procedure to be amended to clarify that a School academic offences panel hearing could be elevated from an initial 'minor' to 'major' if evidence suggested that this was necessary (see 5.7 above).
  - vi) The policy and procedure to be amended to clarify that both the unit tutor and programme coordinator/framework leader should attend the preliminary meeting but could decide that the presence of the programme coordinator/framework leader at the panel/board was unnecessary provided that the unit tutor was thoroughly briefed in advance (see 5.8 above).

## **6 Draft external examiner report template**

- 6.1 As there was no time for a detailed discussion, Members were invited to send their comments on the draft external examiner report template the Chair.
- 6.2 **ACTION:** All Members to send comments on the draft external examiner report template the Chair.

## **7 AOB**

- 7.1 None.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

- 8.1 The next meeting will take place in the autumn term, date to be confirmed.