ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 (2.00pm – 4.00pm).

Present: Professor L Kilbride (Convener), Dr B Addison, E Akerele, F Antoniazzi, Dr I Arana, S Bamigbola, D Blyth, J Bolger, M Buchan, D Christie, Dr K Cross, J Guest, J Innes, D Wynne, V Strachan, D Wilson and N Johnson.
Apologies: P Daly, Professor E Gammie, F McLean Whyte and J Strachan.
In Attendance: L Barry (Secretary), L Ginsberg, L Jack, A Smart and A Watson.

	Action
1. **MINUTE**	
1.1 **QAEC/23/2 Minute**	
The Committee **approved** the *Minute of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee* meeting held on 24 November 2022, reference QAEC/23/2.	
1.2 **Matters Arising Report**	
The Committee noted the *Matters Arising Report* with particular focus on the following items: -	
– Student Working Group - The Committee were informed that a group had been implemented since the last meeting which had so far been very beneficial with members being pro-active and engaging.	Professor L Kilbride
– Student Voice: Module Feedback – The Committee heard that the questionnaire was currently live and to date the response rates had been poor. The Committee noted that there had been changes made to the Student Voice: Course Feedback question, and the final iteration of the questionnaire would be widely disseminated in due course.	
Further to this, the Convener highlighted the implementation of the term 'student voice' and noted that full detail regarding this change was covered in the SESC minute later in the Agenda. However, the Committee was informed that Student School Officers had raised that this change had caused some confusion and whilst consultation had happened at the time with the Student Union, there were differing views on how this change had been interpreted. In general, students had understood the rationale behind the change however it was not clear if the change had achieved what it had set out to do, which was to align with terminology used in the National Student Survey (NSS) and provide clearer signposting to help students better understand what the student voice was and the importance of it. The Committee agreed that there would need to be continued engagement with students to help explain and add clarity to what the student voice entailed to aide understanding, however it would need to go through a full academic year to ascertain if any further changes were needed.	

The Committee heard of good practice in some Schools where they had changed the 'Head of Year Sessions' and called them 'Student Voice Sessions' which had subsequently reflected positively the following year in the NSS scores.

1.3 Close Off Report

The Committee noted the *Close Off Report* with particular focus on the following item: -

− Academic Integrity – The Committee heard that there would be development sessions provided by the Department of Governance and Academic Quality (GAQ) and the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) over the coming month. A communication regarding these sessions would be circulated in due course. The Committee was encouraged to attend one of these sessions and were asked to encourage colleagues to attend.

Committee Members

2. INTERNAL QUALITY ISSUES

2.1 Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Committee was reminded that changes had been implemented to the process of Annual Appraisal including the incorporation of an Action Plan as a means of monitoring any identified enhancements arising from the Annual Appraisal process, close-off any issues that had been addressed or completed and add anything that had arisen.

2.1.1 Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan 2021/22

The Committee considered the revisions that had been made to the *Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan 2021/22* including the inclusion of items that had not been completed in the previous plan.

The Committee heard that working groups were to be set up to discuss the course portfolio for UG, and the Academic Development Committee (ADC) would consider anything arising from that process over the coming months.

An audit would be carried out of the current portfolio and feedback from Strategy Policy and Planning Department (SPPD) would be sent to the individual Schools to ensure the current provision is aligned with the University objectives.

The Committee was content that it was a clear and accurate representation and members were asked to take the current Action Plan back to their Schools and Departments.

QAEC Members

It was noted that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) came up frequently throughout the Annual Appraisal process and it was clear that updates needed to be made to the spreadsheet to show institutionally what was happening as this was not reflected in the School-level appraisal.

V Strachan

2.1.2   Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan 2020/21

The Committee considered the updates that had been made to the *Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan 2020/21* and noted that any items that had been completed had been scored off.

The Committee were content that the *Action Plan* for 2020/21 accurately covered all enhancement activities and that all items highlighted as completed were recorded accordingly.

2.2   Institution-Led Subject Review: Interim Reports

2.2.1   Institution-Led Subject Review: Interim Review – Psychology, Social Work and Sociology

The Committee **approved** the *Interim School Response* from the School of Applied Social Studies in respect of the Review of Psychology, Social Work and Sociology, held in November 2019, and thanked the School for the thorough, comprehensive, and considered response. In terms of process, it was highlighted how the student engagement aspect was followed up and that the School had put a large amount of work into this. However, it was noted that the engagement was still low, and the School were advised to keep an eye on this.

Prof S Vertigans

2.2.2   Institution-Led Subject Review: Interim Review – Midwifery, Nursing, and Paramedic Practice

The Committee **approved** the *Interim School Response* from the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice in respect of the Review of Midwifery, Nursing, and Paramedic Practice, held in October 2019, and thanked the School for the comprehensive and detailed response, and noted there had been a clear continuous transformation.

Prof S Dawkes

2.2.3   Institution-Led Subject Review: Interim Review – Architectural Technology, Architecture, Business and Management, Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying

The Committee **approved** the *Interim School Response* from the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment in respect of the Review of Architectural Technology, Architecture, Business and Management, Land, Construction, Real Estate and Surveying**,** held in November 2019 and thanked the School for the detailed response. It was noted that it did not appear to be particularly pro-active, but this was attributed to the fact that the School was between Deans, and the identity of the school was not yet clear.

Dr B Bjeirmi

Dean, Scott Sutherland/ D Wilson

The Convener noted that it was clear some actions had been addressed in relation to development and once the new Dean is in place, it would be beneficial to get an update to see how the School were moving forward.

2.3 **Institution-Led Subject Review: Executive Summary**

The Committee **approved** the *ILSR Executive Summary* Report from Gray's School of Art which was held on 26 and 27 October 2022.

The Convener highlighted that it had been a positive event and thanked the panel and School for the enthusiasm and valued input throughout the event.

3. **RETENTION**

The Committee received a presentation from Alison Watson, Head of Planning and Insight on the challenges faced in regard to retention.

The Committee heard that the key priorities were to maintain the level of performance in student satisfaction and employability rates and improve its performance in relation to retention rates.

Retention was noted as being the commitment to enable students to progress successfully from one stage to the next, culminating in qualification at any level or mode of study.

The Committee noted that based on the most recent data available from 2019/20, performance in student success rates had dropped steadily since 2017/18 and in 2019/20 this dropped below the key performance indicator (KPI) target of 92% to 91.30%. This could be attributed to the fact this cohort would have been the first to have experienced the impact on their learning from the Covid pandemic. Notably however, at this same time the Scottish average rose to 92.50%.

It was noted that data such as this can help improve challenges with retention, in particular the data available on withdrawals would enable a real time view around reasons for withdrawal at university level, school level and at course level and analyses data with regards to EDI.

Further to this, the Committee heard that Cohort Analysis would be made available which was a prototype that provided a sophisticated view of progression through each stage of a course, would enable data to be tracked regarding progression, qualification, and withdrawal throughout the course stage. It was envisaged that this would be tested over 5 courses in 5 different schools and Deans would be approached regarding the involvement of this with a view to rolling it out to all Schools in the near future.

A Watson

The Committee highlighted that a lot of work was being done across other institutions regarding retention. It was noted that RGU could be doing more in that space particularly in relation to attendance and monitoring.

The Committee raised and noted the following points:

– The dashboard was a welcome and an invaluable addition as currently there was not the ability to analyse this level of data.

– In regard to direct entrants, articulating students or where a student transfers courses mid-way through their study, it would still be classed as a success for retention purposes providing the student exits with a qualification.

– Several factors could impact on students continuing or withdrawing such as timings of resit dates. Students may feel a disconnect coming back to do resits in August and a move to resit timings to May/June time may be beneficial.

– The impact on moving resit dates in relation to timings of assessment boards would need to be considered, whilst also taking students into consideration to ensure they had sufficient time to prepare for any resits.

– Some Schools had positive feedback on AttendR and the focus was now on actions to retain students as those schools were seeing an increase in retention

Presentation to be circulated around the members.

L Barry

4.   **EMPLOYABILITY**

The Committee received an update from Professor Lynn Kilbride, Vice Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience (VPADSE), on employability data.

Data was analysed per course from the following sources: -

– Leavers Survey 2019/20

– Leavers Survey 2020/21

– Graduate Outcomes 2018/19

– Graduate Outcomes 2019/20 (released (2022)

– Guardian Subject RGU 2019/2020

It was noted that RGU were doing well in regard to employability, coming first in Scotland and 3rd in UK and it was hoped that the level could be maintained. It was further noted that whilst 14 courses were above the KPI target which was 96.5%, in this field, 44 courses were below this target.

The Committee heard that a list of the Schools that were below the median would not be available however, a spreadsheet would be provided for every school there including data that detailed how the courses and School were doing in this field.

Presentation slides to be circulated around the members, together with data on employability in order to help schools identify what work they want to do in order to enhance employability.

Prof L Kilbride/L Barry

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The Committee received an update from Donna Wynne, Academic Strategic Lead from the School of Health Science.

The implementation of the Impact Assessment Project was as a result of an ELIR recommendation in the EDI space and started in September 2022.

The project team included staff members from Inclusion, DELTA, HR and GAQ and was advised by the Student Union as well as EDI champions and an external advisor who were involved in the project meetings.

The scope of the project was to devise a process of impact assessment for all course curricula which would be implemented at the time of course validation and re-approval quality processes. From this Inclusive Curriculum Tool had been devised, based on best practice across the HE Sector as well as a key ethos of taking an enhancement based approach to ensure Schools are appraising their curricula appropriately.

The aim was to implement a pilot during semester 2 and early semester 3 of 2023 and liaise regarding University procedures to embed this tool as part of the quality assurance process. The pilot will help to provide feedback and form recommendations or enhancements with a view to providing training and rolling out in Session 2023/24.

The project team will be available to support with queries regarding the completion of the tool and there are also guidance notes to accompany the tool to assist with the completion.

6. UKVI REQUIREMENTS

The Committee considered a paper on UKVI requirements and the implications arising from 'repeat with no attendance' decisions at Assessment Boards.

It was noted that international students repeating the whole or part of their course for the purpose of re-assessment, there were implications where the student could potentially have their visa revoked.

The Committee heard that in the past, there was no university position on this, however it had been noted that this was more about the impact of the decisions made at assessment boards and that discretion lay with the Assessment Board members.

The Committee were informed that there had been discussions at the Academic Regs Sub-Committee where it was highlighted that stipulations that were put in place would need to be applied to both international students and home students.

The Committee discussed the following aspects: –

– where Assessment Boards made the decision that students must 'resit with attendance' would this be considered a UKVI decision or an academic decision and the implications of those students who wanted to return to their home country, but the decision was to resit with attendance, would they need to appeal.

– The potential to have earlier resit opportunities in May for example, and whether that would negate the issue.

– Pre-Covid, extra touch point classes had been implemented for UKVI students which were carried out every 50 days to ensure the regulations were met in terms of UKVI.

– Assessment Boards currently make decisions in accordance with regulations irrespective of student status whether home or international, for both PG and UG taking into consideration January start students.

– It was noted that to ensure alignment with UKVI regulations, there was a requirement to have two in-person/face to face touch point/contact points per month.

– where a student had failed at first attempt, to encourage skill development, engagement, would the School maintain the responsibility to monitor attendance.

The Committee agreed that clarity was necessary and supported the need for an institutional recommendation on this to ensure practice was consistent across the Schools and to establish what would constitute contact activity/touch points. It was noted that the Assessment Board would still have the discretion to stipulate whether a student was required to repeat with attendance, and this would be particularly important where the resit was at third attempt and the student would benefit from repeating the learning prior to reassessment or in instances where there had been changes made to the module in terms of assessment.

It was agreed that a standard narrative would be prepared in liaison with the Student Immigration Manager and the Director of Academic Administration, and this would be submitted to Academic Council via V Strachan for approval.

V Strachan

7. SUB-COMMITTEES

7.1 Academic Regulations Sub-Committee

The Committee considered the report from the meeting held on 7 February 2023.

7.1.1 *Regulation A3 – Section 1: Student Appeals (Award and Progression) Procedure – Grounds for Appeal [paragraph 6.5]*

Minor revisions were proposed to the Grounds for Appeal in an effort to simplify them and reduce any ambiguity. The proposal was to combine ground (i)(a) and (b) and to remove the term 'computational error' from ground (ii).

Recommended to Academic Council: that it approve, for implementation in Session 2023/24, amendments to *Regulation A3: Section 1, paragraph 6.5* [deleted text scored through], as follows:

6.5 (i) that there is exceptional and compelling justification, which can be evidenced, that the student was experiencing such physical or mental incapacity as to prevent the student from: (a) notifying the School by submitting a *Coursework Extension Request* or a *Deferral Request*; and/or (b) undertaking the assessment;

(ii) that there had been a material procedural, or administrative or computational error;

(iii) that the assessment was not conducted in accordance with the current regulations governing the course.

7.2   Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee

The Committee noted the report from the meeting held on 6 February 2023 and, in particular, the attention was drawn to The Bulletin from 13 February 2023 which directed staff to the EDI calendar that Emmanuel had been working on. The Committee was encouraged to use it and direct members of their Schools and Departments to it.

The Committee also heard that The Bulletin had a feature on faith and belief, highlighting additional rooms that were available for Ramadan and extra spaces for prayer facilities which are to be made available from the 20 March 2023 to ensure they are laid out accordingly. The Committee members were encouraged to take this back to their Schools and Departments.

7.3   Student Experience Sub-Committee

The Committee considered the report from the meeting held on 8 February 2023 and noted in particular, the impact of the cost of living on the student experience at both an academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular level.

The Committee heard that the implementation of the Student Communications Short Life Working Group had revealed positive feedback from students which indicated that there was not the level of overwhelm from communications as previously thought. The Sub-Committee had received extremely positive feedback from the communication review which aligned with the Student Experience Focus Groups that were being carried out at the moment.

The Committee heard that a Short Life Working Group for personal tutors would be set up reporting to the Sub-Committee and up to QAEC.

8.   **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 2.00pm, details of whether this will be held on campus or virtually will be circulated in due course.

L Barry

9.   **QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (QAA)**

9.1   **Quality Code**

The Committee noted the advancements and developments that had made to the quality code.

9.2   **Office for Students**

The Committee noted the review of the operation and performance of the OfS.

9.3   **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Membership Events Calendar**

The Committees attention was drawn to the current events that were available at News & Events (qaa.ac.uk)

10.   **QUALITY EVENTS**

The Committee noted a paper outlining the *Programme of Quality Events: 2022/23 – 2027/28* and a paper detailing the *Review, Validation and Professional Body Event Outcomes*.

Professor L Kilbride, <u>C</u>