

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 8 November 2019 (2.00pm – 4.35pm).

**Present:** Professor E Hancock (Convener), Mr F Antoniazzi, Dr M Bailey, Dr H Bain, Mrs L Binnie, Mrs J Bolger, Ms M Buchan, Dr S Burgess, Mr D Christie, Ms I Crawford, Mr J Dunphy, Ms J Guest, Mr S Matthew, Dr R McDermott, Ms U Ojiji, Mr L Smith and Mrs V Strachan.

**Apologies:** Dr N Emmison and Mr T Kouider.

**In Attendance:** Dr D Cockburn, Ms L Ginsberg, Ms L Jack, Dr S Maxwell and Mrs F McLean Whyte (Secretary).

**Welcome:** Dr Bailey, Mrs Binnie, Mr Christie and Ms Ojiji were welcomed to their first meeting of the Committee.

1.	<b>ANNUAL APPRAISAL PROCESS: SESSION 2018-19</b>	Action
	The Committee was required to report annually to Academic Council and the Board of Governors on the <i>Annual Appraisal Process</i> and, in doing so, provide a number of assurances regarding the quality and standards for award-bearing courses. The Committee's <i>Annual Report of the Annual Appraisal Process for Session 2018-19</i> (see <a href="#">Appendix</a> ) would be presented to Academic Council on 19 November 2019 and the Board of Governors on 27 November 2019.	
1.1	<b>Risks identified in School Academic Board Appraisal Reports</b>	
1.1.1	<b>Marketing</b>	
	Recent changes to the marketing team, which was now overseen directly by the Principal, had led to changes in practice and liaison with Schools, and the impact of the changes were already evident. This was also in the context of limited resources and resulting prioritisation of activities. Nevertheless, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' <i>Action and Enhancement Plans</i> , were referred to the Head of Marketing for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):	Ms K Bullock QAEC Holding File [12.02.20]
i	Aberdeen Business School: Marketing and recruitment: Poor numbers on courses particularly postgraduate. Whilst some significant progress has been made in terms of marketing sufficient budget needs to be allocated to this in order to attract students to the School and University. There is clear evidence that the specific ABS marketing campaigns run by the marketing team were successful and it would be worthwhile extending the marketing campaigns further. The AMBA accreditation is dependent on securing at least 20 students for each mode of delivery and it will be necessary to devote sufficient marketing spend to this specialist market to generate these numbers.	

- ii Aberdeen Business School: Open days: The move away from a Wednesday open day to another Saturday potentially removes the opportunity for more local schools, or those with Saturday jobs, to visit the University and find out what we have to offer. Consideration should be given to re-instigating the Wednesday event which could be run on the Wednesday afternoon and evening.
- iii Gray's School of Art: Marketing and recruitment: The School will work with marketing and recruitment to develop collateral and marketing activity. The School is actively engaged in reviewing its narrative/Creative Industries message. The School has to compete with other Arts institutions and the design and presentation of materials should reflect the design values of the School. Currently the School feels challenged in this space.
- iv School of Creative and Cultural Business: Focus on Marketing and Student Recruitment. Downturn in postgraduate recruitment, especially in relation to the international market.
- v School of Engineering: Marketing, recruitment, admissions and communications: All of our new course developments require actions from these departments if they are to be successful.
- vi School of Engineering: RGU website navigation issues are damaging our recruitment as well as reputation because of factual errors, links do not find our course nor the correct forms. It cannot be emphasised enough how bad the information, or lack of information or navigation of the website is.
- vii School of Health Sciences: Identified issues in relation to processes and availability of accurate data for teams for selection visits and to support/nurture applications and admissions. Report of inaccuracies or unavailable data impacting on ability to make timely decisions or nurture applications. Discussions commenced/meetings scheduled to review issues and current processes supporting improvements.
- viii School of Health Sciences: Marketing planning and scheduling and timeline for materials to be developed/reviewed to support targeted planning. Issues previously identified relating to inaccurate materials, limited time for review and some courses not being marketed or not at opportune times. Discussions commenced/meetings scheduled to review issues and current processes to support improvements.
- ix School of Nursing and Midwifery: Requirement to work closely with the University marketing team to ensure that targets for B Nursing Adult are met. Whilst student enrolments are improved there is still a need to increase the number of applicants.
- x School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences: Marketing and Recruitment Provision. The support the School receives from central University marketing is patchy and at times, inaccurate. The School is required to spend significant sums from an already stretched budget to ensure courses are adequately marketed at recruitment events, Open Days, etc. The University should consider increasing funding to Recruitment and Marketing departments. This will help to maintain consistency in staffing, offering more support to the Course Teams and enhancing the recruitment of able and talented students.

- xi Scott Sutherland School: Absence of a clear marketing plan for launching new courses: The failure of a number of new courses to successfully launch in the market despite industry engagement/involvement and market intelligence is problematic. Hitherto there has been no differentiation between the ways in which new and existing courses are marketed.

### 1.1.2 Estates

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Director of Estates and Property Services for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i Gray's School of Art: Estates and Accommodation: To simply state that this continues to be a live issue. Activities are being progressed to support the School in terms of upgrade. The School does feel supported but acknowledges the continued attention needed to address the long term solution/s.
- ii School of Health Sciences: Inability to dim or turn off lights when showing students x-ray images - they are unable to view any detail due to the glare. Radiography students unable to view images during teaching sessions – particularly on sixth floor of The Ishbel Gordon Building.
- iii School of Health Sciences: Poor state of maintenance of The Ishbel Gordon Building. Ongoing issues identified and this does not reflect well at open days and selection visits when trying to sell state of the art facilities.
- iv School of Health Sciences: Room facilities – missing resources e.g. white boards, smart boards required for teaching.
- v School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences: Deteriorating condition of lab equipment across School. This has arisen due to year on year restrictions on capital items spend. This is unsustainable and will lead to a deterioration in the quality of education provided in the School.
- vi School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences: Provision of lockers. The School is a science school and requires students to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in all laboratory classes. There is insufficient locker provision in the Sir Ian Wood Building to allow students to store valuables (including laptops, mobile phones, etc.) while attending laboratory classes.
- vii Scott Sutherland School: Intermittent operation of School lift. Whilst it is functioning at the time of writing, the experience of the intermittent operation of the School's lift over the four years that the new wing has been operated, has had a significant detrimental impact on the experience of all students and staff, but in particular those with disabilities.
- viii Scott Sutherland School: The repeated failure of a few essential installations in the building, such as the spray booth, and the time lag for effective repairs. Facilities such as the spray booth were built into the new wing to remove recurring fume-related health and safety challenges experienced in the School's prior location. Consequently, the inability to access them is a major cause of student disgruntlement.

Mr W Somerville  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

### 1.1.3 IT Issues

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Director of IT and Digital for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i Aberdeen Business School: The health and safety impact of the move to online assessment – lack of appropriate hardware. Insufficient staff have dual screens which are crucial for undertaking significant amounts of online marking. This is causing concerns about the health and well-being of staff who have expressed concerns regarding the prolonged time spent reviewing material on screen and the associated issues of eye fatigue and eye strain. This was raised by staff as an issue in relation to them feeling valued by the University in the recent staff engagement survey.
- ii School of Computing Science and Digital Media: Provision of lab machines. Purchased through ITS. CSDM is disproportionately affected by budgetary cuts to ITS.
- iii School of Creative and Cultural Business: Monitor IT issues, specifically in relation to MAC provision. Unsatisfactory level of maintenance and provision with serious detrimental impact on both staff and student experience.
- iv Scott Sutherland School: Aspects of the School's digital infrastructure require upgrading. A major strand of curricula development for all courses ahead of re-validation is to be enhanced digitisation/digital skills (in design and construction/fabrication). An appropriate infrastructure is required to facilitate delivery of this.

### 1.1.4 Timetabling

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Director of Academic Administration for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i School of Engineering: Lack of availability of rooms capable of lecture capture is inhibiting the development of new methods of delivery. This makes developments related to on-line learning, video-assisted lectures and lecture capture much more difficult.
- ii School of Engineering: Students comment negatively on timetabling and facilities in some lecture rooms. Students are complaining about this to staff and Student Staff Liaison meetings and in Student Experience Questionnaire comments. Traipsing across the whole campus should be banned if possible. All rooms must have basic teaching equipment such as white boards, podium equipment, and heating control (e.g. N419, N249). Restricted access for engineering students to N235 and N331 for engineering software is often requested by students (Level 3, 4 and 5), particularly in November and March each year. Difficulty of access to PCs for Engineering software is affecting student satisfaction.

Mr S Matthew  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

Ms J Guest  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

- iii School of Health Sciences: Timetabling. Rooming allocation and impact when students have back to back classes at opposite ends of the campus and one is a practical class. Limited availability of IT labs and specialist practical rooms impacting on timetabling, module running order. Functionality of change form where change requests are essential for student learning or experience.
- iv School of Nursing and Midwifery: The School requires to work closely with central timetabling to reduce the number of occurrences when students' timetables have short sessions across single days or sessions that are split across two days when ideally they should be on one day. Timetabling comes up in some of the qualitative comments received via National Student Survey and Student Experience Questionnaires. There is a need to reduce where possible the perceived fragmentation as reported by students.

#### 1.1.5 *Student Recruitment and Admissions*

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Acting Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

Ms E Corry  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

- i Aberdeen Business School: International induction. The international induction clashed with the School inductions and therefore international students missed the School inductions. Care needs to be taken over the timing of inductions so that they are at the later part of the induction week and there is a seamless transition between the international induction and the School specific one. Whilst it is appreciated that there were challenges with Visas this year it needs to be clear that students should where possible be in country for induction week.
- ii School of Applied Social Studies: Rigidity of new application process. Delaying process and adding to frustrations for applicants to distance learning courses.
- iii School of Engineering: Entry requirements have been monitored with a view to optimising student numbers. This makes KPI targets increasingly challenging: This does effect module performance, student retention, student number forecasting and student success.

#### 1.1.6 *Governance and Academic Quality*

The Department for Governance and Academic Quality would coordinate consideration of the following issues and the outcomes would be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

Mrs V Strachan  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

- i School of Applied Social Studies: Bringing forward appraisal process in the academic calendar: Reduction in preparatory time and height of the process coinciding with school holidays (which is itself a consequence of contraction of opportunities for staff holidays in the summer) has resulted in some analysis being more rushed and discussions with staff harder to arrange.
- ii School of Applied Social Studies: Course SARs data to be made available to course leaders. At present course leaders are only able to comment on modular SARs.

- iii School of Engineering: The new academic calendar has made turn-around of resit assessments very challenging, resulting in late, hurried processes, causing errors to be made: A number of errors have occurred which have had to be corrected after the assessment boards. This makes students who are affected unhappy.
- iv School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences: Discrepancy between data in Insight and progression data from School Assessment Boards. Errors in RGU Insight became apparent during the preparation of these reports and appear to be due to incomplete accessing of data from SITS (SMR data?).

#### 1.1.7 *Academic Regulations Sub-Committee*

The following issues were referred to the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i School of Applied Social Studies: Rude and borderline threatening behaviour of students towards staff. The need for a policy that establishes need for respect between both staff and students to include behaviour that cannot be actioned through *Academic Regulations* [in the context of the University's *Dignity At Work and Study Policy*].
- ii School of Engineering: Regulations and processes relating to GAs and WBL. Issues arising relating to RPL and Learning Plans and assessment of Learning Outcomes.

It was noted the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee would also be reviewing comments received from external examiners relating to *Academic Regulations*, and the potential impact of the *Fit to Sit Policy* on the number of academic appeals.

#### 1.1.8 *Student Experience Questionnaires*

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Director for Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i School of Health Sciences: Lack of *Student Experience Questionnaire* data. MSc Public Health and Health Promotion full-time on-campus and part-time ODL students failed to be included in SEQ for a second year.
- ii Aberdeen Business School: Poor response rates by students of the SEQ. As there are poor response rates by students to the SEQs the results are not always valid as there are insufficient response on which to base a judgement. It might be worth considering collecting the data in two tranches at the end of each Semester to see if this can improve the completion rates and hence provide better feedback.

Mrs V Strachan  
 & Ms L Jack  
 QAEC Holding  
 File [12.02.20]

Mr J Dunphy  
 QAEC Holding  
 File [12.02.20]

1.1.9 *Email Communications to Students*

The following issue was referred to the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee for action/response, with a request that the outcome be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

School of Computing Science and Digital Media: Volume of email communications to students. The issue cuts across many departments and the Student Union.

Mr F Antoniazzi  
& Mrs A Smart  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.1.10 *Course Fees*

In the knowledge that actions to address the following might either already be complete or well advanced, the following issues, extracted from the Schools' *Action and Enhancement Plans*, were referred to the Director of Planning and Policy and the Director of Finance for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

- i School of Engineering: Review PG international student course fees. Our competitors have increased fees for FT enrolment on campus.
- ii School of Health Sciences: Recruitment to targets threatened by availability of other/new providers. Need to keep course fees competitive/attractive for international applicants.

Dr D Cockburn &  
Mr M McCall  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.1.11 *Strategic Planning*

The following issue was referred to the Director of Planning and Policy for action/response, with a request that the outcome be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

School of Engineering: The UG evening class courses, GA recruitment, articulation from colleges and industry placements are all four in competition/conflict. These conflicts are affecting recruitment such that we may not have more students overall. This will affect University student number forecasting.

Dr D Cockburn  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.1.12 *Market Intelligence on Potential Collaborations*

The following issue was referred to the Associate Vice-Principal for Business and Economic Development for action/response, with a request that the outcome be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

School of Applied Social Studies: Greater availability of information about potential for international collaborations in different locations could prove helpful: To inform targeting of recruitment processes for international students.

Ms D Beaton  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.2 **Good Practice and Innovations**

The Committee welcomed the significant number of achievements and examples of good or innovative practice identified by the School Academic Boards in their *Appraisal Reports*. Those considered worthy of wider dissemination across the University community were contained in the Annex to the *Annual Report of the Annual Appraisal Process for Session 2018-19*, and would be shared with School Academic Boards.

Governance and  
Academic Quality

## 1.3 Points of Discussion and Actions

### 1.3.1 Institutional Annual Appraisal Meeting

The *Minute of the Institutional Annual Appraisal meeting held on 25 September 2019* was **approved** by those who had been in attendance.

Mrs F McLean  
Whyte

### 1.3.2 Retention and Continuation

The University had consistently had a continuation rate that was higher than its HESA benchmark, and a non-continuation rate below its HESA benchmark. Two other retention measures were included in the *Outcome Agreement* guidance by the Scottish Funding Council:

- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) who were continuing in higher education or who qualified with an exit award from the same HEI (i.e. not including transfers) [measure 6]. The University was the top performing Scottish post-92 institution in the most recent data available;
- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled entrants from different protected characteristic groups and care experienced students who were continuing in higher education or who qualified (i.e. including transfers)[measure 5]. Overall, the University had performed well at the Scottish sector level with regard to the continuation of students with protected characteristics. For the majority of measures included, the University ranked as the top Scottish post-92 institution and second only to Glasgow Caledonian University in the measures relating to SIMD20 and SIMD40.

Dr D Cockburn

An additional *Insight Workbook* that tracked retention/continuation performance would shortly be launched to Schools and briefings would be provided.

### 1.3.3 Policy Compliance: Student Handbooks

The 2019 *Assessment and Feedback* scale in the *National Student Survey* had improved by over 4%, to 76.76%, and the University was now 6.35% above the Scottish *National Student Survey* result on this measure. Improvements had also been demonstrated in the *Student Experience Questionnaires*. The timeliness of issue of feedback, however, appeared to have remained a concern. Although *Student Handbooks* were required to provide students with details of the timing of assessments, it was believed that variable practice had led to varying levels of satisfaction.

The Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee had highlighted concerns (item 6.2.2 below) with variable practice across Schools in respect of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*, leading some students not to be aware they had a personal tutor.

It was **agreed** the Department for Governance and Academic Quality would undertake an audit of *Student Handbooks* across the University to ensure compliance with the minimum content of *Student Handbooks* as specified by Academic Council. In particular, whether they contained calendars of assessments, identifying dates/weeks of all summative assessments and feedback deadlines, and adequate descriptions of appropriate arrangements to meet the requirements for the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*.

Governance and  
Academic Quality

1.3.4 *Satisfaction in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students*

It was **agreed** the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee would explore likely contributory factors to poorer satisfaction levels reported by BAME students, the President of Communication and Democracy **agreed** to assist by coordinating a student focus group, and the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

Mr J Dunphy,  
Ms L Ginsberg &  
Ms U Ojiji  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.3.5 *Gender Balance in the Student Population*

The Committee **agreed** the issue of gender imbalance in the student population, and the appropriate measures to be taken to address this in marketing, student recruitment and admissions practices, be referred to the Vice-Principal for Corporate Operations, in her role as Convener of the University's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, for action/response, and with a request that an outcome be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

Ms V Nairn &  
EDAG

QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

1.3.6 *Annual Appraisal Process*

It was **agreed** the *Action and Enhancement Plan* template and the appraisal forms would be reviewed to capture more effectively the differentiation between improvements in service and enhancements to the student experience.

Governance and  
Academic Quality

1.4 **Conclusions**

The Committee was of the opinion the *Annual Appraisal Process* provided a sound evidence base for Academic Council and the Board of Governors to have confidence in, and be satisfied with the quality and standards of award-bearing courses.

The Committee would highlight to Academic Council and the Board of Governors the following in respect of the completeness of the quality assurance processes of the 11 Schools:

- all courses within the Schools had been appraised and all required *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* had been submitted to the satisfaction of the Committee, with the following exceptions:
  - The Law School: the *School Academic Board Appraisal Report* had been referred back to the School Academic Board, as no *Action and Enhancement Plan* had been provided and there was insufficient evidence of the School's full engagement with the messages evident from the appraisal data. An updated *Appraisal Report* had been received, revised after a re-convened School Academic Board, but there had been no opportunity prior to the Committee's meeting for the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and Assistant Chief Academic Officer to review this with the Head of School concerned;
  - Aberdeen Business School: three actions recorded in the *Action and Enhancement Plan* were related to historical discussions at Executive level and so were no longer pertinent in the form presented. The *Plan* would be revised and considered by Convener's Action.
- all *External Examiner Annual Reports* had been received and responded to, with the exception of three, and the Committee was satisfied appropriate action was being taken to obtain these outstanding reports.

The Committee welcomed the considerable evidence both of impressive work and innovative activities across Schools and Departments, as well improvements across many measures related to the *Annual Appraisal Process*, which in turn demonstrated the value of the *Insight Dashboards*. This included evidence of, for example, the extensive partnership between students, Schools and services, and the increasingly significant role of the Student School Officers (SSOs). Also notable were the upward trends across many areas of student feedback, including *Assessment and Feedback*, and the Teaching Excellence Fellows would be leading work across the University on improving the consistency of approach to, and timeliness of, feedback to students.

The Committee acknowledged the effectiveness of the engagement of Schools and Departments undertaking the *Annual Appraisal Process* that had led to demonstrable evidence of extensive improvement and enhancement actions that were either already complete or well advanced. Furthermore, the Committee was satisfied the *Annual Appraisal Process* had confirmed these actions were adequate and appropriate.

The Committee thanked the Academic Quality Officers for their efforts in compiling detailed and considered reports that captured the executive consideration of *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* and discussions with the Heads of School.

## 2. MINUTE

The Committee **approved** the *Minute of the meeting of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee held on 29 May 2019*, reference QAEC/19/4.

### 2.1 RGU Digital Estate [QAEC/19/4/2.1]

The Director for Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access wished to record his appreciation of the efforts of staff during the recent upgrade to version 6 of *CampusMoodle*.

### 2.2 Spend and Student:Staff Ratios (SSR) [QAEC/19/4/3.2]

Work was nearing completion to re-classify students on placements of more than 10 weeks and it was anticipated this would have the effect of reducing the SSR by approximately 1.6.

### 2.3 Student Engagement with Quality [QAEC/19/4/4.4.1]

A considerable amount of student representative training had been undertaken since the summer involving DELTA, RGU Union, Student Life and the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee.

### 2.3 Student Partnership Agreement [QAEC/19/4/4.4.2]

A meeting over the summer had led to the following decisions:

- Annual objectives would be determined utilising existing key drivers: a review of the evidence base, *Student Experience Questionnaires*, *National Student Survey*, insights from the Student Union and specific interests of officers, *Action and Enhancement Plans* from Schools and services, and key institutional strategic priorities as well as key sectoral priorities.

- To permit reference to the *Annual Appraisal Process*, the *Student Partnership Agreement* would run from January to January. This would require appropriate handover between sabbatical officers of RGU Union.
- The *Student Partnership Agreement* would be managed by a smaller group, the Partnership in Action Working Group, the membership of which would be augmented by the addition of three School academic representatives.

### **3. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted an extract from *Organisational Regulation O4* concerning the remit and composition of the Committee and its Sub-Committees. Amendments, including the addition of stipulating the responsibilities of Committee/Sub-Committee members, had been made at a meeting of the respective Conveners and representatives from Governance and Academic Quality on 9 September 2019. The Committee confirmed its satisfaction with its remit and composition, and those of its Sub-Committee, as now contained in *Organisational Regulation O4*.

The *Membership List* for the Committee for Session 2019-20 was noted.

### **4. EXTERNAL QUALITY ISSUES**

#### **4.1 Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council**

The Committee noted the *Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council: 2018-19 – Institution-Led Review of Quality*, endorsed by the Board of Governors on 2 October 2019. It was understood the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) had forwarded all such Annual Reports to the Scottish Funding Council's Outcome Agreement Managers.

#### **4.2 Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)**

Consideration was given to a paper providing the *Outcome of the TEF Year 4 institutional data and the second year of the subject-level pilot*.

Although the future of the *Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)*, and the likelihood of the *TEF* extending to the subject level, was dependent on the outcome of the General Election in December 2019, it was providing the University with valuable subject-level data, and more would be released in the new year. The data relating to the University's performance at subject level indicated an initial hypothesis of a silver award, although the final award would be dependent on analysis of the supplementary metrics and the subject submissions.

The Executive would decide whether the University would participate in the subject-level *TEF* in 2020-21 following consultation with Academic Council, the Committee and Heads of School. Whilst participation at a subject level would be onerous, it might assist the University compete in international markets.

#### 4.3 Outcome Classification Descriptions

The Committee considered *Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees*, published on 10 October 2019, and providing degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1<sup>st</sup>, 2.1, 2.2 and 3<sup>rd</sup>. These statements build upon the descriptors within *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

It was **agreed** the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee would consider their adoption as helpful guidance to staff.

Mr J Dunphy &  
Ms L Ginsberg

### 5. INTERNAL QUALITY ISSUES

#### 5.1 Quality Events

The Committee noted:

- *Review, Validation and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body Event Outcomes*, for onward reporting to Academic Council and the Board of Governors; and
- *Programme of Quality Events: 2019-20 – 2024-25*; and
- a list of internal conveners and second internal members for quality events.

AC Report  
[19.12.19]

##### Secretary's Note

Subsequent to the meeting, the Institution-Led Subject Review for Law (*The Law School*) was re-scheduled from Session 2021-22 to January 2023, given the last Review had taken place in January 2017.

### 6. SUB-COMMITTEES

#### 6.1 Academic Regulations Sub-Committee

The Committee noted a report from the meeting held on 11 October 2019 and, in particular, the following items:

- *Regulation A2: Admission and Enrolment*: an update was provided on disclosure of criminal convictions and the operation of the criminal declarations panel. Since July 2019 there had been three disclosures made and risk assessed by the panel. In each of these cases the student/applicant had been able to continue/commence their studies as planned subject to appropriate risk management and/or support.
- *Self-Certification*: Sub-Committee members were generally supportive of the proposed self-certification process. Further work would be undertaken in response to the feedback from the Sub-Committee and consultation would be undertaken with students.
- *Condonement Report*: the annual Condonement Report was considered. Seven Schools had applied the condonement regulation in Session 2018-19. There were 101 instances of condonement in Session 2018-19 which was slightly lower than the 115 cases in Session 2017-18.

## 6.2 Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee

Consideration was given to a report from the meeting held on 8 October 2019.

### 6.2.1 Wednesday Afternoon Teaching Policy

The Sub-Committee wished to highlight to the Committee its concerns with the significant increase in timetabled activities on Wednesday afternoons, contrary to the *Wednesday Afternoon Teaching Policy*. This had been designed to allow students time to participate in 'sporting, artistic and other social/society activities'. A short-life working group had met to consider the issues and contributing factors, and had made a number of recommendations to the Sub-Committee, which it had endorsed.

Reflecting on these recommendations, the Committee **agreed** the Convener would undertake further investigation with Heads of School and staff, to ascertain reasons why policy and procedures were not being followed. The President of Communication and Democracy **agreed** to assist the Convener consult with students. The outcomes would be reported back to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

The remaining recommendations would be re-visited once the outcomes of the investigation by the Convener had been completed.

Concerns had also been raised with the impact on students and staff of inconsistent practice across Schools in relation to the scheduling of Reading Weeks, and the timetabling of formal teaching during the Induction/Freshers' Week, impacting on some students' ability to engage with induction or freshers' activities.

#### **Recommended to Academic Council:**

AC Report  
[19.12.19]

- i From September 2020, no formal timetabled teaching be permitted within the Semester 1 Induction/Freshers' Week.
- ii From September 2020, the semester 1 and semester 2 Reading Weeks be standardised across the University, and not be at the Heads' of School discretion to determine which week would be designated Reading Week for their respective School/courses.

### 6.2.2 University Policy on Personal Tutoring

In light of its concerns with variable practice in the implementation of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*, the Sub-Committee had welcomed the Committee's decision that School Academic Boards would be required to provide reports on the effectiveness of their personal tutoring arrangements through the *Annual Appraisal Process* from 2019-20 onwards.

The Committee shared these concerns, and regarded the non-standard practice as a significant risk for the University. It was **agreed**, therefore, that the Committee's Ordinary Members, who sat on School Academic Boards, would be tasked with leading discussion of the School's personal tutoring arrangements at their next School Academic Board meeting, and to report back to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

QAEC Members  
QAEC Holding  
File [12.02.20]

Although not a formal requirement of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*, it was the Committee's view that every student should receive personal correspondence from their personal tutor that introduced themselves, provided contact details and included an invitation to meet.

#### 6.2.3 *Items for Noting*

The following additional items were noted:

- *Appraisal and Enhancement of the Student Experience*: the Sub-Committee considered *Annual Appraisal Reports* completed by the relevant Head of Service, alongside a report from the Convener on the outcomes of the process;
- *Review of Student-Facing Support Services 2018/19: Delivery of Support Services to Off-Campus Students*: the Sub-Committee considered the final report from the 2018-19 theme. It was noted that this had been a useful exercise for the University; the actions arising from the review would be monitored by the Sub-Committee;
- *Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)*: the Sub-Committee noted changes to the proposed timescales for setting the *Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)* objectives for Session 2019/20;
- *Healthy Universities Update*: the Sub-Committee received an oral update from the Head of Sport on the re-establishment of the Healthy University Committee and associated activity.

### 6.3 **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee**

The Committee considered a report from the meeting held on 9 October 2019.

#### 6.3.1 *Guidance on Recording of Lectures*

The Sub-Committee had taken the opportunity to review and propose updates to the original guidance, approved by Academic Council in Session 2009-10.

It was **agreed** that the guidance should become a policy, and it would benefit from incorporating a parallel policy on lecture capture. Also, other additions, such as guidance regarding students not wishing to be recorded, could usefully be included. Consequently, the item was referred back to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee, which would also consider the measures taken to communicate the revised policy to both staff and students.

Mr J Dunphy &  
Ms L Ginsberg

#### 6.3.2 *Items for Noting*

The following additional items were noted:

- *Sharing Effective Practice*: an informal session was facilitated whereby members came prepared with an example of effective practice in learning and teaching that they had delivered, experienced or were aware of, which did not necessarily need to be at the University. The examples were then shared with members with the minute. Due to its success, the session would run again at the next meeting.
- *Remit and Composition*: Ms Fiona Roberts, Teaching Excellence Fellow and School representative, was nominated as the Vice-Convener for Session 2019-20. In addition, this was the first meeting of the Sub-Committee where Teaching Excellence Fellows were fully in attendance.

## 7. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS – SESSION 2019-20

Wednesday 12 February 2019, 2.00pm in room N204, Sir Ian Wood Building  
 Monday 18 May 2019, 2.00pm in room N204, Sir Ian Wood Building

## 8. QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (QAA)

### 8.1 International Enhancement Conference

QAA Scotland's 4<sup>th</sup> International Enhancement Conference *Beyond measure? Exploring what counts in higher education* would take place on 3 and 4 June 2020, at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow.

### 8.2 Focus On: Graduate Skills

New resources were published on 25 September 2019 at [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on/graduate-skills](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on/graduate-skills).

*Technology in Learning and Teaching* would be the topic of *Focus On* in 2019-20.

## 9. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT THEMES

### 9.1 Evidence For Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience (2017-20)

*Progression and retention data in Scottish HEIs annual monitoring processes*, published in August 2019, was noted. The University was highlighted in the report for its improved presentation of appraisal data through the *Insight Appraisal Dashboards*.

New resources, including a *Guide to Using Evidence*, had been published at [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/student-engagement-and-demographics/students-using-evidence](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/current-enhancement-theme/student-engagement-and-demographics/students-using-evidence).

### 9.2 Transition Skills and Strategies

New resources had been published at [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/completed-enhancement-themes/student-transitions/transition-skills-and-strategies](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/completed-enhancement-themes/student-transitions/transition-skills-and-strategies).

Professor E Hancock, C

14 November 2019

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

19 November 2019

**Annual Report of the Annual Appraisal Process for Session  
2018-19**

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## 1. The Process

This report provides a summary of the university's consideration of the *Annual Appraisal Process* of credit-rated taught provision for Session 2018-19.

The *Annual Appraisal* of teaching and the broader learning experience is central to the university's quality assurance processes. It is the process whereby the delivery of all courses, programmes and output standards are monitored. It is also designed to encourage the identification and dissemination of enhancement activities.

It is informed by a number of key sources including: feedback from students obtained through staff/student engagement/partnership liaison meetings and through feedback received from the *National Student Survey*, *Student Experience Questionnaires* and *External Examiner Annual Reports*, as well as performance indicator data produced by the university.

Reflecting on the aforementioned sources, Course/Programme Management Teams complete the appraisal of all courses. Once complete, the School Academic Board is required to produce a *School Academic Board Appraisal Report*, including an integral *Action and Enhancement Plan (AEP)*. School Academic Boards have responsibility to ensure delivery of actions identified in the AEPs.

The process is overseen by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) in three stages:

- An *Institutional Annual Appraisal meeting* is held with some of the *ex officio* members of the Committee, the Academic Quality Officers and representation from Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTa). This early meeting enables early consideration of annual appraisal intelligence to determine any remedial action required, and strategic actions and enhancements in relation to the student experience for Session 2019-20, prior to the meetings of the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and the Assistant Chief Academic Officer with Heads of School. This was the first occasion that this meeting considered much of the data previously received by Committee in November of each year.
- The Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and the Assistant Chief Academic Officer, convener and vice-convener of QAEC respectively, and the relevant Academic Quality Officer, meet with each of Head of School. The focus at this stage is the *executive consideration* of the respective *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* and *Action and Enhancement Plans*, to establish how effective the *Annual Appraisal Process* was in positively impacting on the student experience.
- At the *Committee's first meeting* of the session, it considers the summary outcomes of the executive consideration of the *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* and *Action and Enhancement Plans*, as discussed with the respective Heads of School. The Committee also considers a report from the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee on the appraisal of student-facing support services.

This cycle of the *Annual Appraisal Process* has witnessed a further refinement to the *Insight Appraisal Dashboards*, with the introduction of a School-level dashboard. Briefings on the new *Dashboard* had been provided to Schools prior to meetings of the School Academic Boards. In addition, for the first time, the Institutional Annual Appraisal meeting was informed by consideration of data from the *Insight Appraisal Dashboards*.

## **2. Institutional Annual Appraisal Meeting: 25 September 2019**

### **2.1 Data and Analysis**

The *Insight Appraisal Dashboards* provided analysis of the following data sources:

- Student Experience:
  - *Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ)*; and
  - *National Student Survey (NSS)*;
- Student Performance and Course Data:
  - student numbers, demographic information and retention;
  - student achievement rates (first assessment diet only);
  - ‘good honours’ (achievement of class 1/2.1 honours degrees);
  - employability: graduates progressing to employment or further study, and professional-level employment, as reported in the *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE)* survey
  - academic appeals and misconduct appeals.

In addition, the meeting was also informed by:

- a summary of *External Examiner Annual Reports* and *Link Coordinator Annual Reports* across all Schools provided by the Academic Quality Officers;
- a report on progress, to date, with the *Annual Appraisal of Student-Facing Support Services*;
- the *Equality Monitoring Report 2018-19*, provided by the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group;
- the *Annual Report on Quality Events in 2018-19*; and
- outcomes from recent internal audits of two Schools.

### **2.2 Key Observations**

#### **2.2.1 Student Experience**

- 5,300 students had provided feedback, and 34,000 comments had been analysed. All Heads of School had been briefed on the data.
- The University had achieved its highest National Student Survey overall satisfaction result to date, of 88.61%. This was a 3% rise on the previous session and meant the University had achieved its Business Plan target of 88%. It also placed the University third highest amongst Scottish institutions. All other question scales had also improved, and were above the Scottish average.
- Pursuing an institutionally agreed, planned, and supported enhancement agenda in the area of assessment and feedback, to enhance consistency of practice, had delivered demonstrably positive results with a 4% improvement in satisfaction, which had risen to 76.6%. The University was now 6.35% above the Scottish National Student Survey result on this measure.

- It would be valuable to build on the success of the assessment and feedback project, as it had demonstrated Schools were willing to share and enhance practice. This had the most impact when there was a common and shared goal and where this goal was enabled by changes within support services (e.g. expansion of CPD, improvements to the digital estate). Key priorities were:
  - organisation and management, which was the lowest-rated aspect despite a 3% improvement in 2018-19;
  - student voice, which had improved in recent years (since it had been a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) objective in 2017-18) to 76.47% and had placed the University third in the Scottish sector, but it remained one of the University's lowest-rated areas.
- To achieve a top quartile student satisfaction result three Schools, with results which were low against the University's overall result, or had remained low over cycles of Annual Appraisal, would need to place concerted focus on improving satisfaction. The three Schools accounted for 26% of the NSS target population and their satisfaction levels were not mirrored in the Scottish sector. It would be expected the Schools would reflect on this in their Action and Enhancement Plans (AEPs).

### **2.2.2 Student Performance and Course Data**

- Student numbers: whilst intake was slightly down, the number of continuing students was slightly up.
- Gender imbalance: some Schools had shown small improvements, but an imbalance was greater than the Scottish Funding Council target of 13% in several Schools.
- Module achievement: had increased in all Schools, though Black and Asian students performed less well than White/Other.
- Honours classifications: the number of Class 1 degrees had risen from 27.8% to 31.7%, with some Schools awarding more than 30% of their honours degrees with first class honours, and Class 2.1 degrees risen from 42.6% to 44.2%. It was unlikely, however, this relative performance would impact on the University's position in league tables.
- Withdrawals: had increased from 248 to 350. Further analysis would be required.
- Academic Appeals: had increased across most Schools, and the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee would be exploring the potential impact of the *Fit to Sit Policy* on this trend.
- Misconduct: plagiarism was the most common form of academic misconduct, although numbers of non-academic misconduct cases appeared to have reduced from previous sessions, and it was not clear if the data included non-academic misconduct reported in relation to student accommodation cases.
- Employability: two Schools had fallen below target.

### **2.2.3 Annual Appraisal of Student-Facing Support Services**

- For the first time, the opportunity had been taken to circulate the *Action and Enhancement Plans (AEPs)* from the student-facing support services. These had been very informative, and it was agreed they would be circulated to Heads of School to help inform the School Academic Board Appraisal Reports.

- After receiving the Appraisal Reports, the Director of Student Life had met with heads of the services on 19 September 2019. There were no obvious signs of poor performance, and there was evidence of expanded use of new technologies to improve the student experience.
- A significant observation was the increased engagement of students in the design and delivery of services, as well as the appraisal process, in areas not traditionally accustomed to encouraging student involvement. Examples included the renegotiation of the catering contract, timetabling, and the launch of the MyWay software. There was, however, and with only a handful of exceptions, little evidence of the services' direct engagement with Schools.
- The Appraisal Reports were largely not data-led unless informed by local questionnaires, although these were largely focused on usage rather than impact. It was confirmed development of appropriate Insight Appraisal Dashboards for the Annual Appraisal of Student-Facing Support Services could commence from November 2019 onwards. This would also permit greater use of equality data. It was understood that service heads had welcomed the introduction of Action and Enhancement Plans (AEPs) as a helpful addition. It was also noted there was no in-year monitoring of improvement/enhancement actions.
- There were a number of ways to improve liaison with Schools, including focus groups, engaging with the Student School Officers, and with Equality Champions.
- One interesting observation had been that students did not always want to see improvement, but sometimes wanted things to stay the same.

#### 2.2.4 Equality Monitoring Report 2018-19

- The report from the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group was based on analysis of demographics, withdrawal rates (retention) by protected characteristic, student satisfaction rates, and employability.
- At the time of analysis, the gap between male (42%) and female (58%) enrolments had continued to widen, although enrolments would continue until 7 October 2019.
- Withdrawals continued to be greater for males than females, with a larger proportion for males being for academic failure.
- Students with a declared disability had a significantly higher rate of withdrawal for 'health reasons' than students with no declared disability.
- The University performed well in the protected characteristic groups for retention relative to the University's overall retention position in the Scottish sector.
- Males students were less satisfied than female students in both the National Student Survey and the Student Experience Questionnaires.
- While satisfaction for students with a declared disability had increased in the Student Experience Questionnaires, it was still lower than students who had not declared a disability.
- The satisfaction rates for black students in the Student Experience Questionnaires continued to be below Asian and white ethnicities. In the National Student Survey, students of Asian and white ethnicity had seen an increase while the satisfaction rate for black students had not changed.
- Across all age categories, the percentage of those who were professionally employed or in graduate study had increased. While those with a declared disability had

responded with slightly lower rates of employment, the percentage of those who were professionally employed or in graduate study had increased. While the number of black respondents was low, these respondents had seen an increase in those in professional employment or graduate study. The percentage of male respondents in employment had decreased in the Leavers' Survey, however, there had been a significant increase in those professionally employed or in graduate study, above the overall university score.

- Overall, a number of trends were ongoing from previous years. In particular, this included lower enrolment, lower satisfaction and higher withdrawal rates for male students, a higher withdrawal rate for students who had declared a disability and a higher withdrawal rate for black and Asian students.

#### **2.2.5 Annual Report on Quality Events in 2018-19**

- No significant issues had been identified.
- Response rates for panel members' and Heads of School questionnaires had reduced significantly in recent years, and it had been agreed the questions would be amended.

#### **2.2.6 Academic Quality Officers' Report**

- This summarised any areas of concern arising from *External Examiner Annual Reports* or *Link Coordinator Annual Reports* across all Schools. No issues had been raised for consideration by the University's senior management. The report had also been shared with the Student School Officers.

#### **2.3 Initial Conclusions**

The meeting provided assurances that no significant concerns had arisen that required immediate intervention at University level, and that all actions were predominantly focused at School and course level.

### **3. Executive Consideration of School Academic Board Appraisal Reports**

The Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and the Assistant Chief Academic Officer, accompanied by the Academic Quality Officers, had met with all Heads of School to review the *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports*, which incorporated the *Action and Enhancement Plans*.

From these meetings, they were able to assure the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on 8 November 2019 they were satisfied, in general, with the quality and engagement of courses and Schools with the *Annual Appraisal Process*. The meetings had been robust, informative and constructive, and proven reassuring that Heads, in general, had ownership of issues and shown a readiness to respond to issues in real time. A caveat to this assurance to the Committee involved the following exceptions:

- The Law School: the *School Academic Board Appraisal Report* had been referred back to the School Academic Board, as no *Action and Enhancement Plan* had been provided and they were not convinced of the School's full engagement with the messages evident from the appraisal data. An updated *Appraisal Report* had been received, revised after a re-convened School Academic Board, but there had been no opportunity prior to the Committee's meeting for the Vice-Principal for Academic

Development and Student Experience and Assistant Chief Academic Officer to review this with the Head of School concerned;

- Aberdeen Business School: three actions recorded in the *Action and Enhancement Plan* were related to historical discussions at Executive level and so were no longer pertinent in the form presented. The *Plan* would be revised and considered by Convener's Action.

#### **4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee: 8 November 2019**

##### **4.1 Sources of Analyses**

The Committee considered reports from various sources at its meeting on 8 November 2019:

- Minutes of the Institutional Annual Appraisal meeting held on 25 September 2019;
- summary outcomes of the executive consideration of the *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports*, with the *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* also available separately;
- a report from the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee on the appraisal of the student-facing support services;
- analyses of *External Examiner Annual Reports*;
- a report providing a *Summary of the Compilation and Use of Student Retention Measures*.

##### **4.2 Key Observations**

A considerable number of risks had been raised by the School Academic Boards in their *Appraisal Reports' Action and Enhancement Plans*. The Committee observed that, by the nature of the *Annual Appraisal Process*, the issues being reported related to Session 2018-19 and consequently, many would have already been addressed or action would be in progress.

In the knowledge that actions to address the issues might either already be complete or well advanced, issues relating to the following were referred for action/response, with a request that the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020):

<i>Marketing</i>	Head of Marketing
<i>Estates</i>	Director of Estates and Property Services
<i>IT Issues</i>	Director of IT and Digital
<i>Timetabling</i>	Director of Academic Administration
<i>Student Recruitment and Admissions</i>	Acting Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions
<i>Academic Regulations</i>	Academic Regulations Sub-Committee
<i>Student Experience Questionnaires</i>	Director for Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access
<i>Email Communications to Students</i>	Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee
<i>Course Fees</i>	Director of Planning and Policy and Director of Finance
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	Director of Planning and Policy

<i>Market Intelligence on Potential Collaborations</i>	Associate Vice-Principal for Business and Economic Development
<i>Aspects of Annual Appraisal Process</i>	Governance and Academic Quality

#### 4.3 Points of Discussion and Action

- **Retention and Continuation**

The University had consistently had a continuation rate that was higher than its HESA benchmark, and a non-continuation rate below its HESA benchmark. Two other retention measures were included in the *Outcome Agreement* guidance by the Scottish Funding Council:

- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) who were continuing in higher education or who qualified with an exit award from the same HEI (i.e. not including transfers) [measure 6]. The University was the top performing Scottish post-92 institution in the most recent data available;
- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled entrants from different protected characteristic groups and care experienced students who were continuing in higher education or who qualified (i.e. including transfers)[measure 5]. Overall, the University had performed well at the Scottish sector level with regard to the continuation of students with protected characteristics. For the majority of measures included, the University ranked as the top Scottish post-92 institution and second only to Glasgow Caledonian University in the measures relating to SIMD20 and SIMD40.

An additional *Insight Workbook* that tracked retention/continuation performance would shortly be launched to Schools and briefings would be provided.

- **Policy Compliance: Student Handbooks**

The 2019 *Assessment and Feedback* scale in the *National Student Survey* had improved by over 4%, to 76.76%, and the University was now 6.35% above the Scottish *National Student Survey* result on this measure. Improvements had also been demonstrated in the *Student Experience Questionnaires*. The timeliness of issue of feedback, however, appeared to have remained a concern. Although *Student Handbooks* were required to provide students with details of the timing of assessments, it was believed that variable practice had led to varying levels of satisfaction.

The Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee had highlighted concerns (item 6.2.2 below) with variable practice across Schools in respect of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*, leading some students not to be aware they had a personal tutor.

It was agreed the Department for Governance and Academic Quality would undertake an audit of *Student Handbooks* across the University to ensure compliance with the minimum content of *Student Handbooks* as specified by Academic Council. In particular, whether they contained calendars of assessments, identifying dates/weeks of all summative assessments and feedback deadlines, and adequate descriptions of appropriate arrangements to meet the requirements for the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*.

- **Satisfaction in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students**

It was agreed the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee would explore likely contributory factors to poorer satisfaction levels reported by BAME students, the President of Communication and Democracy agreed to assist by coordinating a student focus group, and the outcomes be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

- **Gender Balance in the Student Population**

The Committee agreed the issue of gender imbalance in the student population, and the appropriate measures to be taken to address this in marketing, student recruitment and admissions practices, be referred to the Vice-Principal for Corporate Operations, in her role as Convener of the University's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, for action/response, and with a request that an outcome be reported to the Committee at its next meeting (12 February 2020).

- **Annual Appraisal Process**

It was agreed the *Action and Enhancement Plan* template and the appraisal forms would be reviewed by the Department for Governance and Academic Quality to capture more effectively the differentiation between improvements in service and enhancements to the student experience.

## **5. Good Practice and Innovations**

The Committee welcomed the significant number of achievements and examples of good/innovative practice identified by the School Academic Boards in their *Appraisal Reports*. Those considered worthy of wider dissemination across the university community are contained in the [Annex](#), and the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access would assist with their effective dissemination.

## **6. Conclusions**

The Committee is of the opinion the *Annual Appraisal Process* provides a sound evidence base for Academic Council and the Board of Governors to have confidence in, and be satisfied with the quality and standards of award-bearing courses.

The Committee wishes to highlight to Academic Council and the Board of Governors the following in respect of the completeness of the quality assurance processes of the 11 Schools:

- all required *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* have been submitted to the satisfaction of the Committee, with the exception of the two highlighted in section 3 above;
- all *External Examiner Annual Reports* have been received and responded to, with the exception of three, and the Committee was satisfied appropriate action was being taken to obtain these outstanding reports.

The Committee welcomes the considerable evidence both of impressive work and innovative activities across Schools and Departments, as well improvements across many measures related to the Annual Appraisal Process, which in turn demonstrated the value of the Insight Dashboards. This included evidence of, for example, the extensive

partnership between students, Schools and services, and the increasingly significant role of the Student School Officers (SSOs). Also notable were the upward trends across many areas of student feedback, including Assessment and Feedback, and the Teaching Excellence Fellows would be leading work across the University on improving the consistency of approach to, and timeliness of, feedback to students.

The Committee acknowledges the effectiveness of the engagement of Schools and Departments undertaking the *Annual Appraisal Process* that has led to demonstrable evidence of extensive improvement actions that are either already complete or well advanced. Furthermore, the Committee was satisfied the *Annual Appraisal Process* had confirmed these actions were adequate and appropriate.

Professor Elizabeth Hancock, Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience  
Convener, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee  
14 November 2019

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**Annex: Good Practice and Innovations***Aberdeen Business School*

- The utilisation of a framework using common course architecture to extend our PG provision without running lots of bespoke modules.
- Front loading the UG research methods course into the early part of the first Semester before setting chapter deadlines for formative feedback on the thesis which has resulted in significantly improved thesis performance and honours classifications.
- Incorporating a 12- month placement opportunity into the PG provision which has resulted in an increase in numbers.
- Our GA course design which encourages students to reflect on the learning in the workplace throughout the year via the Developing Professional Excellence modules (assessed by e-portfolio).
- Our collaborative working with professional bodies and DELTA to secure the GA Accounting pilot and the ongoing collaboration with BD, DELTA and professional bodies to successfully recruit and deliver on our innovative GA provision across Management and Accounting
- Engagement with the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council Schools by offering Aberdeen Business School Head of School awards.
- Embedding sustainability issues across the curriculum which was well received by the BGA resulting in the School being the first School in the world to achieve this accreditation.
- Submitting the School into consideration for awards which resulted in the School being shortlisted for the Times Higher Ed Business School of the Year. This shortlisting has resulted in excellent press coverage and will help build the reputation of the School as a top quality Business School.

*Gray's School of Art*

- Teaching & Learning:
  - PPD: The School's approach to PPD has now been made even more rigorous. The School now has in place Scottish Institute for Enterprise Accreditation (SISA Scottish Innovative Student Award) and the PPD programme runs from stage 1 through to 5.
  - Assessment & Feedback: The School now has a complete Assessment and Feedback calendar that all courses in the School adhere to.
  - T& L Case Studies: The School is developing an on-going production of T&L case studies. A template has been developed and this is used to populate projects etc. The template asks that the case studies are tagged in relation to the School's T&L priorities and core narrative. These are Collaborative Partner | Enterprising Professional | Critical Creative | Socially Engaged Contexts. The aim is to build up material for the up-coming ILSR.
- School's Research Conference. The School has now run two research conferences (Spatiality 2018, Creativity and the Periphery 2019). Both conferences were highly successful in bringing in high profile speakers to support the School's research sharing and enabled the presentation of developing research from members of staff. External guests (from arts organisations, curators, and cultural bodies) were present. Most importantly from a teaching and learning perspective many of our stage 4 and Masters students were present.

- Creative Industries development / Professional skills / Profile:
  - The School has invited the LOOKAGAIN (LA) team into the School. This has afforded some unique synergies and opportunities to be developed and explored. Given the work that the LA team are doing in the city as part of the Festival, their development of the Creative industries (CI) the School is uniquely placed to integrate and make a purposeful narrative that supports RGU's (therefore the School's) strategic intentions around the future professional and the development of the student experience. The following activities are important for the eco system of the School, RGU, and the city more widely as a mechanism to create a stronger identity for the creative industries in Aberdeen.
- LOOKAGAIN
  - Creative Accelerator – Initiated by LA and in collaboration with RGU Innovation and Enterprise Group (with funding from RGU and Creative Scotland), this was advertised by LA to creatives in the city, the alumni, and the School's students.
  - Creative Industries development in the city – several networking events have been run in the city bringing together creatives in the city and our own students to become part of the wider creative community and share practice and ideas (events supported by Creative Scotland).
  - Festival : international profile for RGU and Gray's |Supporting and developing artists / designers in the region |brings new international artists / designers to the city | student interaction and volunteering opportunities | integrated student projects |
  - Project Space (St. Andrews Street) – An established 'shop window' and exhibition space has now been established with regular opportunities for student volunteering and exhibition support. This space supported the showcase of the Creative Accelerator, Creative Industries Events, staff exhibition space, and research space.
  - Bill Gibb Line (Festival Project next developments): Cross cutting developments promoting CI | RGU | Research / practice linkages | collaboration. 'The Bill Gibb Line', a project commissioned by the LOOKAGAIN festival involved 3<sup>rd</sup> year Fashion and Textile students and a writer (Shane Strachan). This was a culmination of an 8-month long collaboration with our students who created new outfits inspired by Gibb's collections as well as original pattern cuttings and sketches for Gibb's final 1985 collection held in RGU Art & Heritage Collections. This project is now going to be exhibited at the Art Gallery in 19-20 and a research symposium held to accompany it.
- Interim Shows prior to Degree Show | Professional Skills development: This still remains an unusual activity in the Art Design sector but fundamentally enables students to test out the presentation of their ideas at the point of the mid-term External Examiner visit. The Painting course take this one stage further and produce their interim show in Edinburgh. The students fund raise.
- Enterprise | Commercialisation | Student Partnership | External Events | Live Projects |Profile building |:
  - 3DD: Staff and students worked together to apply for and secure a place on the RGU Accelerator. This lead to the start-up of a circular economy plastic business were both staff and student members are directors. The company has raised over £31k in funding for research and development work.
  - Fashion & Textile's development of a KTP with Montrose Rope and Sail has enabled interaction with other groups of students other than F&T students. This session the Communication Design students were involved in developing the brand identity

associated with the design led KTP intervention with the company. This will complement and promote the new range of products being designed through the KTP.

- Fashion & Textile's Fashion Show was developed by a student and staff committee and in this appraisal session took place at Trinity Hall (Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen). This received fantastic press coverage. Students across all year levels were involved. Next session the show will be held in the newly opened Art Gallery.
- Contemporary Art Practice (CAP) have brokered a volunteering opportunity with Inchgarth Community Centre enabling students to assist in special needs art and craft classes. Participating students will receive a PVG certificate.
- CAP have developed two summer placement opportunities with the Cabrach Trust Partnership. CAP take students to work collaboratively with a professional artist at Deveron Projects – the 'Huntly Take- Over'. This introduces students to contemporary socially engaged creative practice at the internationally known Deveron projects who invite artists from across the globe to work in this rural village setting.
- Communication Design | Painting | CAP: Rock Rose Collaboration (was Marathon Oil): This two year project started with the Communication Design students documenting the decommissioning of the Brae Bravo platform. This was a project that documented the people that worked on the platform. This resulted in a publication. The company used the photographic imagery in their year-end report. From this collaboration two students managed to get photographic positions with other companies. And now a second project has been initiated now including CAP and Painting which has now resulted in an exhibition in the LA project space, additional commissions for students, and commitment from the company to continue to work with the School inviting creative practice to enhance the activities of the company.
- Live projects continue to be a core 'staple' of the curriculum with all departments engaging in live projects and partnership with outside agencies and companies.
- All departments in the School provide opportunities for external exhibiting and showcasing of work for professional development. These include New Designers and Free Range (London) for the design students. For Fine Art courses this is to be found through external collaboration in the region, and through field study and though RSA opportunities.]

#### *School of Applied Social Studies*

- Trialling of 10 point assessment framework.
- Greater usage of Panopto.
- Broadening range of international placements in anticipation of reduction of ERASMUS opportunities post Brexit.

#### *School of Computing Science and Digital Media*

- We have established a partnership group with students to provide a forum for discussing longer-term teaching themes with students. This enables us to explore possible variations to how our teaching practice as well as to tease out stubborn recurring issues. An early result has been a change to our procedure for scheduling assessments.

*School of Creative and Cultural Business*

- The School has focused on staff/student engagement through several channels, including Student Voice sessions, the Personal Tutor role, the Class Representatives and use of social media. Professional Skills Enhancement (PSE) sessions continue to be delivered, with sessions by a mix of University-wide support staff and the Heads of Year, all targeting the skills students need for their specific year of study. E-Certificates for good attendance were distributed, to encourage and reward attendance at these sessions.
- Course Leaders and Heads of Year placed emphasis on Student Voice, working with students to ensure understanding of the concept, and reporting back to students to close the feedback loop. A series of posters was designed to communicate how past feedback had been used to drive student-led change within the School.
- Students from the School of Creative and Cultural Business have been following the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) Scottish Innovative Student Awards (SISA) programme, largely driven by two members of the Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies teaching team. Through successful module accreditation, with staff input and upon completion of a reflective statement, 119 students achieved level one SISA making them a 'Future Thinker' in 2018/19. 18 of these students progressed to achieving level 2 via participation in a multidisciplinary workshop facilitated by Ann Davidson of the SIE to become 'Innovation Catalysts'. Some of this group went on to submit their application for Level 3 and after the judging panel met, and we now have five Level 3 'Innovation champions' from the school. Students and staff also participated in two 'Future Thinkers' workshops in 2018/19 led by the SIE. Learning from this initiative was shared at the RGU Teaching and Learning Conference 2019. The SIE initiative has now been recognised more widely across the University, with involvement now from the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Group, demonstrating how CCB's commitment to collaborative approaches can impact across the University.
- A Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project with students in four different countries was pioneered successfully in the BSM065 PR Theory & Practice module this year. Learning from this innovative pedagogical approach was shared at the RGU Teaching and Learning Conference 2019, Chartered Association of Business Schools Learning & Teaching Conference 2019 and several international conferences worldwide.
- The recent collaboration and accreditation with the Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) has already been of significant benefit to the MSc Digital Marketing delivery and has significant potential for future commercial activity in the form of micro-credentials. The DMI's library of materials and activities has enhanced the delivery of the MSc Digital Marketing modules, and also provides the opportunity to package their content in micro-credential format as a model of future sustainable commercial activity.
- Significant effort has been devoted to support for international articulation students at undergraduate level. The 'culture shock' of joining RGU, having studied Stages 1 and 2 in a home institution, is significant and cannot be under-estimated. Given the School's intention to grow this market, and although the initiative only relates to six students in 18/19, the support group that has been led by the Academic Subject Lead for Events, Hospitality and Tourism has demonstrated best practice in terms of regular meetings to discuss general concerns, coursework content, scheduling and expectations, language and referencing issues, and cohort integration. This group meets for two hours once a week and has seen the international students growing in confidence, with their trust in the member of staff allowing them to settle in more quickly to CCB, and feeling able to raise concerns and questions in a 'safe' environment. There are plans to build on and enhance this approach in Session 19/20.

*School of Engineering*

Good practice identified on PG courses includes:

- Offering three start dates per year and double module enrolment for online courses as significantly increased new enrolments on online courses.
- Inclusion of external experts mainly as guest lecturers from technology pioneering companies such as Safevision, Halliburton and Merlin ERD.
- Inclusion of two new well control software tools to the course portfolio donated by Safekick and Innova-Drilling Company.
- Running IWCF training for FT students as an extra professional credit enhancing students' professionalism and employability chances.
- Implementing both DART drilling simulators (6000 Cyber system and old 5000 model) learning facilities into several modules.

Good practice identified on UG courses includes:

- Graduate Apprenticeships development and delivery of work-based learning.
- High student satisfaction with the delivery model for Graduate Apprenticeships including video/audio supported presentations, blackboard video sessions, workplace visits and logbook/portfolio assessments.
- The MEng fast-track course continues to be unique in Scotland and provides excellent opportunities for students to gain relevant professional experience on placements in industry as part of their course.
- Having detailed 'marking guidelines for tutors' for exam marking, annotation and double marking has consistently been commended by our external examiners.
- The use of personalised parameters for coursework and the use of Moodle to make these available to students has been commended, i.e. using different parameters such as dimensions and loads for different student's and we are encouraged to implement this further.
- The external examiners, in speaking with students, report that there are excellent staff-student communication channels and issues which are concerning students are known to staff.
- A very high proportion of academic staff are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) and 7 have achieved Senior Fellowship (SFHEA). Scholarship and CPD relating to engineering education is supported where possible and discussed in the EPR process.
- We continue to use our alumni and graduate employers to support the Residential Course for final year students to improve their employment prospects.
- Product Development and professional skills modules have received positive feedback from students for improving critical thinking, team work, individual working ability and manufacturing skills.
- Coursework deadlines planned on different dates allowed the students to plan and prioritise better.
- A new approach (Video-Enhanced-Teaching, VET) for the delivery of evening class modules is being developed and delivered. 80% of students surveyed in session 17/18 favoured this new proposal.

- Introduction of Engineering Applications Supervisors to the Personal Tutor rota recognising their relationship with the students.
- Mental Health First Aiders.
- Introduction of the Direct Entry Transition day.

*School of Health Sciences*

- Opportunities identified for students to gain additional qualifications and professionally recognised training and skills integrated into Sports and Physio courses.
- HS3111 Leadership and Enterprise Module in MOccTh is in process of accreditation by Scottish Institute for Enterprise allowing students to achieve Level 1 award (Future Thinker).
- Number of embedded situated learning experiences and collaborative working / sector engagement with range of stakeholders providing authentic learning experiences and inculcating skills for current and future practice.
- Link between AS2103 assessment and structure of placement and also HS3104 supporting employment opportunities with Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Youth Games recognised in Scottish Parliament and national "Made at Uni" campaign.
- Embedding of internship opportunities in Physiotherapy, Radiography, Sports courses with developments being investigated in Occupational Therapy supporting employability of students and current workforce challenges.
- Simulation, inter-professional learning opportunities and involvement of volunteer patients is integral across all courses to enhance student learning and understanding of service user needs.
- Collaborative piloting of Practice placements and supervision models to build placement capacity.
- Near Peer teaching continues to be integral part of Diagnostic Radiography course with Stage 1 and 2 students taught radiographic technique in small groups in X-Ray suite by stage 3 and 4 students; successfully piloted in Physiotherapy as part of School student Officer project; and also being developed as model to support placement capacity building.
- Number of examples across all courses of provision of Service user groups and clinics.
- Sports students have opportunities to gain additional professional qualifications.
- Standard of structure /organisation of content modules on Moodle established and subsequent audit completed to enhance consistency and student experience.
- Involvement of guest speakers/ experts and E-tutors to enhance credibility and currency of students learning and support collaborative working.
- Students achievements and activities recognised individually and of groups such as Physiotherapy Society through awards.
- Staff and students have been recognised for research output through presenting at conferences and posters and also being awarded Grants and member of Physiotherapy team awarded prestigious CSO Parkinson's UK Clinical Academic Fellowship.

*School of Nursing and Midwifery*

- The School has adopted a two phased approach to the SAB EGM, firstly a workshop is held to enable peer review of the ACAs to be undertaken, this enables critical review to be carried

out by peers and the draft reports updated. The second phase is a more formal scrutiny of the reports prior to approval by SAB. The second event takes place a few days after the first and doesn't add to the time required but appears to provide greater scope for scrutiny.

- The School successfully reaccredited the UNICEF Baby Friendly programme for the B Midwifery course this year and is working towards stage two of the programme for the health visiting and School nursing routes of the MSc Advancing Nursing Practice. In addition, the School is working with the wider RGU community to embed the Baby Friendly principles within the undergraduate nursing curriculum.
- The practice learning team has embedded the PEL model of student support which has been evaluated positively by students and practice staff. It has now been expanded to the B Midwifery course covering support in Highland and Tayside and the Western Isles also.
- The School worked in collaboration with NHS Grampian to develop and deliver provision for the Newly Graduate Nurses programme whereby they work towards a one-year certificate course in leadership. This has been a successful initiative with some student progressing further in their Masters level study in the next academic year. The leadership provision is part of the MSc Advancing Nursing Practice course.

#### *School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences*

- The number, extent and quality of off-campus placements has increased over the session. This is due, in part, to the provision of ACTp funding from Scottish Govt but is equally evident in BSc courses such as Food Nutrition and Human Health and Biomedical Sciences.
- Inter-Professional Education continues to be a successful component of the accreditation of courses in the school.

#### *Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment*

- Early engagement with direct entry students (AT and Surveying courses) through extended inductions, regular visits to FE colleges and participation in targeted workshops. This has resulted in a steady increase in recruitment, particularly in a better integration of these students in the respective stage and much improvement in performance in the respective courses.
- Use of digital tools (including) BIM to carry out a collaborative project with 4 partner European universities to develop students' and staff collaborative working, cultivating an international perspective and sharing of experiences. The impact has been positive for both students and staff and the network built continues to explore other methods of collaboration.
- Co-design of assessment in studio to response to students' perception of lack of clarity. The impact of this staff-student collaborative exercise in Architecture stage 3 culminated in clear and transparent assessment criteria, a better understanding of how tutors assess design work by students all of which helped student satisfaction. A related paper was presented in the RGU Learning and Teaching conference.

#### *Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA)*

- The use of a Baseline compliance test within the staff facing provision has resulted in positive comments from learners and would be a practice worthy of consideration by other course teams. The university's Baseline for Online Learning includes a sample test which can be used, or adapted, by colleagues to this end.