

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Academic Quality and Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee
held on Thursday 14 May 2015

Present: Professor C Hughes (Chair), Professor R Ball (Chair of the Faculty of Science), Ms S Bennett (Director of Student Careers and Skills), Dr C Constable (Representative of Senate (Arts)), Professor A Dowd (Academic Director of the Graduate School), Professor C Hughes (Chair of the Faculty of Social Science), Professor S Jacka (Representative of Senate (Science)), Professor C Jenainati (SSLC Coordinator (Arts and Social Science)), Mr S Lamb (Senior Tutor), Professor R Leng (Chair of the Board of Undergraduate Studies), Dr N Monk (Acting Director of IATL), Professor J Palmowski (Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies), Professor A Reeve (Representative of Senate (Social Sciences)), Dr J Robinson (SSLC Coordinator (Science and Medicine)), Ms A Thomas (Service Owner (Academic Technology)), Mr A Thompson (Student Representative (Postgraduate Officer)), Professor P Winstanley (Chair of the Faculty of Medicine)

Apologies: Professor D Lamburn (Chair of the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee), Professor L Roberts (Representative of Senate (Medicine))

In Attendance: Ms K Gray (Secretary), Ms C Smith (Assistant Secretary), Miss R Compton-Davies (Sports Officer, Students' Union) (for item 82/14-15), Ms R Davis (Head of Student Development, Student Careers and Skills) (for item 82/14-15), Mr I Leigh (Societies Officer, Students' Union) (for item 82/14-15).

82/14-15 Induction and Transitions

(a) Update Report from the Induction Strategy Steering Group

RECEIVED:

- (i) An update report on the Induction Strategy Steering Group from the Head of Student Development regarding recent work in the area of student induction (Paper AQSC 50/14-15).
- (ii) Additional information on induction and transitions including a presentation, a report on the evaluation of student induction in 2014, diagrams of the student life cycle and proposals for student induction 2015 as set out in Paper AQSC.73/14-15.

REPORTED (by the Head of Student Development):

- (iii) That a representative of the Warwick Medical School was on the Induction Strategy Steering Group and the needs of the MBChB students, who started at an earlier point in September, would therefore be noted.

(by the representative of Senate (Science)):

- (iv) That there needed to be an appropriate balance of central and departmental activity in induction and that academic departments should be engaged in this discussion.

(by the SSLC Coordinator (Arts and Social Science)):

- (v) That there was considerable variability in the quality of induction provision across academic departments and the opportunity to share practices would be welcome.

RESOLVED:

- (vi) That the proposed conference on induction to be held in September 2015 be supported, that all departments be represented at the event and that the University's SSLC Staff Co-ordinators be included in the final panel membership.
- (vii) That the Induction Strategy Steering Group's remit be extended to incorporate student transitions between key stages of the student life cycle, noting that work would need to be co-ordinated with other fora.
- (viii) That the Committee welcomed the work undertaken by the Induction Strategy Steering Group and associated professional services.

(b) Week Zero

CONSIDERED:

A report on the concept of implementing a Welcome 'Week Zero' at Warwick by the Students' Union (Paper AQSC 60/14-15).

REPORTED (by the Sports Officer, Students' Union):

- (i) That the existing provision offered through Orientation Week and Postgraduate Welcome Week was very good and the introduction of week zero induction would extend this opportunity to all students.

(by the Chair):

- (ii) That it was not the expectation that academic departments be required to engage with students during 'week zero'.
- (iii) That teaching would continue to take place over the existing ten week term period and would not be extended.

(by the Societies Officer (Students' Union)):

- (iv) That it would be the intention to provide a full range of activities during the week which suited different students' interests and emphasised the importance of students becoming part of a student community.

(by the representative of Senate (Science)):

- (v) That the current situation, in which students started their studies immediately, set the expectation that they were required to work hard during their time at the University.

(by the Chair of the Board of Undergraduate Studies):

- (vi) That a third option might be to clarify the purpose of week one, the range and extent of induction and academic activity that should take place in that period, and to provide better guidance for academic departments in order to provide greater consistency of experience for new students.

(by the Director of Student Careers and Skills):

- (vii) That it would be useful to run an evaluation survey on induction with new students at the end of their first year at the University when they would have the opportunity to understand better the impact that induction would have had.
- (viii) That it would be necessary to offer different packages of activities to recognize differences in student behaviours and preferences and to provide guidance for students to support them in navigating the options.

(c) Minimum Requirements for Supporting Transition

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Induction Strategy Steering Group on Minimum Requirements for Supporting Transition at Warwick, as set out in Paper AQSC 51/14-15.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That comments be provided on the proposal to the Secretary to the Committee by 22nd May 2015.
- (ii) That further clarity on the status of the document be provided, noting that it appeared to be a work in progress.

83/14-15 Membership of the Committee

REPORTED (by the Chair):

- (a) That Professor Ball be welcomed to the Committee in his capacity as Chair of the Faculty of Science.
- (b) That Professor Jenainati be thanked for continuing to serve as SSLC Co-ordinator for the Arts and Social Sciences while a replacement was identified.

84/14-15 Conflicts of Interest

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that no members had reported conflicts of interest.

85/14-15 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2015 be approved.

86/14-15 Matters arising

(a) Mitigating Circumstances Working Group (minutes AQSC.32/14-15, AQSC.68(j) and 69(c)/14-15 referred)

REPORTED (by the Senate Representative (Arts)):

- (i) That the work of the Mitigating Circumstances Working Group had two related drivers: the significant increase in numbers of students seeking sickness certification from the University's Health Centre and the significant increase in numbers of students submitting evidence of mitigating circumstances to Boards of Examiners.
- (ii) That 120 responses had been received to a survey, with the consensus being that further guidance was required but that the handling of mitigating circumstances should remain in academic departments.
- (iii) That the guidance being developed covered what constituted mitigating circumstances and related processes.

(b) Waiving of assessed module components (minute AQSC.60/14-15 referred)

REPORTED:

- (i) That at its meeting on 23 February 2015, the Committee recommended that a proposal for the waiving of assessed module components be approved subject to the consideration by the Board of Graduate Studies, noting that the changes would be applicable to both integrated and standard masters courses;
- (ii) That at its meeting on 30 April 2015, it was reported to the Board of Graduate Studies that the Chair of the Board, acting on its behalf, had taken action to approve the proposal for waiving of assessed module components of low credit weight, as set out in paper SUGS.18/14-15(revised).

87/14-15 Chair's Action

REPORTED:

That the Chair had taken action on behalf of the Committee to approve an amendment to the Undergraduate Degree Classification Conventions for the BA in Law and Business, as set out in Paper AQSC 61/14-15.

88/14-15 Progress of Committee Recommendations

REPORTED:

That the Senate, at its meeting of 10 March 2015, resolved that recommendations from the Committee under the following headings be approved:

Regulations relating to Pass Degree Status
Report from the Seymour Replacement Working Group (amendment to the additional credit convention proposal by the Undergraduate Studies Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Science)
Waiving of assessed module components
Amendment to Ordinance 13
Double MA in Global Governance at the University of Waterloo, Canada, based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs and the University of Warwick
Double MA in Politics and International Service at American University, Washington DC based at the School of International Service and the University of Warwick, Department of Politics and International Studies
MSCA ITN European Joint Doctorates in Chemistry
Several collaborative proposals by Warwick Manufacturing Group
Centre for Lifelong Learning (BA (Hons) Health and Social Policy (2+2) and the BA (Hons) Social Studies (2+2) with Warwickshire College)
Several proposals from the Centre for Education Studies
Postgraduate Certificate in Reproductive Health in collaboration with the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
Global Energy Masters Business Administration module with Tongji University

89/14-15 Chair's Business

REPORTED (by the Chair):

- (a) That the NSS had closed and that the overall University response rate was just under 80%.
- (b) That the University was involved in two expressions of interest to the HEFCE call for pilot projects to investigate measures of learning gain.
- (c) That the Warwick International Higher Education Academy (WIHEA) had launched on 7 May 2015, that the Director post had been advertised and the initial nominations to fellows would be progressed shortly.

- (d) That the Monash Warwick Education Strategy had been finalized.

90/14-15 Students Union Update

REPORTED (by the Postgraduate Office, Students' Union):

- (a) That discussions with students on the proposed introduction of Teach Higher were ongoing;
- (b) That a report on issues arising from postgraduate SSLCs had been considered by the Board of Graduate Studies.

91/14-15 Report on Equality matters

(a) Committee Business

REPORTED:

That a standing item on "equality matters" will be introduced to future agendas of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

(b) Disabled Students' Allowance Update

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the University Disability Coordinators on the University's response to changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance, as set out in paper AQSC.42/14-15).

REPORTED (by the Secretary):

- (i) That a sub-group of the Disability Working Group would be formed to consider measures that could be integrated into the delivery of teaching and learning to facilitate access.

(by the University Senior Tutor):

- (ii) That the University had a legal responsibility to facilitate access to teaching and learning.

92/14-15 QAA Causes for Concern report on the University of Buckingham: plagiarism

RECEIVED:

A report from the QAA on an investigation into the University of Buckingham's adherence to its formal guidance for addressing suspected plagiarism (paper AQSC.47/14-15).

REPORTED:

- (a) That in December 2014, the QAA carried out an investigation into practices at the University of Buckingham in response to a submission to the QAA's Concerns about Academic Standards and Quality Procedure;

(by the representative of Senate (Social Sciences)):

- (b) That the University may wish to consider whether its processes for investigation of plagiarism provide for an appropriate level of objectivity.

(by the representative of Senate (Science)):

- (c) That the use of electronic plagiarism detection software needed to be sensitive to disciplinary differences.

(by the Secretary):

- (d) That, while reporting of cases of cheating was included in Annual Course Review forms, the current reporting methods could be improved further.

CONSIDERED:

The implications for the University of Warwick and appropriate actions in light of the findings outlined in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be referred to the Quality Assurance Working Group to consider the implications for the University.

93/14-15

Student Staff Liaison Committee Code of Practice

CONSIDERED:

The proposed Code of Practice between the University of Warwick and the Students' Union for the coordination of Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) (Paper AQSC.55/14-15).

REPORTED (by the SSLC Co-ordinator (Science and Medicine)):

- (a) That the updated SSLC Handbook would cover standard items for meeting agenda.
- (b) That there was ongoing discussion on the timing of elections.

RESOLVED:

That the Student Staff Liaison Committee Code of Practice be approved subject to amendments to reflect the fact that courses can start throughout the year and are not all campus-based.

94/14-15

Policy on the Employment of Postgraduates as Teachers (minute AQSC.31/14-15 referred)

CONSIDERED:

- (a) A report by the Senior Assistant Registrar (Graduate School) on progress made since the first consideration of the policy by AQSC at its meeting on 3 December 2014 (Paper AQSC.46/14-15);
- (b) The revised proposed policy on the Employment of Postgraduates as Teachers (Paper BGS.3/14-15 (revised));

REPORTED (by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies):

- (c) That the intention of the Policy was to establish good practice on the employment of postgraduates as teachers.

(by the representative of Senate (Arts)):

- (d) That the requirements for mentoring of postgraduates who teach set out in the current version would still be challenging for small departments to implement.

(by the Chair of the Board of Undergraduate Studies):

- (e) That the Board of Undergraduate Studies had considered this point and was of the view that the role and function of teaching mentor was essential but that the means of delivering this could be flexible.

RESOLVED:

- (f) That the Policy on the Employment of Postgraduates who Teach, as set out in Paper BGS.3/14-15(revised) be amended in light of the comments made in minute 93/14-15 (d to e) above.
- (g) That the Chair be authorized to take action on behalf of the Committee to approve an amended version of the Policy on the Employment of Postgraduates who Teach for recommendation to the Senate.

95/14-15

Professional Development for Doctoral Researchers

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Skills Working Group of the Board of Graduate Studies outlining a proposed framework for professional development for doctoral students (paper BGS 47/14-15);

REPORTED (by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies):

- (a) That the framework for professional development of doctoral students was intended to recognize local needs and to be fit for purpose.

- (b) That the University of Warwick scored poorly in comparison with the sector in relation to questions on career development and support in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- (c) That, while the Research Councils did not currently have a universal policy on professional development, there was likely to be a move towards more explicit expectations in this regard;

(by the Representative of Senate for the Faculty of Science):

- (d) That there was a risk that engagement in professional development would not be promoted by making it compulsory.

RESOLVED:

That comments be provided to the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies following the meeting and an amended version of the paper be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

96/14-15 Sub-Groups of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee

CONSIDERED:

A revised schedule for sub-group reports to be submitted to the Committee as outlined in paper AQSC.56/14-15.

RESOLVED:

That the schedule be approved subject to the addition of the Mitigating Circumstances Working Group.

97/14-15 Terms of Reference and Membership of the Interdisciplinarity Sub-Group

CONSIDERED:

The revised terms of reference and membership of the Interdisciplinarity Sub-Group as set out in paper AQSC.52/14-15.

REPORTED (by the Director of IATL):

- (a) That the Representative of Senate for the Faculty of Social Sciences would also be invited to be a member of the Sub-Group.

(by the Postgraduate Officer of the Students' Union):

- (b) That it may be useful to have a member of the professional services on the group to advise on the processes which would need to be addressed to facilitate greater opportunities for interdisciplinarity.

REPORTED:

That the revised terms of reference and membership of the Interdisciplinarity Sub-Group be approved as set out in paper AQSC.52/14-15, subject to the amendments agreed by the Committee.

98/14-15

Master of Research (MRes)

CONSIDERED:

A proposal from the Academic Director (Graduate School) and Senior Assistant Registrar (Graduate School) to amend Regulation 37 to include the University's definition of an MRes Programme as outlined in paper BGS.46/14-15.

REPORTED (by the Academic Director, Graduate School):

- (a) That the MRes was a taught degree which could be taken over one or two years and which prepared students to undertake a PhD;
- (b) That the University already offered a Masters by Research which was a research degree.

RECOMMENDED (to the Senate):

That the proposal to amend Regulation 37 to include the MRes as outlined in paper BGS.46/14-15 be approved.

99/14-15

Ordinance 13

CONSIDERED:

A proposal from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) to amend Ordinance 13 to include the award of the Bachelor of Arts and Science (BASc) as outlined in paper AQSC.54/14-15.

RECOMMENDED (to the Senate):

That the proposal to amend Ordinance 13 to include the award of Bachelor of Arts and Science (BASc) be approved as outlined in Paper AQSC.54/14-15.

100/14-15

Timeliness Reports

RECEIVED:

A composite timeliness of feedback report covering all Faculties from Spring term 2013/14, Summer term 2013/14 and Autumn term 2014/15 (paper AQSC.49/14-15).

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the composite timeliness of feedback report, as set out paper AQSC.49/14-15 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

101/14-15 Collaborative Courses

Shakespeare for Teachers courses

REPORTED:

That, at its meeting on 7 April 2015, the Chair of the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee, acting on its behalf, had taken action to consider and recommend to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee a request from Warwick Business School for the discontinuation of the “Shakespeare for Teachers” courses in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company as set out in papers CFDLSC.71a-b/14-15;

CONSIDERED:

A request from Warwick Business School for the discontinuation of the “Shakespeare for Teachers” courses in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company as set out in papers CFDLSC.71a-b/14-15.

RECOMMENDED (to the Senate):

That the request from Warwick Business School for the discontinuation of the “Shakespeare for Teachers” courses in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company as set out in papers CFDLSC.71a-b/14-15, be approved.

102/14-15 External Examining

RESOLVED:

That a report on revisions to the external examining system be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

103/14-15 Higher Education Academy (HEA) Report on Independent Learning

REPORTED:

That research had been published by the HEA on 12 May 2015, highlighting the importance of independent learning in higher education and how it was best supported by universities and colleges (paper AQSC.58/14-15)

104/14-15 HEFCE Programme for the Advancement of Technology-enhanced Learning

REPORTED:

That the HEFCE had published a summary report and a range of online resources to share innovative practice and to support ongoing development in the area of technology-enhanced student learning (paper AQSC.59/14-15).

105/14-15 Mock Tier 4 Compliance Report

RECEIVED:

A report on the mock Tier 4 compliance exercise by the Compliance Officer (Student Immigration) as outlined in paper AQSC.53/14-15;

106/14-15 New Postgraduate Courses of Study

REPORTED:

That, at its meeting on the 30 April, it was reported to the Board of Graduate Studies that the Chair had taken action on behalf of the board to approve the following new courses:

MPhil/PhD in Media and Communication
PhD in Chemistry with European Collaboration (MSCA ITN European EJD)
Executive MBA (London)
MSc in International Business
MSc in Urban Science

107/14-15 Revised Postgraduate Courses of Study

REPORTED:

That, at its meeting on the 30 April, it was reported to the Board of Graduate Studies that the Chair had taken action on behalf of the board to approve the following revisions to courses:

MSc in business (with variants)
Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation in Education

108/14-15 Next meeting

REPORTED:

That the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held on Monday 15 June 2015 from 14.00 to 16:00 in CMR1.0, University House.