

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Will Barras, Isla Callander, Selma Carson, Nadia DeGama, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, Lois Gall, Flora Groening, Jacqui Hutchison, Chukwuadinula Kachikwu, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Alex Menshykov, Gareth Norton, Miles Rothoerl, Fiona Stoddard, Thanga Thevar, with Scott Carle, Darren Comber, Lucy Leiper, Ann Simpson, Emma Tough and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

Apologies: Debbie Dyker, Mark Grant, Faye Hendry, Rachel Smith.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(copy filed as QAC/111224/001)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minute of the previous meeting held in September 2024.

MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG

(i) ACTION LOG

(copy filed as QAC/111224/002a)

- 2.1 Qatar Representation for Decolonising the Curriculum Community of Practice (*minute 2.1.3 refers*): Complete. The Decolonising the Curriculum Community of Practice is not meeting frequently, but is currently reviewing the Toolkit resources and colleagues from Qatar are involved with this.
- 2.2 Vacancies on the APRG and the Senate (*minute 5.1 refers*): The QAC noted that one vacancy remained on the Senate, and expressions of interest should be made to the Clerk.
- 2.3 Business School Graduations (*minute 17.1 refers*): Although the action was complete, a question was asked regarding whether cohorts which may have studied together but have differing titles (i.e. which mean they are in different graduation ceremonies) could be considered. It was agreed that this would be reviewed.

(ii) ACADEMIC POLICY & REGULATIONS GROUP REMIT & COMPOSITION

(copy filed as QAC/111224/002b)

- 2.4 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Academic Policy and Regulations Group, following the appointment of two QAC members and a Student member.

UNDERGRADUATE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

(copy filed as QAC/111224/003)

[Clerk's Note: Megan McFarlane and Sally Middleton joined the meeting for this item.]

- 3.1 A summary of the paper was provided to the QAC, noting that the Committee had previously seen various changes to standard and contextualised admissions entry requirements. The Committee noted that the proposed changes referred to higher tariff degrees, given the previously made changes had resulted in a widened gap between the standard and higher degree tariff entry requirements. It was noted that approval was not sought for the changes to

the Law entry requirements at the current stage as discussions were ongoing with the School of Law. The higher entry requirements for the International Baccalaureate were noted, given the status of the award. It was suggested that the proposed changes align with current practice. The governance route was highlighted, noting that approval had been obtained from Student Recruitment Committee (SRC), but Heads of School endorsement was awaited.

- 3.2 The Committee discussed the proposals, noting the following:
- That a print deadline of 2 December was stipulated; responding, it was accepted that the deadline was aspirational and that there would still be time to amend the prospectus.
 - That the proposals seemed logical and that the consistency across the entry requirements was welcome.
 - That the IB requirements appeared out of line with other requirements; responding, it was noted that the University reputation would suffer if the IB requirements were lowered any further.
 - Clarity was sought regarding international requirements; responding, it was noted that international entry requirements were constantly under review and that the admissions team sought to be agile in making changes in-year. It was agreed that discussions will take place following the meeting to agree an appropriate process, ensuring appropriate governance and oversight. **Action: Chair**
- 3.3 The Committee was content to approve the proposals set out in the paper.
- 3.4 An overview was provided in relation to a proposal to accept the Malaysian Unified Examination Certificate (UEC), which is offered by private Chinese High Schools, and which the University's competitors are accepting. The Committee was advised that the University was proposing a similar approach to that of competitors. It was agreed that further details would be circulated to the Committee and approval sought by circulation. **Action: Clerk**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW REPORT

(copy filed as QAC/111224/004)

[Clerk's Note: Jason Bohan joined the meeting for this item.]

- 4.1 The QAC heard a summary of the key matters raised within the School of Education Internal Teaching Review report. The QAC was advised that the review had ultimately been positive with good practice identified in abundance. The themes for the review were identified as (i) School structure and staffing; (ii) teaching, learning and assessment; (iii) student experience; and (iv) student support and EDI. In summarising the commendations, the sense of community, assessment practices, feedback and facilities were praised. The Committee was advised that workload and resource pressures were the largest issue facing the School. The wider issues identified in the report were summarised. The action plan was highlighted.
- 4.2 In discussion, the Committee discussed the importance of disseminating good practice within other Schools. It was suggested that the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) could have a role in collating good practice. Caution was urged in respect of collating good practice which is not used or can be outdated quite quickly. It was suggested that the MyAberdeen User Group might be an appropriate place to store this information. Engagement in the TESTA process was also highlighted. It was agreed that separate discussions would take place to identify the best means of achieving effective dissemination of good practice. **Action: Chair**
- 4.3 The Committee was content to approve the report.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH MATTERS
(i) POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH READMISSION PROCEDURE

(copy filed as QAC/111224/018)

[Clerk's Note: Robert Findlay joined the meeting for this item.]

- 5.1 The Committee heard an overview of the paper pertaining to the Postgraduate Research readmissions procedure, noting a formal procedure for readmission of PGR students did not currently exist. The QAC was advised that the procedure served two primary cohorts of students: (i) where a student requires to return to study to complete further research under supervision; and (ii) where a student may have exhausted their period of study and is not eligible for further extensions but has undertaken to prepare their thesis to a standard which is ready for submission. It was suggested that the approval route would be the supervisor, relevant Head of School, with ultimate approval from the Dean for Postgraduate Research.
- 5.2 Discussion ensued, the tenets of which were:
- That a typo was identified in section 1(d) in respect of 'in order to submit...';
 - Clarity was sought regarding whether the current procedure required payment of fees (*section 15 refers*), to which this was confirmed;
 - That it appears the School Director of Postgraduate Research was not included in the approvals process; to which it was noted that the Head of School should have oversight, particularly in relation to workload allocations, however, may opt to delegate the responsibility, noting that structures differed between Schools;
 - Clarity was sought regarding whether it was possible to change supervisors upon readmission; responding, it was confirmed that supervisory arrangements will be adjusted following staff departures.
- 5.3 The Committee discussed in detail the proposed timeframe beyond which readmission applications would not normally be considered. In discussion, it was suggested that research in some disciplines will have progressed significantly within the five year period. Conversely, it was suggested that the five year period was helpful and consistent with other readmissions policies and with part-time study. Clarity was sought why a time period was necessary. In response, the QAC was advised that primarily, a time period was enacted to manage student expectations and to ensure that only meaningful applications were considered. It was suggested that it will be kept under review and that it remains at the discretion of the Schools to readmit students.
- 5.4 Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee approved the proposed procedure.

(ii) POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRESSION

(copy filed as QAC/111224/005)

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the paper pertaining to Postgraduate Research progression, noting the proposal to remove the biannual progression exercise in light of the significant associated workload. The QAC was advised that students and supervisors are waiting for the six-monthly progression meetings to highlight issues, which is challenging where theses and projects are not on track. The range of mitigations, including a Research Development Audit, enhancing induction, and clear expectations regarding the supervisory relationship, were highlighted. It was suggested that there would be more opportunities to be in contact with students and supervisors through the new process.
- 6.2 General support for the proposed changes was expressed, noting the positive impact on workloads. Clarity was sought regarding the form of assessment for the Annual Progression Exercises (APE), to which it was suggested that these were still at the discretion of the Schools. It was highlighted that the three-month audits would remain within the School. Additionally, it was clarified that students will remain responsible for preparation of the paperwork.

- 6.3 Concerns were raised regarding the impact of a negative supervisory relationship or where a supervisor is not engaged. It was clarified that there will be multiple opportunities to contact students regarding supervisory relationships. The Committee noted that it should be made clear to students and staff their role within the supervisory arrangements, particularly in terms of appeals and complaints. Further, the feedback sought from students was clarified, noting that internal and external survey data is gathered.
- 6.4 The QAC was advised that discussions will take place regarding the appropriate approval route and timeline for implementation for these proposals, and the Committee will be updated in due course. The Committee thereafter approved the proposals. **Action: Chair / Clerk**

MYABERDEEN GRADES JOURNEY: TRANSPARENCY AND ENHANCING THE RETURN OF GRADES TO SRS

(copy filed as QAC/111224/019)

[Clerk's Note: Sara Preston joined the meeting for this item.]

- 7.1 A summary of the paper in relation to the MyAberdeen Grades Journey was presented to the Committee, noting that approval was sought for Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4 of the paper, with Section 4.3 for discussion. The proposals to reduce staff workload were noted, while improving the consistency of how grades are presented and the process by which marks are transferred between systems. The establishment of a Task and Finish Group for the implementation of a more efficient marks transfer process was highlighted.
- 7.2 General support for the proposals was expressed. Comments in relation percentage grades conversion were noted. A variety of views were expressed, with some suggesting that where components of assessment are separate, separate CGS grades should be provided. Inconsistencies in the mapping of percentage grades to the CGS were highlighted. It was suggested that guidance would follow to Schools in this regard.
- 7.3 The Committee approved the proposals set out in Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4, with further discussion to be had in relation to Section 4.3.

PROFESSIONAL DECLARATION FOR MSc PHYSICIAN'S ASSOCIATE STUDIES

(copy filed as QAC/111224/006)

- 8.1 The Committee heard an overview of the paper in respect of a Professional Declaration for the MSc in Physician's Associate Studies, noting the recent introduction of regulation by the General Medical Council. It was noted that the declaration will take place during graduation, at which students will be invited to stand and collectively respond 'I do' following the declaration being read out.
- 8.2 The Committee approved the proposed professional declaration.

EXTERNAL QUALITY REVIEW

(i) UPDATE ON TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (TQER)

- 9.1 The Committee heard an update on the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), noting that the review for the University will take place in February 2026. It was noted that additional resource to support the preparation of the review had been requested, and that discussions will take place in the next calendar year regarding preparations. It was noted that while there are

similarities between the former ELIR process and the new TQER process, guidance was still being issued and that substantial lead-in time will be required.

(ii) UPDATE ON SCOTLAND'S TERTIARY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME (STEP)

- 10.1 The Committee heard an update on Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). The QAC was advised that a four-year theme had been identified as Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys. The Chair's selection as Staff Topic Lead was highlighted. The Committee was advised that funding had been received for Learning & Teaching Enhancement Projects (LTEPs), with eight projects funded in 2024/25, which are aligned to the STEP theme. Additionally, the Annual Academic Symposium was highlighted, due to take place on 30 April 2025, and will also be aligned to the STEP.

(iii) SELF-EVALUATION AND ACTION PLAN (SEAP)

(copy filed as QAC/111224/007)

- 11.1 The Committee noted the submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in respect of the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan, which replaced previous reporting to SFC. The QAC was advised that the report was designed to collate all quality activity across the previous academic year. It was noted that this is the first year where Higher Education and Further Education sectors are both aligned. It was further noted that feedback was awaited from SFC. Thanks were expressed to all who provided information for the report, and particularly, Emma Tough who prepared the report. In discussion, it was noted that the MSc Real Estate and Master of Land Economy programmes were both reaccredited but appeared to be omitted; the comments were noted.

EDUCATION POLICY AND REGULATIONS REVIEW SCHEDULE

- 12.1 The Committee heard an update in respect of the Education Policy and Regulations Review Schedule, noting Senate's consideration and endorsement of the plan on 4 December 2024. A summary of the key areas of focus for this academic year was provided to the Committee, in respect of (i) assessment and feedback; (ii) undergraduate student progress; and (iii) academic discipline. The QAC was advised that the schedule was prepared against the context of embedding the new enhancement framework and TQER.

UK QUALITY CODE MAPPING

(copies filed as QAC/111224/008, 009, 010 and 011)

- 13.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments to the UK Quality Code Mapping in respect of:
- Section 4: Course Design and Development;
 - Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - Section 9: Partnerships; and
 - Section 10: Research Degrees.

STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEES REMIT & COMPOSITION

(copies filed as QAC/111224/012 and 013)

- 14.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments to the Remits and Compositions for (i) Students' Progress Committee and (ii) Students' Progress Committee (Healthcare Programmes).

UPDATES TO COURSE FEEDBACK AND REVIEW FORMS IN RESPECT OF MYSKILLS

(copy filed as QAC/111224/014a and 014b)

- 15.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, the amendments to the (i) Course Feedback and Reflection Form (CFRF) and (ii) Annual Course Review Form (ACR).

REPORT FROM ACADEMIC POLICY AND REGULATIONS GROUP

(copy filed as QAC/111224/015)

- 16.1 The Committee noted the report from the Academic Policy and Regulations Group.

REPORT FROM THE STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEE

(copy filed as QAC/111224/016)

- 17.1 The Committee noted the report from the Students' Progress Committee.

MATTERS APPROVED BY CONVENOR'S ACTION: TERM DATES FOR BSc MEDICAL SCIENCES HONOURS PROJECTS

- 18.1 The Committee noted a change to the term dates for the BSc Medical Sciences honours projects, which will commence a week earlier than Term 2 is scheduled to begin, opening instead on 13 January 2025, which was approved by the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement on behalf of QAC.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

(copy filed as QAC/111224/017)

- 19.1 The Committee noted the matters pertaining to partnerships and collaborative provision in respect of (i) the Partnerships and Collaborative Register, and (ii) that the partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) has now concluded following UHI obtaining degree awarding powers.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 20.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 19 February 2025 at 14:05 at Committee Room 2, University Office and via Microsoft Teams.