

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

OPEN MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10:00, TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 (ONLINE MEETING)

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| Present | Professor Andy Clark | AC | Co-Chair, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Policy) |
| | Professor Will Curtis | WC | Co-Chair, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education Quality and Standards) |
| | Dr Jon Burrows | JB | Representative of the Board of Faculty of Arts |
| | Professor Gill Cooke | GC | Co-opted member of academic staff in a quality assurance role |
| | Professor David Davies | DD | Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (Science, Engineering and Medicine) |
| | Lee Griffin | LG | Academic Director (Postgraduate Taught) |
| | Dr Jeff Jones | JJ | Co-opted member of academic staff in a quality assurance role |
| | Professor Jonathan Heron | JH | Representative of the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning |
| | Dr David Lees | DL | Deputy Dean of Students (in place of the Dean of Students) |
| | Dr Helen Nolan | HN | Representative of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine |
| | Nathan Parsons | NP | Postgraduate Officer, Students' Union |
| | Professor Sarah Richardson | SR | Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (Arts) (until 11am) |
| | Dr Ross Ritchie | RR | Representative of the Faculty of Social Science |
| | Professor Dmitriy Rumynin | DR | Representative of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine |
| | Professor Gwen van der Velden | GvdV | Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Learning Experience) |
| | Dr Naomi Waltham-Smith | NWS | Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (Social Sciences) |
| Dr Tim White | TW | Representative of the Board of Faculty of Arts | |
| Professor Philip Young | PY | Representative of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine | |
| Attending | Professor Kurt Debattista | KD | (for item 015) |
| | Geraldine Connelly | GCon | Assistant Registrar (Assessment) (Assistant Secretary) |
| | Phil Griffiths | PG | Education Projects and Academic Governance Officer (Minutes) |
| | Julia Fan | JF | (for item 015) |
| | Maureen McLaughlin | MM | Director of Education Policy and Quality (Acting Secretary) |
| Ref | Item | | |
| 001 | <p>Chair's welcome and introduction</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all members, noting the following had joined the committee from the start of the academic year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isabelle Atkins • Professor Dan Branch • Lee Griffin • Dr Jeff Jones • Dr Helen Nolan • Nathan Parsons • Professor Dmitriy Rumynin • Dr Tim White <p>It was also reported that this would be the last meeting of AQSC for Maureen McLaughlin, who would shortly be leaving the University to become Academic Registrar at the University of Northumbria; the committee's deep gratitude was extended to Maureen for all of her work in leading the Education Policy and Quality team and supporting the work of the AQSC.</p> | | |
| 002 | <p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies were received from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Jo Angouri • Professor Dan Branch • Professor Rebecca Freeman | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Pat Tissington |
| 003 | <p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>No new declarations were made.</p> |
| 004 | <p>Minutes of meeting held on held on 2 June 2021</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2021 were received and approved with a correction to minute 127 decision (c) as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Approve that all undergraduate <u>finalist</u> exam boards in term three must take place by the end of week 10 within each academic year and all other boards <u>must take place at a time that should normally take place by week 0</u>, which will also ensure progression and award decisions are submitted for processing and conferral by the <u>DRL submission deadlines</u>.</p> |
| 005 | <p>Matters arising from meeting held on 2 June 2021</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the report (005-AQSC140921). The key points and discussions were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 55 – Maths had provided a response regarding the high level of firsts seen in the student data report, which were explained: by the graduate benchmark, a shift to online examination, and the departmental approach to scaling that year. • Item 57 – History had provided a detailed response on increased cases of plagiarism, and the department had taken steps to mitigate this. No response from WFS – AQSC secretariat to follow up. • Item 85 – FTP Operational Procedure almost complete and a draft would be circulated for the 21 October 2021. WMS was in discussion with colleagues in legal regarding their guidance. • Items 126 and 128 – Policies on right to remedy failure and deferral of assessment in an examinations period had been published online and communicated to academic departments. <p>ACTION: Item 132 – Task and Finish Group to be established to review the 20 point marking scale in 2021/22. SR had volunteered to Chair the Group.</p> |
| Governance | |
| 006 | <p>Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference</p> <p>The report (006-AQSC140921) setting out the AQSC membership for 2021-22 and terms of reference was considered by the committee with the following decisions and recommendations made:</p> <p>DECISION: The Committee approved the addition of the Director of Education Policy and Quality to the constitution of the AQSC.</p> <p>DECISION: The Committee approved an amendment to clause (m) to the AQSC Terms of Reference as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(m) To receive audit reports of the undergraduate <u>and postgraduate taught</u> module approval processes within academic departments from the Faculty Education Committees</p> <p>DECISION: The Committee recommended the revised Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference for 2021/22 for approval by the Education Committee.</p> |
| Updates | |
| 007 | <p>OfS consultation on Quality and Standards</p> <p>The Committee received a report (007-AQSC140921) and a verbal update from the Director of Education Policy and Quality. The key points and discussions were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MM reported that the second phase OfS consultation on the shape of Quality and Standards that will govern HE in the England, and follows a previous consultation a year ago on a realignment away from the UUK Quality Code to a redefined set of conditions of registration. • The Government’s prevailing narrative is around addressing low quality courses, and the ways that courses are taught. • As an individual institution, it was very unlikely that the proposals would affect Warwick directly, but there may be some concerns which are echoed in the response (item 14 in the report refers). UUK and Russell Group proposed responses also reflect concerns: |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The move away from alignment with the Quality Code detaches Warwick from UK notions of quality and standards, noting that the UK brand tended to add value. • The UK Quality Code was also aligned closely to European standards and guidelines, which in turn align with other jurisdictions around the world. • The proposals did not regard externality as being valuable in a number of areas including the development of programmes. • There was a diminution of student engagement, noting no reference for the need for direct engagement with stakeholders. The HE sector and Russell Group felt this would weaken our position on quality and standards. • Claims some kinship with transnational education, but it was known anecdotally that this may not be the case, and that it was unclear what the OfS intended to do in this space without it being clearly defined. • The timing of the consultation was also challenging, noting it was taking place over the summer 2021 and the deadline for responses was 27 September 2021. • The consultation also discussed the inclusion of Degree Apprenticeships, noting this could add more confusion as to who would regulate our provision alongside the Institute For Apprenticeships and Ofsted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWS raised a concern on the vagueness of definitions used in the consultation, that this seemed to be deliberate, and that it would be helpful for the sector to address this and put forward its own tighter definitions relating to breadth, depth and coherence. Alternate phrasing on student descriptions relating to socio-economic deprivation was also recommended. • GvdV praised the report, particularly considering timing and noted that the move towards the OfS and the ownership of control of curricula meant handing control to a Government lead regulator, which would undermine the autonomy of institutions. <p>ACTION: Colleagues to write to MM with comments.</p> |
| 008 | <p>University College Birmingham (UCB) Headline Report of Approval & Accreditation Events</p> <p>The Committee received a report (007-AQSC140921) and a verbal update from the Director of Education Policy and Quality. There were number of areas where further work was required, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with UCB to develop a deeper research culture, with focus on underpinning ethics. MMc/PG had reached out to colleagues in Research Impact Services to talk with colleagues at UCB • UCB had been in partnership with the Uni of Birmingham for many years and some degrees would continue to be taught out to fulfil those arrangements. UCB would make clear to staff and students which awards their students are studying on, and with which institution. • UCB/University of Warwick are working together to identify where each institution's policies link together and where they do not, and how they can be aligned. • UoW was working with internal colleagues to identify where there was overlap in provision and establishing link tutors. <p>WC and AC would jointly take on the role of accreditation visitor, and more frequent institutional oversight of the operation of the partnership would take place.</p> |

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| 009 | <p>Chairs Business</p> <p>The committee received several verbal reports with key details and discussions, as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WC reported that online meetings had been working well and for the remainder of the calendar year AQSC meetings would remain online, noting that this would be reviewed by the committee at Christmas. • AC reported that the next Exams Committee meeting would consider, amongst other matters, requests from departments to hold face to face, on-campus exams. • AC reported that Rules for Award had been sent out to departments and longer-term discussions of remaining points would be revisited later this year. • AC reported that a reboot of the Review of Assessment would commence October 2021 to address a number of unfinished issues, including end-to-end assessment and other online assessment matters. Terms of Reference for the reboot, workstreams and membership would be circulated for the 21 October 2021 AQSC meeting for approval. • WC reported that there was a shift in policy, which had been led by the Provost, to permit some overseas students to remain learning by distance until January 2021. |
| 010 | <p>Students Union Update</p> <p>An update would be provided at the 21 October 2021 meeting of the committee.</p> |
| 011 | <p>External Examiner Handbook</p> <p>The Committee received a report (011-AQSC140921) and a verbal update from the Assistant Registrar (Assessment). There were number of areas where further work was required, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertations, and whether they should consider the module as a whole as well as consider individual pieces of work. Clarity was also sought on how projects and dissertations were taken and seen by external examiners. • Item 1.2 in the report was comparable to other HE institutions. The standards were a baseline, however GvdV raised a concern that the University would not wish to move away from those minimum standards but that it was acceptable for departments to make statements themselves and encourage external examiners to focus on quality areas that exceeded those minimum standards. • MM recommended that Warwick develop an induction programme for External Examiners. |
| 012 | <p>Table 22 Report: Towards A Blended Education from 2022</p> <p>This item was deferred to the 21 October 2021 meeting of the committee.</p> |
| 013 | <p>Summary of Key Points from a Review of External Examiners' Reports relating to Collaborative Provision for the Academic Year 2019/20</p> <p>The Committee received a report (013-AQSC140921) and a verbal update from the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education Quality and Standards). The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Examiners had noted how positive the partnership work had been during the pandemic. • Many external examiners had not demonstrated a deep understanding of the specifics of degree apprenticeships. Partnerships Committee had recommended that further work, including improved induction and guidance material for external examiners was developed to help ensure that they commented meaningfully on those programmes. WC would ask the new FOLD division to progress this work. |
| 014 | <p>Good Practice Guide: Monitoring Student Attendance</p> <p>The Committee received a report (014- AQSC140921) and verbal report from the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (Arts). The key points and discussions were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant workload for departments resulting from authorised and unauthorised absences needing to be updated in Tabula individually. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a strong sense from students and academic staff that monitoring and personal tutoring should not be linked, and a previous review of personal tutoring had recommended decoupling attendance monitoring and personal tutoring. • In departments where there were not enough core modules that could be used as monitoring points, they had to rely on using personal tutor meetings as monitoring points and this was considered punitive. • That there should be a more explicit link between loss of attendance and wellbeing, and that the Dean of Students' Office would be best placed to progress work in this area. • There were mixed feelings on the issue of monitoring all students when the University is only legally required to monitor students with specific immigration status, and there was a concern from some staff that this may undermine work to achieve the University's objectives in social inclusion and equality. • There was also concern regarding some of the wording used in the automated letters that were sent to students who had missed monitoring point(s). <p>ACTION: The AQSC would review the process, including the wording of correspondence to students, by a task and finish group to complete ahead of the next academic year. Membership of the group would include SR, DL and RR).</p> |
| 015 | <p>Request to Change Regulation 38 to Incorporate EngD Part-time Study</p> <p>The Committee received a report (015- AQSC140921) and verbal report from JF and KD. The report introduced a part-time variant of the EngD, which would make a positive impact for the reasons detailed in the report and place it in line with the PhD's part-time option of 7 years.</p> <p>DECISION: The committee recommended the report to Senate for approval.</p> |
| <i>Items below this line were for receipt and/or approval, without discussion</i> | |
| For Information | |
| Approved by Chair's Action | |
| 016 | <p>Standing RPL Exemption: MA in Quality Assurance and Accountability (CTE)</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the report (016-AQSC140921)</p> |
| 017 | <p>Standing RPL Exemption: MSc and PGDip in Diabetes (WMS)</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the report (017-AQSC140921)</p> |
| 018 | <p>Alternative Assessments and Changes to Course Regulations</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the report (018-AQSC140921)</p> |