

SCONUL WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Minutes of Meeting held on 12 October 2005 at the SCONUL Secretariat

Present: Jeremy Atkinson - University of Glamorgan (Chair)
Michael Breaks - Heriot-Watt University (Secretary)
Scott Robertson - University College Chichester
Ann Mathie – University of Gloucestershire
Helen Fletcher – Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (UCISA)
Charlotte Jarvis – University of Birmingham

Copies: Wayne Morris – University of Glamorgan

1. Welcome and Background

The Chair welcomed Charlotte Jarvis to her first meeting of the Group. Following the review of Committees, the Executive Board had agreed that the Group should continue, but with a reduced membership and meeting twice a year. Executive Board has also confirmed that the Group is a SCONUL Working Group with UCISA representation.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 26 November 2004 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

4. Terms of Reference for the Group

These were noted with the addition of “and other organisations” after QAA on line 1 and replacement of “IL and learning issues” with “quality issues” on the last line.

5. Action Plan for the Group

The following points were noted:

- (i) Clarify the involvement of the QAA in health issues

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

- (ii) Explore possible collaboration with SCHOMS (Anne Mumford)

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

- (iii) Follow up Australian quality developments with Bidy Fisher and explore further Australian contacts

Action: Michael Breaks

- (iv) The role of the Group in relation to internal quality issues was discussed and it was agreed to raise this issue with the Working Group on Performance Improvement.

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

SCONUL WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

- (v) The Group considered possible involvement with the RAE process but did not see it as appropriate.

6. Feedback from SCONUL Strategy & Planning Meeting

The Chair reported on his attendance at the meeting in Cambridge in August. Key points included:

- Emphasis on engagement with other relevant bodies but not to duplicate the activities of other organisations
- Join up activities of all Groups with SCONUL Strategic objectives
- Deliver benefits to the members
- Maintain a watching brief on behalf of the members
- Establish sustainable communication between groups and with the Executive Board and membership
- Attend to succession planning

7. Informal Guidelines for Members of SCONUL Groups

This paper was noted. It was agreed that video-conferencing would not, at present, be an effective arrangement for the Group.

8. QAA Developments

The Chair reported that he had not met Nicola Channon recently but will meet with her in the near future. In discussion, it was noted that LIS services were generally not high on the agenda on institutional visits on the assumption that they are run efficiently. However, this 'invisibility' could have a potential impact on funding.

It was noted that both Collaborative Provision and Flexible & Distributed Learning are growing audit issues. Audits of Collaborative Provision will focus on how the university manages the collaborative relationship to ensure that learning resources are good enough overall for students in all locations. Audits would not be judging the partners; rather they would be judging the university's management of the relationship.

9. Feedback on Institutional Audit (England) and Institutional Review (Wales)

It was agreed that more reports, particularly from Scotland on the new ELIR process, should be on the web site. Experiences of Collaborative Provision Audits would also be valuable.

Action: Michael Breaks

10. National Student Satisfaction Survey

This had been commissioned by HEFCE but it was not clear whether the output provided any meaningful analysis.

All members of the Group were requested to review the survey results.

www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss/data/

Action: All

SCONUL WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

11. English Quality Matters

The current round is ending and Collaborative Provision Audits will take place over the next two years.

12. Scottish Quality Matters

It was reported that in the Enhancement-led ethos, institutions were subject to an Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) supported by a range of sectoral support activities to improve quality.

13. Welsh Quality Matters

It was reported that there will be no more subject reviews as part of the new institutional review process.

14. Group Web Site

This will be enhanced by adding a range of links.

Action: Michael Breaks

15. Date of next meeting

This would be in Spring 2006 – date to be confirmed.

Action: Michael Breaks