

SCONUL WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Minutes of Meeting held on 24 June 2002 at the SCONUL Secretariat

Present:

Jeremy Atkinson - University of Glamorgan (Chair)
Michael L. Breaks - Heriot-Watt University (Secretary)
Julie Howell - University of North London
Scott Robertson - University College Chichester

Apologies:

Ann Mathie – University of Gloucester
Keith Webster - School of Oriental & African Studies
Alison Alden - University of Warwick

1. **Membership**

With the resignation of Elizabeth Heaps, University of York it was agreed that Bidy Fisher, Sheffield Hallam University would be invited to join the Working Group, subject to confirmation by the Executive Board.

2. **Previous Minutes of Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 23 October 2001 were approved.

3. **Matters Arising**

2.3 Scott Robertson informed the group that The Draft OFSTED Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training, 2002 – 2008 (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/public/docs02/itthandbook.pdf>) did not contain any references to libraries or learning resources.

4. The remit of the Working Group and of the Advisory Committee on Performance Improvement had been agreed between the chairs. The Executive Board had approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Working Group.

11&12 Jeremy Atkinson and Michael Breaks had completed the Annual Report 2001 and Action Plan 2002.

4. **QAA Developments**

(a) A SCONUL response (attached) had been made to QAA CL08/02 Draft Handbook for Institutional Audit: England and 2002-2005. Transitional Arrangements (29 April 2002).

(b) A SCONUL response (attached) had been made to HEFCE 01/45 Quality Assurance in Higher Education: proposals for consultation (July 2001) and the Group noted the publication of HEFCE 02/15 Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Final report of the Task Group (the Cooke Report), March 2002.

(c) A SCURL response (attached) had been sent to SHEFC Consultation Paper HEC 02 2002 An Enhancement Led Approach to Quality Assurance (February 2002)

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5. Chairman's Update

Jeremy Atkinson had met with Nicola Channon of the QAA on 18th June 2002 and received an update on QAA developments. A new process of Institutional Audit will be introduced from February 2003. Longer term this will be on a 6 yearly cycle, but there will be an initial 3-year transitional period during which all institutions will be audited. During this transitional period, while institutions are waiting for their first audit, there will be some developmental engagements, which will aim to test the strength of internal review procedures at the level of the discipline or programme. Some of these will be Subject Reviews, as defined in the current Academic Review Handbook. Nicola commented that the Codes of Practice and Subject Benchmarks would stay as part of a framework to which institutions should pay due heed. The views of students and external examiners are also to be emphasised.

Jeremy Atkinson and Nicola Channon agreed to keep a watching brief on developments and to meet again around Easter 2003 to review the implications for learning resources arising from early examples of Institutional Audit in practice. The Working Group noted that University College Chichester would be one of the first institutions to undergo Institutional Audit.

6. Welsh Quality Matters

Jeremy Atkinson reported that a Quality Assurance Working Group had been established to decide on what new processes for quality should be implemented in Wales and what interim arrangements to put in place based on disciplinary interactions.

7. Scottish Quality Matters

Michael Breaks reported that SHEFC was to implement a process which would be based on quality enhancement, built upon a robust system of internal reviews of subject provision carried out by institutions. External subject reviews would only operate where an institution has insufficient track record of HE quality assurance or where there was clear evidence that the institution's internal processes are failing to ensure that provision has acceptable quality. Each institution will be subject to periodic institutional audit of its approach to quality. SHEFC will also institute a programme of activities, which will focus on issues of enhancement and would be based on annual themes in order to identify, disseminate and help to embed good practice.

8. Quality Working Group Web Site

The web site had been developed and it was agreed to attempt to add more information from Professional Associations/Societies on their quality procedures. It was felt that it would be helpful to have information on the use, and by whom, of the Working Group's pages.

9. Provision of Templates and Examples of Best Practice for External Evaluation of Library and Information Services

The Group reviewed a number of documents that had been supplied by member libraries via Christopher West, University of Wales Swansea. It was agreed that wider circulation of some of the documents – universities of Newcastle and Ulster – would be of benefit to

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SCONUL members as they prepared their own contributions to the institutional self-assessment document. It was agreed that Jeremy Atkinson would initiate discussion by email within the Working Group to seek support for the proposal and if this was forthcoming, Michael Breaks would contact member libraries to ask them to contribute any relevant internal documents which then might be made available on the web site, subject to issues of access control.

10. **Video Conference Meeting**

The Working Group considered the SCONUL requirement to hold one of its meetings via video conferencing, but decided that since it only met twice a year this would not assist the effectiveness of the Group, especially as there was active email discussions between meetings.

11. **SCONUL Members' Update**

The Executive Board required a regular update to members from each Committee if appropriate.

12. **Meeting Summary**

The Executive Board required a summary of the minutes from each Committee to be prepared for them.

13. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting would be held in October 2002.

Actions arising from this meeting:

- i. Jeremy Atkinson to continue to liaise with QAA and to discuss with the QAA on whether the text of the Aide Memoire was still relevant. MB then to discuss with SCONUL the publication of the Aide Memoire as a SCONUL publication
- ii. Michael Breaks to update the web site, particularly with information on the quality procedures of professional associations/societies
- iii. Jeremy Atkinson and Michael Breaks to initiate development of examples of best practice for external evaluation of library and information services
- iv. Jeremy Atkinson to provide update for SCONUL/UCISA members
- v. Michael Breaks to provide summary of minutes for Executive Board
- vi. Scott Robertson to consider response on draft OFSTED Handbook for Inspection of Initial Teacher Training, 2002-2008.