

SCONUL/UCISA WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Minutes of Meeting held on 24 November 2003 at the SCONUL Secretariat

Present: Jeremy Atkinson - University of Glamorgan (Chair)
Michael Breaks - Heriot-Watt University (Secretary)
Scott Robertson - University College Chichester
Brian Clifford - University of Leeds (replaced Keith Webster)
Carys Thomas - Loughborough University (UCISA)
Cathryn Gallacher – University of Bristol (replaced Julie Howell)

Apologies: Ann Mathie – University of Gloucestershire
Biddy Fisher – Sheffield Hallam University

Copies: Wayne Morris - University of Glamorgan

1. Membership

Brian Clifford and Cathryn Gallacher were welcomed to their first meeting.

2. Previous Minutes of Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 13 June 2003 were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

JA remains in regular contact with Nicola Channon of the QAA and will have further discussions with her in the near future. She has noted the lack of concentration of Libraries/IT in the new quality processes, but has indicated this could be seen as a positive sign, showing confidence in their management and service delivery. JA has sent details of the UCISA MIS Group to Nicola Channon in response to QAA's need for more information on student data requirements. A response has been made to the consultation HEFCE document 2003/23 on Improving standards in postgraduate degree programmes. The group noted HEFCE 2003/51 (October 2003) : *Information on quality and standards in higher education : final guidance* (www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/hefce/2003/03_51), and JA would alert the membership.

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

The group noted that John Horton, Hilary Johnson and Mary Heaney had been appointed as QAA auditors.

3. Feedback on Institutional Audit

In order to assist the membership, the Group agreed to adopt the following strategy: -

1) Institutions who have been audited would be asked to provide for the membership a reflective view of the process. The example of SR's document would be placed in a password protected area on the SCONUL web site and cited to as an exemplar.

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

2) The Group would prepare a document for members providing advice on how to ensure that library/IT issues were properly addressed by the institution during the subject and institutional audits.

Action: Scott Robertson

SCONUL/UCISA WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 3) The Group would collect examples of internal documents prepared by libraries/computer centres as part of their contribution to the preparation for an institutional and discipline quality review visit. These documents would be made available on the SCONUL website in a password-protected area.

Action: Michael Breaks

5. **Quality Assurance for NHS funded Higher Education Programmes**

JA reported that he had been approached by Val Trinder with a view to sharing documents and experience on discipline and institutional audits. It was agreed to respond positively to the approach and to consider inviting Val Trinder to a meeting of the group.

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

6. **Report from SCONUL Strategic Planning Meeting**

SCONUL Executive Board requires Advisory Committees to prepare and circulate:-

- Bullet points of meetings
- Email Digests
- Briefing papers

Action: Michael Breaks

Action: Jeremy Atkinson

It was noted that the group had prepared the Aide Memoire which met the third requirement.

7. **English Quality Matters**

SR reported that OFSTED were continuing to audit institutions that provided teacher education. The process could last a year and had involved relevant subject librarians to assess their contribution to the curriculum.

8. **Scottish Quality Matters**

MB reported on the new approach in Scotland – Enhancement-led institutional reviews which involved: -

- a comprehensive programme of subject reviews, to be run by institutions themselves;
- institution level review, which is the subject of this Handbook, and which will involve all Scottish HE institutions over a four-year cycle;
- improved forms of public information about quality, based on addressing the different needs of a greater range of stakeholders including students and employers;
- a greater voice for student representatives in institutional quality systems, supported by a new national development service;
- a national programme of enhancement themes, aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching higher education.

9. **Welsh Quality Matters**

The *Handbook for Institutional Review in Wales* had been published on the QAA web site (http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/welsh_hbook/welsh_handbook_section1.htm) and it is likely that any new process will start in October 2004. However, the timetable is uncertain as there is the possibility of more institutional mergers taking place.

10. **Quality Working Group Web Site**

SCONUL/UCISA WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

It was agreed to increase the number of links to the quality section of professional institutional web sites.

Action: All

11. Annual Report and Action Plan

The following Annual Report and Action Plan have been submitted to the Executive Board:

There were a number of changes to the membership of the Group during the year. Julie Howell (London Metropolitan) and Keith Webster (SOAS) were replaced by Cathryn Gallacher (Bristol) and Brian Clifford (Leeds). Carys Thomas (Loughborough) replaced Alison Allden (Bristol) as UCISA representative. Thanks to Julie, Keith and Alison for their contributions to the work of the Group.

Formal responses were made to the consultation on the final report of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee and to the HEFCE consultation on improving standards in postgraduate research degree programmes. Activities of the Group were concentrated on the new Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) processes for Institutional Audit. Close liaison was maintained with QAA on the learning resources aspects of the processes and excellent feedback was obtained from members on early experiences of Institutional Audit in practice.

Work began on bringing together a collection of resources that will help members undergoing Institutional Audit; these will be made available on a secure website. There also continued to be monitoring of quality developments in Scotland and Wales.

Initial contact was made with the NHS Library and Knowledge Development Network to discuss possible collaborative work on quality assurance processes for NHS funded HE programmes. Information was disseminated to SCONUL and UCISA members on quality developments and further improvements were made to the Group's website, particularly links to quality documentation on professional body websites.

Action Plan 2004

- 1) Monitor and respond to developments related to the implementation of the new QAA quality procedures, including specific developments in Scotland and Wales. Track developments with the National Student Satisfaction Survey.
- 2) Liaise with a QAA representative to update her on the Group's activities and to receive information on QAA plans/developments.
- 3) Develop a resource for SCONUL and UCISA members on a secure website providing: a) Commentaries on members' experiences of Institutional Audit in practice b) Links to Institutional Audit reports c) Examples of input by members to institution and discipline self evaluation documents
- 4) Develop separate guidelines for library and ICT staff and for institutional managers on learning resources input to institutional quality procedures. Seek QAA endorsement of these guidelines as appropriate.
- 5) Collaborate with the NHS Library and Knowledge Development Network on quality assurance processes for NHS funded HE programmes.
- 6) Track relevant developments in HE quality assurance overseas, e.g. in Australia.
- 7) Disseminate to SCONUL and UCISA members information on quality assurance developments.
- 8) Further develop the Groups web pages, including the provision of links to quality documentation on professional body websites.

SCONUL/UCISA WORKING GROUP ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

12. Uke-Universities Committee for Academic Quality

The Group noted that Elizabeth Heaps, University of York, has been invited to join the Uke-Universities Worldwide Ltd Committee for Academic Quality. Her role is to ensure that library and information needs for programmes are adequately addressed, by helping to put in place the necessary checks and balances, and to make sure they are audited. It was noted that the QAA has no guidelines for eLearning, but now views it as part of mainstream education.

12. Date of Next Meeting

This will be held in May/June 2004.

Action: Michael Breaks