

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Academic Quality and Standards Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee held on
24 October 2002

Present: Professor S Bassnett (in the Chair), Professor R Burns, Professor M Cooper, Professor R G Dyson, Professor A Easton, Professor J Jones, Professor M. McCrae, Professor A Reeve, Dr S Hill, Dr P Blackmore, Mr G Jones, Mr A Reiss.

Apologies: Professor I Lauder, Professor A Mullender, Professor M Whitby.

1/02-03 Minutes

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2002.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 June 2002 be approved.

2/02-03 Membership and Terms of Reference of the Committee

RECEIVED:

A statement of the terms of reference, constitution and membership of the Committee (paper AQSC 1/02-03).

3/02-03 Matters arising

(a) E-Learning (Minute 57/01-02 refers)

REPORTED:

That proposals for the coordination of the E-Learning Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy in terms of the committee system would shortly be formulated, now that the new arrangements for the E-Learning Steering Group had been clarified.

(b) Timetabling (Minute 63/01-02 refers)

REPORTED:

(i) That no solution had been suggested to the problem of timetabling of lectures and examinations raised by the Board of the Faculty of Science, given the constraints on the overall timetabling of events in the Summer term imposed by Degree Congregations.

- (ii) That the Students' Union intended to consider bringing forward a proposal for revised timing of Degree Congregations in due course.

4/02-03

Action taken by the Chair

RECEIVED:

A copy of a memorandum dated 14 August 2002 from the Chair to academic departments on behalf of the Committee, concerning the publication of Examination Conventions, and the need to ensure consistent provision of information to students, and a sufficient lead-time for the introduction of any changes to conventions (paper AQSC 2/02-03).

5/02-03

Chair's Business

- (a) Consultation by Law Society and the Bar Council on quality assurance arrangements for Qualifying Law Degrees

REPORTED:

- (i) That the Law Society and the Bar Council had issued a detailed joint consultation document on future arrangements for qualifying law degrees, and had separately issued a circular requesting that representatives of the professional bodies in Law be invited to attend "validation events" for new Law degrees.
- (ii) That a draft response had been prepared addressing all the consultation issues, including the following points of University-wide significance:
 - (A) that it was inappropriate to make the whole QAA Code of Practice binding on universities offering Qualifying Law Degrees, in view of the advisory status of the document generally;
 - (B) that, subject to certain conditions, it would be acceptable for a list of potential reviewers provided by the Law professional bodies to be used for the appointment of external members of Periodic Review panels considering qualifying law degrees;
 - (C) that it would be acceptable for the professional bodies to receive copies of the University's Periodic Review reports on Qualifying Law Degree programmes, on condition that these would not be for publication;
 - (D) that it would be inappropriate for training for External Examiners in Law to be provided by the professional bodies;
 - (E) that the University of Warwick, in common with many universities, did not operate a system of "validation

events" for new degree courses, and that attendance at relevant committee meetings carrying out an equivalent function would be impracticable.

RESOLVED:

That it would be of interest for the Committee to receive any information available at a later date on the trends in responses from other universities on the matters highlighted above, in particular to the proposal that the professional bodies should provide training for External Examiners, which was related to current proposals from QAA and UUK to which the University had expressed its strong opposition.

(b) External Examining

RESOLVED:

- (i) That it would be beneficial to discover which members of the University's academic staff currently carried out External Examining elsewhere;
- (ii) That the Director of the Centre for Academic Practice should consult the Chairs of Faculty Boards on whether they considered it desirable to provide training in External Examining for members of the University's own academic staff who were about to undertake External Examining duties elsewhere.

6/02-03

Programme (course) specifications

CONSIDERED:

A report from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) regarding the introduction of programme specifications in web-based form, and a proposed revision of the University Template for the specifications (paper AQSC 3/02-03).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the general approach outlined in the proposal from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) regarding a strategy for introducing programme specifications more widely in the University, be approved;
- (b) that the amended categories for the specification as set out in Appendix B to paper AQSC 2/02-03 be approved, subject to the inclusion of formative as well as summative assessment against each learning outcome, and to minor drafting amendments;
- (c) that Faculty Boards be asked to set up, at their Autumn term 2002 meetings, subgroups with authority to approve programme/course specifications for degrees in their Faculties.

7/02-03

Skills Awayday

RECEIVED:

A report from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) on the Skills Awayday held on 26 September 2002 (paper AQSC 4/02-03).

8/02-03

New National Framework for Quality

RECEIVED:

A report from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality) regarding developments in the new new national framework and for institutional audit (paper AQSC 5/02-03).

9/02-03

Personal Tutors

CONSIDERED:

A recommendation to the Committee from the Board of the Faculty of Social Studies held on 29 May 2002 (Minute 48/02-03), that the University introduce a requirement for departments to appoint personal tutors for students enrolled on postgraduate courses.

RESOLVED:

That Professor Bassnett, Professor McCrae and Mr Reiss present a draft resolution on the matter to a future meeting of the Committee.

10/02-03

Abolition of Degree Classification

CONSIDERED:

An extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 16 September 2002 (paper AQSC 6/02-03), indicating a request that Academic Quality and Standards Committee consider the practical alternatives to the current system of honours degree classification during the Autumn Term, taking into account the needs of students and employers.

REPORTED:

That a system for the issue of transcripts had already been developed by the University, and that the key issues in abolishing degree classification appeared to be the conservative views of some employers and students, and the position likely to be taken by other UK universities.

RECOMMENDED:

That the University of Warwick consider commissioning, in collaboration with a group of universities - eg the Russell Group - a survey of the opinions of employers and Research Councils on their attitudes to the abolition of degree classification.

11/02-03

New and Revised Constitutions of Research Centres

CONSIDERED:

Draft texts of constitutions for Research Centres (paper AQSC 7/02-03).

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) That the proposed constitution for the Warwick Centre for Public Economics be approved as set out in paper AQSC 7/02-03;
- (b) that the proposed revised constitution for the Centre for Scientific Computing be approved as set out in paper AQSC 7/02-03.

12/02-03

OFSTED Reviews

REPORTED:

The excellent outcome of the most recent OFSTED assessments (paper AQSC 8/02-03).

RESOLVED:

That the Institute of Education be congratulated on the excellent results obtained in OFSTED assessments.

RMH
November 2002