

Education, Quality and Standards Committee

Thursday, 19th October 2023 2:15 pm

Wessex House 3.36 | Education, Quality & Standards Committee

Attendees

Attended

Sascha Athey

Helena Barrell

Ian Blenkarn

Christopher Bonfield

Andrew Burrows

Julian Chaudhuri

Georgina Eggleston

Gail Forey

Nathalia Gjersoe

Marion Harney

Momna Hejmadi

Ryan Lucas

Rachel Sheer

Amber Snary

Tim Wakeley

Jane White

Did Not Attend

Jura Neverauskaite

285.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Chair welcomed the Committee and noted a quorum was present. A special welcome was extended to Gail Forey, Andrew Burrows and Helena Barrell for their first meeting.

286.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

There were no declarations of interest.

287.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - EQSC 23-24 01

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Helena Barrell

The minutes to the previous meeting held on 16th May 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

288.0 Actions and Matters Arising - EQSC 23-24 02

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the action log.

289.0 Standing Items of Business

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The SU Officers reported that the SU Top Ten list for 2023/24 has now been released. They will report further on this at the next meeting and will be working closely with Academic Registry.

290.0 Terms of Reference and Membership - EQSC 23-24 03

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Governance Manager presented the report which included suggested amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference and Membership. It was explained that the recommendations are intended to support EQSC's continued focus on its governance function.

In the following discussion on the paper, it was noted that 'Appendix 2: Role specification' mistakenly identifies the Nominations Committee as being responsible for recommending appointments to EQSC and that this text would be deleted. In answer to a question on why 'attainment' and 'progress' have been removed from 'Appendix 1: EQSC Terms of Reference', it was noted that these types of institutional data still come under 'academic outcomes'. Such changes are not intended to exclude these elements from EQSC's remit, but to consolidate the text and make it more concise.

It was noted that it is generally viewed as good practice for governance committees to have smaller memberships to enable them to function better. In response to a question on the suggested removal of the SU Postgraduate Officer role from the Membership, it was agreed that the SU Officer role does not need to be specified and other SU Officers can join when needed for particular items.

It was suggested that those in attendance should only join for items as required, rather than regularly attending whole meetings. However, the importance of having Academic Deans of Education and Academic Registry present at meetings was also highlighted. It was agreed that there would be a period of transition in which meetings would be split into two parts. The items in Part 1 would be open to all those in attendance and then Part 2 would cover reserved business for members. The Committee will review how this is going after twelve months.

In response to a question about the three co-opted roles, it was explained that these would not just be open to those in academia but also to individuals working in professional services or who are external to the University. The Committee could decide who to co-opt based on which areas of subject knowledge it would be useful to include.

The Committee agreed to co-opt Professor Momna Hejmadi. Members were encouraged to consider in their own time who could fill the other two vacancies and the Governance team will then ask members to share their views after the meeting.

It was noted that it would be useful for the new membership to receive training on governance. The Governance team plans to regularly deliver training sessions for committee members and those who submit papers to committees. The next session will be held on Wednesday 29th November and EQSCs attendees and members can let the Governance team know if they would like to join.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee agreed to recommend the revised Membership and Terms of Reference to Senate. The Committee approved the committee member role description and new annual workplan.

Action by Helena Barrell

Secretary to ask members for their recommendations regarding who should fill the two vacancies for co-opted committee members

291.0 Assuring Academic Quality & Standards Policy -

EQSC 23-24 04

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Acting Head of Academic Quality & Standards presented the report proposing a new Academic Quality & Standards Policy to replace The University's Approach to Quality Management document. It was explained that the new policy has been developed in response to the current regulatory environment, and is less prescriptive than the previous document and more risk-based.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee agreed to recommend to Senate the approval of an Academic Quality & Standards Policy.

292.0 Transitioning the Quality Assurance Code of Practice - EQSC 23-24 05

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the report. It was agreed that this piece of work will help to consolidate the Quality Assurance Code of Practice and make it more readable.

The Committee noted that while Academic Registry does not intend to make any policy changes, it may find that others in the University recommend changes as a result of the work.

The next steps will be for Academic Registry to approach various teams in professional services for their views and ideas, and then come back to the Committee.

293.0 Assuring Compliance with the B Conditions - EQSC 23-24 06

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Acting Head of Academic Quality & Standards presented the report on Assuring Compliance with the B Conditions. It was reported that now that the Office for Students is the main regulator for universities, the Committee will need to review the extent to which the University is complying with the B Conditions and find an evidence base to show this. This project will be carried out over the next year or so.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful for members to attend training on the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) and the OfS Regulatory Framework to support them in this work.

It was noted that while regulatory conditions may continue to change, starting this work now will mean that the University will be able to show that it is trying to meet compliance requirements.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee approved the mapping of the requirements of OfS Ongoing Conditions of Registration B1/2/4/5 prepared by the Academic Quality & Standards Team.

The Committee approved the setting up of a policies and procedures risk register for institutional compliance with the OfS Ongoing Conditions of Registration related to academic quality and standards.

Action by Helena Barrell

Sascha Athey to plan a training day for committee members on the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) and the OfS Regulatory Framework

294.0 Assuring Compliance with Condition B5 - EQSC 23-24 07

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee considered the report on Assuring Compliance with Condition B5. The Committee noted the importance of communicating to staff that this work should not be viewed as an inspection but as a review of procedures.

It was suggested that Academic Registry could begin by looking at the evidence produced to show the alignment of programmes, such as Chemistry and Pharmacy, with external accreditation as some relevant documentation may already be in place.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee approved the interpretation of the requirements of OfS On-going Condition of Registration B5.

The Committee agreed that Academic Registry will review the extent to which the University's policies and procedures ensure compliance with OfS Ongoing Condition of Registration B5.

295.0 Institutional Approach to Assessment Design, Delivery and Development in Light of Generative Artificial Intelligence - EQSC 23-24 08

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee considered the report outlining an institutional approach to assessments in light

of the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), with a particular focus on coursework.

It was reported that the Centre for Learning and Teaching would like to feed student views into the approach taken and will be carrying out a student-wide consultation on GenAI soon.

In response to a question on whether the University's Academic Initiative Integrity test features any questions on GenAI, it was confirmed that none are currently included. It was noted that the University could look at adding some.

The Committee commented that any changes made to assessments in this academic year as a result of the work outlined in the report will need to come into effect in Semester 2 as coursework has already been set for Semester 1.

A question was asked on whether any assurance activities are already being carried out to assess the risk of GenAI to assessments in this academic year. It was reported that academics in Social Sciences have started putting together a spreadsheet that reviews their assessments in light of GenAI. The Faculty of Engineering & Design has also designed its assessments with GenAI in mind.

It was suggested that the Committee could set up a risk register so the situation can continue to be monitored. It was noted that the main risk is poorly designed assessments, rather than GenAI. It is hard to avoid the risk of GenAI where an assessment has a written component, but using a mixture of assessment approaches is the best way to have assurance. Reviews so far indicate that students who rely solely on GenAI in their assessments are likely to receive low grades.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee agreed with the institutional approach to GenAI outlined in the report.

Action by Helena Barrell

Gail Forey to share the Social Sciences department's spreadsheet on GenAI with Chris Bonfield

Action by Helena Barrell

Gregory Noakes to create a risk register for the Committee.

296.0 Quality Assurance Code of Practice review for AY2023/24 - EQSC 23-24 09

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee considered the report proposing updates to a number of QA CoP documents.

It was noted that some more minor amendments need to be made to the updates. The Director of Academic Registry will approve these once done.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee approved the proposed updates to the QA CoP documents, subject to some minor amendments.

297.0 Degree Apprenticeship Quality and Standards - EQSC 23-24 10

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the minutes of the Degree Apprenticeship Quality and Standards Group meeting and considered the proposed new QA CoP statements.

Decision by Helena Barrell

The Committee approved the proposed new QA CoP statements.

298.0 Semester 2 Strike Audit - EQSC 23-24 11

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Director of Academic Registry presented the Strike Audit Report and requested feedback on whether the level of detail included is an appropriate amount for assurance activity.

It was noted that while the strike audit requires substantial work and is quite granular, it does enable people to stay engaged with the risk of strike action. The Committee agreed that the audit is necessary, particularly as it gives the University visibility to any major breaches before they lead to formal complaints. The information gathered could also be used as evidence if this is ever required by the OIA.

It was suggested that the Committee could add the risk of strike action to academic quality to the new risk register. The Boards of Studies already report on this risk to Senate, but by also monitoring the risk EQSC can consider the links with education quality.

299.0 Sector Developments in Higher Education - EQSC 23-24 12

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the report on sector developments in higher education and discussed some of the highlights.

Members were encouraged to let the Chair know if they would like training on any of the topics covered in the report.

It was agreed that it was useful for the Committee to discuss this report and the item will stay in the discussion section of future meeting agendas.

300.0 Minutes of Committees - EQSC 23-24 13

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the minutes.

301.0 Previous Decisions by Correspondence

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the previous decisions made by correspondence.

302.0 Programme of Meetings for 2023/24

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

The Committee noted the programme of meetings for 2023/24.

303.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Helena Barrell

No other items of business were raised.