

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
ACADEMIC BOARD
TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING 3/08

A meeting of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) was held at 2.15 pm on Thursday, 10th April 2008 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne.

MINUTES

PRESENT

Committee Members

Professor Leslyanne Hawthorne (Chair), Professor Pip Pattison, Professor Alistair Moffat, Professor Richard Huggins, Professor Prem Bhalla, Associate Professor Mary Wlodek, Associate Professor Nick Haslam, Associate Professor Ray Misson, Professor Richard James, Professor Gillian Wigglesworth, Associate Professor Jenny George, Associate Professor Kim Watty, Professor Ken Gelder, Dr Rebecca Ford, Mr Paul Fijn, Mr Shaun Khoo, Dr Pat McLean and Mr Shaun Ewen.

Observers

None

In Attendance

Professor Sue Elliott attended for Professor Peter McPhee, Mr Bill Jones for Ms Daroesman, Dr Greg Missingham attended for Item 6.2 and Ms Kathy Menezes, Committee Secretary.

BUSINESS

1. FORMAL MATTERS

1.1 Welcome

Professor Hawthorne welcomed new and returning members to the Committee noting the importance of the work ahead for TALQAC in 2008, ensuring the QA of both the New Generation and continuing degrees.

Professor Hawthorne thanked Professor Slocombe for his excellent Chairing of TALQAC from October 2007 – March 2008, while she was away on OECD business.

1.2 Apologies

The Committee received apologies from Professor Peter McPhee, Associate Professor Su Baker, Associate Professor Marilys Guillemain, Professor Camille Cameron, Mr Jey Sern Choo, Professor Ron Slocombe, Associate Professor Steven Holloway, Ms Suzanne Daroesman, Ms Tammi Jonas and Ms Onagh Bishop.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of TALQAC meeting 2/08 held on Thursday, 13 March 2008 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the change that 'Mr Khoo' not 'Mr Fijn' had advised the Committee of the negative feedback received from students in relation to the Student Centres in Arts and Environments.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3.1 Action Sheet

Items 1 and 2 (TaLMET Evaluation and Turnitin Reports): These items are to be taken off the TALQAC Agenda as they were an initiative of Associate Professor Tregloan, Chair of TaLMET, a committee that no longer exists.

Item 3 (In principle approval of postgraduate courses by Academic Board): This item has been shifted to the May Meeting.

Item 4 (TALQAC's recommendations to Academic Board and Follow Up Action with Faculties): Professor Elliott noted that she had consulted with the Provost and confirmed that TALQAC's role was to remain forwarding recommendations to Academic Board while implementation was the responsibility of the Faculties. Management will follow up during Operational Reviews. If there was an issue particularly pertinent to the Deans, then a Memo from TALQAC to the Committee of Deans was recommended.

Item 5 (Emerging Innovations): Professor James recommended that this item remain on TALQAC's Agenda.

Item 6 — (Feedback Boxes in Student Centres and Training for Student Centre Staff): Professor Elliott reported that while some Student Centre Managers had set up Suggestion Boxes, there was significant resistance from other Centres and she was working with the Academic Registrar to address this further. The latter group felt that Suggestion Boxes was a sub-optimal method of eliciting feedback and that the more thorough online system currently being developed should be utilised. However as the online system is not ready for immediate implementation and the importance of early feedback recognised by members, the following recommendation was made:

TALQAC wished Professor Elliott to report to Centre Managers that the Committee reiterated the importance of setting up Suggestion Boxes in the Centres, recognising that this was an interim measure till the more formal online system was ready. In keeping with the principles of consistency of service provided to all students this needs to be implemented across all Student Centres.

In response to the issue of training Professor Elliott noted that the roll out of Specialist Advisory Training was occurring and she would present this to TALQAC at the June meeting. A series of KPIs are being developed to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of Student Centres and advice being offered. Three external companies have tendered to assist the University develop an appropriate evaluation strategy for Student Centres.

Item 7 (TALDEC to consider better ways of providing feedback and analysis of subjects with low QoT results): Professor James noted that he would put this item on the TALDEC Agenda and Mr Jones observed that the analysis would be undertaken by UPO when work load permits but definitely prior to the completion of 2008.

Item 8 (Establish TALQAC Working Groups to commence work on the Schedule of Projects 2008 - 2010): This was dealt with under Agenda Item 5.1

Item 9 (Student Advice Quality Assurance Design Working Group): This was dealt with under Agenda Item 6.5

4 OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND OTHER COMMITTEES

4.1 Matters from the Provost's Office

4.1.1 Learning and Teaching Plan 2008

Members received and noted the Learning and Teaching Plan 2008. The Committee endorsed the Plan and recommended that it be forwarded to the Academic Board.

4.2 Academic Programs Management Committee (APMC)

In the absence of Professor Slocombe, there was no report

4.3 Undergraduate Programs Committee (UGPC)

Due to insufficient business the UGPC meeting was cancelled

4.4 Postgraduate Coursework Programs Committee (PCPC)

Due to insufficient business the PCPC meeting was cancelled

4.5 Teaching and Learning Development Committee (TALDEC)

Professor James noted that there has been ongoing discussion in relation to the LMS and a booklet has been compiled to provide assistance with subject sites. TALDEC also considered a Discussion Paper on e-portfolios exploring the potential benefits of e-portfolios and the issues related to their implementation at the University of Melbourne.

Learning Communities and Student Engagement, engagement both within and outside the classroom were discussed by TALDEC. Professor Gelder noted that as Arts students did not have ownership of any significant space within the Faculty, the building of Learning Communities/the cohort experience is difficult in such circumstances. Professor James observed that while the cohort experience is affected by lack of sufficient student space there are a number of other factors which also have an impact such as class size, hours students engage in employment activities and teaching and learning activities. An examination of the pedagogical practices in class to promote the cohort experience was worth exploring further. Dr McLean commented that the Melbourne Model needs to include non-curricular activities in its stipulated contact hours to build social connectedness, an important aspect of the cohort experience. Dr Ford observed that the provision of a space within the Department/School is important to enable undergraduate and postgraduate students to meet in order to enhance the +2/+3 aspect of the Melbourne Model.

4.6 Melbourne Experience Committee (MEC)

Dr McLean reported that MEC considered two important papers from the Student Housing Service reflecting the current thinking of the Housing Team in the present situation where the current rental market makes the availability of affordable student housing extremely difficult. Two short term and one long term strategy to mitigate housing stress experienced by students were recommended for MEC to consider. Professor Hawthorne noted the reported decline in usage of select Residential Colleges, the cost factor being a possible cause of this under utilisation. There could be the potential to use these as a resource.

4.7 Reports from Student Representatives

Mr Khoo reported that the Student Union had received complaints that some students were receiving a late fee notice for non-payment of fees prior to receiving the invoice requesting payment. Mr Khoo enquired if there were any QA mechanisms to ensure that invoices are sent out on time to all students. Dr McLean offered to discuss the issue with Mr Cameron, Director Student Management Services, and report back to TALQAC at the May meeting. Members observed that students need to ensure that their correct address details are recorded on the Student Information System.

5 EVALUATION CYCLE AND QUALITY MEASURES

5.1 Evaluation Cycle

(a) TALQAC Schedule of Projects 2008-2010

Professor Hawthorne reported that after discussion with Professor Pattison and the UPO, it was decided to convene a single Working Group to address the following three items from the TALQAC Schedule of Projects as there was sufficient synergy between the issues for the single Working Group to tackle:

- a) Develop an evaluation strategy for New Generation Degrees (Breadth, Engagement, Enrichment)
- b) Identify QA and evaluation processes for postgraduate award courses
- c) Review course evaluation guidelines, procedures to ensure relevance to continuing courses as well as New Generation undergraduate and postgraduate award courses

As the draft reports from this Working Group are due to TALQAC at the 8th May meeting, Professor Hawthorne recommended that the group meet and commence discussion as soon as possible. It was also noted that soon after the May report, the Review Panels for Engineering, Dental Science and VCA will need to meet preferably in June, prior to commencing reviews in July.

The following names were put forward as potential members of the Working Group:

Professor Hawthorne, Mr Fijn, Professor Pattison, Ms Jonas, Associate Professor Watty, Associate Professor Haslam, Dr Ford, Mr Ewen, Associate Professor Wlodek, Dr Mclean, Associate Professor Guillemin, Professor James and Mr Choo.

Chairs of the Review Panels:

Engineering – Professor Hawthorne
Dental Science - Professor Wigglesworth
VCA – (This has yet to be finalised)

It was suggested that Professor Lynn Meek, Head of the L.H. Martin Institute at the University be invited to participate in this meeting noting his particular expertise in evaluation, with Professor Hawthorne to meet with him to canvass potential interest.

Ms Menezes to organise the first meeting of the Working Group and Chairs of the Review Panels.

5.2 Quality Measures

Generic Skills Project Report

The Committee received and noted *The University Experience and Generic Skills Project Report*, the outcome of an application made by a group of staff during the dissemination of the first round of the Learning and Teaching Performance Funds. Dr Paul Badcock compiled the report which is to be published in a journal. The aim of the project was to explore the relationship between important aspects of a university education and the development of generic skills. 323 first, penultimate and final year students from the Faculty of Arts, Engineering and Science completed the Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA), a three hour assessment designed to measure four different generic skills - Critical Thinking, Interpersonal Understandings, Problem Solving and Written Communication. Students also completed a second assessment called the Generic Skills Questionnaire (GSQ) gauging students' own views

in relation to generic skills and the extent to which they felt that their time at university has helped them to develop these skills. The test was language rich, so difficult for students for whom English was a second or even a third language; domestic students scoring higher than international students in a number of dimensions. Also while it would have been beneficial to do a longitudinal study, students were not keen to repeat the lengthy assessment in second or third year.

Data revealed that students' Grade Point Average (GPA) was significantly and positively related to the four skill scales of the GSA, suggesting that academic achievement at university tends to be a reliable indicator of students' generic skills. The University of Melbourne students are also performing better than average. Discipline area has at least some differential impact upon students' skill enhancement as on comparison of GSA skill profiles of students from the larger sample with the profiles of students enrolled in pure or combined Arts, Engineering and/or Science degrees, results indicated that students enrolled in a pure or combined Arts degree scored significantly higher in the Critical Thinking dimension, Engineering students tended to score more highly in Problem Solving and Science students in Written Communication. Across all students, results revealed a significant, positive correlation between both a student's ENTER score and GPA and the four skills of Critical Thinking, Interpersonal Understandings, Problem Solving and Written Communication.

While there is a general consensus among students that Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills are particularly important there was considerable variation between the discipline areas with respect to the subjective importance of a wide range of other skills. Data revealed that both Engineering and Science students tend to perceive direct work and team related skills (working with others in teams, decision making and problem solving) as important whilst Arts students tend to rate Academic Skills (persuasion and argument skills, finding, evaluating and using relevant information; and written communication) high.

It was acknowledged that some of the data requires further analysis.

6 WORKING GROUPS

6.2 New Generation Degrees Working Group

This working group may be merged with the Working Group organised under Item 5.1

6.3 ABP Review Group

Dr Missingham reported on the Architecture, Building and Planning (ABP) Action Plan, a detailed response to the each of the recommendations made by the TALQAC Review Panel in 2007. Important points highlighted were:

- the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Unit which will work on teaching quality initiatives to be implemented through out 2008 and the intensive induction of new teaching staff. The Faculty is expecting to see some improvement in its QoT scores over the next few years as a result of the increased investment and engagement in this area.
- The new Student Centre will be developing and implementing student communication, evaluation and support strategies in Semester I 2008.
- The Committee expressed some concern in relation to the uncertainty about the academic management structures for the Bachelor of Environments, an issue related to uncertainty over the funding of teaching and student service delivery for this New Generation Degree. Dr Missingham noted that until clarification was provided by the Faculty and the Course Standing Committee, routine student administration approval matters such as leave of absence, student mobility, special consideration and advanced standing could be problematic. Dr Missingham also noted that that first year teaching in the Bachelor of Environments is being delivered by sessional rather than permanent

academic staff, in contrast to the rhetoric of providing all students with the best academic staff. Professor Bhalla disagreed noting that a number of LFR staff teaching into the Bachelor of Environments are permanent academic staff. TALQAC members were of the opinion that the use of sessional staff was not an issue provided they were appropriately trained.

- Student liaison representatives for individual tutorials and studio groups in particular subjects have been appointed to provide feedback to subject co-ordinators and Student Centres.
- There has been a positive change in the Faculty Governance structure providing enhanced interaction between staff in the different units.

On behalf of the Committee, Professor Hawthorne commended ABP on the diligent approach adopted by the Faculty in considering the recommendations of the TALQAC Review Panel and the meticulous response to each of the recommendations made. A follow-up meeting will occur in Semester II 2008 to enable the TALQAC Working Group to review ABP's progress in implementing the new policies and procedures and to undertake a number of focus groups with students. At this time the Faculty will provide a brief self-assessment of teaching quality and progress on issues raised in the report. TALQAC endorsed the ABP Action Plan and recommended that this form part of the Committee's report to Academic Board.

6.4 Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group

Professor Moffat reported that the order for the new QoT Survey forms, containing the additional question designed to differentiate the perceptions of students taking a given subject as a breadth component of their course or otherwise, has been placed and delivery is expected at the latest by 18th April 2008.

The redesign of the Excel macro has commenced, designed to provide Departments with up to two summary sheets per batch depending on whether or not certain conditions are met. If there are i) five or more students who said they were taking the subject as a breadth component and ii) there are at least 10 students in total (at least five non-breadth) then a Department will receive two summary sheets. The first will contain the overall result for the subject and the second the result for the breadth students. This will need to be noted in the instructions given to staff administering the QoT.

The Working Group is to meet soon to complete work remaining on Phase 1 and commence work on Phase 2. The Working Group is to provide a project outline and schedule to the May meeting of TALQAC and a final report in October.

In relation to breadth subjects Professor James reported that students have essentially made conservative/instrumental choices noting that 723 first year Economics and Commerce students have opted for Principles of Business Law as their breadth subject of choice. With students taking either a language or a subject close to their study domain, members were concerned if students were in fact experiencing the principles of breadth as enshrined in the Melbourne Model. Professor James noted that considering the choices made by students a review of the concept of breadth may be necessary.

6.5 Student Advice Quality Assurance Design Working Group

Further discussion to occur in May

6.6 Examinations Working Group (EWG)

In the absence of Associate Professor Guillemain there was no discussion under this item

6.7 TALQAC/TALDEC Working Group on Support Technology for Academic Honesty and other QA/IT Activities

There was no report under this item

7 EMERGING INNOVATIONS

It was recommended that this item would be better dealt with earlier on in the Agenda.

8 FOR INFORMATION

There were no items for information

9 OTHER BUSINESS

In response to the Committee Secretary's announcement that the Central Secretariat was moving to an electronic distribution for most of the committees being served, some members noted that they would still prefer the hardcopy version. It was agreed to offer TALQAC members the choice of an electronic or paper distribution.

10 NEXT MEETING

The next TALQAC meeting will be held on Thursday, 8th May, from 2.15 pm-4.15 pm, in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building.

The meeting closed at 4:15 pm.