

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

ACADEMIC BOARD

TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING 1/08

A meeting of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) was held at 2.15 pm on Thursday 14 February 2008 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne.

MINUTES

PRESENT

Committee Members

Professor Slocombe (Acting Chair), Professor McPhee, Associate Professor Misson, Professor Moffat, Professor James, Ms Daroesman, Dr McLean, Professor Bhalla, Associate Professor Wlodek, Mr Ewen, Dr Ford, Professor Huggins, Ms Bishop, Ms Jonas and Mr Fijn.

Observers

None

In Attendance

Mr Khoo attended for Ms Buckingham, Mr Jones for item 6.4, Professor Stevens and Ms Menezes (Committee Secretary).

BUSINESS

1. Formal Matters

1.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed new members; Professor McPhee, Mr Ewen, Ms Jonas, Dr McLean, Ms Bishop and Dr Ford as well as returning members to the first TALQAC meeting for 2008. Professor Slocombe outlined the achievements of TALQAC in maintaining the QA processes of teaching and learning at the University and the significance of the work ahead in the context of the introduction of the New Generation Degrees where the major student cohort is still enrolled in courses being taught out.

1.2 Apologies

The Committee received apologies from Associate Professor Kim Watty, Professor Pattison, Associate Professor Crosby, Associate Professor Su Baker, Associate Professor Guillemin, Professor Wigglesworth, Associate Professor Holloway and Mr Choo.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of TALQAC meeting 10/07 held on Thursday, 8 November 2007 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1 Action Sheet

Items 1, 2 and 4: Reports will be provided at the March 2008 meeting of TALQAC.

Item 3: In the absence of Professor Pattison the Committee Secretary reported that on an investigation of subjects being uploaded onto the LMS, Professor Pattison found no evidence to suggest that subjects in the New Generation Degrees were being given preference over subjects in Continuing Courses.

4 Office of the Provost and Other Committees

4.1 Matters from the Provost's Office

Professor McPhee reiterated the Chair's comments in relation to the significance of the Committee in maintaining the QA of courses introduced under the Melbourne Model and new Professional Programs at the Graduate level all occurring simultaneously with changes to student administration and the establishment of Student Centres. TALQAC's major responsibilities include ensuring the high quality of courses being taught out.

Professor Bhalla queried the mechanisms to be employed to ensure the impartiality of advice delivered in the new Student Centres. It was noted that in addition to this feature forming an important part of the Student Advisor Training Modules; student surveys and other forms of evaluation will be the main instruments to monitor this aspect of the service delivered in Student Centres.

4.2 Academic Programs Management Committee (APMC)

Professor Misson noted APMC's role in the approval of all proposals for new undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs as well as major changes to existing courses. All proposals/changes in 2008 will be made using the new forms, designated in Parts A, B and C of the process:

- Part A is a Strategic Statement and Business Plan
- Part B contains the academic components of the proposal required under the new approved academic structures
- Part C contains the academic components of the course change

4.3 Undergraduate Programs Committee (UGPC)

Professor Misson reported that UGPC has reviewed a number of late changes to subjects and will be discussing the issue of Concurrent Diplomas at its next meeting.

4.4 Postgraduate Coursework Programs Committee (PCPC)

Professor Misson noted that PCPC is involved in work similar to UGPC but at the Graduate level. Professor Bhalla to discuss with Professor Misson courses given in principle approval by Academic Board in late 2007 without completion of the detailed 2008 approval process.

Professor Misson reported that both UGPC and PCPC have received detailed teach out plans from Faculties in relation to courses being discontinued and noted the difficulties experienced in instances where small numbers of students have failed a subject in a discontinued course.

4.5 Teaching and Learning Development Committee (TALDEC)

Professor James reported that the TALDEC will meet in March 2008 and pursuant to its Terms of Reference anticipates a broader Agenda than its predecessor TaLMET. One of the goals of the Committee in the context of the Information Futures Commission is to examine how the

University formulates its own information in areas such as the LMS and Academic Honesty. The Committee has sought to co-opt staff with specific expertise such as Associate Professors Kim Watty and Lynn Gillam as well as Associate Professor Peter Jamieson who has lead the development of student centred teaching and learning spaces across the campus.

4.6 Melbourne Experience Committee (MEC)

In the absence of Professor Pattison, the report has been deferred till the April meeting.

4.7 School of Enterprise Committee

As Associate Professor Ray Misson no longer attends meetings of this Committee, there was no discussion under this item. This item will be removed in the March Agenda.

4.8 Reports from Student Representatives

Ms Bishop noted that Mr Khoo and herself will attend TALQAC as UMSU representatives.

Ms Jonas noted the lack of an audit/review of students undertaking the coursework component of a research program as well as the minor thesis research component of a Masters by Coursework and Minor Thesis. Professor Misson reported that there will be a joint PCPC and UGPC working group to examine the issue of students in the relevant programs in addition to students in undergraduate degrees who undertake negotiated projects with individual supervision and assessment. Ms Daroesman commented that administering a survey to students doing a minor thesis is problematic due to timing as this is not undertaken at a set time by all students.

Ms Jonas also informed the Committee that UMPA has set up a working group to investigate claims from students disadvantaged as a consequence of issues associated with the transition of certain courses across the University. Some examples include (but are not limited to): loss of staff in Creative Writing, Creative Arts & Gender Studies, leading to loss of subjects and supervisors. UMPA plans to collate the information and then approach the relevant Heads, Deans, senior management or the appropriate committees to investigate the development of support measures for the affected students.

5 Evaluation Cycle and Quality Measures

5.1 Evaluation Cycle

5.1a) Melbourne Experience Survey

Ms Daroesman presented the Melbourne Experience Survey, an integrated student experience survey incorporating a 'first year experience', a 'current course experience' and the 'support services' survey, designed to evaluate students' experience in the transition into and during the introduction of the Melbourne Model. The survey enables the collection of data on students' perceptions of the quality of their course, support services and the social dimensions of their student experience. The 2007 and the 2008 survey will also facilitate an evaluation of aspects of the student experience, both continuing and New Generation, in the context of TALQAC's particular responsibilities to the former group and the promises made to the latter by the University. The survey was administered in August and September 2007 to all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, eliciting a response rate of 24.6%.

The main findings reveal that approximately 70% of undergraduate and 65% of postgraduate students rated their overall experience as good to excellent, with 5% of the former and 7% of the latter group reporting a poor or very poor experience. 72% of undergraduate and 70% of postgraduate students agreed that 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this course,' emphasising aspects such as intellectual stimulation, knowledge gained and skills acquired.

Consistent with previous findings poor results were reported in the areas following areas:

- learning community (only 43% of undergraduates and 36% of postgraduates reported a sense of belonging to the university community)
- students' perceptions of the time and effort spent by staff on feedback to students in relation to their work (only 26% of undergraduates and 41% of postgraduates agreed that staff put 'a lot of time into commenting on my work')
- student's uncertainty in understanding the standard of work expected (33.2% undergraduate and 40.9% postgraduate student agreed that it was 'easy to know the standard of work expected.')

'Best aspect' comments reveal that a student's social experience; factors such as making friends, interacting with staff and other students, the diversity of people and activities across campus as well as an academic atmosphere were significant aspects of their experience. Survey results suggested that students who are removed from/disengaged from the University have a less satisfactory experience than those who participate more fully. Possible reasons contributing to this are students involvement in paid work, as this impacts on the time they are able to spend on campus and their living arrangements; students in residential colleges report higher levels of satisfaction with their University experience than most other students.

There also appear to be some areas of concern in the adjustment of first year students with only 53% feeling as if they belonged, two fifths (41%) found they could easily find help with questions and problems, fewer than two fifths (38%) had adjusted well to organising their time to complete academic work and only one fifth reported being involved in campus activities. These factors may have a negative impact on students subsequent experience and will be examined further.

A small proportion of students appear to utilise the range of support services and programs available across campus, with usage figures consistent with the QASSS survey conducted in 2005. While a possible explanation could be that students do not require particular services, it is also likely that students are unaware of available services or may experience difficulty accessing them.

There are 30,000 comments to code and it was noted that detailed reports on particular topics and cohorts will follow in further releases throughout the year.

Mr Ewen queried if the data revealed a link between *Learning Community* and technology, to gauge if students feel more or less engaged with the online environment/online teaching methodologies. Professor James noted that it will be part of TALDEC's responsibilities to examine and find ways of addressing the 'disengagement' experienced by some students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Mr Khoo queried if specific demographic information was available to assist with correlations for example the time spent on campus and academic achievement. It was noted that with the necessary shortening of the survey some demographic information was lost however Professor James reiterated that the questions utilised in the survey are based on empirical evidence designed to elicit the best information.

5.1b) Course Experience Questionnaire 2007 Preliminary outcomes for the University of Melbourne

The paper provided preliminary data on the 2007 Course Experience Questionnaire for University of Melbourne graduates who completed a course in 2006.

The data revealed a modest increase for three of the five established scales, a result of initiatives introduced to improve students' course experience and the outcomes for the two new scales introduced, *Student support* and *Graduate qualities* are higher than the 2006 national average. Briefly:

Good teaching - 51.9% up from 48.2% in 2006 for Bachelor (a first time increase above fifty percent) and 59.2% up from 57.4% in 2006 for postgraduate outcomes

Learning community - 52.0% up from 49.4% in 2006 for Bachelor (also a first time increase above fifty percent) and 56.7% up from 55.3% in 2006 for postgraduate outcomes

Generic skills – 65.1% up from 64.6% in 2006 for Bachelor and 63.3% up from 61.5% in 2006 for postgraduate outcomes

Clear goals – the scale agreement reduced slightly falling to 48.1% from 48.2% in 2006 for Bachelor and 52.6% from 54.5% in 2006 for postgraduates

Overall satisfaction – 72.9% a slight decrease from 73.0% in 2006 for Bachelor and 73.8% down from 74.7% in 2006 for postgraduate outcomes

Student support – 61.9% for University of Melbourne graduates compared to 55.8% observed nationally and 58.8% for postgraduate coursework students compared to 52.2% nationally

Graduate qualities – 69.3% for University of Melbourne Bachelor graduates compared to 69.1% for the national outcome and 71.8% for postgraduate students with 69.4% being the national outcome

There are however areas in need of improvement in the core scales of *Good teaching*, *Generic skills* and *Overall satisfaction* where the scale agreement for certain Faculties remains less than 50% and other Faculties where results have remained static or outcomes have reduced. It was noted that these outcomes have been achieved at a time when the University has been experiencing major changes in terms of class sizes and initiatives to improve the student experience have in some instances not kept pace with increased volume. Professor James reiterated the importance placed on this data by the Commonwealth in the distribution of the Learning and Teaching Performance Funds.

The national data set which will enable comparisons across disciplines and universities is expected in April 2008 with comparative reports to follow.

5.1c) Graduate Destination Survey 2007 – Preliminary Outcomes Bachelor and Postgraduate Coursework Graduates

Preliminary data for students who completed a course in 2006 reveal that while the overall outcomes are positive for University of Melbourne students, there has been no further improvement over the past two years. While full time employment for Bachelor graduates of the University who are Australian citizens or permanent residents is 84.4% and for postgraduates 88.9%, employment rates for non-permanent residents has fallen from 81.0% in 2006 to 78.3% in 2007. Though caution is to be exercised in the interpretation of this figure as data from non-resident students is low compared to permanent residents and shows variations between and within Faculties across time, there is evidence to suggest that international students who apply for permanent residence take longer to find full time employment than already established Australian citizens and permanent residents.

The median salaries for Bachelor and postgraduate coursework students has increased and while the gap in salary between male and female graduates at the Bachelor level has narrowed (males - \$45,000 females - \$44,000), the differential between male and female median salaries at the postgraduate level is quite large (males - \$68,000 females - \$55,000).

Around a third of Bachelor graduates continue with further full time study but a smaller proportion of postgraduates continue with further postgraduate study.

5.1d) Graduate Destination Survey – Preliminary Results Comparison between University of Melbourne and National Outcomes

There is currently minimal difference between the University's full time employment outcomes at 84.4% and the national outcomes at 84.5% in 2007 though median starting salary figures for Melbourne remain higher than the reported national average. Compared to national figures, a slightly higher proportion of Melbourne graduates are in part-time work while seeking full time work (9.4% compared to 5.0%) and a lower proportion is unemployed (6.1% compared to 10.5%).

Consistent with previous years a higher proportion of Melbourne graduates continue with further study – just under a third compared to a fifth nationally.

5.2 Quality Measures

5.2 a) TALQAC Terms of Reference and current membership

Members received and noted the TALQAC Terms of Reference and current membership.

6 Working Groups

6.1 TALQAC Review of Honours Programs

Ms Daroesman will report at the March meeting

6.2 New Generation Degrees Working Group

Meetings for this Working Group have been deferred to April 2008.

6.3 ABP Review Group

Professor Goad to report at the March meeting

6.4 Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group

Professor Moffat presented a modified version of the Quality of Teaching Student Feedback Questionnaire. The additional question at the commencement of the Questionnaire is designed to differentiate the perceptions of students taking a given subject as a breadth component of their course or otherwise. The modified Questionnaire is to be used in Semester I 2008. The Working Group reiterated that with the implementation of the Melbourne Model, it is vital to minimise changes to the current QoT instrument in the short term in order to create comparable data.

After discussion TALQAC approved further minor amendments and will seek Academic Board endorsement of the modified Quality of Teaching Student Feedback Questionnaire.

6.5 Student Advice Quality Assurance Design Working Group

There was no discussion under this item.

6.6 Examinations Working Group (EWG)

There was no discussion under this item.

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

Professor James to report in March

7 For Information

Members received the TALQAC 2008 meeting dates.

8 Other Business

Professor Slocombe informed members that Professor Pattison, President of the Academic Board, has requested a brief assessment report from Chairs of Committees of the Academic Board in the interests of evaluating how well Academic Board fulfils its responsibilities to the University. This report is to outline major achievements of the Committee in 2007, any frustrations or

disappointments and to foreshadow any changes that might enhance the effectiveness of the Committee in the future. In addition, Professor Pattison has also requested that the report contain the specific responsibilities and goals of each Committee for 2008.

The final report will be discussed in a meeting of Chairs of the Academic Board Committees.

9 Next Meeting

The next TALQAC meeting will be held from 2:15-4:15 pm on Thursday, 13 March 2008 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building.

The meeting closed at 4:15 pm.