

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

ACADEMIC BOARD

TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING 5/07

A meeting of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) was held at 2.15 pm on Thursday 7 June 2007 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne.

MINUTES

PRESENT

Committee Members

Professor Hawthorne (Chair), Professor Moffat, Professor Stevens, Ms Daroesman, Professor Pattison, Associate Professor Guillemin, Professor James, Associate Professor Holloway, Ms Buckingham and Mr Fijn.

Observers

Ms Harrison

In Attendance

Mr Jones for Item 5.1c, Mr Brett for Item 5.2, Ms Smith (Vice-President UMPA) who attended on behalf of Ms Beattie and Ms Menezes (Committee Secretary)

BUSINESS

1. Formal Matters

1.1 Welcome

Professor Hawthorne welcomed Professor Stockdale as the new member representing the VCA to TALQAC.

1.2 Apologies

The Committee received apologies from Professor Goodwin, Associate Professor Tregloan, Ms Ahrens, Associate Professor Crosby, Associate Professor Misson, Associate Professor Elliott, Professor Considine, Professor Jackson, Professor Bhalla, Professor Huggins, Mr Fong, Ms Beattie and Professor Borland.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the TALQAC meeting held on Thursday, 10 May 2007 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1 Action Sheet

Item 1: Professor Hawthorne (Convenor), Professor James and Ms Sleep (UPO) will constitute the ABP Review Panel. Professor Hawthorne reported that the Faculty was being urged to schedule a meeting with the Dean and relevant staff in early rather than late July, to enable the review to take place in time for preparation of the Report to Academic Board in September.

Item 3: The Committee received and noted the brief outline of TALQAC's responsibilities for 2007. Professor Pattison reported that the HR Subgroup, chaired by Ms Luck, is currently involved in preparations for Open Day 2007. Work is being undertaken to ensure the publication of appropriate materials and staff training for this significant marketing event. Professor Hawthorne noted the current lack of adequate materials for advertising in international markets.

In relation to the Honours Review, positive responses have been received from three of the five Departments/Schools invited to participate in the review.

Professor Pattison noted that as QA is a core activity of TALQAC, a key responsibility in 2007 will be the development of a Strategy Paper to review the QA aspects of the New Generation Degrees and Graduate Professional Programs. This will necessitate a review of current documents to check if they require modification to accommodate the new undergraduate degrees and graduate programs. As there are a number of concurrent activities occurring in relation to the evaluation of the New Generation Degrees, it was recommended that consultation with the relevant groups be undertaken to avoid duplication.

TALQAC will also review the QA aspects of the Evaluation Strategy for Orientation presented by staff from the Melbourne Experience Support Programs (MESP) Unit at the August meeting.

4 Other Committees

4.1 MM08 Taskforce Update

Professor Pattison reported that the BCG Team had presented their report on the Melbourne Student Service Model (MSSM) which is designed to deliver consistent, integrated and quality student service through 'one stop' Student Hubs/Centres, tailored by discipline clusters and reporting via the Deans to a central Provost. It is envisaged that the Hubs/Student Centres will reduce current duplication and inconsistent service and the model presented possible options to deliver a range of services to undergraduate, postgraduate and RHD students. Under this model, Transactional and Wellbeing Services will be centralised, with the Hubs acting as referral centres, but there will be local management of Enrichment Services. While consistency in service standards is an important objective, there will be incentives to encourage innovation. The decision to adopt or reject the model will be made by the University at the PBC Conference.

Professor Pattison expressed concern about the work that still needs to be completed with Trusts as Awards need to be aligned to the new Melbourne Model. Extra meetings of UGPC and PCPC have been scheduled to deal with the volume of Course Proposals to be considered; these will come to Academic Board for approval in July.

4.2 Undergraduate Programs Committee (UGPC)

There was no discussion under this item.

4.3 Postgraduate Coursework Programs Committee (PCPC)

There was no discussion under this item.

4.4 Teaching and Learning (Multimedia and Educational Technologies) Committee (TaLMET)

There was no discussion under this item.

4.5 Melbourne Experience Committee (MEC)

There was no discussion under this item.

4.6 School of Enterprise Committee

There was no discussion under this item.

4.7 Reports from Student Representatives

There were no reports from student representatives.

5 Evaluation Cycle and Quality Measures

5.1 a) Quality of Research Supervision and Academic Support: Report on 2006 Outcomes

The Committee received and noted the *Quality of Research Supervision and Academic Support (QRS): Summary Outcomes from the 2006 Survey*. The QRS administered in the last quarter of 2006 was a web-based online survey receiving 1503 responses which represented a response rate of 38.7%. Data was assessed against the Growing Esteem strategic objectives.

While student satisfaction remains high at whole of University level, survey outcomes declined in 2006 compared to previous years. The scale mean for *overall satisfaction with supervision* dropped to 3.98 compared to 4.00 in 2004. Falls in satisfaction are relatively small at University level, but more marked for particular Faculties, and revolve around issues of guidance to students on research design and analysis as well as overall satisfaction which is linked to supervision and candidature.

Students' *overall satisfaction with resources, facilities and support* rose to 3.71 compared to 3.67 in 2004. In keeping with past surveys, students' main concerns are related to access to adequate working space and financial resources including funding for research, conferences and scholarships. Data collected by the addition of a new question revealed that over half of all respondents are in paid work, with over a fifth engaged in more than 10 hours work a week and 7% engaged in more than 20 hours per week. Professor Hawthorne commented that it was worth analysing this data to examine the levels of work different students groups, local and international, are engaged in.

A number of questions have been added to the students' *participation in a research community* category. The data revealed that while student satisfaction with induction and orientation processes as well as integration into Department and Faculty communities is only moderate, the level of satisfaction with other aspects of their participation such as research seminar programs and social opportunities has improved. Professor Pattison noted that feedback on the correlation between students' perceptions of feeling part of a research community and the seminars and other programs designed by Departments for their research students would be beneficial.

Student comments have highlighted the need for clearer information on expectations of supervisors and for information on mechanisms to resolve problems encountered in the

supervisory relationship. The importance of being co-located with academic staff within Departments to enable students to better contribute to and participate in the Department's research community, were also stressed in students' comments.

5.1 b) Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) 2006: The Course Experience of Graduates of the Year 2005 of the University of Melbourne

Nearly five thousand (4873) students and graduates completed the 2006 CEQ yielding a response rate of 44.8% -- slightly higher than the previous two surveys. Given that trend data are flat, this report was structured to focus more on areas of weakness – that is, on the *Good teaching*, *Clear goals* and *Learning community* scales – with an emphasis on identifying particular influences on CEQ outcomes (such as demographic characteristics), and students' comments on what aspects of their course were most in need of improvement.

Analysis of 2006 results against those of previous years showed a flat to decreasing trend for undergraduates over the last four years. While it can be said that just under three quarters of undergraduate and postgraduate respondents are satisfied overall with their course, scale mean agreement levels for Bachelor respondents were less than 50% on three key scales, *Good teaching*, *Clear goals* and *Learning community*. Postgraduate outcomes are more positive showing higher levels of agreement and a small upward trend in agreement.

Analysis of Faculty results show a similar pattern to that of the University as a whole with lower outcomes on *Good teaching*, *Clear goals*, and *Learning community* and higher outcomes on *Generic skills*, *Intellectual motivation* and *Learning resources*. Architecture, Building and Planning, Economics and Commerce, and Science show results above their three year trend, but all remaining Faculties show lower outcomes. Comparisons with national data show that Faculty scale means agreement tend to be lower than the national outcome for their respective discipline on *Good teaching* and *Generic skills*, but higher for *Overall satisfaction*.

Analyses of the data, which accord with previous research and internal reporting, show that:

- a student's discipline is a key determinant in the likelihood of being classified as satisfied or dissatisfied on all three scales;
- international respondents and those less than 25 years of age were less likely to be satisfied on the *Clear goals* scale;
- male respondents and those who paid HECS upfront were more likely to be satisfied on the *Learning community* scale while those who deferred their HECS or paid domestic fees were more likely to be dissatisfied;
- compared to satisfied respondents, respondents dissatisfied with *Good teaching* were more likely to comment on a lack of interest or empathy, unhelpfulness, or the attitude of staff; the content or relevance of the subject or staff's knowledge of the material; feedback and marking; and lecturers' organisation or the organisation of the course.
- there is a strong interrelationship between students' perception of their learning community and their perception of staff and teaching; and
- need improvement comments relating to the *Clear goals* scale include: lack of clarity in the course objectives, or in sequences of subjects which were not coherent, or instances where material was repeated; and a mismatch in expectations where students expected more career related content or more of a career related focus in teaching methods.

As the CEQ outcomes are a very public indicator of students' perceptions of teaching and learning, given their use as three of seven indicators in the DEST *Learning and Teaching Performance Fund* allocation and in commercial publications such as the *Good Universities Guide*, it is recommended that decisions made to improve teaching and learning outcomes, as measured by the CEQ, take into account the findings that the data reveal.

- Given that students' experiences are heavily Faculty/discipline oriented, it is likely that any action plans around teaching and learning will need to be at the local rather than global University level, and within the context of the discipline.
- Faculties may find it helpful to examine the demographic profile of their CEQ respondents and to consider results in that context and in conjunction with comments and suggestions offered by the cohort. It is possible that certain student groups face particular difficulties and need the assistance provided by specialised programs to support their transition to University.
- Analysis of quantitative data shows a large group of students-around 40%- have ambivalent or mixed views about their course experience, particularly teaching. The comments suggest that students experience some variability or inconsistency in teaching, which might require the need for further support and training of staff and tutors in particular.

It was noted that these issues are not new, and work is already underway to address some of them. For example, a total of thirty-nine grants were funded from the University's 2006 allocation of the *Learning and Teaching Performance Fund* for projects to enhance learning and teaching at the University and 12 grants were funded in 2007 to investigate large-group teaching. It is anticipated that the reports of these studies will inform the University's understanding of the issues affecting students' learning experience and lead to development of programs and support strategies to improve students' course experience. Other initiatives such as the development of the Melbourne Experience Survey and the work being done by the TALQAC Quality of Teaching Working Group to investigate ways to improve the effectiveness of the QoT, may provide more current indicators of students' course and subject experience and provide a leading indicator of CEQ outcomes.

5.1 c) Engineering Request for QoT Unit Record Data

The Committee noted the request made by Faculty of Engineering for the raw QoT data files i.e. unit record data, to examine the relationship between a student's response to Question 2 (well taught) and Question 5 (interest of staff). The files are archived by Student Administration and contain each student's response as a single record which for Engineering amount to 175 files and 8000 records per semester. Mr Jones reported that while there is currently no set policy, this data has not historically been released except in 2005 when TALQAC (after discussion) allowed Information Systems access to their unit record data. Professor Moffat clarified that Information Systems did not request any information it did not already have, rather to avoid the cost to the University of employing staff to re-key the data, it had approached the UPO. Concern was expressed about the additional workload for the UPO and Student Administration if this becomes routine and the possible breach of privacy policy guidelines affecting both staff and students. UPO queried the perceived limited value of additional analysis of this type in improving the quality of teaching relative to other measures such as assistance from the CSHE or analysis of the information currently available. Professor Pattison noted that if the proposal put forward by the Faculty of Engineering provided a compelling argument for the improvement of teaching and learning and this did not impose a significant workload on the UPO, then she had no objections to the request.

Professor James noted that TALQAC needs to establish a position on the collection, evaluation and reporting of such QA related data. It was agreed that the QoT Working Group produce a statement of protocols for TALQAC's consideration to avoid any inappropriate use of such data.

5.2 Discussion Paper: Policy on Students with Disabilities

Mr Brett, Manager Disability Liaison Unit (DLU), presented a discussion paper *Students with Disabilities Policy*. While the University has systems in place to comply with most aspects of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (subordinate legislation to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)); there are difficulties in demonstrating Standards for Curriculum Development, Accreditation and Delivery, and Reasonable Adjustments. Finding an appropriate balance between the requirement to design curriculum that enables the participation of students with disabilities and the University's entitlement to develop academically rigorous programs, relies on the capacity to deliver high calibre advice to students and staff.

The Standards require education providers to provide reasonable adjustments where necessary, in consultation with the student or the student's associate in order to meet the objectives of the Act. Although processes are in place to provide reasonable adjustments to student with disabilities, this occurs within a myriad of competing policies. As a result, there is inconsistency in both processes and interpretation of policy across the University. If the Melbourne Student Advice Model (MSAM) is to be effectively implemented, there is a need to refine University policy in relation to reasonable adjustment. The University Disability Action Plan 2004-2007 sets targets for developing guidelines for reasonable adjustments which may address policy gaps relating to the provision of adjustments. Work has been undertaken to draft a Policy on Students with Disabilities and to augment this policy Faculties have drafted statements describing requirements and abilities that will enable an appropriate assessment of adjustments that might be available to students with a disability.

It was noted that while the University has developed a range of policies, guidelines, services and information resources to manage some specific disability issues (such as print disability and examinations), there are still significant gaps and insufficient direction for staff to meet the commitments required of the University. Consequently disability is one of the most frequent grounds for complaint through both the Equal Opportunity Unit and the external Equal Opportunity Commission.

It was agreed that the DLU Manager will liaise with the Policy and Procedures Working Group for further discussion on the reduction of gaps in the University's legislative obligations to students with disabilities. Professor Hawthorne also noted that after discussion of the MSAM document at the PBC Conference, additional input from the DLU will be sought.

6 Working Groups

6.1 Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group

The Committee received and noted the QoT Working Group's Progress Report. The Working Group plans to focus on:

- a) Enhancing the use of the current Questionnaire, with a September reporting deadline
- b) Examining ways in which the current instrument might be improved, with a preliminary report due in December.

The Committee also noted the membership of the Working Group which consists of TALQAC and co-opted members from the CSHE and UPO.

6.2 Peer Review of Teaching

There was no discussion under this item.

6.3 Acquisition of Generic Skills

Professor Pattison reported that the Generic Skills Project Steering Group (which oversees the project set up with the LTPF and has undertaken most of the work) will present a report to the Acquisition of Generic Skills Working Group with subsequent presentation to TALQAC.

6.4 Student Advice Working Group

It was noted that on the July Agenda this Working Group will be replaced by the HR and Student Advice Quality Assurance Design Subgroups. Professor Hawthorne as a member of the HR Subgroup and Chair of the QA group will provide TALQAC with an update at each meeting.

6.5 Assessment Implementation Working Group

Professor Pattison noted that this Working Group had been set up in 2004 and following further progress on the LMS, will present a final report to TALQAC prior to being disbanded in September 2007.

6.6 Examinations Working Group (EWG)

Associate Professor Guillemin reported that EWG had their first meeting for 2007 and noted that she would send the Best Practice Guide on Assessment website to the Secretary, to forward to all TALQAC members. In response to the query on Procedures for Results Processing to be prepared by EWG, Professor Pattison clarified that these would need to be in place prior to the commencement of the New Generation Degrees; however clear guidelines will only be available after the PBC Conference in mid June.

Professor Moffat requested that the dates of the information sessions held subsequent to the PBC Conference be made available as soon as possible to enable staff to note them in their calendars.

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

The Working Group has yet to meet.

7 For Information

There was no discussion under this item.

8 Other Business

There was no discussion under this item.

9 Next Meeting

The next TALQAC meeting will be held from 2:15-4:15 pm on Thursday 12 July 2007 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, University of Melbourne.

The meeting closed at 3:45 pm.