

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
ACADEMIC BOARD
TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting 2/09

MINUTES

A meeting of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee was held at 2.15-4.15pm Thursday 12 March 2009 in the Jim Potter Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne, Parkville.

PRESENT

Board Members

Professor Leslyanne Hawthorne (Chair), Professor Prem Bhalla, Ms Elizabeth Capp, Professor Sue Elliott, Professor Saman Halgamuge, Professor Bill Harley, Ms Laura Harris (present for items D-G.1, G.3-L), Professor Nick Haslam, Professor Lynn Meek, Ms Sarah Quek, Mr Anwar Shah, Professor Geoff Stevens, Associate Professor Kim Watty, Professor Gillian Wigglesworth (present for items A-H) and Professor Ian Woodrow.

Others Attending

Ms Diana Harrison, Ms Gillian Luck (present for item G.1), Ms Karen Roe (Committee Secretary) and Ms Sue Sleep.

BUSINESS

A. Formal Matters

A.1 Apologies

The Committee received apologies from Dr Rebecca Ford, Mr Shaun Ewen, Dr Rebecca Ford, Associate Professor Marilys Guillemin, Professor Ron Slocombe and Associate Professor Mary Wlodek.

A.2 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the new committee members, Professor Saman Halgamuge, Professor Bill Harley, Ms Laura Harris, Associate Professor Sandra Kentish and Professor Ian Woodrow, and announced that Associate Professor Marilys Guillemin will be Deputy Chair. The Chair invited the new committee members to orientation drinks at University House on 6 April 2009 for university staff, 9 April 2009 for students (including student representatives appointed in 2008) and 30 March 2009 for the President and Vice-President of the Academic Board, TALQAC Deputy Chair and Secretary.

A.3 Attending

Mr Bill Jones attended the meeting as the delegate of Ms Suzanne Daroesman and Ms Gillian Luck attended the meeting at 3:30pm for item G.1.

B. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday 12 February 2009 were adopted as a correct record by the committee and signed by the Chair.

C. Matters Arising from the Minutes

C.1 Action Sheet

The committee received and noted the action sheet.

D. University Reports

D.1 Matters from the Provost's Office

The committee received a verbal report from Professor Sue Elliott on the Responsible Division Management project at the university. Business processes have been examined, and now the focus has turned to student services and academic systems across the faculties, central administration and the Academic Board.

E. Emerging Innovations

Nil.

F. Evaluation Cycle

F.1 Online Quality of Teaching Survey

The committee received and noted a report from the Provost's Office entitled 'Online Quality of Teaching Survey' and a tabled paper 'Quality of Teaching Student Feedback Questionnaires Policy Framework' from the 2006 evaluation cycle. The discussion included the following points:

- there is a view that a shift to on-line QoT surveys is bound to occur at some point in the future, given the availability of on-line technologies.
- there are expected to be overall budgetary and labour savings in moving to online application of the survey, but this process must also improve quality assurance.
- any transfer to online application must be made with due consideration of the policy implications, eg several other universities have transferred to online surveys. Two of these universities returned to a paper based survey due to an unacceptably low response. The typical response rate for similar unit evaluation online surveys is in the range of 30%-45%.
- the policy framework for the survey states "the primary purpose of the QoT is to measure the quality of subjects, rather than individuals. The instrument has been developed primarily for quality assurance purposes and is not a diagnostic tool for evaluating teachers". Nonetheless, survey results have been used regularly for purposes other than quality assurance of taught subjects.
- the survey re-design process should be used to clarify its purpose and to rewrite some survey questions to maximise the usefulness of the data.
- students who do not attend lectures will be able to provide feedback online, whereas this was not possible with paper distribution in lecture

- theatres. The introduction of an online survey may require the addition of a question on class attendance to assist in the interpretation of survey results.
- subject characteristics such as class size should be considered when analysing the survey data.
 - students may prefer the online method, because it will allow more time for reflection on the subject without the time constraints of survey collection at the end of lectures.
 - Merlin was determined to be unsuitable for online application of the survey. The Learning Management System could provide a link to the survey, but could not support adequately the survey itself. A new system would be required at sizeable cost to the university.

The committee resolved to recommend to the Academic Board that the survey be moved online within the next 12 months and that a pilot on three diverse faculties be conducted. Professor Elliott was requested to bring forward a proposal for the pilot project including the supporting principles. The TALQAC Working Group on the Quality of Teaching Survey will conduct a systematic review of the purpose and content of the survey including consideration of its alignment with the university wide communication strategy.

F.2 Student Feedback on the Quality of Teaching: Semester 2 2008

The committee received and noted an evaluation cycle report from the University Planning Office (UPO) entitled 'Student Feedback on the Quality of Teaching: Report on Semester 2 2008 and Trend Data'. Mr Jones reported verbally on key issues arising from the survey. The percentage of undergraduate respondents who agreed increased for all questions compared to the previous semester and the outcome for each question was also above its respective three year average. The increase in agreement for each question was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all but Question I (expected of me). Postgraduate outcomes remain high and steady. The results show again that students are generally satisfied with most aspects of their subjects, but there remain areas of less satisfactory results such as students' perceptions of the feedback they receive. The proportion of undergraduate students who agreed that overall they were satisfied with the quality of the learning experience in their subject and that their subjects were well taught was 77.0% and 78.0% respectively, a level of agreement at the top of the range of previous results. Postgraduate outcomes show the level of agreement for overall satisfaction to be 81.1% while that for well taught was 81.8%. The full survey will be available on the evaluation cycle website.

G. Quality Measures

G.1 Student Advice Program

The committee received and noted a report from the Academic Registrar entitled 'Student Advice Program: Training Attendance Rates to Date (Tuesday 18 November 2008)' and the minutes 1/09 of the Student Services Network meeting that was held on 19 February 2009. The discussion with Ms Luck included the following points:

- there are three tiers of advice which are provided to students: answering enquiries, discussion with course advisers and specialist advice. At present, the need for better system support to record the advice given to students at each stage is being investigated.

- more professional staff than academic staff provide course advice, so the format and timing of training programs is being reviewed to encourage increased participation by academic staff, including from Faculties where the level of academic staff engagement appears to be problematic. (Access to academic staff has emerged as a significant issue in a number of recent TALQAC reviews.)
- the ratio of course advisers to students is reportedly problematic in some faculties (as high as 1:1000, and far exceeding the levels advocated by TALQAC when developing the previous Melbourne Student Advice Model). Identifying of appropriate staff:student ratios for advice functions may be required, noting in relation to this that enrichment officers and other staff give course advice too, so the ratio could be higher.
- course advisors are under great demand at the commencement of the academic year. Students have complained about difficulties in making appointments and long queues. It was suggested that an online booking system be implemented. Greater engagement of academic staff in course advising was necessary particularly with the implementation of the new policy on advising students in their first and penultimate year. One option could be to mandate a defined number of days for academic staff engagement at peak times (as has been the case with Science, as part of routine faculty roles). Another possibility would be to utilise senior students as casual course advisors at this time of year.
- student bodies have expressed concerns about the level of advice given to students for sequences and pathways within the Melbourne Model. Published material such as the course handbook cannot answer all queries and websites are sometimes out of date.
- students make their views on student services widely available through blogs. Good service at this time of year may influence positively their blogs.

The committee noted the Student Advice Program is subject to ongoing review and continuous improvement. The Chair requested the committee be updated on the student advice program later in the year, and requested that future reports provide a breakdown of academic and professional staff enrolment and attendance in training courses.

G.2 AUQA Audit 2010

The committee received and noted a memorandum dated 27 February 2009 from the Vice-Chancellor entitled 'Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) Audit of the University of Melbourne in 2010'. Professor Elliott reported verbally the AUQA audit will be conducted in May 2010 as part of the second cycle of the AUQA reviews. The University must submit a self review portfolio by January 2010 addressing two themes. The University has proposed a number of themes to AUQA – internationalisation, research training and the Melbourne Model as exemplified by Science programs. The TALQAC quality reviews of new generation degrees and the new Teaching and Learning Evaluation Guidelines will be important in preparing for the AUQA audit. The Commonwealth Government has proposed a new national accreditation body to be responsible for reviewing quality assurance and accreditation responsibilities of universities.

G.3 Ensuring Accountability

The committee received the university publication entitled 'Ensuring

Accountability: a Strategic Framework for Planning, Managing & Assuring Growing Esteem 2009' and noted the references to TALQAC on pages 8 and 23.

H. Course Reviews

The Chair thanked the University Planning Office for preparing the review reports and the panel members for participating in the reviews and providing feedback on the reports. The Chair undertook to note at the next Academic Board meeting the key issues arising from the four course reviews including quality of student advice and training of student advisors during the transition to the Melbourne Model, learning support for international students, roles of faculty teaching and learning units and their level of interaction with students, and the need for improved systematic communication with students about curriculum and other Melbourne Model changes.

H.1 ABP Review Panel

The committee received from the Chair a verbal report about the review of coursework programs in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. The Chair undertook to phone the Dean to discuss the draft review report. The revised report will be distributed to the panel members thereafter and forwarded to the April meetings of TALQAC and the Academic Board. The Faculty's formal response and action plan will be available in June.

H.2 Dental Science Review Panel

The committee received from Professor Haslam a verbal report that the review of Dental Science has been delayed. It is anticipated the review process will be conducted in May 2009.

H.3 Engineering Review Panel

The committee received from the Chair a verbal report about the course review of the Melbourne School of Engineering. The draft review report was sent to the Dean. Issues raised in the report were discussed at a school retreat recently. Feedback from the Dean is expected next week. The report will be forwarded to the April meetings of TALQAC and the Academic Board. The School's formal response and action plan will be available in June.

H.4 VCA Review Panel

The committee received from Professor Wigglesworth a verbal report about the course review of the Victorian College of the Arts. Several issues arose during the review including how talent is identified and assessed, and the admission and training of students at differing levels of achievement. The draft review report was sent to the current Dean for feedback. Additional feedback will be sought from the new Dean after she takes up the position in April 2009. The review report will be available for the TALQAC meeting in April and then forwarded to Academic Board for its June meeting.

I. Working Groups

I.1 Course Evaluation Strategy and Design Working Group

The Chair reported verbally that two meetings of the Course Evaluation Strategy and Design Working Group are planned for March and April 2009. Separate

workshops will be run to address two sub-issues: quality assurance in teaching, and the jurisdiction of deans compared to heads of departments in relation to quality assurance. Four TALQAC members will participate in each workshop, with draft text following the meetings to be provided to the UPO. It is anticipated that draft guidelines will be presented to the committee in April, and a final draft will be presented in May for recommendation to the Academic Board in June.

I.2 Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group

The committee appointed Professor Harley as chair of the Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group. The role of the working group is to review the 2006 policy framework for the 'Quality of Teaching Survey', review the survey questions, monitor the transition to online application of the survey and work closely with the Provost's Office and UPO. The Secretary was requested to send Professor Harley the list of working group members and the 2008 working group report by Professor Alistair Moffat.

I.3 TALQAC/TALDEC Working Group on Support Technology for Academic Honesty and Other QA/IT Activities

Nil.

J. Other Committees

J.1 Melbourne Model Committee

The committee received from Professor Elliott a verbal update on two matters that were discussed at the recent meeting of the Melbourne Model Committee: documenting and recommending breadth subjects and determining pathways to degrees.

J.2 Academic Programs Committee

It was noted the Academic Programs Committee had not met since the February meeting of TALQAC.

J.3 Teaching and Learning Development Committee

It was noted the Teaching and Learning Development Committee had not met since the February meeting of TALQAC. The Chair reported verbally that Associate Professor Guillemin will represent TALQAC at meetings of the Teaching and Learning Development Committee.

J.4 Policy and Procedures Working Group

The committee received from Professor Stevens a verbal update on matters discussed at the recent meeting of the Policy and Procedures Working Group. It is due to wind up in June 2009 when its work will conclude on tracing the origin of all academic policies and procedures back to the approving committee.

J.5 Reports from Student Representatives

Nil.

K. Other Business

The Chair reported verbally on her discussions with Mr Tony Crook, Melbourne International, and Mr Douglas Proctor, International Relations, about requests from international universities for expert quality assurance advice. It was agreed that staff from around the university should share their views on the interest, merits and challenges in providing such advice, in order to facilitate the development of a common approach and costing across the faculties. Mr Crooks will be invited to attend the next TALQAC meeting to discuss the merits of such international quality assurance engagement directly.

L. Forthcoming Meetings

The committee noted that forthcoming meetings will be held at 2.15-4.15pm Thursday 30 April, 25 June, 13 August, 17 September, 22 October and 19 November 2009 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne, Parkville.

The meeting closed at 4:15pm.