

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE**

**ACADEMIC BOARD**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

**MEETING 9/07**

A meeting of the Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee (TALQAC) was held at 2.15 pm on Thursday 6 October 2007 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, The University of Melbourne.

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT**

**Committee Members**

Professor Slocombe (Acting Chair), Professor Goodwin, Professor Jackson, Professor Stevens, Associate Professor Misson, Professor Huggins, Ms Beattie, Professor Pattison, Ms Daroesman, Associate Professor Guillemin, Professor Bhalla, Associate Professor Wlodek and Mr Fijn.

**Observers**

None

**In Attendance**

Mr Edwards for item 6.3, Mr Jones for item 6.4 and Ms Menezes (Committee Secretary)

**BUSINESS**

**1. Formal Matters**

**1.1 Welcome**

Professor Slocombe welcomed Associate Professor Wlodek, (Department of Physiology), nominee of the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Graduate Research.

**1.2 Apologies**

The Committee received apologies from Associate Professor Crosby, Professor Stockdale, Associate Professor Elliott, Professor Borland, Ms Ahrens, Associate Professor Holloway, Professor Moffat, Ms Harrison, Professor James, Ms Buckingham and Mr Choo.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minutes of TALQAC meeting 8/07 held on Thursday, 6 September 2007 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

**3 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

**3.1 Action Sheet**

Items 1 and 2: In the absence of Professor James these items were not discussed.  
Item 3: Briefing the Acting Chair of TALQAC – This item has been completed.

It was also noted that Item I under the Long Term Action Items needs to read TALDEC Chair rather than TaLMET Chair.

## **4 Other Committees**

### **4.1 MMIT Update**

Professor Pattison reported that significant discussion has occurred in relation to the Student Hubs and clarification of the academic staff interaction/relationship with professional staff and students in the context of the Hubs. The Academic Connectedness Advisory Committee is currently preparing a paper on approaches to this issue to be presented to TALQAC at the November meeting.

Professor Slocombe also reported that as a consequence of a paper prepared by Professor Strugnell and presented to the Committee of Deans, a proposal for the creation of a Working Group to conduct a review the functions of the Melbourne School of Graduate Research (MSGR) was endorsed.

### **4.2 Undergraduate Programs Committee (UGPC)**

Professor Stevens reported that Committee work involved the discontinuation of some courses and discussion on the teach out of legacy courses over the next five to ten years. It was noted that TALQAC will need to monitor the quality of this teach out process.

### **4.3 Postgraduate Coursework Programs Committee (PCPC)**

Associate Professor Misson reported that the recommendations of the Working Group examining the nomenclature of postgraduate courses under the Melbourne Model have been approved by Academic Board. This was undertaken to obtain consistency in the content of marketing material across the University.

In addition to a number of Course Proposals, PCPC also received the report prepared by the CSHE on student finances and the implications of this for the student experience, when students are forced to self fund their academic and living expenses. Professor Slocombe noted that some RHD students with an H1 rating who were unsuccessful in securing a scholarship have continued with their research degrees, with a subsequent negative impact on their finances and the student experience.

Professor Jackson also noted that maintenance of Quality Assurance in postgraduate coursework programs may become problematic with the intent to run classes with a minimum of twenty-five students, policy in this area being driven by a financial rather than an academic model. Professor Jackson noted that in some disciplines, small group teaching was considered very important and meeting such a target minimal class size could potentially damage academic program delivery. The Chair indicated that he understood that the Provost was aware of this potential problem and would be investigating further.

Student representatives queried the QA of the new courses being approved. Associate Professor Misson noted that there is a distinction between course design and approval which is the responsibility of PCPC and the QA of delivery which TALQAC needs to monitor. Professor Bhalla commented on the need to ensure that there is a clear distinction between material delivered at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Associate Professor Misson commented that often while subject descriptions are similar, the level and mode of delivery were the main distinguishing features. Ms Beattie observed that with the two-year Masters Program in Science, there has been discussion on the integration into the Masters Program, those undergraduate subjects lost as a result of including breadth, to enable students to build the requisite knowledge base. It was acknowledged that including purely undergraduate material at the postgraduate level

would be problematic and any such material will need to be adjusted in design and delivery to the appropriate standard.

Professor Pattison recommended that when TALQAC reviews the *Guidelines for Course Evaluation* in the context of the *Quality Assurance Programs during the Transition to the Melbourne Model* paper developed by the ABP Review Group and endorsed by TALQAC and Academic Board, QA of new Graduate Courses needs to be considered. Professor Pattison also proposed that the final document be sent to TALDEC for feedback.

#### **4.4 Teaching and Learning Development Committee (TALDEC)**

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**

Associate Professor Ray Misson noted that a review of the School of Enterprise has been conducted with significant changes foreshadowed including a change of name for the School.

#### **4.7 Reports from Student Representatives**

Ms Beattie reported that students in legacy courses could be a potential equity group citing the example where the uploading of coursework materials onto LMS for the New Gen Degrees was being given priority over materials of some legacy courses, disadvantaging this student cohort. Professor Pattison promised to follow up and report back to TALQAC noting that this could also affect the student experience of this cohort in which case it needs to be followed up by the Melbourne Experience Committee as well.

### **5 Evaluation Cycle and Quality Measures**

#### **5.1 Evaluation Cycle**

There were no reports at the October meeting.

#### **5.2 Quality Measures**

##### **5.2 a) Review of TALQAC's membership and Terms of Reference**

The Committee received the Membership and Terms of Reference and noted that changes to the names of Committees and titles of new positions need to be made to the document in line with the organisational structure outlined in the *Structural Change to Support the Growing Esteem Strategy* paper which was approved by Council. For the Terms of Reference it was noted that 3.1 needs to include Graduate Schools in addition to Faculties. Associate Professor Guillemin noted that with the new Committee structure it would be logical to first review the TORs of the Academic Programs Management Committee, prior to TALQAC amending its own terms of reference. Professor Slocombe agreed to follow up and report back to TALQAC in November at which time discussion of Item 5.1a will continue. Members reiterated that TALQAC should continue with its constructive role of showcasing examples of best practice.

Professor Slocombe encouraged members to discuss with and nominate staff within their Departments for the vacancies existing on TALQAC in 2008.

### **6 Working Groups**

## **6.1 TALQAC Review of Honours Programs**

Ms Daroesman reported that meetings and the major site visit with the School of Historical Studies, Department of Zoology, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Department of Economics, Surgery - Austin Health and Northern Health have been conducted. The draft report will be presented to TALQAC at the November meeting to be revised and then forwarded to the November or December Academic Board meeting, depending on the speed of feedback/revision.

## **6.2 New Generation Degrees Working Group**

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

## **6.3 ABP Review Group**

Associate Professor Guillemin presented the TALQAC ABP Course Review Report to the Committee. Professor Slocombe cautioned members to maintain the confidentiality of the report as Professor Kvan, Dean of ABP, had not had the opportunity to review the current iteration of the report. The report commended the Faculty on positive measures undertaken in the areas of maintaining a strong demand for ABP courses, achieving strong graduate outcomes, extensive use of industry experts in teaching which provided exposure to students of industry practice, addressing course accreditation issues at the national and international levels, implementing a new Faculty governance structure and a workload policy, increasing support services for learning and teaching for both staff and students part of which includes improvements in recruitment and induction of sessional staff and policies to guarantee that no student is disadvantaged by the Melbourne Model changes, as well as the development of detailed support services for addressing the needs of diverse student cohorts. The Faculty has also developed a Melbourne Model implementation plan and a comprehensive student hub proposal.

To address areas of concern, the report also recommended in some detail the development of an action plan in relation to the following:

- a) create a strong Faculty teaching culture and take immediate steps to improve the teaching quality
- b) strengthen Faculty-based quality assurance programs for course governance and management
- c) Strengthen Faculty-based quality assurance programs for teaching and learning
- d) Strengthen teaching and learning support
- e) Enhance the Melbourne student experience
- f) Strengthen student communication processes
- g) Systematically engage industry and professional bodies in Faculty QA and outreach activities with regular feedback to the Faculty Board
- h) Strengthen relations with recent graduates through Alumni networks
- i) In conjunction with the University, develop a systematised and coordinated program for national and international professional accreditation of courses

The Working Group recommended that a progress report on actions taken and outcomes be provided through the Dean as part of the Faculty's 2008 Vice-Chancellor's Performance Review. A follow-up meeting to occur in Semester II 2008 has also been planned by the TALQAC Working Group to review ABP's progress in implementing 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 of issues raised in the report.

The final report incorporating the response of ABP will be considered by TALQAC at the November meeting and then forwarded to Academic Board. Professor Pattison commended the ABP Review Group on the excellent report especially its constructive quality which has the potential to lead to significant changes with the Faculty.

## **Quality Assurance Programs during the Transition to the Melbourne Model**

The Committee decided that the section of the ABP Report recommending a modified TALQAC QA process during the transition to the Melbourne Model be discussed as a separate issue.

TALQAC received and accepted the proposals outlined by the TALQAC ABP Course Review Group recommending a modified QA review process during the transition period. Members agreed that TALQAC needs to conduct a simplified evaluation of QA with the process still providing meaningful assurance of teaching and learning standards as well as commitments to improvements, achievable within the operational goals of the Faculties.

TALQAC to submit the following recommendations to Academic Board for approval:

- TALQAC's review of the quality of teaching and learning in University coursework programs continues but in a simplified form
- A schedule of course reviews which include New Generation and Legacy coursework programs is developed, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders
- Membership of the TALQAC Review Panels will be constituted noting the priorities and characteristics of the course being reviewed and may include an appropriate external senior academic in addition to academic and professional staff and student members of TALQAC
- The simplified course reviews to consist of self assessment by the academic units within the Faculty on their QA practices, quality of teaching and student service standards; discussion between TALQAC and the units within the Faculty of the self-assessment provided in line with the modified Guidelines for Course Evaluation; and feedback collected from student focus groups, professional and industry groups
- A Review Report including recommendations on enhancement of quality assurance standards and areas for improvement be provided to Academic Board
- The TALQAC Review Panel should also provide advice to the Provost regarding the standards and coherence of courses under review
- TALQAC to subsequently develop a showcase of best practice relating to quality improvements in the areas of course governance and management, teaching and learning practices including assessment and feedback mechanisms, engagement of students as independent learners, monitoring student progress and students at risk, transition programs and professional/industry engagement.

### **6.4 Quality of Teaching Survey Working Group**

Mr Jones and Ms Daroesman presented the Draft Summary of Recommendations. The Working Group conducted a series of structured interviews with academic and professional staff as well as students to identify current practice in the areas of administration of the survey, communication of survey results to staff and students and utilisation of the results to improve the quality of teaching. Feedback revealed a range of practices in place, areas where better practice would enhance the use of the current questionnaire and examples of best practice as well. A recurrent theme was lack of engagement with the QoT process from both students and staff which could be partly attributed to the lack of communication to students of QoT results and improvements made, making them feel that the feedback they provide is not taken seriously. Also in some instances results were not made routinely available to staff or not discussed/utilised in a manner to improve the quality of teaching. The Working Group reiterated that with the implementation of the Melbourne Model, it is vital to utilise the current QoT instrument to create comparable data. However five major recommendations were made in the draft report in relation to enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the current instrument, making the instrument more meaningful to staff, encouraging students to engage with the survey, highlighting examples of good practice to assist Departments and Faculties in the administration of the survey and investigating the incorporation of minor modifications to the questionnaire to assist in the collection of enrolment details for use in Semester I 2008.

Professor Stevens queried if it was possible to analyse the response of different student cohorts as they sampled subjects either as the core or breadth component of their degree. Mr Jones noted that recommendation five in the report; proposing minor modifications to the questionnaire would address this. Uploading onto the LMS the QoT subjects scores, what actions were taken or not as a result of those scores and for what reasons, and providing all students with Level 2 access to view this information prior to enrolment in a subject, would be beneficial to the entire student cohort.

Members approved the Draft Summary of Recommendations noting that the final report on Phase I would be presented to TALQAC at the November meeting and then forwarded to Academic Board for approval.

#### **6.5 Student Advice Quality Assurance Design Working Group**

There was no discussion under this item.

#### **6.6 Examinations Working Group (EWG)**

Professor Stevens reported that the EWG Report was discussed at UGPC and in relation to Item 2, Alternative Forms of Assessment and Exam Timetabling, Professor Borland (Chair UGPC) and Associate Professor Sondergaard had agreed to approach the relevant Faculties in order to resolve the issue of poor utilisation of exam venues where there are vacant desks as students have opted to do a research essay rather than sit the exam. It will be recommended that these Faculties obtain from students a commitment earlier in the semester as to their preferred form of assessment, so that exam venues cater only to the group that has chosen to sit the examination.

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

There was no discussion under this item.

### **7 For Information**

There was no discussion under this item.

### **8 Other Business**

There was no discussion under this item.

### **9 Next Meeting**

The last TALQAC meeting for 2007 will be held from 2:15-4:15 pm on Thursday 8 November 2007 in the Jim Potter Conference Room, Old Physics Building, University of Melbourne.

The meeting closed at 3:45 pm.