**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CARDIFF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY COMMITTEE (ASQC) HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2020 AT 10.00 AM VIA ZOOM**

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| Present: | Ms Claire Morgan (Chair); Ms Jane Chukwu; Ms Hannah Doe; Ms Judith Fabian; Dr Kate Gilliver; Dr Robert Gossedge; Dr Julie Gwilliam; Professor Martin Jephcote; Professor Dai John; Dr Andrew Kerr; Dr Emma Kidd; Dr Rhys Pullin; Mr Sebastian Ripley; Dr Andrew Roberts; Professor Helen Williams; Dr Robert Wilson. |
| In attendance: | Mr Rhodri Evans (Secretary); Ms Kath Evans; Ms Tracey Evans; Mr Lloyd Hole; Ms Sian Lewis; Mrs Tracey Stanley; Ms Martine Woodward. |
| Apologies: | Dr Hannah Shaw. |

The Chair welcomed new members attending their first meeting of the Committee.

1279 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee held on 3 June 2020 (paper 19/683) were confirmed as a true record.

1280 **MATTERS ARISING**

Received and considered paper 20/91, 'Matters Arising'.

Arising therefrom:

1280.1 Regulations (Minute 1267.1)

NOTED

.1 equality impact assessment of the postgraduate research Regulations had been completed;

.2 the finalisation of the equality impact assessments of other Regulations had been delayed as a consequence of the need to prioritise actions to mitigate disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

[Secretary's note: the equality impact assessments for all regulations would be completed by the end of April 2021.]

1280.2 Periodic Review (Minute 1267.2)

NOTED

.1 that the development of a new re-validation process had commenced with a desktop analysis of the approach typically undertaken by other universities;

.2 that two task and finish groups would be established – one strategic and one operational – and the terms of reference and membership would be confirmed by the Chair of ASQC and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

1280.3     <u>Review of Chair's Action</u> (Minute 1267.3)

NOTED:

.1     that further work was being undertaken by the Deputy Head of Registry to develop a standard operating procedure, ensuring a shared understanding of the decision-making process and identifying the location where supporting evidence was filed;

.2     the a draft standard operating procedure would be available for the reviewer of Chair's action to comment on in the forthcoming review.

1280.4     <u>QER Reports and Action Plan</u> (Minute 1269)

NOTED that Council and Senate had approved the QER action plan and it had been published on the University's webpages.

1280.5     <u>ARE 2019/20</u> (Minute 1271)

Received and considered paper 20/92 'Colleges Joint Report on Update on ARE'.

NOTED

.1     the report specified the actions taken following the last meeting of ASQC in respect of individual schools and advised that progress against the actions would be monitored through routine meetings, as a part of the ARE process, and with additional review meetings scheduled as necessary;

.2     that the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students and the College Pro Vice-Chancellor had met the senior management team of HCARE to discuss how the identified risks would be addressed;

.3     that the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students, the College Pro Vice-Chancellor, and the College Deans, had met with the Head of SHARE and agreed a support plan.

**RESOLVED**

.4     a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee to provide a further update on progress.

1280.6     <u>ARE 2019/20</u> (Minute 1271)

NOTED that the arrangements for ARE 2020/21 had been communicated to schools by the Chair and details of the process and guidance had been published on the intranet.

1280.7     <u>Programme Development Policy</u> (Minute 1274)

NOTED that Council and Senate had approved the QER action plan and it had been published on the University's webpages.

1280.8    Other Matters Arising

NOTED that other matters arising would be considered elsewhere on the agenda:

.1    Degree Outcomes Statement (Minute 1267.4)

See Minute 1284.

.2    Policy for Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating Credit Bearing Activity (Minute 1270.5)

See Minute 1286.

1281    **CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP**

1281.1    Academic Standards and Quality Committee

Received and NOTED paper 20/103, 'Academic Standards and Quality Committee: Constitution and Membership Session 2021/21'.

Further NOTED the following updates to membership:

.1    the new student members: Ms Jane Chukwu (Vice-President Postgraduate), Ms Hannah Doe (Vice-President Education), and Mr Sebastian Ripley (Vice-President Heath Park), replacing Mr Nick Fox, Mr Tomos Evans, and Ms Shekina Ortom;

.2    the appointment by Council of Ms Judith Fabian, replacing Professor Stuart Palmer;

.3    the appointment by Senate of Dr Andrew Kerr (EARTH) and Dr Hannah Shaw (BIOSI), replacing Professor Barbara Chadwick and Dr Ryan Prout.

1281.2    Sub-Committees of Academic Standards and Quality Committee

Received and considered paper 20/93, 'Terms of Reference and Membership of Sub-Committees of Academic Standards and Quality Committee: Session 2020/21'.

NOTED

.1    the membership of the Programme and Partner Standing Panel had been updated to include professional service staff who would be invited to provide input when matters related to their area of expertise were included on the agenda.

.2    that the Programme and Partner Standing Panel would continue to consider proposals put forward in line with the Programme Development Policy;

.3    that any variation to programmes, which were required to address disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic, would be considered and approved through the established Framework for Variation taking into consideration the University's obligations under consumer protection law;

.4      that the Framework for Variation enabled changes to be made to programmes under the provisions outlined in the Senate Regulations which permit the Vice-Chancellor to vary arrangements, to minimise the impact on the student learning experience, in exceptional circumstances which are beyond the University's reasonable control.

## 1282      ITEMS FROM THE CHAIR

### 1282.1      Education and Student Sub-Strategy

NOTED

.1      that the Way Forward 2018 – 2023 had been recast and the strategic direction revised in response to Covid-19 pandemic;

.2      that there was a need to re-prioritise activity to provide our students with the highest quality experience possible given the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst preserving our academic standards and integrity;

.3      that during the summer, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Students had consulted with staff and students on the priorities for a revised Education and Student sub-strategy and in due course would be seeking approval for the revised sub-strategy which would inform actions over the next 3 years.

### 1282.2      Digital Learning Framework

NOTED

.1      that in 2020/21, the University is supporting learning via a blend of on-campus and online activities with a greater emphasis on digital education;

.2      that to ensure a high-quality student experience in 2020/21, during the summer the Digital Education Programme engaged with over 200 staff from across the University and delivered:

- a Digital Learning Framework which specified the five underpinning principles for all aspects of the University's approach to digital education and provided guidance about design and delivery of modules in 2020/21;

- a digital support service to provide proactive and reactive support to academic staff on online and blended teaching throughout 2020/21;

- online support resources and training events.

### 1282.3      Contingency Planning 2020/21

NOTED

.1      that during the academic year there were likely to be ongoing challenges in responding to the spread and incidents of coronavirus transmission: individual cases; the potential for a growing number of students needing to self-isolate; and the

prospect of further restrictions being introduced by Welsh Government;

.2     that to ensure students were supported if they needed to switch to remote learning, or if there is a requirement to suspend some or all on-campus learning activities for a period, schools had been asked to produce a contingency plan;

.3     that contingency plans would enable swift action to be taken to support remote learning, should it be necessary, and provide reassurance to students that we would be able to support their learning throughout 2020/21;

.4     that if as a result of continued disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic, required changes to programmes would be facilitated through the established Framework for Variation, taking into consideration the University's obligations under consumer protection law.

1283     **ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT 2019/20**

Received and considered paper 20/105 'Annual Quality Report 2019/20'.

NOTED

1283.1     that the Annual Quality Report provided a holistic overview of the operation of the University's academic quality management system during the 2019/20 academic year;

1283.2     that the purpose of the report was to provide assurances to the Council that the systems in place provided confidence that the University appropriately set and maintained academic standards, and systematically monitored and evaluated teaching and learning, identified enhancement opportunities, and supported students to succeed;

1283.3     that the University's positive outcome to QER would provide Council with significant assurance, however, there remained issues of concern to be addressed, notably the latest NSS scores;

1283.4     that as the Committee responsible for advising the University on all matters relating to the promotion of academic quality and standards it was important the report received due scrutiny and that members were confident that the report provided an appropriate overview to Council;

1283.5     the report provided a risk status for each area of the academic quality system, identifying two areas of high risk and the actions being taken to address issues:

•     Student Experience - Action plans were being developed as a matter of priority to address the disappointing NSS scores and an institutional plan was being submitted to HEFCW. School NSS actions would be incorporated into Student Experience Enhancement Plans (SEEPs) and monitored via College Deans and the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process;

     • Student Cases – Action had been taken to implement a stabilisation package, and the risk was not lowered until the actions were completed and staff trained. The risk status also recognised the potential increase in managing student case load during 2020/21 due to issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic;

1283.6    that the Chair had written to 10 Schools regarding changes to degree outcome profile for 2019/20 to ensure that analysis and intervention was in place before discussion through ARE;

1283.7    that the report identified the significantly lower degree classification outcomes for undergraduate BAME students and confirmed that in 2020/21 the BAME Awarding Gap Group would develop an action plan to address the variation in profile when compared with the profile for the student population;

1283.8    that the QER action plan confirmed that there would be a review of the CUROP, to ensure that undergraduate could continue to have opportunities to engage with research activities to support their learning, and that it would be appropriate for the review to also include the CUSEIP;

1283.9    that whilst it was acknowledged the data available to support ARE in 2019/20 were improved, there continued to be a need to enhance the availability of data to better inform ARE discussions and this was a matter the Chair would be raising with the Director of Strategic Planning;

1283.10    that further information on the timescales for the completion of complaints and appeals, the outcomes of cases received by the OIA, and any OIA confirmation that the University has complied with "student-centred" recommendations could helpfully be included in the report.

**RESOLVED**

1283.11    that subject to the updates identified by members, to **recommend** to Senate and Council:

1.    that the University:

- could continue to have confidence in all quality policies and processes operated during the 2019/20 academic cycle;
- could continue to have confidence that the standards of awards had been appropriately set and maintained; and
- had identified key quality enhancement activities and actions for the 2019/20 academic year which addressed identified risks;

2.    that the report enabled Council to provide the required assurances to HEFCW as specified in the Quality Assurance Statements for the Governing Bodies of Regulated Institutions.

1284    **DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT**

Received and considered paper 20/106 'Degree Outcomes Statement'.

NOTED

1284.1 that universities in England and Wales were expected to publish a Degree Outcomes Statement as specified by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) Statement of Intent to protect the value of UK degrees;

1284.2 that the format and content of the draft Degree Outcomes Statement was aligned with the QAA's guidance to universities on producing the statement;

1284.3 that the Degree Outcomes Statement summarised the University's degree classification profile up to 2018/19, the last academic year for which a review had been concluded, and confirmed that degree outcomes were reviewed annually through the University's academic quality system, which ensured that academic standards were appropriately set and maintained with reference to external expectations;

1284.4 that Cardiff University data showed that there had been a 5% increase in the proportion of students attaining good degrees (1st and 2-1) over the five-year period (2014/15 to 2018/19), from 78% to 83%, which was broadly similar to the sector increase of 4% over the same period;

1284.5 that data for our academic schools was not included as they do not align fully with the nationally defined discipline categories and therefore direct comparisons were not reliable; it was discernible from review of the school data that variability in the proportion of students achieving 1st class degrees across academic schools was generally typical of the variability of students achieving 1st class degrees across discipline categories in the higher education sector data;

1284.6 that analysis of good degree (1st and 2-1) outcomes by student characteristic highlighted significantly lower outcomes for BAME students, an issue which was being addressed by the BAME Awarding Gap Group, and the action in the statement would be strengthened prior its publication;

1284.7 that should data be available, the statement would benefit from analysis of data for other student characteristics, such as widening participation;

1284.8 that Schools would continue to monitor degree outcomes at programme level, via the annual review process, ensuring that there were appropriate action plans where required.

**RESOLVED**

1284.9 subject to amendments to take account of members' comments, to **recommend** to Senate and Council approval of the Degree Outcome Statement for publication on the University's web pages by the end of 2020;

1284.10 that a review of the University's degree algorithm with reference to the Principles for Effective Algorithm Design report should be undertaken during the 2020/21 academic year to ensure that the algorithm continued to meet external expectations.

1285        **EDUCATION GOVERNANCE**

           Received and considered paper 20/114, Review of Education
           Governance Arrangements'.

           NOTED

1285.1     that the Quality Enhancement Review (QER) report noted that the team
           had found it difficult to understand fully the University's current
           governance structure, with only the Academic Standards and Quality
           Committee (ASQC) formally reporting to Senate; the conclusions of the
           review team were also shared by staff who contributed to the review
           process;

1285.2     that an internal audit report of the University's response to the Student
           View identified that the Student View document was currently
           considered in isolation and highlighted that feedback from other
           sources of student voice often sit under separate structures, with
           separate reporting and monitoring;

1285.3     that during the period of disruption resulting from the Covid-19
           pandemic, temporary governance structures were established which
           worked in an agile, visible, and transparent manner, and although the
           Covid-19 governance may be transitory, there were potential lessons to
           be learned from this experience;

1285.4     that the purpose of the review of education governance arrangements,
           which sit beneath Senate, was to bring forward proposals for the
           enhancement of education governance arrangements to ensure clarity,
           effectiveness, and accountability;

1285.5     the proposals to strengthen the governance arrangements for learning
           teaching were welcomed and would provide the opportunity for an
           holistic oversight of initiatives to enhance students' educational
           experience;

1285.6     that there would be engagement with College Deans and staff in
           schools to clarify the relationship between Senate and Boards of
           Studies and provide the opportunity for a further review of the
           Academic Management Regulations;

1285.7     that there would continue to be a need for the Academic and Standards
           and Quality Committee to undertake the detailed scrutiny of the
           academic quality system and that the consultation would provide the
           opportunity to ensure that membership of the educational governance
           committees was appropriate.

           **RESOLVED**

1285.8     to endorse the proposals outlined in paper 20/114, including
           consultation on more detailed proposals, to establish an Education and
           Student Experience Committee, reporting to Senate, to bring together
           discussions on matters relating to academic quality and standards,
           teaching and assessment, and the student experience, and scrutinising
           the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of the Education
           and Students sub strategy.

1286      **MONITORING AND REVIEW POLICY**

          Received paper 20/94, 'Monitoring and Review Policy'.

          NOTED

1286.1    that whilst the University had robust and comprehensive procedures to monitor, review, and evaluate its credit bearing provision, it did not have an overarching policy document that outline its approach to monitoring and review;

1286.2    that ASQC, at its meeting in June 2020, had endorsed the development of a monitoring and review policy;

1286.3    that the policy summarised the primary University processes for monitoring and review of credit bearing activity and therefore was not introducing changes, other than re-confirming that periodic review would be replaced by a re-validation procedure which would be developed during 2020/21.

          **RESOLVED**

1286.4    to **recommend** to Senate the approval of the Monitoring and Review Policy.

1287      **REPORTS FROM GROUPS**

          Received paper 20/95, 'Report from Programme and Partner Standing Panel'.

          NOTED

1287.1    that, as there was no travel budget available to the Global Opportunities team during 2020/21 and current restrictions on travel, the Standing Panel had agreed that study abroad applications could be approved without a visit for the foreseeable future; a record would be maintained of partners due to be visited once travel and budgetary restrictions had eased, ensuring that visits were undertaken in the most cost-effective way;

1287.2    that some study abroad students had not being given resit opportunities and had been required to transfer to a 3 year variant of degree programmes, consequently the Standing Panel had agreed that resit opportunities for outgoing study abroad students should be routinely captured on the individual learning agreements.

1288      **UPDATE ON REGULATIONS AND POLICY CHANGES**

1288.1    Remote Study Policy for Taught Students

          Received and NOTED paper 20/96, 'Remote Study Policy and Procedure for 2020/21'.

1288.2    Safety Net Policy for 2020/21 Onwards

          Received and NOTED paper 20/97, 'Safety Net Policy for 2020/21 Onwards'.

1288.3    Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Received and NOTED paper 20/98, 'Extenuating Circumstances Procedure 2020/21'.

Further NOTED that the intranet pages, which provided an overview of the extenuating circumstances procedure, would confirm that if students should encounter technical difficulties during an examination or equivalent time assessment, the circumstances should be raised with the school and may be regarded as extenuating circumstances, which if accepted would permit the student to take the examination when it is next scheduled to be undertaken.

1288.4    Risk Assessment Guidance for Placement and Study Abroad

Received and NOTED paper 20/99, 'Placement and Study Abroad Provision for 2020/21'.

1288.5    Variation to Arrangements for Postgraduate Research Programmes

Received and NOTED paper 20/101, PGR Variations'.

1289    **REVIEWER OF CHAIR'S ACTION**

NOTED that ASQC members were asked for a volunteer to undertake a review of 2019/20 executive actions and report to the Committee.

[Secretary note: Following the meeting Professor Rhys Pullin agreed to review the 2019/20 executive actions and report to ASQC in January.]

1290    **ACTION TAKEN ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE**

Received and NOTED paper 20/100, 'Routine Actions Taken on Behalf of the Committee', and paper 20/102, 'Actions that Exceed the Permitted Variation of Arrangements due to Covid-19'.

1291    **PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE DEGREE ALGORITHM DESIGN**

NOTED

1291.1    that as part of its ongoing commitment to fairness, transparency and reliability in degree classification, the UK higher education sector had committed to a new set of principles for effective degree algorithm design to protect the value of qualifications;

1291.2    that to support the implementation of these principles, the Principles for Effective Algorithm design report provided explanatory guidance and illustrative examples of suggested practices in areas such weighting, discounting, and borderline policies.

1292    **UNIVERSITY TASK FORCE RESPONSE TO HEFCW**

Received and NOTED paper 20/104, 'HEFCW Online Learning Cardiff University'.

1293      **DATE OF MEETINGS: 2020/21**

NOTED the dates of meetings to be held in 2020/21:

Tuesday 19th January 2021 at 9. 30 am
Tuesday 18th May 2021 at 9.30 am
Tuesday 20th June 2021 at 9.30 am