Minutes of the Committee

Summary
These are the minutes of the TQEC meeting of 23 January 2014.

Recommended action
The Committee is asked to confirm these minutes.

William Scott
May 2014
MINUTES OF THE TEACHING & QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
23 January 2014

Present:
Professor Sue Jackson (Chair), Jasbir Gill, Neil O’Connor, Dr Jim Pitts, Dr Dick Rayne, Harriet Smith, Dr Anita Walsh, Dr Dionyssis Dimitrakopoulos, Jennifer Fraser, Deborah Mabbett, Dr Nathan Moore, Robert Atkinson

Apologies for absence:
Dr Joanna Barros, Dr Elizabeth Hoult, Dr Joanne Leal, Dr Vincent Tong, Professor Matthew Weait, Philip Payne, Dr Martin Shipway, Dr Linda Trenberth, Tricia King, Jeremy Tanner, Steve Hirons (Centre for Learning & Professional Development); Nigel Buckle (Information Technology Services); Sarah Gardner (Representative of School Managers)

In attendance:
Bob Westaway (Interim Academic Registrar); Scott Miller (Assistant Academic Registrar (Operations & Quality)); Dr Kate Burrell (Academic Standards & Quality Team Leader); William Scott (Minutes Secretary)

2. MINUTES (TQEC 19 – 2013/14)
   Received and Confirmed:

   2.1 The minutes of the Teaching Quality and Enhancement meeting held on the 16 October 2013 were an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING
   (i) Matters arising relating to items not featured elsewhere on the agenda
       Neil O’Connor has requested Schools contact him and provide feedback following the Staff Survey issues raised at the last TQEC meeting.

   (ii) The report to Academic Board of the TQEC meeting of 16 October 2013 (TQEC 20 – 2013/14)
       Noted:

       3.1 All the Committee’s recommendations to the Academic Board were endorsed.

4. CHAIR’S REPORT
   (i) A verbal report from the Chair on teaching and quality enhancement matters
       Noted:

       4.1 The removal of student number controls from the 2015/16 academic year means we can continue with our successful recruitment of 3 year degrees.

       4.2 Birkbeck tops the poll for the largest percentage increase of students studying three year undergraduate degrees; we should continue to actively grow recruitment onto three year degrees.
4.3 Focus should also be maintained on retention, with development continuing on the Retention Strategy for 2015 onwards with the working title Strategy for Access, Retention and Success. The strategy will take clear account of student needs and how students engage with learning and teaching and the Committee will be asked to consider the retention strategy in terms of student success.

4.4 Annual Conference – a conference will be held on March 24th on transformative assessment. The focus for attendees will be on School TQECs and Programme Directors, although it will be advertised to all staff.

4.5 Very few programmes have formally declared interest in Three Term Learning. Modules that are being held in the third term but do not have examinations at the end of the module are not considered by Schools to come under Three Term Learning. An audit is planned that will look at what programmes do in the third term, to get a general overview of activity in the third term.

4.6

5. STRATEGY FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ENHANCEMENT

Noted:

5.1 Further updates were added to the existing Strategy for Learning & Teaching Enhancement 2012-16 which show how work is being taken forward and implemented.

5.2 That the half-way point of SLATE is coming up, which is a good moment to update SLATE. The Learning and Teaching working group has started to think about what else needs to be done to draw out and develop its aims.

Discussed:

5.3 That the External Examiner reports will be published and available to students. This can lead to issues where Examiners are restrained in their responses because students will be able to see them.

Agreed:

5.4 Registry to revise the External Examiner report template to show clearly which questions and answers will be available to students.

6. LEARNING AND TEACHING WORKING GROUP

Noted:

6.1 A verbal report from the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Working Group on Learning and Teaching Working Group matters.

6.2 It was explained that the working group takes forward actions resulting from TQEC and SLATE and also provides an opportunity for ADs Learning and Teaching to share issues from their respective Schools.

7. STRATEGY FOR ACCESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Noted:

7.1 That OFFA and HEFCE are working on a national strategy for access and student success (SASS). The strategy was also considered by the Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships Committee on 8 January 2014 and will also be considered by the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee.
7.2 That Learning and Teaching was not embedded in the previous Strategy but it is understood that it will be part of the new Strategy.

7.3 That the Strategy for Access and Student Success will explicitly report on progression (including progression from undergraduate to postgraduate studies) but that this cannot be developed before the guidelines are available.

8. **DEVELOPMENTS IN FLEXIBLE AND ONLINE PROVISION**

   (i) **A verbal report on the developments in flexible and online provision**

      *Noted:*

   8.1 Implementation and responsibility on online provision will be taken forward by the Vice-Master.

   8.2 That Birkbeck’s reputation can be increased with an online showcase. This is taken forward by various groups.

   (ii) **A discussion paper on flexible and blended learning at Birkbeck (TQEC 23 – 2013/14)**

      *Noted:*

   8.3 That the paper outlines the scope of the issues and what blended learning would look like at Birkbeck.

   8.4 Flexible and blended learning should enable students to engage across the whole academic year. Blended learning should be incorporated wherever possible, but should be included in at least one module per course.

   8.5 Comments are sought on this paper, especially on how flexible and blended learning can be utilised to present the unique opportunities Birkbeck offers to students; for example lifelong learning, critical thinking.

   8.6 The Learning and Teaching Working Group will consider how to take the discussion from this meeting forward and will bring this back to the next meeting.

   8.7 Lecture capture system ‘Collaborate’ was not satisfactory and that ITS is undertaking a formal assessment of market leader systems. Recommendations will be taken to the Online Learning Group. A number of considerations are needed for developing a specific set-up.

      *Discussed:*

   8.8 The importance of this paper to the Committee: what blended learning and flexibility means for the younger student body.

   8.9 A pedagogic model which consists of a number of different learning methods.

   8.10 Whether the one module option for flexible learning per programme should be a formal recommendation.

   8.11 An optional module could perhaps be on personal development, which may or may not be credited. It was noted that students are often unwilling to take modules that have no credit value. It was suggested that a non-credit bearing module might best be placed at the start of a curriculum, especially regarding skills development.

9. **COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

   *Noted:*

   9.1 A report detailing the exam board appeals, complaints and assessment offences dealt with by the Academic Services unit within Registry Services in 2012/13 (TQEC 24 – 2013/14)
9.2 There was a significant decrease in assessment offences.

9.3 A high number of appeals cases involved mitigating circumstances, and that a further analysis of these is needed.

9.4 The new fee structure resulted in a number of complaints, which have largely been resolved internally by the College, rather than being referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

9.5 A webpage is being developed that will outline the fee structure more clearly, and that this will be communicated to the students appropriately.

10. **2013 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

(i) **A verbal update on the 2013 National Student Survey**

Noted:

10.1 Satisfaction levels are higher than average but are lower than those reported in Birkbecks 2011/12 National Student Survey.

(ii) **Responses from Schools for consideration**

Noted:

10.2 The School of Science has not responded yet and a report will come to the next meeting of TQEC.

10.3 Student feedback and assessment is still an issue, as it also is on the national level.

10.4 The 50% response threshold was only just reached. This is the case each year, and there is an ongoing discussion with Marketing to address this.

10.5 It is encouraging to see the innovative ways Schools are planning to tackle the feedback to students, and that it is hoped a College-wide plan will be developed.

10.6 The Conference and Space Planning Manager wishes to meet with Schools to discuss ways to improve room booking issues.

11. **REGISTRY STUDENT SURVEYS**

Considered:

11.1 A briefing report on the student surveys undertaken by Registry Services (TQEC 26 – 2013/14)

Noted:

11.2 The National Student Survey had a 4.9% response rate in the first week, which is lower than last year. The Team Leader, Academic Standards and Quality, will discuss this with the Director of External Relations.

11.3 A new Postgraduate Taught Experience survey is run by HEA. The Team Leader, Academic Standards and Quality is considering what type of questions should be asked to students.
11.4 An Annual Survey will be implemented, directed at all non-final year Undergraduate students. It will be launched around the same time as the Postgraduate Taught Experience survey and the National Student Survey.

11.5 Incentives to encourage students to complete the surveys, will be considered.

12. **QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY UPDATES**

   **Noted:**

   12.1 A paper that details five new codes from the Quality Assurance Agency.

   **Considered:**

   12.2 How Learning and Teaching can be enhanced through the use of these codes.

13. **COLLEGE PROGRAMMES COMMITTEE**

   **Endorsed:**

   13.1 The recommendations of approval in the report of the College Programmes Committee of 21 November 2013 (**TQEC 28 – 2013/14**)

   **Noted:**

   13.2 That there was smooth progress and the last College Programmes Committee went well.

   13.3 There was a slight change in the programme proposal form in order to gather information for External Relations.

   13.4 Any programmes planned for inclusion to UCAS 15/16 should contact ASQ as the next CPC will be held on 6 March 2014.

14. **INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME REGULATIONS**

   **Approved:**

   14.1 Changes to the Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management regulations (**TQEC 29 – 2013/14**).

15. **INTERNAL REVIEWS 2012/13**

   **Noted:**

   15.1 The report of the internal review, and the response of the Department of English and Humanities (**TQEC 30 – 2013/14**)

   15.2 The report of the internal review, and response of the Department of Philosophy (**TQEC 31 – 2013/14**)

   15.3 That the internal review process is going well and that the reports highlight good practice within the College.

16. **INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

   16.1 The PVM Academic Partnerships was not present so there was no report given.
17. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

   *Noted:*

   17.1 That the future meetings of the Committee are scheduled for Tuesday 20 May.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

   18.1 There was no other business.