

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

**First Year Experience Quality Enhancement Theme**

**Meeting of Steering Committee**

**Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling**

**Friday 16 February 2007**

**CONFIRMED**

Minutes of the eighth meeting of the Enhancement Steering Committee for The First Year held at 13.00 on Friday 16 February 2007, at the Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling.

**Present:**

Professor Ron Piper (Chair), University of St Andrews  
Professor Terry Mayes, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Professor George Gordon, University of Strathclyde  
Dr Simon Guild, University of St Andrews  
Mr Bill Johnston, University of Strathclyde  
Dr David McCausland, University of Aberdeen Business School  
Ms Birgitta MacDonald, Edinburgh College of Art  
Dr Anne McGillivray, University of Paisley  
Ms Ruth Taylor, The Robert Gordon University  
Dr Jonathan Weyers, University of Dundee  
Mr Tim Cobbett, Edinburgh University Students' Association  
Mr Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland  
Mr Robert MacGregor, Scottish Funding Council

**Officers:**

Dr David Bottomley, QAA Scotland  
Dr Christine Macpherson, QAA Scotland  
Ms Marjorie Craib, QAA Scotland

**Apologies:**

Dr Pete Cannell, The Open University in Scotland  
Dr Andrew Eadie, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Dr Leona Elder, University of Abertay, Dundee  
Mr Steven Findlay, Heriot-Watt University Students Association  
Ms Erica Hensens, sparqs  
Dr Liz Thomas, Higher Education Academy  
Ms Erica Hensens, sparqs  
Ms Veronique Johnston, Napier University  
Professor Martin Wilkinson, Heriot-Watt University  
Ms Sandie Randall, Queen Margaret University College  
Dr Alastair Robertson, Higher Education Academy (HEA)

**1. Welcome**

**ACTION**

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the eighth meeting of the Enhancement Steering Committee for The First Year. The Chair welcomed Robert MacGregor, representing the Scottish

Funding Council (SFC). Apologies were received as noted above. The committee received a further paper, QET FY-08-13, from Mr Bill Johnston (Project 2) relating to project updates under agenda item 5.

## **2. Minute**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 December 2006 at the University of Dundee were confirmed as an accurate record with one amendment: apologies had been recorded in error in respect of Ms Ruth Taylor, The Robert Gordon University who had been present.

## **3. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda**

QET-FY-08-01 item 1.1: the call for case studies had been circulated twice to the steering committee, main institutional contacts, project teams, network of practitioners, Universities Scotland Educational Development Sub Committee, Scottish effective learning advisers group, and to Higher Education Academy (HEA) subject centres through Alastair Robertson.

QET-FY-08-01 item 3: in December 2006 a submission had been made on behalf of the First Year theme to run three different sessions at the 2<sup>nd</sup> European First Year Experience conference in Gothenburg, 9-11 May 2007. An acknowledgement had been received. Response to a further e-mail was awaited. It was suggested any committee member with contacts within the organising body seek information regarding the third conference, as consideration might be given to bidding to run this in Scotland.

## **4. Scottish Higher Education Committee (SHEEC)'s revised strategy**

The Chair indicated that SHEEC is currently considering its strategy relating to themes and invited Dr Bottomley to update the committee on progress.

### **Supporting engagement with the themes and Considering the five year programme of themes**

Referring to QET-FY-08-02 and QET-FY-08-03, Dr Bottomley invited the committee to consider proposals for further supporting higher education institutions' engagement with the themes. He outlined the move away from presenting themes as a series of projects and workshops run by their steering committee to themes engaging the higher education sector more broadly from the initial scoping through to an active dissemination phase.

Dr Bottomley outlined the proposal that future themes would not overlap other than during the initial scoping of one theme and the dissemination and embedding phase of another. It is possible that some future themes may be shorter to include practical issues such as writing, maths and presentation skills. A review of SHEEC's five year rolling programme is expected to take place shortly and this issue will be discussed at the annual enhancement themes conference.

The committee welcomed this change of direction, confirming that many institutions would welcome the clearer flow between themes and the opportunity to engage with outcomes.

The committee confirmed the value the ELIR (Enhancement-led institutional review) process as a developmental process including engagement at all levels. Dr Bottomley noted this support of the ELIR process and how it can engage and indicate enhancement. Mr McGregor noted the committee's feedback regarding ELIR and would report this to the SFC.

The committee indicated that timescale is an issue regarding themes, suggesting that the timescale might be extended.

Professor Piper confirmed that ELIR and supporting engagement with the themes are discussed regularly at SHEEC meetings and indicated he would update the committee on developments.

## **5. Review of progress and future programme of work**

### **5.1 Reflections on the morning discussions**

The Chair noted the success of the morning meeting which allowed informal networking for project teams, the committee, and institutional contacts.

Dr Bottomley agreed QAA would organise an informal meeting for project teams.

CMM

The committee expressed some concern regarding proposed deadlines and indicated that some flexibility would be welcome. Dr Bottomley confirmed the importance of progressing in line with the timetable agreed with the SFC.

### **5.2 Arrangements for providing feedback**

The committee was invited to consider the arrangements for providing feedback to the projects so that project teams are aware of expectations regarding content, purpose and style.

Discussion highlighted the need for project teams to identify the target audience (eg policy makers, practitioners, individual institutions), and for the outcomes to be useful to practice. Dr Bottomley highlighted the need for the committee to offer guidance and help facilitate debate to ensure projects remain on track. It was suggested individual members of the steering committee might adopt a mentoring role for each project to assist with this. The Chair confirmed that he would liaise with Dr Bottomley with a view to preparing a guidance paper which will assist project directors in terms of expectations, target audience, case studies and so on.

All

RP/DB

### **5.3 Received project reports**

The Chair invited the committee to consider the progress reports from the project teams.

#### **Project 1: Sector-wide discussion: the nature and purpose of the first year**

Professor Gordon confirmed he had some difficulty obtaining

information from individual HEA subject centres. He has raised this with Alastair Robertson and awaits a response.

**Project 2: Discussion and exploration of student expectations, experiences and reflections on the first year.**

Bill Johnston tabled a short report outlining arranged and planned institutional visits, confirming the project's progress and inviting the committee to email Rowena Kochanowska with any feedback.

**Project 5: Peer support**

The report confirmed progress with this project. The committee requested the literature review before the full outcome is submitted.

CMM

A tentative issue was raised regarding the issue of disclosure: that some peer support programmes were considering the implications of Disclosure Scotland on their arrangements. Mr Madill indicated that Universities Scotland would have an interest in hearing if this is the case. It was agreed that clarification would be sought.

CMM

**Project 6: Personal Development Planning (PDP)**

The report confirmed progress with this project.

Difficulties in issuing a contract were acknowledged and Dr Bottomley indicated the considerable time and work associated with the issue of contracts and welcomed feedback from the committee on ways to alleviate this.

All

Dr Bottomley agreed he would raise this issue at a future SHEEC meeting.

DB

**Project 3: Curriculum Design**

**Project 8: Introducing Scholarship Skills**

**Project 9: Transition**

Literature reviews were received from these projects.

The considerable work of those involved was acknowledged by the committee.

Discussion of the reports resulted in the agreement that Professor Terry Mayes would collate feedback from committee members and provide this to project directors individually.

All/TM

The committee agreed it may be useful to encourage all project teams to share their literature reviews with each other; to prepare a short summary of the literature review; and to consider the audiences for which they are writing.

CMM

The committee agreed all projects are broadly on track and that progressing.

**A proposed timetable**

5.4 The committee agreed the following regarding the proposed timetable and project outcomes:

- the submission date for reports be set for the end of July (one month later than previously agreed)
- the aim would be for the overview document to be in place for November at the latest
- the projects outputs are focussed on relevant audiences.

CMM

- The committee acknowledged that it would be mutually beneficial for if project leaders were to participate in institutional discussions where appropriate.
- 6. Developing a programme for dissemination and supporting consideration of outcomes**  
 Dr Bottomley indicated that during the course of the theme institutions will have had discussions about the nature of the first year and that this would be followed by a period of reflection to consider the outcomes. This period of consideration of the implications and application of the outcomes would be supported by a series of events.  
 This is in keeping with the proposed model for future themes. The committee agreed that it would welcome a paper at the next steering committee meeting setting suggestions for this final phase of the theme. DB/CMM  
 It was suggested that institutions might be alerted to this proposed change and indicate that there will be a small amount of funding available for these activities. CMM  
 The Chair confirmed that with this dissemination phase, the steering committee's input is likely to be required during this time.
- 7. Ethical approval update**  
 The Chair confirmed that in relation to Project 2, a question was raised at their own institution relating to ethics approval for the projects. Theme projects have not previously worked so directly with students, although the question may relate to staff as well as students. The Chair confirmed that this has been discussed at the Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching committee and as a result he will chair a small working group to discuss the possibility of proposing a way forward for future projects. This may include the proposal to adopt an agreed set of protocols to which institutions may agree.
- 8. Nature and purpose of the next meeting**  
 The committee agreed it would be useful if the following items could be included in the next meeting:  
 • feedback from main institutional contacts on their institutional and informal discussions  
 • project updates  
 • feedback from the Annual Enhancement Theme conference workshops. CMM
- 9. Update on work of other themes**  
 The committee receive the above paper for information.
- 10. Any Other Business**  
 There was no other business.
- 11. Date of Next Meeting**  
 It was confirmed the next First Year Meeting will be held on Tuesday 24 April 2007. Venue to be confirmed.