

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the first meeting of the Enhancement Steering Committee for The First Year on Tuesday, 17th January 2006, held at QAA Scotland office, Glasgow.

Present:

Professor Ron Piper, University of St Andrews (in the Chair)
Dr Pete Cannell, The Open University in Scotland
Dr Andrew Eadie, Glasgow Caledonian University
Dr Simon Guild, University of St Andrews
Mr Bill Johnston, University of Strathclyde
Dr David McCausland, University of Aberdeen Business School
Dr Jonathan Weyers, University of Dundee
Professor Martin Wilkinson, Heriot-Watt University
Mr Tim Cobbett, Edinburgh University Students' Association
Mr Steven Findlay, Heriot-Watt University Students Association

Officers:

Dr David Bottomley, Assistant Head of QAA Scotland
Ms Thelma Barron, Assistant Director (Enhancement)
Mr Bill Thomson, Temporary Consultant (Enhancement)

Apologies:

Mr David Beards, SFC
Mr Duncan Cockburn, Sparqs
Dr Leona Elder, University of Abertay, Dundee
Ms Veronique Johnston, Napier University
Professor David Lines, The Robert Gordon University
Mr Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland
Professor Terry Mayes, Glasgow Caledonian University
Ms Birgitta MacDonald, Edinburgh College of Art
Dr Anne McGillivray, University of Paisley
Dr Liz Thomas, Higher Education Academy
Ms Sandie Randall, Queen Margaret University College

1. Welcome

ACTION

1.1 The Chair welcomed the members and officers to the second meeting of the Enhancement Steering Committee for The First Year.

1.2 Changes in Administrative Support Arrangements

Before proceeding to the formal business, the Chair invited Ms Barron to update members on imminent changes to administrative support arrangements for the Steering Committee. Ms Barron reported that in two months time, she would be taking up a new post at QAA Scotland, concerned with the integration of work across the office, and in particular between the Enhancement Themes and the ELIR process. Support for the Enhancement Themes would be provided by two new Assistant Directors, Dr Christine Macpherson and Dr Claire Carney. It was likely that Dr Macpherson would take over support for The First Year.

2. Minutes

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5th December were

approved as a correct record.

3. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda

Engagement with students

- 3.1 Ms Barron reported that she would be having further detailed discussions with Tim Cobbett and Steven Findlay, immediately after the meeting, regarding arrangements for regional student fora on the student first year experience.

TB

Linkage with other themes

- 3.2 Mr Bill Thompson reported that the Integrative assessment project work was now underway, and due for completion by December 2006. Led by Professor Dai Hounsell, the project comprised three strands of development, as follows:

- A literature review on optimising formative and summative assessment;
- A survey of good practice across a wide range of subjects and institutions written up as case studies;
- A small number of exemplars chosen from a range of case studies and analysed in greater depth and detail.

- 3.3 In view of the previously identified linkage between the First Year and Integrative Assessment Themes, members noted that it was important that the survey of good practice should include case studies for the First Year, which could be referred for detailed consideration by the Steering Committee for the First Year. Mr Thompson agreed to communicate this point to Professor Hounsell.

BT/TB

Engagement with Institutional Contacts

- 3.4 Ms Barron reported that she would shortly be contacting the nominated institutional contacts with a view to creating an extended community of practice, involving those with specific responsibilities for the First Year.

TB

4. Revised version of scoping paper for the First Year

- 4.1 The Committee considered a revised version of the scoping paper for the First Year, noting how it had been further refined and focused in response to members' comments. Whilst broadly supportive of the proposed approach, the Committee considered it important that the final document should address itself to the whole academic community, including students, and therefore recommended some expansion to allow for greater contextualisation, with a view to adopting a more learner-centered perspective. To this end, it was proposed that an additional introductory paragraph should set the theme in the context of the whole student experience, giving greater emphasis to diversity and related factors such as social orientation, funding and part-time working, and how these impact upon curriculum design, empowerment and engagement. In this way, members felt, institutional and student interests

would be more clearly aligned. The final paragraph would also need to be tailored to harmonise with this more expansive exposition.

4.2 More specific editorial comments were as follows:

P1, Para 2. Amend first sentence to 'Some institutions have concerns that for some students the first HE year is now unsatisfactory'

P2, Para 1, line 1. Replace 'content and structure' with 'curriculum design'.

P2, Para2, line 2. Delete 'core'.

P2, Para2, line 3. Replace 'core curriculum' with 'curriculum design' '

4.3 It was agreed that Ms Barron would convey these comments to Professor Mayes, for ongoing revision of the scoping paper. TB/TM

5. Development of Implementation Strategy

5.1 The Committee considered further the development of a preliminary programme of activities with a view to seeking further comment from participants in the First Year workshops at the forthcoming Enhancement Themes Conference on 27th January.

5.2 It was agreed that workshop participants should be invited to comment on how institutional constraints and constraints on students' time impacted on curriculum development, and what kinds of activities and outputs would make a real difference to practitioners, in terms of curriculum design, institutional policy development, student attitudes and expectations, and empowering students to be more autonomous learners. Ms Barron would prepare a handout to support the discussions. TB

5.3 The proposed 'Launch Event' would be targeted primarily at institutional contacts. It was noted that the University of Stirling was organising a two day event on 24/ 25 April the focus of which was Student Retention in Continuing Education. The keynote speaker would be Dr Betsy Barefoot, a co-Director at the Policy Centre on the First Year of College, Brevard College, North Carolina, and colleague of Dr Randy Swing. Dr Barefoot would be available on the morning of 26 April for participation in a possible First Year Enhancement Theme event. Members noted that this also coincided with the publication of initial outcomes of work on the first year experience, being conducted for the Higher Education Academy by Professor Mantz Yorke and Dr Bernard Longden. Members agreed that they should be invited to speak at the Launch Event, and that we should also request sight of their reports at the earliest opportunity to inform the Committee's deliberations. It was further agreed that the Steering Committee should report the key issues identified in the scoping of this theme to the Quality Working Group TB

5.4 Members were supportive of engagement with HEA subject centres, but further consideration was required on the nature of

such engagement and its timing, in particular whether this would be most helpful during the development and implementation of the theme's work, or at the point of dissemination. By analogy with subject centres' own provision, there was a suggestion for 'virtual' activities as part of the theme's programme.

- 5.5 Members also agreed that one key task would be to collect case studies of curricular design with an individual and small group focus, incorporating skills development in the subject area. In particular, it was suggested that approaches to problem-based learning, such as had been developed in Medicine and Nursing, should be explored.
- 5.6 In addition, the need for outputs to support policy change at institutional level was recognised. SHEEC would provide a useful sounding board in this context.
- 5.7 The role of Professional Bodies should be considered, both in terms of constraining influence on curriculum design, as well as in terms of positive examples of a move towards skills-based learning in certain disciplines.
- 5.8 Members noted that student expectations of higher education are conditioned by their experience at secondary school or FE college, and the assessment regimes in operation there. This was identified as one possible area for further investigative work, as part of a broader theme on the current student experience and all the social, economic and educational factors that impact upon it.
- 5.9 It was agreed that the next meeting on 1st February would be a working meeting to distil the feedback from the Conference workshops.
6. **Schedule of Meeting Dates**
The Committee received a schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of academic session 2005/6. Details of arrangements for the meeting on 1 February would be circulated shortly.
7. **Any Other Business**
There was no other business.

