

Board of Studies 16th Meeting

13 September 2005, Dashwood House, London

Minutes

Present

Cheryl Penna (Chair), Nigel Beasley, Terry Bransbury, Janet Flexney,
Sandra Griffiths, Martin Hodkinson, Matthew McClelland (Secretary),
William Mortimer, Ann Morton, Alison Robinson

Apologies

Sue Beech, Hugh Jones, Bland Tomkinson, Joyce Tate

01.16 Minutes

.1 **Confirmed:** minutes of the previous meeting

.2 **Arising from the minutes**

Reported:

1. The presentation of the revised quality strategy had been deferred to January when all the programme documentation would be presented to the Board. The Quality Strategy will, in the meantime, be made available on the website. (02.15.2)

Action: Matthew McClelland

2. The Open University had been unable to confirm the dates of the revalidation meeting because of the retirement of the Partnerships Manager. The incoming partnerships manager would confirm dates as soon as possible. AUA had requested 15 & 16 March 2006. (04.15.4.2)

3. Participants were not currently being charged for the resubmission of formative assignments. (06.15.5)

4. Guidance on establishing local networks of participants and mentors was currently being developed. (11.15.4.3&4)

Action: Matthew McClelland

02.16 Committee Structure

.1 **Noted:** the proposed changes to the committee structure were approved by PDC on 30 June 2005.

.2 **Approved:** the appointment of Sue Beech as Vice Chair, Assessment Board

.3 **Received:** current committee membership list

Noted:

1. Vacancies existed for a second PDC link and a Branch Coordinator

Agreed:

2. PDC should be asked to nominate a second link

3. Terry Bransbury would be a member of the Board in the dual capacity of Branch Coordinator and participant representative until she completes the programme when a new participant representative should be elected.

03.16 Programme Revalidation

.1 **Received:** Chair's report on the revalidation process

Reported:

1. The revision of the admissions regulations and procedures had now been completed
2. The Review Group was proposing to discontinue the minor assignments. Participants had found it problematic to reach M level standards within the specified word limit of 1000 words. The proposed new structure would encourage participants to critically reflect on their reading on all ten new knowledge areas. They would be required to reflect on the integration of this new knowledge into their professional practice through an expanded Reflective Statement of 5000 words.
3. The assessment strategy would be drafted as part of the finalisation of the Programme Specification.
4. The resource pack had been updated for the 2005/6 session.
5. Provisional referees for the knowledge areas had been identified. Members could nominate referees by emailing the secretary.

Action: All

6. Arrangements for the institutional review were being progressed by the Executive Secretary.
7. The Assessors' Handbook, External Examiner's Report, revised marking criteria, Mentor Guidelines, and revised training programme were presented for consideration later on the agenda.

Noted:

8. Concerns existed about the proposal to eliminate the minor assignments, specifically how knowledge would be tested, whether it would be tested in sufficient detail, the role mentors would play in checking knowledge, and the total student work load bearing in mind that 600 hours is the norm for a 60 credit programmes.

Resolved:

9. The Review Group should give these issues further consideration.

Action: Review Group

.2 Received: draft programme specification

Noted:

1. The programme specification was unusual in the level of detail it contained, but that it was a very user-friendly document for participants.
2. The fact that the programme was one of independent, self-managed learning was now made clear to participants before they joined the programme.
3. The programme specification would be very useful in promoting the programme to members.
4. The programme was 60 credits, structured as one module with assessment end loaded.

Agreed:

5. The lack of continuous assessment should be made clear to applicants to the programme.

.3 Received: revised revalidation plan

Noted:

1. The Open University had confirmed that they did not have a policy on the storage of assessed work.

Agreed:

2. AUA would retain original copies of all work submitted for summative assessment for one year to allow for the internal and Open University appeals processes to run their course. Thereafter copies of summative assignments exemplifying the best, median, and worst standard of work submitted in each assessment round would be retained.

.4 Received: agreed knowledge themes and template, which are appended

to these minutes, noting that the range was appropriate.

04.16 Annual Monitoring Exercise

Received: report of the 2004-05 Annual Monitoring Exercise

Reported:

1. The response rate (mentors, 38%; participants, 32%) did not represent a significant improvement on 2003-04 (combined, 35%) despite the introduction of the book tokens as an incentive, but that this was still acceptable.
2. The majority of participants who responded were satisfied with their progress, the arrangements for mentoring and course provision.
3. The majority of mentors who responded were satisfied with their experience of mentoring and with course provision.
4. Both participants and mentors rated the jiscmail lists and online resources less favourably than other elements of course provision.
5. The following actions had been identified to address concerns raised:

Resources

1. Guidance notes will continue to be issued to clarify particular elements of the programme
2. Participants and mentors will be consulted on the new resource pack which will be implemented in 2006/7 as part of the revalidation process
3. New mentor guidelines will be made available on line in clickable version
4. Participants and mentors will be notified by jiscmail lists when guidance notes from the Assessment Board are issued.
5. Examples of good practice assignments will be issued by end September 2005

Training

6. Feedback from and performance of participants who attend the new training programme from start 2005-06 will be monitored over the programme cycle.
7. Three development days will be scheduled in advance in 2005/6.

Assessment

8. Essay writing guidelines will be issued in autumn 2005.
9. Revised marking criteria will be issued in autumn 2005.
10. The impact of formative assignments on the performance of candidates at final assessment will be monitored.
11. The training programme will, from 2005-06, include training on constructive use of feedback.

Agreed:

6. In future, the Board of Studies would require only the conclusions and actions from the Annual Monitoring exercise, although the whole report would be available on request.

Resolved:

7. The jiscmail lists should be used to disseminate information to participants. The use of hosted chat rooms or a weblog facility should be investigated for future implementation.

Action: Matthew McClelland

05.16 External Examiner's Report

.1 Received: External Examiner's Report for 2004-05

Reported:

1. While the external examiner was satisfied with the overall standards being operated by the Assessment Board, he had some concerns about the performance of candidates at the margins, and wondered whether in some circumstances assessors might sometime be a little generous. The External Examiner recommended that more blind double marking be undertaken and that feedback forms be used uniformly by all assessors

Noted:

2. The External Examiner's comments had been addressed by the revised assessment process which was presented to the Board later on the agenda.

Agreed:

3. The External Examiner's recommendation to classify results should not be implemented.

.2 Received: Chair's response to the External Examiner's report

Noted: many of the points raised by the External Examiner were already being addressed.

06.16 Resources

- .1 **Noted:** the 2004-05 edition of the Resource Pack would be reissued in 2005-06 with minor editorial revisions.

- .2 **Noted:** the pre-course information for participants had been issued with the following statement included by permission of the Chair:

8. IT Resources

All of the work you submit should normally be word-processed, and AUA is making an increasing number of resources available on the internet. For those reasons, it is expected that you will have access to and use of a computer which is connected to the internet.

- .3 **Noted:** the new AUA website was live. Changes to the PG Cert section included: publication of guidance notes and guidance from the Assessment Board, substantial revision of information about the programme. Scheduled changes included: publication of good practice assignments and updating resources for mentors.

- .4 **Approved:** Draft guidance for mentors, subject to revisions

Action: Ann Morton, Matthew McClelland

Reported: that the guidance would be published on the website as soon as possible in a clickable format. Pdf copies would also be available to download.

07.16 Training

- .1 **Received:** minutes of the 3rd Training Team Meeting, 25 July 2005.

Reported:

1. The training team had met twice this year, once since its formal constitution. It was at this stage concerned with revising the training programme for 2005-06. The training programme for the first participant study day had been developed and was presented to the Board for approval. The training team was meeting again on 29 September 2005 to complete the training programme for the second participant study day.
2. Once the programme had been finalised for revalidation, the training team would develop the new training for 2006-07.

- .2 **Received:** report from the Training Team Representative

Noted: there were no further items raised.

- .3 **Received:** feedback from PGC30, PGC31, MEN26, MEN27, and summary evaluations 2004-05.

Noted:

1. Training provision had improved in comparison to 2002-03 and 2003-04, meeting the objective set out in the Annual Report for 2003-04.

Agreed:

2. The Board of Studies would no longer receive feedback from training events because the Training Team had now been formally constituted and would consider feedback at its meetings. The Board of Studies would receive the summary of training evaluations as part of the Annual Report.

- .4 Approved:** draft training presentation for participant study 1, 2005-06., subject to the following amendments:

1. Slide 3, 2nd bullet point: replace 'able' with 'better prepared'
2. Include more reference to the quality and standard of knowledge required and the expectation to research.

Action: Matthew McClelland

08.16 Assessment

- .1 Received:** Minutes of 6th Assessment Board Meeting, 26 May 2005.

Noted:

1. 10 candidates had submitted work for assessment. 5 candidates were awarded the Certificate, 4 were referred in the major assignment, and 1 in the portfolio.
2. An assessor had raised the admissions requirements as a possible reason for poor standards. The Board felt that there was a need to make it clear to applicants to the programme it is a postgraduate qualification, and to provide extra support for participants who do not have a first degree.

- .2 Noted:** that the appointment of Professor Ian McNay as External Examiner had been approved by the Open University.

- .3 Approved:** *Handbook for Assessors*, subject to the following amendment:

Responsibilities of assessors: replace 'a given number of formative assignments' with 'appropriate formative assignments'.

Action: Matthew McClelland

- .4 Approved:** revised assessment process 2005-06, subject to the following amendments:

1. Assessment of major assignments and portfolios: the fact that second marking will be carried out blind should be clearly stated.
2. Appendices A and C, section C: delete: 'You may use percentages ... the candidate'.
3. Appendices A and C: section C: the criterion should be revised in line with the newly approved marking criteria.

- .5 Received:** draft marking criteria and a report from the external moderator, Alan Dordoy, Head of Learning and Teaching Support, Northumbria University.

Reported:

1. The new format of marking criteria offered greater transparency and clarity to participants and were to be welcomed.
2. The new marking criteria needed to be tightened in some places to ensure they were meeting the FHEQ descriptors for M Level.

Agreed:

3. The review group would revisit portfolio marking criteria 5, 6, 11, 17 to incorporate Alan Dordoy's comments and to ensure that the criteria reflect the need for engagement with reflection. Criterion 16 will be deleted.
4. The review group would revisit major assignment criteria 3, 4-6, 7, 9 to incorporate Alan Dordoy's comments.
5. The review group would develop an appropriate formula for weighting

- the different components and for condonement.
6. The revised marking criteria would be circulated to the Board for approval.
 7. The aim would be to implement the new marking criteria as soon as reasonably possible. The criteria would be issued in October 2005 to participants and mentors. The criteria would not be used by assessors to assess work submitted in the October 2005 assessment round, but would be issued to assessors for testing and to gain feedback on the process. The new marking criteria would come in to force in February 2006. The programme manager would write to all candidates entered into that assessment round to explain that the new criteria were an elucidation of the old criteria, and that the goal posts had not been moved.

09.16 Reports

.1 Received: report from participant representatives

Reported:

1. Participants had raised concerns about the standard of the Resource Pack, lack of regular feedback, the low word limit of the minor assignments, and the need for examples of good practice.

Noted:

2. The Resource Pack had been updated at the start of 2004-05, and additional guidance notes had been issued through the year; examples of good practice would be posted on the website by the end of September 2005. The Review Group were addressing the question of assessment and feedback as part of the revalidation process

.2 Received: oral reports from mentor representatives

Reported:

1. As this was their first meeting, the mentor representatives would make a formal report at the next meeting of the Board.
2. Mentor representatives would feedback information from the Board to mentors.

Agreed:

1. Participant and mentor representatives would feedback responses to the issues raised to their constituencies as it was important to fulfil this aspect of the role and to develop communications networks

Action: Janet Flexney, Sandra Griffiths, Terry Bransbury

2. An official information report on developments to the programme would be produced twice yearly and posted on the web

Action: Matthew McClelland, Cheryl Penna

10.16 Statistics

Received: statistical report

Noted: the number of intermissions seems to be high.

Resolved: the Review Group should examine the procedures for agreeing intermissions, and review the overall timescale of the programme.

Action: Review Group

11.16 Dates of next meetings

Thursday 12 January, Manchester

Wednesday 10 May, London

Appendix 1: Agreed Knowledge Themes

Theme A: Higher Education in Society**1. Philosophy and politics of higher education**

- 1.1 Purposes of higher education
- 1.2 Regulation and accountability in higher education
- 1.3 Lifelong learning and widening participation
- 1.4 Globalisation
- 1.5 Sustainability
- 1.6 Recruitment and admissions

2 Stakeholders

- 2.1 Governments
- 2.2 Regional bodies
- 2.3 Local communities / employers
- 2.4 Students

3. Contexts and funding

- 3.1 Funding streams and funding initiatives
- 3.2 Other sources of funding
- 3.3 England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland
- 3.4 International Systems
- 3.5 Fees
- 3.6 Institutional finance

Theme B: The Learning Experience**4. Quality and standards**

- 4.1 Setting academic standards
- 4.2 The European Higher Education Area
- 4.3 Maintaining academic standards
- 4.4 Assuring academic standards
- 4.5 Enhancing academic standards

5. Learning and teaching

- 5.1 Different kinds of learning and student needs
- 5.2 Assessing learning
- 5.3 Enhancing learning and teaching

6. Student support

- 6.1 Student support and guidance
- 6.2 Student representation
- 6.3 Physical infrastructure
- 6.4 Student finance and mobility
- 6.5 Supporting diverse student populations

7. Supporting research and related activities

- 7.1 The research environment and institutional research strategies
- 7.2 Sources of funding for research
- 7.3 Postgraduate research
- 7.4 Managing and supporting research
- 7.5 Evaluating research

Theme C: Administration and Management of Higher Education**8. Leadership, governance, and management**

- 8.1 Leadership, governance, and management
- 8.2 Risk management
- 8.3 Corporate planning

- 8.4 Financial audit and review
- 8.5 Value for money
- 8.6 Models of good practice – TQM, EFQM

9. The legal framework

- 9.1 Data protection
- 9.2 Freedom of information
- 9.3 Intellectual property rights
- 9.4 Charity law
- 9.5 Employment law
- 9.6 Contracts
- 9.7 Complaints / OIA
- 9.8 Equality

10. Managing resources

- 10.1 Human resources
- 10.2 Physical resources
- 10.3 Information resources
- 10.4 Financial resources

Appendix 2: Agreed Knowledge Area Template

Knowledge Area (e.g Philosophy and Politics of Higher Education)

1. Subsection (e.g. Purposes of higher education)

Indicative content:

Essential sources:

Further reading:

2. Subsection (e.g. Regulation and accountability in higher education)

Indicative content:

Essential sources:

Further reading:

etc...for all subsections

Check list of learning points and questions

Generic learning outcomes

Participants who complete a major assignment should be able to:

1. apply knowledge in context
2. critically evaluate and integrate theory and practice

Specific learning outcomes

Participant who complete a major assignment in this knowledge area should be able to demonstrate a systematic and enhanced knowledge of:

1. xxxxxxxxxx

Assignment title