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**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES
QUALITY AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

Thursday 27 January 2005

MINUTES

Members: Professor Ian Brown (Chair)
Dr Monik Charette
Dr Matthew Craven
Ms Jo Halliday*
Mr Terry Harvey
Dr Elizabeth Moore
Dr William Radice
Dr Graham Smith

In attendance: Ms Jennifer Hearn (Secretary)

* Apologies were received from Ms Jo Halliday.

11 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2004 were **APPROVED**.

12 Matters Arising

12.1 Non-Departmental Programme Reviews (NDPR) (minute 3.2, 30.09.04)

It was noted that, with only one Departmental Programme Review (DPR) completed, the Committee did not yet feel in a position to make decisions regarding the guidelines for NDPR. A draft would instead be prepared once the third DPR scheduled for this session had been completed.

12.2 The recording of double blind marking (minute 32.1, 04.06.04)

The Committee received an oral update from the Academic Registrar on the recording of double blind marking. Concern had been expressed about the administrative processes involved in double blind marking. The Academic Registrar had consulted the QAA Code of Practice and noted that double blind marking was not a formal requirement, although the QAA had recommended at the School's Institutional Audit in April 2003 that an institution-wide policy on double blind marking should be implemented and this had been agreed at the School's Learning & Teaching Policy Committee. It was noted that the Faculties had each formulated their own method of recording double blind marking. The School needed to ensure that its policy complied with QAA requirements and that there was uniformity of practice across all Faculties.

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The Academic Registrar reported that examination scripts were exempt from disclosure under the Data Protection Act. Comments made by examiners, however, were not exempt, and should a request be made for comments which had been recorded on the script, they would have to be transcribed. If comments were recorded separately, they could be destroyed, provided that this was done in all cases as a matter of policy. Such a policy would prevent the disclosure of comments and the Committee felt that this would ensure examiners felt free to make detailed comments.

The Committee agreed to request that the Learning and Teaching Policy Committee review the policy on double-blind marking, including the mechanisms used and whether, if comments were to be recorded separately, they should be destroyed following the publication of results.

13 QAAC reviews of the Near & Middle East and Music Departments

13.1 Points arising from the Review of the Near & Middle East Department

The Committee received a report from the NME Department on the action taken to address the recommendations one year after the review [Appendix A]. The Committee noted the following points in relation to responses:

Para 1.9

The Committee agreed to ask the Learning and Teaching Unit whether the School had formulated any guidance for language departments on defining 'language competence'.

Para 1.11

The Committee recognised that the original recommendation to the Department, that it should 'continue to take urgent measures to improve the completion rates of its research students,' was now the responsibility of the Faculty, and agreed to ask the Faculty of Languages and Cultures for a report on progress in this area.

Para 1.12

Professor Hewitt had no comment to make on the review's recommendation that it would be advisable for the Department to 'consider introducing a more varied range of assessment, especially for courses currently examined only by final written examination'. The Committee considered that the recommendation reflected QA recommendations and agreed that Professor Hewitt should be asked to show that further serious consideration had been given to this matter.

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Para 1.14

The Committee recognised that Professor Hewitt's comments on departmental website administration echoed their own concerns, raised for instance in the Departmental and Programme Review of the Department of Japan and Korea. They agreed to ask the Pro-Director to keep this matter under review.

Para 1.17

The Committee did not consider Professor Hewitt's response that 'the Department has no wish or plan to reintroduce a Departmental Research Committee' to be sufficient. While the Committee recognised that Research Committees are not School policy nor strongly recommended under QA guidelines, and that in small departments a separate committee is often unnecessary, they agreed that Professor Hewitt should be asked to provide more detail on how decisions regarding research leave, grant applications and other strategic matters are made in the Department.

The Committee's officers would continue to monitor the progress of those matters which were ongoing, and an update would be considered at a future meeting.

13.2 Points arising from the Review of the Music Department

The Committee received a paper detailing progress on the various outstanding recommendations from the report on the review of the Music Department [Appendix B]. The Committee accepted the responses and did not wish to raise anything further in response; officers of the Committee would continue to monitor the progress of those matters which were ongoing.

14 QAA Institutional Audit, April 2003

The Committee received a copy of a letter sent by the Director and Principal to the QAA, with the one-year progress report [Appendix C]. The School's officers were responding to QAA recommendations and there were currently no areas not being pursued. This would be an ongoing item on the agenda and updates would be provided to the Committee when available or necessary.

15 Departmental and Programme Reviews 2004/05

15.1 Forthcoming Departmental and Programme Reviews

Members noted the DPR dates for 2004/05 as follows:

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- Thursday 10 March 2005 – all day DPR of the Department of Politics and International Studies (including the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy). Internal panel members are:
 - Professor Ian Brown (Chair)
 - Dr Matthew Craven
 - Dr Elizabeth Moore
 - Dr Graham Smith
 - Ms Jo Halliday

- Thursday 28 April 2005 – all day DPR of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of China and Inner Asia. Internal panel members are:
 - Professor Ian Brown (Chair)
 - Dr Monik Charette
 - Dr Elizabeth Moore
 - Dr William Radice
 - Ms Jo Halliday

The Committee agreed that it would be necessary for the internal panel members (and those external members based in London) involved in each review to attend a brief meeting, lasting up to one hour, to determine lines of enquiry and the particular themes and issues on which they would take the lead. This meeting would take place within the week prior to each review.

15.2 Review of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea

The Report of the Departmental and Programme Review of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of Japan and Korea [Appendix D] was **APPROVED**. The Secretary of the Committee would now forward it to the Department and to the Faculty. Recommendations for action by the School would be forwarded to the relevant committees/officers. Written responses would be requested within three months. The Report would be forwarded for information to the Research, and the Learning and Teaching Policy Committees. The Report would also be made available on the School's Intranet, and the Officers of the Committee would prepare a summary of the Report to be posted on the HERO Teaching Quality Information website.

16 Interim Departmental and Programme Reviews (IDPRs)

16.1 Department of South East Asia and the Islands

The Committee received a submission from the Department for interim review [Appendix E]. The Committee agreed to ask the Department to submit a brief addendum to their paper, to cover the following points:

- action taken in respect of recommendations emerging from previous reviews, with particular reference to the QAA Teaching Quality Assessment of the then Department of East and South Asian Studies (1997)

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- a statement on the Department's adherence to the QAA subject benchmark for Languages and Related Subjects
- confirmation that programme specifications have been prepared and lodged with the Head of Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Committee's officers would draw the Department's attention to the guidelines for IDPRs and provide any support necessary.

16.2 Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia

The Committee received a submission from the Department for interim review [Appendix F]. The Committee agreed to ask the Department to submit a brief addendum to their paper, to cover the following points:

- action taken in respect of recommendations emerging from previous reviews, with particular reference to the QAA Teaching Quality Assessment of the then Department of East and South Asian Studies (1997)
- a statement on the Department's adherence to the QAA subject benchmark for Languages and Related Subjects
- confirmation that programme specifications have been prepared and lodged with the Head of Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Committee's officers would draw the Department's attention to the guidelines for IDPRs and provide any support necessary.

16.3 Department of the Languages and Cultures of Africa

The Committee received a submission from the Department [Appendix G] and noted that it satisfied the requirements for interim review. The Committee noted the following points:

Section 1.1, para 4

The Committee was concerned by the implication that no supervision was provided by the School for Independent Study Projects in the Department, which were started while students were on their Year Abroad and completed before the beginning of the session in which they returned to SOAS.

Section 1.2.3

The Committee shared the Visiting Examiners' concerns regarding a shortness of time for examination marking. The Academic Registrar pointed out that an additional week had been added to the 2004/05 session, which should address these concerns. The Committee agreed to ask the Department for reassurance that the Visiting Examiners would this year be given sufficient time to consider exam scripts.

16.4 Department of Financial and Management Studies, and the Language Centre

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The Committee received an oral report from the Chair. Although both had submitted a paper, their submissions were not sufficient to meet the requirements of the interim review process. The Committee noted that the submissions contained no reference to quality assurance mechanisms or any form of internal review. The Committee agreed to ask the Departments to resubmit their papers for reconsideration at its next meeting. The Committee's officers would draw the attention of the Department and the Centre to the guidelines for IDPRs and provide any support necessary.

17 Date of next meeting

The next scheduled meeting was Thursday 10 March 2005. This would be an all day review meeting of the Department of Politics and International Studies (and therefore would not involve all members of QAAC) starting at 9.00am in room 116, Russell Square.

A further meeting would be necessary during the Summer Term in order to consider the reports arising from the two Departmental and Programme Reviews, and the two Interim Departmental and Programme Reviews. Thursday 9 June 2005 was suggested as a possible date, and the Secretary to the Committee agreed to confirm this shortly.

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Action Points

Minute	Item	Action	Deadline	By
12	Matters Arising			
12.1	<i>Non-Departmental Programme Reviews</i>	Drafting of guidelines for NDPR would be discussed at a meeting of the Committee early in the next session	Summer 2005	QAAC officers
12.2	<i>The recording of double blind marking</i>	The Committee's officers to write to the Learning and Teaching Policy Committee to report their finding regarding the Data Protection implications of double blind marking	ASAP	QAAC officers
		The Committee to recommend to the LTPC that the School devise a clear policy regarding double blind marking, including guidance on the recording and retention (or destruction) of examiners' comments.	ASAP	QAAC officers
13	QAAC reviews of the Near & Middle East and Music Departments			
13.1	<i>QAAC Review of the NME Dept</i>	The Committee's officers to ask the Head of Department to address points outstanding following his response to the report.	ASAP	QAAC officers
		The Committee's officers to ask the LTU about guidance regarding 'language competence'.	ASAP	QAAC officers
		The Committee's officers to ask the Faculty about progress on completion rates.	ASAP	QAAC officers
		The Committee's officers to ask the Pro-Director to keep issues relating to Departmental websites under review.	ASAP	QAAC officers
		The Committee to consider the update at the May 2005	May 2005 (date tbc)	Sec QAAC/ All

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		meeting.		
Minute	Item	Action	Deadline	By
13.2	<i>QAAC Review of the Music Dept</i>	The Committee's officers to continue to monitor the progress of those matters which are ongoing.	Ongoing	QAAC officers
14	QAA Institutional Audit, April 2003	An update on the nine main QAA recommendations for action to be an ongoing item on the agenda as necessary	Ongoing	QAAC officers
15	Departmental and Programme Reviews 2004/05			
15.1	<i>Forthcoming DPRs</i>	The Committee's officers to contact the internal review panel members shortly to arrange a brief meeting prior to each review to determine the particular themes and issues on which each member would take the lead.	ASAP	QAAC officers
16	Interim Departmental and Programme Reviews			
16.1	<i>Department of South East Asia</i>	The Committee's officers to ask the Department to submit additional remarks to cover topics missing from the original submission.	ASAP	QAAC officers
16.2	<i>Department of the Languages and Cultures of South Asia</i>	The Committee's officers to ask the Department to submit additional remarks to cover topics missing from the original submission.	ASAP	QAAC officers
16.3	<i>Department of the Languages and Cultures of Africa</i>	The Committee's officers to ask the Department for responses to their concerns regarding the Independent Study Project and exam marking.	ASAP	QAAC officers
16.4	<i>Department of Finance and Management Studies and the Language Centre</i>	The Committee's officers to ask these Departments to resubmit their papers for reconsideration at its next meeting, and to provide any support necessary.	ASAP	QAAC officers
17	Date of next meeting	The Secretary to organise an additional 'business' meeting	ASAP	Sec QAAC

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		of the Committee in May/June 2005.		
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