

## University of Glasgow

### Academic Standards Committee – Friday 25 May 2012

## Report of the Meeting of the Liaison Committee of the University of Glasgow and the Scottish Agricultural College - 31 January 2012

Geraldine Perriam, Clerk to the Liaison Committee

The following were among the items considered at the meeting.

#### 1. Remit and Membership of the Liaison Committee

Following review of the Committee remit it was agreed that no amendment was required. The Committee **agreed** that Professor Jill Morrison should be invited onto the Committee. The membership of the Committee was approved. [**Clerk's note:** Professor Morrison has been invited to become a member of the Committee.].

Academic Standards Committee is invited to **approve**, retrospectively, the remit and membership of the Liaison Committee as specified in [Appendix 1](#).

#### 2. Annual Report from SAC for Session 2010-2011

- i. *The 'Going Further' Project.* The timetable for the conclusion of the project is set as August 2012 but in reality it is more likely to be at the end of 2012. The project, in which four colleges, Elmwood, Barony, Oatridge and SAC will merge had been relatively smooth. The 'Host' model of merger was preferred over the Phoenix model. Under the 'host' model of merger the option is for one institution as lead. It is likely that SAC will be the host institution. This will be decided at the Partnership Board meeting. The structure of governance for the merger is yet to be decided. Ms Burns has been attending the Student Services Group concerning the merger and it is hoped that consultation documents will be ready for sending out in March. The University will be asked for its views.
- ii. *Rural University College.* This is a formal collaboration between SAC, HE and other partners as well as rural colleges. This would allow for degree awarding powers which could be important from a marketing and a research perspective. It also allows for the development of Joint Degrees with UoG and other institutions. At this stage, it is intended that UoG will continue to validate awards for SAC as it currently does. It is intended to build on SAC's current position without putting in jeopardy the relationships with UoG and Edinburgh University. UoG Principal, Professor Muscatelli has affirmed the University's support for the Rural University College concept. SAC does not currently appear on awarding institution lists and it is felt that having degree-awarding powers will help with this.
- iii. *Student Association Sabbatical President.* The Convener welcomed Ms Burns and invited her to report to the Committee. Ms Burns said that she had found the development training helpful and that she had thus far enjoyed her role. Ms Burns indicated that any issues relevant to her role had already been discussed.
- iv. *Appeals and Student Conduct.* The Committee noted that there had been no academic appeals or complaints during 2010-2011. Four cases had been heard

regarding student conduct. Each case involved plagiarism and the students concerned were given appropriate warnings and were required to resubmit their assessments.

- v. *Internal Subject Review: Horticulture.* The Committee noted the recommendation that the Horticulture programmes be revalidated at an event held in Spring 2012 and **agreed** that the report should be forwarded to UoG's Academic Standards Committee (ASC) for approval of the programme for a further six years.
- vi. *Validation.* The Committee noted that the BSc/BSc (Hons) in Garden Design had been put forward for validation. The panel had recommended that the programme proposal be revised and a panel reconstituted to consider the revised programme in February/March 2012. The validation panel felt that further clarification of the curriculum was needed, particularly in relation to the science content. Additionally, further work was required in clarifying the nature of the proposed student learning experience.
- vii. *ELIR.* In response to the ELIR report, SAC had produced an Action Plan and had also published its formal update report to QAA in October, 2011. The Committee received a copy of the report in Appendix 2 of the SAC documents tabled for the meeting.
- viii. *Programme Validations.* The Committee received the report on programme validations and **agreed** that the timetable of future validations was appropriate, synchronising as it does with the timing of Internal Subject Reviews. The Committee further **agreed** that the timetable, as specified in Appendix 2, should be submitted to ASC for approval.
- ix. *Quality Assurance Procedures.* The following items were noted and discussed:
  - a) Video Conferencing. Due to geographical issues related to multiple campuses, there have been some critical comments from students and staff. In some cases the use of video conferencing had proved moderately successful. Some technical difficulties had arisen including the availability of technical back up. The issue has been raised at SAC Board level and a working group had been established to review the pedagogic aspects of video conferencing.
  - b) Feedback. The Committee noted that SAC is taking a fresh look at methods of gathering feedback from students, particularly since practical issues often arise and these can sometimes be addressed in a straightforward manner.
  - c) The Committee noted the list of staff recognised as teachers of the University and received for information the list of members of teaching staff not previously notified to the University. The Committee **recommended** that the list be forwarded to ASC for approval. The new staff are:

Fiona Borthwick, Lecturer in Environmental Management;

Pat Wightman, Lecturer in Ecology

Nicola Penford, Lecturer in Countryside Management;

Lou Ralph, Lecturer and Programme Leader Organic Farming;

Denise Ronald, Lecturer in Countryside Management;

Alison Campbell, Lecturer in Business Management and IT.

### 3. External Examiners' Comments

It was noted that the comments by external examiners had been, on the whole, positive. The Committee also noted the following:

- i. *BA Tourism Management (various pathways)*: there was concern expressed by the examiners that anonymity of students could not be preserved as there were so few students in each stream. It was suggested that this issue may be addressed through amalgamating the various streams of the programme.
- ii. *BSc/BSc (Hons)Advanced Agronomy (various pathways)*: there was a concern from the examiner about the collation of marks and errors made. It was noted that the introduction of an electronic Information Management System might improve the situation. This was currently being investigated. It was also noted that the examiner found a mismatch between feedback made and its reaching students. The Committee noted that this was an issue common across the country and that student rating of feedback is generally low. SAC does not participate in the National Student Survey (NSS) as student numbers on various programmes are low and students could be easily identified, which means that evidence-based discussions using NSS data are not an option.

The Committee heard that there had been a pilot study run with the BA in Rural Business Management Systems and the Student Liaison Committee. It was found that there were inconsistencies in levels of feedback and the exercise had been useful. Although face-to-face tutorial feedback occurs this can be variable and dependent on types of assessment. The Committee **agreed** that the quality and quantity of feedback needed to be addressed. It was also noted that the comments from examiners regarding dissertation marking and consistency suggested that an overview of the marking scheme might be useful.

- iii. *BSc Horiculture/Horticulture with Plantsmanship* The examiner commented that a "clearer statement or manifesto as to what the course is trying to do" was needed. The Committee noted that the programme had been subject to internal review in 2010/2011 and was considered to have a reasonable offering of environmental issues across programmes, particularly as students share modules with other programmes. The programme team had responded to these issues by indicating that they will incorporate a clear statement into the student handbooks as well as discussing it with the students at induction. Further, the team agreed to increase "the biodiversity/urban ecology content in modules such as Garden and Open Space Management as well as ... the horticultural offering in Horticultural Taxonomy".
- iv. *MSc Organic Farming*: The examiner suggested the inclusion of Research Ethics and Research Methods "more formally" in the taught programme. The Committee heard that in the run up to the final year of the programme, there are study weekends for students where these methods are taught. There are also specific courses available to BSc and BA students in the third year of the programmes. Projects are sent to the Ethics Committee where appropriate for approval.
- v. *BSc Sports Coaching and Development (various pathways)*: The examiner has suggested that the collection and analysis of data would benefit from the introduction of statistical software. The Committee heard that it had been suggested that specific programmes would benefit from the appropriate software.

#### **4. QA Guidelines for External Examiners**

The Committee received the paper outlining the changes to Quality Assurance procedures for External Examiners and the areas in which changes would need to be made at UoG. It was noted that the five year term of office for External Examiners can be difficult in practical terms. In a discussion of Indicator 6 it was noted that UoG was opting for written advice to examiners to inform them of policies and procedures.<sup>1</sup> It was also noted that at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA), the use of an induction seminar had been adopted. The Convener suggested that SAC might want to liaise with Dr Craig Williamson, the Director of Student and Academic Services at GSA for more information on this issue.

Indicator 8 was considered to pose problems.<sup>2</sup> While it was important that students were aware of their external examiners, there could be privacy issues emerging for examiners. The Committee expressed concern at this possibility.

#### **5. Other Business**

Professor Mackenzie moved a vote of thanks to the Convener on behalf of the Committee and SAC for the help and assistance which Professor Caie had given. This had been much appreciated. Professor Caie thanked those present for their good wishes and thanks and said that he had enjoyed his time as Convener.

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<sup>1</sup> Indicator 6 relates to the requirement that institutions ensure that external examiners are informed of organisational procedures, regulations, etc. and the role of feedback from external examiners

<sup>2</sup> Indicator 8: "Institutions include the names, position and institution of their external examiners in module or programme information provided to students."

## Remit and Membership of the Liaison Committee

2011-12

### Remit

The Liaison Committee will meet annually to consider an annual report on the performance of all of the programmes leading to awards of the University delivered wholly or jointly by the Scottish Agricultural College.

### Membership

<b>University</b>	
Clerk of Senate [Convener]	Professor Graham Caie
Director of Senate Office (or nominee)	Dr Jack Aitken
Head of School of Life Sciences	Dr Rob Aitken
Head of School of Veterinary Medicine	Professor Ewan Cameron
University Member (College of Medical Veterinary and Life Sciences) and member of SAC's Learning and Skills Committee (alternate years)	(t.b.c.) (2011-12)
University Member (Crichton Campus) and member of SAC's Learning and Skills Committee (alternate years)	Dr Donald MacLeod
<b>Scottish Agricultural College</b>	
Principal or nominee [Vice Convener]	Professor Geoff Simm
Vice-Principal (Learning)	Mr David McKenzie
Academic Services Manager	Dr Chris Smith
A student representative	Margaret Burns
<b>In Attendance</b>	
Teaching Group Managers and/or Programme Leaders, as and if required	
Academic Policy Manager, Senate Office	Mrs Jackie McCluskey
Assistant Academic Policy Manager, Senate Office, Clerk	Dr Geraldine Perriam

*Proposed timetable for future validations*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Subject group</b>	<b>Programmes</b>
2011-12	Agriculture	BSc Agriculture, BA Rural Business Management, MSc Organic Farming, MSc Applied Poultry Science, <i>HNC Poultry Production</i>
2012-13	Bioscience	BSc Agricultural Science, BSc Applied Animal Science BSc Applied Bioscience, BSc Green Technology
2013-14	Environment <sup>4</sup>	BSc Countryside Management, BSc Environmental Protection, BSc Rural Resource Management, BSc Sustainable Environmental Management
	Sport, Outdoor Pursuits and Tourism	BA Sport & Recreation Management, BA Sports Development and coaching, BA Outdoor Pursuits Management, BA Activity Tourism Management
2014-2015	Student Services	
	ELIR3	