

Academic Quality Committee Procedures

25 August 2015
(revised: December 2017)

Background:

As outlined in the College's Governance Reform of March/April 2015, the Academic Quality Committee (AQC) has been created as the prime body for monitoring and fostering academic standards across the majors (see Governance Reform, as approved by the College Council in March and approved by the Board in April 2015).

Membership

The AQC consists of:

- The Associate Dean for Teaching (Chair)
- The Dean (co-chair)
- Heads of Departments
- External Examiners (either in person or via written correspondence)

Note: the AQC will convene **in full** for the first time in December 2015. For the first inaugural meeting on 27 August, the AQC will only convene in the format of

- The Associate Dean for Teaching (Chair)
- The Dean (co-chair)
- Heads of Departments

Mandate and Tasks:

The AQC serves as the College-wide body for academic quality control related to formally tested learning outcomes (written/oral exams and assignments). Act, in consultation with the Heads of Departments, external examiners and moderators, as a College-wide review and quality control committee for grading policy course progression and academic standards. In particular, the AQC

1. Reviews draft exam questions (mid-terms and final exams by week 6 and 14 respectively) and ensures that assignment levels comply with the appropriate academic standard
2. Reviews syllabi and their compliance with the Major Learning Objectives in consultation with Heads of Departments
3. Appoints External Moderators and organizes the moderation process in Week 16 each semester
4. Receives and approves Annual departmental reports on quality assurance (including implementation plan on external examiner reports)
5. Reviews grade distributions and reports on grading standards and grade inflation
6. Advises the Steering Committee regularly on Academic standards of 'the entire educational experience'
7. Reviews and monitors the implementation of academic standards outlined in the Teaching Manual
8. Proposes updates and revisions of the Teaching Manual

Organization and Procedures:¹

The AQC quality review cycle has an ex ante and ex post component.

Ex-Ante Quality assurance

Instructors are required to submit their draft syllabi (with syllabus questionnaire) at least 10 days before the beginning of the new semester to their respective Head of Department. The HOD checks the syllabus for academic standards and compliance with the syllabus template and provides, if needed, written feed-back and suggestions for change.

In Week 4 and Week 12, HODs request the draft mid-term and final exam questions from all instructors and check whether they fulfil the academic standards and progression requirements outlined in the Teaching Manual. HODs suggest changes if necessary in writing.

Ex-Post Quality Control: Course Folder Evaluation: Week 16

Course Folders are an essential component of all processes of quality control and teaching evaluation. Monitoring needs to be an integral component of all exercises of quality control. By the end of the marking period of each semester, upon the request of the Heads of Department, the faculty shall submit a complete teaching folder to the respective Head of Department. The course folders must include:

- A. Preliminary instructor reflection report, to be expanded once the students' evaluations are delivered – *the preliminary report gives the instructor the possibility to share his/her opinion on what went wrong or well in the Course and the changes he/she foresees for the next teaching term. It also allows the instructor to discuss and gives suggestions on the reformed quality control procedures.*
- B. Final grading (excel sheet from Blackboard);
- C. Course Syllabus;
- D. Printouts of course Material (ppt slides);
- E. Course Material (hand-outs, whenever provided);
- F. Graded assessment sheets (whenever provided, e.g. for oral presentations or research proposals);
- G. Graded exams (or any similar assignment);
- H. Graded research paper (or any similar assignment), including grading rubrics;
- I. Marked exercises accounting for more than 10% of the final grade.

¹ Please note that, in accordance with the remedial action plan submitted to the NVAO in June 2015, these AQC meeting procedures apply as of Fall 2015 with the first meeting in Week 6 and 16. For the "Test phase" inaugural meeting of 27 August (to review the Spring 2015 courses as a test run) special procedures apply.

Folder policy

Upon submission of the folders, the AQC and external moderators/examiners conduct quality control of the delivered material. While the AQC is responsible for overall quality control at the College level, the Heads of Department remain the central strategic referents to ensure effective quality control in their respective Departments. The AQC will deliver a short report on each folder, assessing the following aspects:

Syllabus	The Syllabus is complete and adequately addresses the stated learning objectives.
Major/Course Learning Objectives questionnaire	The objectives are clearly stated and resonate with the overall Major objectives
Level of the Course	The objectives; workload; assignments and assessment criteria respond well to the progression level.
Final Grade Summary	There are instances of grade inflation.
Reflection report	The reflection report bears witness of the attempt to improve the level and quality of the course.
Final grading	Final grading is duly reported (using Blackbaud) for evaluation purposes.
Syllabus	The syllabus is complete and provides students with all necessary information (e.g. objectives; reading material, grading policy; reading questions; evaluation rubric for written assignment; bibliography...).
Course Material (Power Point)	A preliminary assessment of the visual support that sustain lectures (does the course material help students better understand the objectives of the course? Does the material highlight and address the objectives of the teaching unit? Does the material contain necessary information? Is the material well engineered and visible?)
Course Material (Hand-outs)	Presence/Absence of meaningful and helpful support.
Assessment sheets for oral presentations	The folder contains the graded assessment sheets adopted to assess oral presentations/research proposals
Mid-term exam	The folder contains the graded mid-term exams (see AQC and policy for criteria of assessment of the grading policy)
Graded research paper	The folder contains the graded research paper (see AQC and policy for criteria of assessment of the grading policy)
Final exam	The folder contains the graded final exam (see AQC and policy for criteria of assessment of the grading policy)

External examiners

To further strengthen the quality control, Vesalius College invites external examiners (EEs) who serve as quality control officers in the College's overall student assessment process. The EE's involvement is a standard procedure in the United Kingdom and was originally introduced at Vesalius College in preparation of the Open University Validation Services (OUVS). The EEs for example read selected examinations and written assignments for all courses in the major on a random basis. They deliberately seek to verify low marks and high marks in order to see that professors' grading is consistent and fair. EEs make suggestions regarding course requirements such as the length of written assignments, the type of examination questions given, and other pedagogical aspects of the courses. Although Vesalius is no longer subject to OUVS-accreditation, since its NVAO-accreditation, EEs' services have been maintained for quality purposes and have proved to contribute highly to academic standards.

In Week 16 of each semester, the AQC is enlarged by externals to 1 external examiner per department, acting as moderators for quality control, grading distribution and the check of validity, reliability and transparency of the grading quality and academic standards

Decision-making is by consensus. The Dean, acts as 'final guarantor of academic standards' (See GAR, Section 8.4 – last updated version of March 2014).

Terms of Reference for AQC Meetings

The Associate Dean for Teaching acts as Chair. At the beginning of the meeting a meeting secretary (responsible for the minute-taking) will be nominated. The AQC members will discuss the course-by-course assessment, presented by each Head of Department in turn – based on the HOD reports, pre-submitted to all AQC members at least three days prior to the meeting. Ideally, the most problematic cases should be discussed first, with a discussion of "best practices" following on and, if time permits, ending with a discussion of 'adequate' cases. The final hour of the meeting should be dedicated to an overall discussion, particularly taking into consideration progression issues across the curricula.

The HOD reports² should include:

- an executive summary of the most important combined quality aspects of the reviewed courses
- The most important findings of the External Examiner report per course
- The most important findings of Student Evaluations per course (with particular emphasis on overall rating of the course, overall rating of instructor, self-perceived study time and salient comments made in the qualitative section)
- The key summaries of the HOD folder Check

² A table template has been forwarded by the Dean to all AQC members, which may serve as the standard format for HOD reports – see Appendix

As a result of the three quality check components, the HOD should proceed to recommendations (AQC recommendations on how quality of teaching and ‘the entire learning experience’ could be improved) and **requirements** (compliance with College-wide standards, as outlined in the teaching manual).

All members of the AQC are entitled to comment on the HOD assessment of a particular course and should reach a consensus on the required recommendations/requirements per course.

Upon agreement, the AQC Course Review Form (see Appendix) will be completed, printed and signed by all AQC members.

This complements the previously filled out Moderation Forms and Folder Checklist (to be added to the instructor file and to be handed out in copy to the instructor when conducting the feedback meeting).

Follow-up of AQC and Feedback to Instructors

The HOD will arrange for a feedback meeting with each course instructor and agrees on a follow-up plan (see fourth page of Course Review Form).

The instructor should receive from the HOD

- a copy of the EE report section on his/her course(s)
- a copy of the student evaluations
- a copy of the Moderator Form
- a copy of the Folder Checklist form
- a copy of the AQC Course review form

Filing and Archival Issues:

The HOD will keep a copy of above mentioned documents in his/her Folder, labeled “Academic Quality Control – Semester/Academic Year”, divided by instructor and his/her courses.

Appendix: AQC Course Review Form

**ACADEMIC QUALITY COMMITTEE
COURSE REVIEW FORM**

Title and Course Code of Course:	
Name of Instructor:	
Department / Non-departmental Core	

Overall rating of the course (in terms of compliance with quality standards):

	Excellent (Best Practice)
	Adequate (with room for improvement)
	In need of improvement (in need of remedial actions – see requirements)

AQC Course Review Checklist:

Quality Aspects	Rating			Comments
	Excellent	Adequate	INOI	
Completeness of Folder				
Quality of reflection report				
Clear Course Objectives				
CO in line with Major O.				
Organization of course				
Progression compliance				
Quality (rigour and up-to-dateness) of lecture material				
Quality (rigour and up-to-dateness) of reading material				
Rubrics				
Timeliness and quality of feedback to students				
Grading (including avoidance of grade inflation)				
Overall academic level and demands of course (compared to international				If below 'excellent', please recommend benchmarking – required for 'inadequate'

standards)				
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Summary Comments from External Examiner Report

Summary Comments from Student Evaluations

Rating of Course:
Rating of Instructor:
Self-reported Study time:

Summary Comments from HOD

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Requirements (these need to be addressed by instructor as a matter of urgency)

Recommendations (these are comments aimed at improving the quality of instruction and course even further)

Signed:

Joachim Koops

Caterina Carta

Frank Billingsley

Svitlana Kobzar

Georgis Terzis

Follow-up plan
(to be agreed with HOD and instructor after feedback meeting):

Date of Meeting:

HOD:

Instructor:

REQUIREMENTS		
<u>Follow-up Actions³</u>	<u>Time-frame / Deadline</u>	<u>Comments</u>

RECOMMENDATIONS		
<u>Follow-up Actions</u>	<u>Time-frame / Deadline</u>	<u>Comments</u>

Signature HOD

Signature Instructor

Date:

³ Please list in order of priorities, following straight from requirements and recommendations, taking into account the full range of review input