

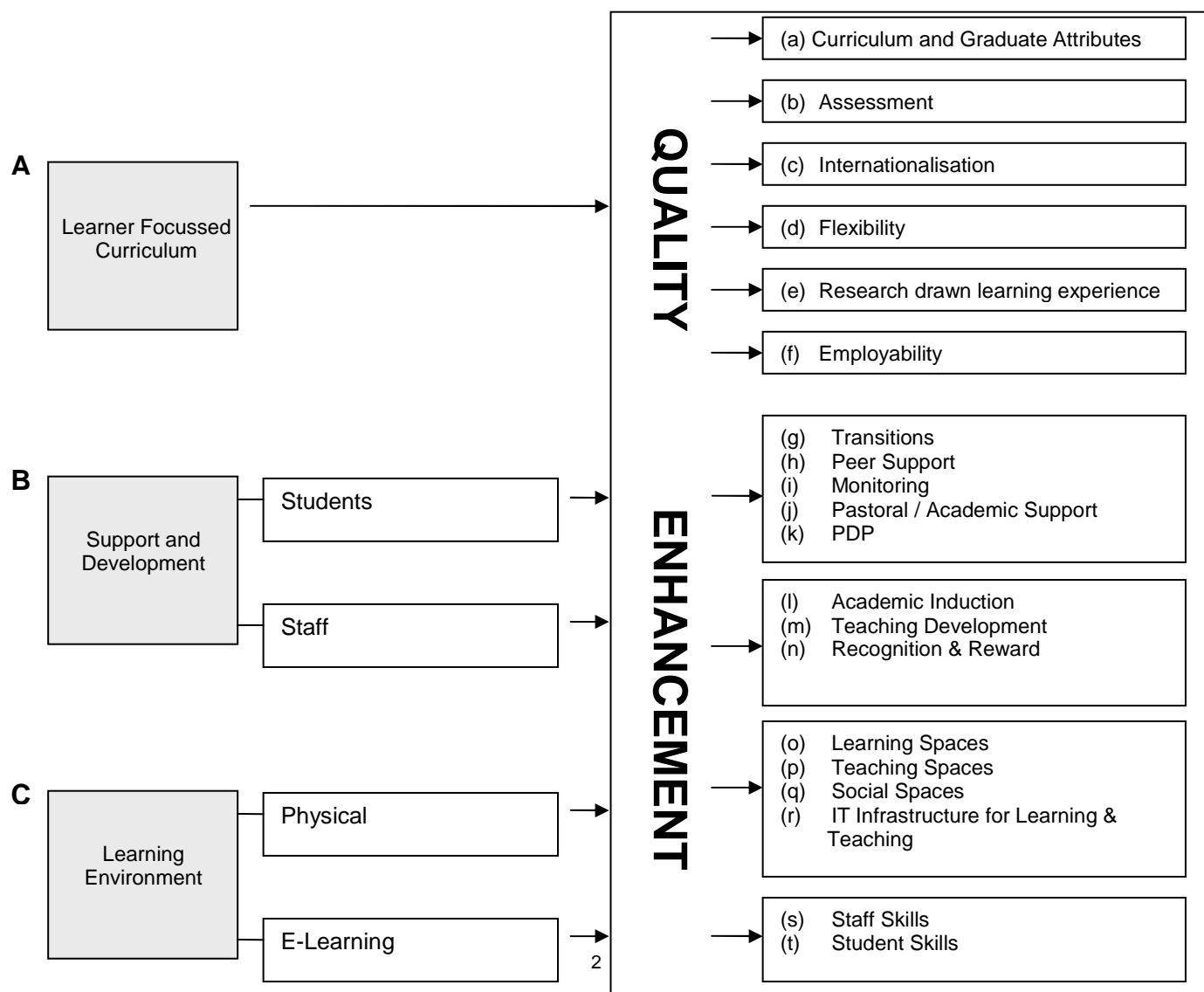
# **The Learning & Teaching Framework**

## **2007 – 2010**

The Learning & Teaching Framework sets out the University's vision for learning and teaching and serves as a tool to aid College and School planning. The Framework is a valuable tool for self-evaluation of learning and teaching across the institution, at both programme and course level, and will provide the foundations upon which Curriculum Reform will be built.

As indicated in diagram (1) which follows, the framework addresses three key themes: a Learner Focused Curriculum, Support and Development (for both students and staff) and the Learning Environment, each of which is then expanded upon in the text.

# FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING



## LEARNING & TEACHING FRAMEWORK: 2007 - 2010

Our vision is to be a world leader in learning and teaching. In achieving this we will be a learner-focussed, dynamic and responsive provider of learning and teaching, offering our students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) a high quality education that is inextricably linked to our research environment, and which is underpinned, at all levels, by our Model of the Effective Learner (MoL<sup>1</sup>).

We will provide an excellent and sustainable learning environment and continually enhance our provision by responding to identified learners' needs, developments in the fields of knowledge, and wider community interests, including those of employers and ensure a deliberate, enhancement-led process of reflection, planning, implementation and evaluation.

To enable us to achieve our vision, we will provide:

- A. A learner-focussed curriculum
- B. Proactive, comprehensive, effective support for students and staff
- C. An attractive, high quality and up-to-date learning, teaching and social environment
- D. Quality Enhancement

**A. A learner-focussed curriculum which enables all our students to realise their full potential and become graduates who are sought after by employers.** To achieve this we will provide an *attractive and relevant curriculum* that:

- i. **is learner- focused and sets clear academic expectations and standards** – We will continually monitor and address the needs of individual students throughout their undergraduate and postgraduate study, focusing on the key transitions and stages of development; we will ensure that programmes provide a range of assessments designed to give full opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and which generate prompt, useful feedback which guides future learning; we will challenge and motivate our students to be autonomous learners and to achieve individual potential and promote lifelong learning. We will provide students with clear details of objectives, skills outcomes and assessment criteria; we will structure our courses so students can plan their learning effectively and we will communicate our expectations and administrative details in a timely and accessible manner.
- ii. **is delivered in a global context** – Our curriculum will incorporate diverse cultural and international perspectives as appropriate, exposing students to a wide range of views and encouraging students to seek opportunities to widen horizons.
- iii. **is flexible and accessible** – Our programmes will consist of flexible and diverse learning and assessment opportunities, designed to develop skills and knowledge and take students to research and/or professional frontiers; different learning styles and talents will be recognised; we will offer a full range of awards that allow students to enter and exit at different points in different ways; by working closely with the Centre for Learning & Teaching, Colleges and Senior Disability Adviser, we will ensure awareness of diversity and the need for curriculum access for all.
- iv. **is research-led** – Our programmes will incorporate our research expertise, inspire curiosity and stimulate progression to, or within, postgraduate study; we will ensure teaching, learning and assessment activities emphasise research-relevant skills and engage students in intellectual enquiry; we will encourage our staff to use pedagogic scholarship to enhance learning and teaching and to encourage creativity. We will further ensure that our research expertise informs the development and delivery of our learning and teaching activities.
- v. **embeds employability at its core** – Employability will be embedded in our programmes, emphasising the complementary nature of high academic and personal achievement and enhanced employability; we will develop employability characteristics within the curriculum and ensure

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<sup>1</sup> The MoL provides a framework to guide all aspects of the University's educational provision: induction, teaching, learning, assessment, student support, quality assurance, quality enhancement and strategic management of change – see Annex 1. The MoL is under constant review to ensure its continued relevance to all levels of students.

employability is firmly embedded within the generic and subject specific elements of the University's Personal Development Planning (PDP) tool.

**B. Proactive, comprehensive, effective support for students and staff.** To facilitate this we must ensure explicit concern and support for both students and staff. For students this will include:

- i. **pre-entry and continuing induction** – We will proactively support students' transition to university and their progression during their studies by co-ordinating pre-entry and initial induction extending into on-going academic induction.
- ii. **a welcoming environment** - Recognising the importance to student development and retention of an appropriate social and academic context, we shall help our students to develop a sense of belonging and identification with the university by fostering the development of learning communities and ensuring opportunities for collaborative work and peer supported learning.
- iii. **advising and registration** – Our students will be supported to make informed academic choices throughout their time at university.
- iv. **pastoral and academic student support** –We will support all students in making informed academic choices and provide flexible and proactive academic and pastoral support services for students, facilitated by multi-disciplinary staff working with Student Support Services, the Centre for Learning & Teaching, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, Students' Association and the Careers Service; students' need for support and assistance will be monitored closely, and we will identify and respond to new concerns.
- v. **personal development planning** – We will develop and continually refine an effective personal development planning (PDP) system that supports the MoL and development of graduate and postgraduate attributes, and that helps students make transitions to (and within) Higher Education, recognise their strengths, address their development needs and plan for their future study or career.
- vi. **support for learning** - Liaising closely with the Centre for Learning & Teaching and Centre for Lifelong Learning we will ensure that appropriate support is accessible at all times; we will provide opportunities for students to participate in schemes such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and enable students to access a range of study skills support tools, workshops and online help guides and one to one sessions.

For staff this will include ensuring that staff:

- i. **have the necessary skills for teaching and access to tailored staff development programmes** – We are committed to encouraging staff to continually enhance their teaching for effective learning; a range of continuing professional development activities (CPD) will be offered for staff to participate in as appropriate to their portfolio of duties and all staff will participate in regular appraisal of their activities.
- ii. **share good practice** - All staff will be supported to enable them to deliver effective teaching, including research led teaching, and generic and employability skills; staff will be encouraged to involve themselves with relevant disciplines and professional communities to share new developments and good practice.
- iii. **Efforts are appropriately recognised** – Teaching, learning support and research achievements will be fully recognised and be rewarded.

### **C. An attractive, high quality and up-to-date learning, teaching and social environment.<sup>2</sup>**

To ensure an excellent learning environment for all we will provide an appropriate:

- i. **Physical environment** – we will keep the current provision under constant review and we will invest in flexible, multi-functional and accessible learning and social spaces and other learning resources that enable a learner centred model of higher education.
- ii. **Technological environment** – By developing and implementing a C&IT strategy for learning and teaching that further develops our use of e-learning technologies we will improve the quality and

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<sup>2</sup> Note: this part of the LTF must be tied to Section 7 of the University's Strategic Plan (Infrastructure and Environment).

flexibility of our provision; the University will use the opportunities provided by C&IT to enhance the quality and range of provision for students, furthering the University's widening access objectives.

**D. A Quality Enhancement Strategy which takes 'deliberate steps to bring about continual improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students'<sup>3</sup>.** We will ensure a deliberate, enhancement-led process of reflection, planning, implementation and evaluation. To do this we will:

- i. **Use agents and procedures to support the review and enhancement process** – this includes:
  - a. procedures for the regular review of courses and programmes; student progression rates; feedback from external examiners, and action in response to these; validation of proposals to introduce, amend or withdraw courses and programmes; Internal Teaching Reviews; and enhancement-led institutional review
  - b. internal agents such as the Academic Standards Committees, School and College Teaching & Learning Committees; College Postgraduate Committees; Staff-Student Consultative Committees, the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, Student Support Services and the Students' Association
  - c. external agents including our Employer Forum, PSBs, Research Councils, HEA Subject Centres and the QAA
- ii. **Ensure these agents and procedures are** - robust and comprehensive; maximise effort; focus on systems of internal reflection, peer review and feedback and provide ample opportunity for staff and students to engage in and contribute to quality-related activities
- iii. **Use specific actions to bring about continual improvement in the learning and teaching opportunities and education support services provided by us** – the University will develop further a culture of critical reflection on all aspects of learning and teaching and ensure that all feedback loops are closed; we will ensure joined-up approaches, linking the work of the various quality agents and improving the flow of quality-related information into, and within, the University; we will ensure effective dissemination and use of good practice.

### **Achieving our vision:**

The framework above helps us to identify our objectives and actions required, to ensure our vision is achieved. These will take account not only of developments within the University but also national, and where appropriate, international developments.

To enable us to accomplish our vision and to identify and achieve our objectives and actions in a systematic and timely manner, an annual operational plan will be developed each year. This operational plan details our objectives, strategies and specific goals for each academic year. The operational plan for each year will be articulated as an Annex.

### **Framework Co-Ordination Process:**

The framework above helps us to identify targets and actions to form part of the annual LTF operational plan. The Advisory Board for Learning & Teaching (ABLT), under the auspices of the UCTL, and working with the Centre for Learning and Teaching, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, the Careers Service, Student Support Services, Schools and Colleges, will keep this framework and operational plan under review, making changes as required, to ensure that the implementation of our targets and action points are achieved in a systematic and timely manner and that the LTF remains fit for purpose.

- a) The LTF's key themes will be monitored, and revised as appropriate, under the auspices of the UCTL.
- b) A key task of the ABLT and the Centre for Learning and Teaching will be to act as a focus for feedback and new ideas associated with the LTF. The Learning and Teaching Framework will continue to be

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<sup>3</sup> Quality Enhancement, as defined by the QAA's Handbook for enhancement-led institutional review: Scotland (April 2003)

written into the University's Strategic and Operational Plans. As such, the LTF will be subject to revision as part of the annual cycle for the full Strategic Plan.

- c) Colleges will be asked to prepare annual Learning and Teaching Plans as part of the College strategic plan. These plans will identify targets and actions that develop the agreed institution-wide themes. Colleges and Schools will also be invited to undertake local development work that complements the Strategy framework. These local actions will be written into School's and College's Learning and Teaching Plans.
- d) Colleges will present their plans to, and to receive feedback from UCTL facilitated through the Advisory Board for Learning & Teaching. This dialogue is intended to promote strategic coherence of development, to facilitate inter-College awareness of actions and to encourage dissemination of good practice.
- e) Feedback and other information collated over the year will shape the next Learning and Teaching submission for the annual Strategic Plan review.

## ANNEX 1 - THE MODEL OF THE EFFECTIVE LEARNER: AN OUTLINE

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### Introduction

The Model of the Learner (MoL) sets out what we want for, and what we expect of, our students (both undergraduate and postgraduate), paying particular attention to the opportunities and benefits of learning in a research-led environment. The MoL defines the type of student learning experience that we wish to promote at the University of Aberdeen, and the qualities that we wish to inculcate in our students, and will be used to guide design of curricula, assessments, personal development planning (PDP) for students, and staff development. The MoL is under constant review to ensure its continued relevance to all levels of students.

### What does the MoL include?

The MoL consists of four inter-related parts that set targets to work towards:

1. Characteristics of an autonomous, self-aware learner and a statement of generic skills to develop in UoA students
2. Key reference points that guide our provision
3. Basic principles of good practice to which learning and teaching at the UoA is expected to adhere
4. Aspects of research-led teaching that Schools are expected to develop

The MoL will remain a work in progress to allow for appropriate evolution in response to external and internal developments. Below, we provide an indicative range of what we wish to develop.

### 1. Characteristics of an autonomous, self-aware learner

#### (A) *Key graduate attributes*

- i) self-awareness as a learner
- ii) self-seeking of new knowledge and understandings
- iii) self review and monitoring
- iv) independence and responsiveness
- v) self-responsibility and motivation
- vi) self-reliance and confidence
- vii) recognise self as part of a wider learning community

#### (B) *Key skills*

- i) information access skills (including C&IT)
- ii) research skills
- iii) communication skills (to include presentation skills, and linguistic skills as appropriate)
- iv) numerical skills
- v) analytical skills (including reasoning and critical analysis)
- vi) team skills
- vii) identifying and building personally and professionally relevant goals
- viii) project / planning skills
- ix) problem solving skills
- x) identification and use of appropriate support from a variety of sources

### 2. Key reference points

*To include:*

- Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF); in particular the level descriptors
- the UoA's Code of Practice for Undergraduate Teaching
- the UoA's Strategy for C&IT in Learning and Teaching
- the UoA's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Taught Students, Programme Coordinators, Heads of School, Heads of Graduate School & College Postgraduate Officers
- the UoA's Employability Strategy
- internal teaching review reports, external examiners' reports, Teachability reviews, and other sources that identify good practice in the University

- the work of the Higher Education Academy's subject centres
- appropriate benchmark statements + PSB guidelines
- appropriate Research Council guidelines (in as much as they impact upon taught postgraduate provision)

### 3. Principles for good practice<sup>4</sup>

- Set high expectations
- Concentrate on the early stages of study for all
- Promote active learning
- Emphasise productive, clearly defined "time on task"<sup>5</sup>
- Encourage contact between students, teaching staff and other services.
- Encourage co-operation among students
- Use effective assessment with clear criteria and prompt feedback
- Respect diverse talents, individual needs and ways of learning
- Systematically assess satisfaction, needs and outcomes.
- Enhance career and professional development opportunities.

### 4. Aspects of research-led teaching<sup>6</sup>

Our current thinking works with the following categories/continuum:

- The *subject content* of the curriculum incorporates current research – in particular, research conducted by the teaching staff themselves.
- Teaching, learning and assessment activities emphasise research-relevant *skills* and introduce students to research processes and research cultures.
- Staff use *pedagogic research* to enhance learning and teaching.

These three aspects of research-led teaching are inter-related. All are to be encouraged, although we anticipate that the appropriate balance between the three maybe different for different disciplines and levels of courses. We would expect research-led teaching to be a defining characteristic of most (if not all) taught postgraduate material.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from, *After* Chickering, A. W. and Z. F. Gamson. 1987. Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. See: <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/7princip.htm>

<sup>5</sup> "Time on task": a phrase designed to capture the idea that students should be given distinct, realistic learning tasks, for which the work time required, what students are expected to do, what they should learn as a result, and, if appropriate, what the assessment criteria are, are all clearly defined. Students should know how, when and with what results they should direct their energies. The opposite of effective "time on task" as a productive force for learning is simply to expect students (especially students in their early years at university) to get on with it without any direction at all.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from the University of Sydney's Research-informed Teaching project. See: <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/rlt/>