## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2017

**Present:** Mrs J Shireffs (Convener), Rev M Anderson, Mr C Anucha, Ms M Chapman, Mr L Forsyth, Mr L Fuller, Prof H Hutchison, Mrs C Inglis, Ms J Killin, Ms A McClellan, Professor P McGeorge, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr L Macleod, Professor J Masthoff, Prof E Pavlovskaia, and Ms A Shipley with Ms C Cameron (Clerk), Ms K Scaife and Mr A Wight. In addition, Mr M Wood of the Good Governance Institute was in attendance to observe the meeting as part of the ongoing Effectiveness Review of Court.

**Apologies** were received from Ms K Allan, Ms D Bruxvoort, Ms J Chalmers, Prof A Jenkinson and Prof C Kee.

12. PRELIMINARIES

New members of the Committee were welcomed to their first meeting.

The Committee was informed of the sudden and unexpected death of Professor Debra Gimlin, Head of the School of Social Sciences, who had been a respected and valued colleague. The Committee recorded its condolences.

13. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON ONLINE LEARNING

The Committee received a presentation on online learning from Dr Gillian Mackintosh. It was agreed that the Committee had an important role in considering the student experience of online learners. This should include easy access to services through a one-stop shop “online Infohub” approach which would include agreed response times for queries, taking note of the difficulties posed by international time differences.

Discussion centred on the following issues:

* the need for appropriate representation on committees;
* what the “student experience” means for online learners, and the appropriate level of support which should be provided;
* the potential to link with alumni groups to provide face-to-face input for online learners;
* the importance of learning from existing work in this area by organisations including IDI and Sparqs; and
* adapting existing online support resources for distance learners.

It was agreed that:

* further information on work undertaken by Sparqs and IDI should be disseminated and considered. **Action: GM/LF**
* potential links with alumni groups should be explored. **Action: GM/KS**

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

15. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was noted that the Accommodation Office had earmarked seven flats on The Spital for family use by students, and that this would be advertised through the Accommodation webpages. The flats would be available at market-level rents, and demand would be monitored.

16. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

16.1 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy update

The Committee received and considered an update on the Health, Wellbeing and Safety policy.

In discussion, it was noted that:

* students were disadvantaged in accessing NHS mental health services as they were typically resident in different NHS areas at different times of the year;
* AMOSSHE, The Student Services Organisation, were to make representation to the government expressing concern that in many areas, students were being referred to university counselling services rather than NHS counselling services;
* the charity Aberdeenshire Life Education Centres (ALEC) had been involved in a presentation to the School of Education about novel ways of delivering health education; and
* work to develop a proposal for a Wellbeing Centre was ongoing.

It was agreed that further feedback on the ALEC event and possible links with the University’s Mental Health policy would be sought. **Action: Clerk**

The possibility of using Mental Health Champions to provide awareness-raising training would be investigated. **Action: JC**

17. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Committee received and considered a report from the Directorate of Academic Affairs. It was noted that positive feedback had been received from students following the January registration week. In addition, the Committee noted that feedback on the trial of a fully online submission, grading and feedback system in the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy had been very positive with a large increase in student satisfaction reported.

It was noted that although the trial with Unique Insights was not being taken forward, positive outcomes had included an increased willingness to engage with learning analytics.

The Committee noted that AUSA had surveyed school convenors about the introduction of a Grade Point Average, and that there may be a renewal of the AUSA policy in support of this.

18. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF STUDENT LIFE

The Committee received and considered a report from the Directorate of Student Life. The following key points from the report were highlighted:

* the introduction of a quiet block at Hillhead had worked well and would be expanded for 2017/18. In addition, an alcohol-free block would be piloted. The student athlete accommodation at Linksfield had also been well-received and would be expanded.;
* the revamp of the first floor food court had been well-received;
* work to recruit a full-time Mental Health Practitioner was ongoing;
* three part-time associate Counsellors had been recruited;
* a review of the Counselling Service provision was underway, including consideration of increased early interventions and group work;
* the quality of the Saltire Foundation internship applicants had been highly praised by the Foundation; and
* work was ongoing with Santander to try to improve the process for students opening bank accounts.

The Committee noted that some positive discussions had taken place with the Scottish Funding Council around alternatives to the current metrics used to measure deprivation. It was noted that cost of accommodation was a factor for some students from widening access backgrounds, and that this would be further discussed outwith the meeting. **Action: AUSA/LF**

It was noted that students have reported that they have found the new location of Student Support, on the top floor of the Students’ Union Building more positive than had been expected due to the less exposed location.

A new Student Job service has been created by AUSA in collaboration with the Careers Service. It was agreed that University jobs suitable for students should be advertised through the Student Job service. **Action: LF**

19. REPORT FROM AUSA

The Committee received and considered a report from AUSA. The following key points were noted:

* it was expected that the Torcher Parade would run again in 2018 following positive meetings with Aberdeen City Council;
* the visit of members of the University of Stavanger Students’ Union had been very successful;
* a new trustee had been appointed, and a three-year Strategic Plan had been approved by the trustees;
* the rebranding exercise was ongoing;
* the Free Periods programme, where female students were given free menstrual products, was being revamped as it had proved costly for AUSA. Consideration was being given to the provision of menstrual cups rather than disposable items.;
* sexual health clinics had been increased to one every two weeks, and bookable appointments had been made available.;
* a report was expected on the anti-harassment campaign currently ongoing;
* the Cut-the-Rent campaign was gathering momentum;
* students would be encouraged to respond to the forthcoming Aberdeen City Council consultation on HMO Overprovision;
* a student worker campaign on ensuring student rights was about to start;
* plans were well underway for the forthcoming Student Elections.

The Committee recognised the excellent fundraising achievements of student James Huxley-Beavis who had raised in excess of £44,000, and of the Sports Union during Movember 2016 where almost £23,000 was raised.

The Committee wished the teams well for the Granite City sporting event and the Boat Race.

Some discussion took place around the provision of Counselling Services for students. It was agreed that further information would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. **Action: LF**

It was agreed that the AUSA Communications Plan should be presented at a future meeting. **Action: AUSA**

It was agreed that a protocol was required to ensure that PhD candidates had provision in place for supervision should their original supervisor leave the University. **Action: JM**

20. EQUALITY CHALLENGE UNIT: ATTRACTING DIVERSITY STUDY UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on the Equality Challenge Unit’s Attracting Diversity study.

21. ONESOURCE STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on the progress with the Student Management System update.

22. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY UPDATE

The Committee received and noted an update on the National Student Survey 2017. It was noted that response rates to date were encouraging.

23. MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE: REMIT AND COMPOSITION

The Committee received and approved an updated remit and composition for the Military Education Committee.

24. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR 2016/17

Meetings of the Student Experience Committee in 2016/17 had been scheduled as follows: (all held at **2.00 pm**):

Monday 8 May 2017