

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Minute of the Meeting held on 28 September 2016

Present: Professor J Kilburn (Convener), Mr C Anucha, Dr T Baker, Mr C Duncan, Mr L Fuller, Professor A Jenkinson, Dr G Mackintosh, Professor K Shennan and Professor J Masthoff with Ms K Christie, Mr P Fantom, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr D Philips, Ms P Spence, Professor R Wells, Dr R Bernard (Clerk) and Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary) in attendance

Apologies: Professor P McGeorge, Professor C Kee, Dr B Scharlau, Dr S Tucker

Ms E Forster was in attendance for item 1.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2016

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/001)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 11 May 2016. The Committee agreed that the minute was representative of discussions held and that all actions arising had been completed.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/002)

- 2.1 The Committee acknowledged that the revised remit and composition for 2016/17 reflected structural changes within the University including the appointment of Deans and the changes in the roles of Colleges and schools. The Committee agreed that the Remit and Composition of the Committee for 2016/17 was both accurate and representative.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 3.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health and Safety.

RECRUITMENT

(i) RUK UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT 2017

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/003)

- 4.1 The Committee noted the paper on proposals for Rest of UK (RUK) recruitment in 2017. Members of the Committee noted a decrease in the number of RUK students studying at the University, with an expected figure of 230 undergraduate students (excluding those undertaking the MBChB) registering for study in 2016. The Committee agreed with the concerns expressed in regard to RUK recruitment and noted the risk level of the approach proposed.
- 4.2 Members of the Committee acknowledged the detail of the paper and its proposals to offer unconditional places to RUK students on the basis of predicted A level results and a successful interview. The Committee noted such offers would be conditional on the applicant identifying Aberdeen as their first firm choice.

- 4.3 The Committee noted concern regarding making offers on the basis of predicted grades acknowledging that predicated grades and actual results often vary significantly. A member of the Committee noted that actual results can often differ in as much as 4 points from predicted results. The Committee were informed that following discussion with School guidance teachers had revealed that they were often under pressure to predict what an applicant required for entry and not what they were capable of attaining.
- 4.4 The Committee noted the proposed interview procedure and raised concern as to the resource implications of this. The Committee were assured that offers were at the discretion of the academic admissions selectors and that guidance and criteria for use by interviewers would be developed. The Committee noted that the interview setting could allow for the discussion of academic performance as well as other relevant factors.
- 4.5 Members of the Committee noted concern regarding the potential of the proposals to make a significant impact; instead suggesting a more RUK focussed marketing strategy. The Committee noted the ability of the proposals and the presence of staff in specific areas in England to attract a different pool of applicants to Aberdeen, never previously reached before.
- 4.6 The Committee considered the experience of Queen Mary University London in taking a similar approach, noting their successes in doing so. The Committee acknowledged anecdotal evidence that the approach had worked well when piloted in specific schools. The Committee agreed that the approach may be more successful in certain disciplines.
- 4.7 The Committee considered the issue of reputational damage in advertising the fact final A level results will not affect RUK applicants. Members also queried whether entry requirements would vary for those in Scotland who undertake A levels and not Highers.
- 4.8 The Committee agreed that approval could not be given to the paper in its current format and requested that the points raised be further clarified before returning it to the Committee for recommendation to Senate.

Action: Clerk to report consideration of the paper to the Senate

(iii) UG ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND HOME FEES RECRUITMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/004)

- 4.9 The Committee noted the paper on Undergraduate entry requirements and home fees recruitment. The Committee noted the concerns regarding the UK's exit from the European Union and the potential effect this could have undergraduate recruitment.
- 4.10 The Committee noted that EU students currently have the same fundable status as Scottish students, however, as the Scottish Government may change this, the University must take action in regards to its recruitment strategy of Scottish students. The Committee noted the uncertainty posed by Brexit and the University's statement that for academic year 2016/17 EU fee status will remain equitable to home fee status but such status cannot be confirmed for future years.
- 4.11 The Committee noted their agreement in the publication of minimum and typical entry requirements, acknowledging that this is often a question posed by applicants at open days. Overall, the Committee were content to approve the proposals contained within the paper.

Action: Paper to be progressed to the Senate for approval

(iv) PROSPECTIVE STUDENT: ENGAGEMENT AND ENQUIRY MANAGEMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/005)

- 4.12 The Committee noted the final paper on recruitment regarding Engagement and Enquiry Management. The Committee agreed with the proposals within the paper, acknowledging that the next stage of the OneSource project will replace the systems currently in place. The Committee were content to approve the proposals made.

Action: Paper to be progressed to the Senate for approval

SUPPORT FOR STUDY POLICY

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/006)

- 5.1 The Committee noted the draft Support for Study Policy produced as a consequence of the fact that existing student discipline procedures do not legislate for instances where a student may be impacted upon by health issues. The Committee noted that the policy had been considered by the Working Group on Mental Health and at a meeting of the Heads of School.
- 5.2 Members of the Committee noted the need for such a policy in dealing with a rising number of such issues. The Committee were content to approve the policy, noting it as a concise, valuable resource. Members of the Committee agreed that the document should be circulated to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees for their information.

Action: Policy to be progressed to the Senate for approval and to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees for information

COLLABORATIVE PROVISION: DELIVERY PARTNERS: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/007)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received the draft handbook in respect of National and International Delivery Partner activity, noting its prior consideration by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees and at a recent meeting of the Heads of School.
- 6.2 The Committee acknowledged the intention of the handbook in covering instances where the University is engaging with a non-degree awarding organisation for the delivery of University owned provision resulting in the award of a University of Aberdeen degree. The UCTL was informed that in such instances the partner organisation will provide facilities and infrastructure and the University will provide the programmes and courses, and is therefore fully responsible for the Quality Assurance of the academic provision.
- 6.3 Members of the Committee noted amendments to the document had been made following meetings of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees, a meeting of the Heads of School and a meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee.
- 6.4 Discussion ensued amongst the Committee regarding the handbook. The main tenets of the discussion were as follows:
- The Committee sought clarification of which type of partner the handbook covered. It was confirmed that a footnote had now been added to the handbook to clarify that it covered non-degree awarding organisations only.
 - The Committee raised concern regarding which organisations are chosen and who makes this decision. It was clarified that the document is intended to make clear how a partner

is chosen but not the specific detail of an agreement or how a relationship will work in practice.

- Members of the Committee noted the importance of school involvement in the identification of organisations and the agreement of contract detail.
- Members of the Committee acknowledged the principles listed within the document, also noting that educational providers within a country should never be undermined by the work of the University. The Committee agreed the importance of remaining ethical and mindful and agreed to add 'operating under clear approval from local government' to the principles listed.
- Members of the Committee noted the risk of corruption in procedure, specifically admissions procedures. The Committee agreed that corruption can exist anywhere but acknowledged the importance of University quality assurance processes including regular monitoring as a means of mitigating any such activity.
- The Committee expressed concern regarding the resource implications associated with such activity. The Committee were assured of the ability of schools to enter into all discussions regarding partnerships.
- Members of the Committee raised the University's reputation as an issue, questioning whether such partnerships were appropriate or had the potential to do the University reputational damage. The Committee were informed that the University would control all quality aspects of a partnership, share standards across all provision and enter into partnerships only where confidence in the delivery partner/agreement exists.
- The Committee were informed of the benefits of such partnerships, the ability of the University to teach beyond the boundaries of Aberdeen and the opportunity to support other countries in the development of academia.

- 6.5 The Committee agreed that the handbook should progress to Senate for consideration, subject to the proposed revisions as detailed above and as by the sub-committees of the UCTL. The Committee agreed that a cover paper should accompany the paper, providing clear guidance that the document seeks to determine how partners will be chosen only, not how the partnerships will work in practice.

Action: Paper, subject to proposed revisions, to be progressed to the Senate for approval

COURSE SELECTION AT LEVELS 3 AND 4

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/008)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper on Enhanced study at levels 3 and 4. The Committee were informed that student feedback obtained suggested that while many students appreciate the opportunity to study outwith their degree programme, many would welcome more structure within their honours years and the opportunity for unrestricted choice.
- 7.2 The Committee noted the proposal of the paper to maintain the gaps as identified within degree programmes at levels 3 and/or 4 but to remove restriction on the courses which must be taken within them.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee noted the desire of some disciplines to propose new courses to ensure discipline specific courses were available to students to take within the identified gaps. The Committee acknowledged that courses had previously been withdrawn to create the gaps as required by Curriculum Reform. The Committee agreed that this proposal should not present an opportunity for the introduction of more courses and agreed with ongoing

University Management discussions that courses should be decreased in number and not increased. Members of the Committee suggested that a course may be proposed only where a course is withdrawn.

- 7.4 Members of the Committee noted the opportunity to remove Curriculum Reform at levels 3 and 4 in its entirety.
- 7.5 Members of the Committee agreed that the proposal should not progress to the Senate until such time as the paper had been further discussed and, as part of discussion regarding the reduction of courses across the Institution, the issue of whether or not of new courses could be proposed clarified.

Action: Policy to be discussed and revised in light of course reduction strategies before returning to a future meeting of the UCTL

INCREASING MARKING TIME IN THE FIRST HALF-SESSION

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/009)

- 8.1 The Committee noted the paper regarding the proposed increase in marking time in the first half-session. Members of the Committee acknowledged the rationale behind the paper, noting the Senate discussion on the issue and agreed referral to the UCTL to find a satisfactory resolution.
- 8.2 Members of the Committee noted the extensive work of the Working Group on the Academic Year in determining appropriate marking timescales, meeting staff and students and proposing an academic year structure as appropriate to all as possible.
- 8.3 The Committee acknowledged option 1 as detailed in the paper as the only viable option to increase marking time. The option, to extend the marking deadline to the end of the first week of teaching, was considered, however, by the Committee to be detrimental to the undergraduate student experience.
- 8.4 Members of the Committee discussed the possibility of allowing marking deadlines to be set on a school-by-school basis but agreed this option was not appropriate and that as many students study cross school, would not be conducive to the student experience. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to a priority deadline structure, with results for levels 1 and 2 expected prior to teaching and levels 3, 4 and 5 by the end of the first week of teaching.
- 8.5 Members of the Committee agreed that the paper should be progressed to Senate subject to the revisions above, however, in doing so wished to remind Senate that the current structure, most appropriate for the student experience, could be retained.

Action: Paper, subject to proposed revisions, to be progressed to the Senate for approval

DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/010)

- 9.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper proposing that the dual system for the calculation of the award of degree classification continue for a further academic cycle (two academic years). Members of the Committee noted that difficulties in ensuring students would not be disadvantaged by use of only the new Grade Point Average system had arisen as a consequence of a failure of courses to mark using the Common Grading Scale (CGS) in its

entirety. Members of the Committee noted that several courses were not using the A band at all.

9.2 The Committee expressed concern that the scale and the instruction to mark to the middle of a CGS band and then moderate as appropriate, would never be used correctly until such time as markers could rely upon the Grade Spectrum as a means of determining classification. The Committee further noted concern as to the resource implications of classifying using two systems for two more academic years.

9.3 A members of the Committee proposed that there was no need to continue the use of both systems for postgraduate taught students. The Committee as a whole, however, agreed that in the best interests of the student population and to ensure no student was disadvantaged, the paper should be approved and passed to Senate for consideration.

Action: Paper to be progressed to the Senate for approval

LECTURE ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR LEVELS 1 & 2

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/011)

10.1 The Committee considered the proposal to monitor attendance at six of the largest lecture theatres across King's College and Foresterhill for lectures undertaken at levels 1 and 2 by means of swipe access. The Committee were in agreement that the attendance taken should not be used for punitive measures and only for the purposes of student support and retention.

10.2 Members of the Committee acknowledged that students may ask their friends to swipe them in to a lecture by giving them their card, however, the Committee noted that these students were not those about whom they were most concerned and that those who do not engage with others at all would be the most sought by the initiative.

10.3 Members of the Committee noted that some students will choose not to attend lectures where Camtasia recordings exist. The Committee noted that data of those who had listened to the recordings combined with attendance data would be more useful.

10.4 The Committee approved the proposed initiative, acknowledging its place in a package of measures to support students. The Students' Association Education Officer stated that issues such as those of Personal Tutors should be given priority in terms of action of supporting those students in need.

Action: Paper to be progressed to the Senate for approval

MINUTES AND UPDATE REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/012)

11.1 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the sub-committees of the UCTL.

11.2 The Committee further noted the following issues arising from the Convener of the QAC:

- The Committee noted concerns as raised by the QAC regarding a partnership between the University and the Mindfulness Association. The Convener informed the UCTL that the issue would be investigated and discussed with the Head of the School of Education.
- The Committee noted approval given by the QAC to a partnership between the University and the Interactive Design Institute (IDI) in the delivery of an online Master of Business

Administration (MBA). The Convener of the UCTL requested that the report be circulated to the Committee as a whole for information.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 12.1 The Committee noted the 2016/17 meetings as follows:

Wednesday 7 December 2016 in Committee Room 2

Wednesday 8 March 2017 in the Committee Room 2

Wednesday 3 May 2017 in the Committee Room 2

LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2016/17

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/013)

- 13.1 The Committee approved the dates for the return of results for 2016/17, noting that these may be subject to change following consideration of the proposed changes to the first half-session return dates at the Senate.

KOREA CAMPUS – ACADEMIC CALENDAR

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/014)

- 13.2 The Committee, for its part, approved the draft academic calendar for the Korea Campus.

DATES OF TERM TO 2028

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/015)

- 13.3 The Committee approved the provisional dates of term until 2027/28.

EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/016)

- 13.4 The Committee approved the Employability Development Framework.

CPD FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING & TEACHING: UPDATE ON FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/017)

- 14.1 The Committee noted the report on the CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching, following its first year of operation.

GRADUATION DATES

- 14.2 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

Thursday 24 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Language & Literature, Geosciences and Law

Thursday 24 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition and Psychology.

Friday 25 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School and the Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy and Social Science

Friday 25 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Education, Natural & Computing Sciences and Engineering.

REMITS FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE, POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

- 15.1 Following Institutional change, the Committee approved the revised remits for the University Committee on Teaching and Learning Sub-committees:

Undergraduate Committee

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/018)

Postgraduate Committee

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/019)

Quality Assurance Committee

(copy filed as UCTL/280916/020)