

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 07 September 2009

Present: Lady Catto (Convener), Mr S Cannon, Ms C Duncan, Mr G Hunter, Mr J Keating, Mr S McKinnon, Mr R Parker, Ms K Ross, Mr J Simpson, Professor WF Long with Mrs J Chalmers, Mr S Duggan, Mr L Forsyth, Mr M Seed, Mr A Wright, Ms Y Gordon (Clerk) Ms K Christie (Clerk), Ms N McPake

Apologies: Professor GJA Burgess

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2009 were approved.

(copy filed as SAC/070909/01)

2. Matters arising from Minutes

Administration of the Students' Association (Minute 47.1 refers)

- 2.1 The Students' Association (SA) is happy with the current status of the transfer of Association administration under the University umbrella. Issues regarding VAT and pensions liability have been resolved and an amended proposal has been submitted to Policy Planning and Governance for consideration. A meeting to discuss this proposal was scheduled for the 17 October 2009; the Secretary to the University will try to expedite this date.

Action: Secretary to the University

- 2.2 Following decision not to continue with the post of 'Director of Student Affairs' proposals for administrative restructuring are now in progress, including the line management structure of the Students' Association.

Wednesday Afternoons (Minute 47.3 refers)

- 2.3 The Committee noted that all Heads of School had been reminded of University policy with respect to Wednesday afternoon teaching.
- 2.4 The SA Vice President (Education & Employability) confirmed leaflets were being finalised to raise awareness of this policy amongst staff and to encourage students to make the most of their Wednesday afternoon. [Clerk's note: in consultation with Registry staff, the SA has decided to submit a paper to the October meeting of Heads of School rather than circulate the staff leaflet].
- 2.5 It was agreed that the Association should put forward proposals if it wishes the Committee to consider enhancements to the current policy, for example, all day fixtures; the Granite City event etc.

Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (Minute 48.1 refers)

- 2.6 The Committee noted that the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) currently offers a short programme of development sessions for Postgraduate Demonstrators/ Tutors and Postdoctoral staff with limited teaching duties, covering the running of tutorials and seminars, assessment, marking and feedback, encouraging critical thinking with students and course planning and design. CLT is now in the process of revising this provision with a view to offering a short programme aligned with standard descriptor 1 of the UK Professional

Standards for Teaching in Higher Education and professionally accredited by the Higher Education Academy
(<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/institutions/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf>). Input and guidance to this process will be sought from Colleges and University Committee for Teaching and Learning (UCTL).

Class Representatives (Minute 48.5 refers)

- 2.7 The Committee noted that in house training, with sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland), is scheduled to take place on 19 October for class representatives.
- 2.8 The Convener of the Academic Standards Committee Undergraduate (ASC (UG)) informed the Committee that the UCTL had asked College Directors of Teaching and Learning (DoTL) to disseminate the Student Engagement toolkits produced in association with the SA and sparqs within their Colleges and Schools. DoTLs have further been asked to report back to the February 2010 meeting of UCTL on how these toolkits have been taken forward within Colleges.

Timetabling (Minute 48.8 refers)

- 2.9 The Committee noted that the SA's paper is scheduled to be put to the next meeting of the CRef Timetabling sub group in October.

Feedback and Assessment (Minute 48.11 refers)

- 2.10 The Committee noted that a draft Feedback Framework on Assessment was considered by the UCTL in May and forwarded to the Implementation Board. It has since been put to the College Teaching and Learning Committees for comment. Feedback from this process will be referred back to the UCTL in November 2009.
- 2.11 UCTL had established a Working Group (including student representatives) which would be looking at the Common Assessment Scale (CAS). It was anticipated that the Working Group would provide an interim report to the UCTL in February 2010.
- 2.12 Similarly, a UCTL Working Group to review use and effectiveness of the current Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) had been established. An interim report was expected to UCTL in February 2010.

Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Staff (Minute 50. refers)

- 2.13 The Convenor of ASC (UG) confirmed that the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, along with previously expressed concerns as noted at Head of Schools meetings, the Student Affairs Committee and UCTL will be put to a future meeting of the University Management Group (UMG). UMG would be asked to take the document back to College Teaching and Learning Committees for further comment to feedback into future revisions. The revised document would be submitted to a future meeting of SAC.

3. Students' Association

- 3.1 The SA President reported that he was pleased with the overall performance of the University in the recent National Student Survey (NSS). While student satisfaction with Feedback and Assessment had marginally declined, the committee noted that this was not unique to the University of Aberdeen and was an area the University was already working to address.

Hillhead Community Centre

- 3.2 The Committee noted the Community Centre at Hillhead had opened; the official launch would take place on 16 October 2009. The Centre provides a useful space for the SA to hold surgeries. It is hoped that the similar centres will be replicated in other University residences in the near future.

Aberdeen Student Forum

- 3.3 The President of the SA informed the group that the Students' Association was involved in the Aberdeen Student Forum comprising representatives from HE and FE institutions across Aberdeen to discuss and lobby on issues affecting students. The Forum aims to provide a shared voice for student issues, such as public transport. The formal launch of the Forum is scheduled for later in the year.
- 3.4 The current focus of the Forum is transport, specifically the withdrawal of the one day student bus ticket from the market. The Forum had scheduled to meet with Paula Middleton, Marketing Manager of First to discuss this; the SA President would report back to the Committee in November.

Action: SA President

Foresterhill Bus

- 3.5 The Committee discussed the transport difficulties students studying at Foresterhill currently face and noted that the majority of level 1 MBChB teaching was now delivered at Foresterhill following the closure of Marischal College. The Secretary to the University informed the group that the University discussed the possibility of running a shuttle bus for staff and students to decrease pressure on limited car parking availability however this proved financially unviable. The University continues to look into this issue.

Action: Secretary to the University

One Stop Shop

- 3.6 Progress continues on the One Stop Student Shop/ Student Centre, with the aim to relocate and co-locate a range of key support services in a central location, co-ordinated by one manager but supported by various directorates. The move is to include the re-location of the SA to Butchart and is likely to begin in the New Year. For September 2009 new entrants, a Student Information Point will be available in the old Saks unit at the Hub.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 The SA President reported that the Open Day had been viewed as a great success, with the SA hoping to become even more involved in similar future events. It was noted that lots of students who were starting University September 2009 attended, not just future applicants. In part this was attributed to the increased numbers of students from England accepting places via Clearing.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that the Clearing process had resulted in the number of students accepting offers vastly exceeding predictions; the BSc programme had met its admissions target with the MA programme exceeding target. It was further noted that the incoming qualifications of many applicants via Clearing were higher than the University's going rates.
- 4.3 The Director of Campus Services confirmed that there would be accommodation for all students who had applied for University accommodation, be this is University residences, Unite residences or local hotels in the first instance and that students had been made aware of the accommodation options available.
- 4.4 The Committee noted the importance of ensuring appropriate infrastructure in light of increasing student numbers, and requested an update on the situation to the November meeting.

Action: Leith Forsyth

- 4.5 It was agreed to include an 'Any Other Competent Business' (AOCB) item for future agendas.
- 4.6 The Secretary to the University requested oral updates from all Sabbatical Officers at future meetings.

5. Reports

5.1 The Committee noted the following reports:

- a) Students' Association (copy filed as SAC/070909/03)
- b) Campus Services (copy filed as SAC/070909/04)
- c) Composite report from the Academic Registrar, the Directors of Student Support Services, Centre for Learning and Teaching and the Head of the Careers Service.
(copy filed as SAC/070909/05)

6. Dates of Meetings in 2009/ 2010

6.1 The Committee noted meeting dates in 2009/ 2010, to be held in Committee Room 2 on the following dates:

- Monday 9 November 2009 at 2 p.m.
- Monday 22 February 2010 at 2 p.m.
- Monday 10 May 2010 at 2 p.m.