UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 20th February 2012
(Confirmed)

Present: Ms J Batty, Ms T Birley, Ms J Bjorkqvist, Mr D Blair, Mr S Cannon, Ms K Christie (Clerk), Dr B Connolly, Mr A Downie, Ms K Duncan, Mr L Forsyth, Dr L Foley, Mr G Hunter, Mr B Lockhart (Chair), Dr M Mackie, Dr G Mackintosh, Prof P McGeorge, Mr S McNally, Dr J Morrison, Mr S O'Rourke, Mr B Snelling, Mr A Wight with Ms A Hogg (Minutes).

Apologies: Mr K Stewart

1. Matters arising from the minutes

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2011 were approved.

(copy filed as SAC/200212/01)

Peer Mentoring (Minute 1.2 refers)
1.2 The Committee noted the Peer Mentoring Pilot Scheme had been presented at the University's Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium and Good Practice Fair's 'Good Practice Showcase' in January 2012, and also at the annual Teaching Fellows event. It further noted that Schools who wish to develop Peer Mentoring Schemes in their areas for September 2012 new entrants are now being identified, with a view to training new peer mentors following the Easter vacation.

Butchart Phase 2 (Minute 1.7 refers)
1.3 The Committee noted the Capital Expenditure Committee felt the proposed enhancements to Butchart were deemed too small to be considered as part of the ongoing exercise to brief and prioritise future institutional projects for inclusion in the 10-year capital investment plan. However there is a proposal within this exercise to provide an annual investment fund for smaller scale refurbishment projects; Butchart will be considered in this separate prioritisation process.

Academic Year (Minute 2.0 refers)
1.4 The Committee noted that a short-term University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) Working Group to review the structure of the academic year has been established and includes appropriate expertise from both an undergraduate and postgraduate perspective and a cross-College viewpoint, in addition to representation from the Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA). In terms of remit, the group has been asked to (i) determine the optimum academic year from a pedagogical perspective starting from first principles rather than amending the existing academic year and (ii) in doing (i) to review the social, financial and other implications drawing on input from key colleagues including SRAS, Campus Services, Registry and Student Support. Any proposals put forward will be taken to a future meeting of the Student Affairs Committee for consideration.

Societies' Space: (Minute 4.4 refers)
1.5 The Committee noted that a meeting with representatives of AUSA, Registry and Estates took place to discuss issues with student society room bookings as a consequence of the Estates-driven initiative to consolidate out-of-hours access in the MacRobert Building. The Committee noted the majority of problems had resolved themselves during the first semester, and that that the situation would be monitored during the second semester.

Action: Estates, AUSA

2. Contact Hours
Contact Hours (Minute 4.6 refers)
2.1 The Committee noted that AUSA had sought clarification as to the University of Aberdeen's definition of 'contact hours'.

(copy filed as SAC/200212/02)

2.2 The Committee noted that the University is following guidance from the Higher Education Statistics Agency whereby 'contact hours' include lectures, seminars, tutorials, project supervision, demonstrations, practical classes/workshops, supervised lab time, fieldwork, external visits and work based learning.

3. Personal Tutors
3.1 The Committee noted the draft proposal for a Personal Tutoring System at the University of Aberdeen, which would replace the current Advising system.

(copy filed as SAC/200212/03)

3.2 The Committee noted the proposed role of the personal tutor would be to engage more regularly with tutees than advisers of studies do at present, and to do so on a broad range of activities associated with the University experience including pastoral support, feedback, graduate attributes, employability and course choice. The Committee also noted the proposals included:

- moving to a system in which every member of academic staff could expect to be a personal tutor, resulting in a reduction in the tutor/student ratio
- where possible, students would be assigned a tutor from a discipline close to that of their degree intention
- a prescribed, minimum number of meetings would take place between students and their personal tutor, the number of meetings being dependent on the year of study and the timing of these meetings being determined by critical points throughout the academic year.

3.4 Whilst noting the scale and complexity of the proposed changes, including the requirement to discuss with Unions, the Committee agreed this was an exciting proposal, and that together with expansion of the peer mentoring scheme, it could significantly enhance the overall student experience.

3.6 The Committee noted that the proposal would be considered at an extraordinary meeting of UCTL in March 2012 before Senate in May 2012.

4. AUSA Constitution
4.1 The Committee received the draft, updated AUSA Constitution and noted that in preparing the document, AUSA had consulted with the University's Policy, Planning & Governance department.
(copy filed as SAC/200212/04)

4.2 The Committee noted in particular that as AUSA is a registered charity under the Charities, Trustee and Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) has the power under this Act to remove charitable status if requirements are not met. The current AUSA constitution fails to meet the OSCR requirement that, as a charity, AUSA must be independent of any other body, in this case the University. The Committee noted that the updated constitution explicitly addresses this issue and meets OCSR requirements.

4.3 The Committee noted the final draft would be taken to the AUSA Annual General Meeting on Monday 20 February 2012 for ratification before final approval would be sought from OSCR prior implementation on 1 August 2012. *[Clerk's Note: the updated AUSA constitution was passed at the AUSA AGM on 20 February 2012. The final version can be accessed at: www.ausa.org.uk/ausa_constitution].*

5. Aberdeen University Students' Association

Student Parking at Foresterhill
5.1 The Committee noted AUSA's concern that Foresterhill-based students have no student-only parking facilities at Foresterhill, and as such only have the option to purchase an annual parking permit unlike Kings College-based students who also have the option the option to pay daily for parking at the Butchart Car Park.
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(copy filed as SAC/200212/05)

5.2 The Committee noted that whilst Estates confirmed that unfortunately there is no facility to create additional student-only parking at Foresterhill at this time, there is substantial parking capacity in the East Block car park, at Foresterhill, and that there are still annual permits available for students who wished to make use of this facility.

Student-Led Teaching Awards
5.3 The Committee noted the plans for AUSA's Student-Led Teaching Awards for academic year 2011-2012.
(copy filed as SAC/200212/06)

5.4 The Committee noted that the Student-Led Teaching Awards are a joint project between the Higher Education Academy, National Union of Students (NUS) and AUSA, and include categories such as innovative teaching, teaching for employability and fantastic feedback. In addition there will be separate awards for lecturers, tutors, advisers, and PhD supervisors. The Committee also noted that building on the success of last year's awards, AUSA would be presenting the awards at a new Teaching Awards ceremony in May 2012.

5.5 The Committee further noted that following the ceremony AUSA will produce a report on good learning and teaching practices identified by participating students, which will be made available to both students and staff.

Consolidated Report from AUSA and the Sabbatical Officers

5.7 The Committee noted that AUSA had appointed a new Academic Casework and Policy officer, and is looking to recruit to the vacant Education Development Co-ordinator role, a position primarily responsible for supporting the Class Representative structure.

5.8 The Committee further noted that AUSA intends to apply for accreditation as an Investor in Volunteering (IiV) organisation. The Investors in Volunteering structure is recognised UK wide, and is similar to that of the Investors in People (IiP) initiative but is aimed at, and structured solely for, volunteers' development.

5.9 The Committee noted the Sabbatical Officers' reports on their recent activities, highlights of which include:
- Planning for a Disability Sports Hub in Aberdeen
- Presenting at the University's Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium
- Developing (i) a new 'Rag Week' and (ii) an Equality and Diversity Week
- Producing Exam Survival Packs for students
- Developing criteria for rewarding and recognising AUSA volunteers via a new 'Kings' Award', akin to the 'Blues' Award scheme available for sports societies.

(copy filed as SAC/171011/12)

6. Directorate of Student Affairs
6.1 The Director of Student Affairs briefly presented his report on recent activities within Campus Services, Student Support and University Sport, highlighting in particular that:
- A Project Implementation Board has been established to manage the refurbishment of Burnett and Esslemont Houses at Hillhead. The refurbishment will to commence July 2012
- An on-line survey to all residents asking for feedback on topics such as move-in weekend, customer service and facilities is in progress; an action plan will be implemented to address any issues and suggestions
- The institution had been successful in a joint bid with the Robert Gordon University to secure funding from the Scottish Government to enhance the welcome of International Students to both Universities.

(copy filed as SAC/200212/08)

7. Directorate of Academic Affairs
7.1 The Committee noted the report from the Director of Academic Affairs on recent activities within Registry, the Careers Service, the Centre for Learning & Teaching and the Student Centre. In particular, the Committee noted that:
- The Careers Service is currently conducting the twice-yearly 'Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education' survey (DHLE). The survey should be complete by the end of February with results being published in April 2012
- The Academic Writing Scheme piloted with the Schools of Education and Law to promote awareness of the importance of academic writing, and to identify students who would benefit from early help with their writing, has now completed. Feedback received from both staff and students indicated that the pilot had been a positive and useful experience and the intention is for it to be rolled out throughout the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) in 2012-2013
- A pilot institutional student survey is being circulated to run concurrently with the National Student Survey (NSS) via *MyAberdeen*. The survey aims to get feedback on the types of issues included in the NSS survey from non NSS-eligible undergraduate cohorts

(copy filed as SAC/200212/09)

8. Remit, Composition and Membership
The Committee noted the updated Remit, Composition and Membership of the Committee in 2011/2012 following the appointments of Dr Mackie as Rector and Mr Hunter as Rector's Assessor was available at www.abdn.ac.uk.admin.sac.shtml.

9. Date of next meeting
The next meeting of the Student Affairs Committee will be held on Monday 28 May 2012 at 2.00 p.m.