

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2002

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Dr A Clarke, Mr D Cockburn, Mr D Donaldson, Professor SD Logan, Dr WF Long, Mr J McDowell (for Ms C Macaslan), Professor M Player, Professor LD Ritchie, Professor AA Rodger, Professor PJ Sloane, Professor IR Torrance, Professor DW Urwin with Dr D Comber, Ms Y Gordon, Ms L Smith, Dr T Webb and Mrs EM McKay-Smith (acting Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professor PR Duff, Professor JH Farrington, Miss A Harper, Ms C Macaslan, Professor PA Racey, Professor JG Simpson, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr JLA Madden and Mr G Pryor.

MINUTES

471. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2002.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/339)

WORKING GROUP ON ACADEMIC APPEALS AND STUDENT

COMPLAINTS ON ACADEMIC MATTERS

1. The Committee received a paper detailing recommendations from the Working Group on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic matters.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/340)

2. The Committee approved all the recommendations except that it was requested under recommendation (iii) that the student member of the Court Appeals Committee should be referred to as 'a student Senator' as this would cover the possible attendance of either one of the Area of Study Conveners or the Students' Association Education Convener.

Action: Clerk

CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE

1. The Committee received a paper detailing draft amendments to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline and draft Notes of Guidance for Heads of Department concerning plagiarism.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/341)

2. After detailed discussion, the Committee agreed not to recommend any change to the current Code of Practice for the time being. However, the Committee agreed that it would establish a working group to consider the Code of Practice in its entirety during the next academic session. Issues to be discussed would include the following:
 - The penalties to be applied to Postgraduate taught and Research students (after consultation with the ASC (Postgraduate) and Professor Houlihan)
 - The penalties where cheating had been proved to have taken place on more than one occasion across all levels of study
 - The powers of the Investigating Officer
 - Whether the same Investigating Officer should hear the second (and subsequent) allegations of plagiarism when they had already made a judgment in regard to the first allegation brought against an individual student.
1. As a result of the discussion, it was agreed that the Resolution in its present form would not be passed to the Senate.

(copy filed as Appendix 1 to UCTL/220302/341)

2. The Guidance Note would be passed to Senate subject to the change in paragraph 4 of 'discretion' to 'a responsibility' and to the change of 'may have' to 'has' in the second sentence of paragraph 4.

(copy filed as Appendix 2 to UCTL/220302/341)

Action: Clerk

REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENTS' PROGRESS ISSUES

1. **Class Certificates, Medical Certificates and Penalties for Late Submission of Coursework**
2. The Committee received a paper detailing a recommendation from the Working group that the current Class Certificate system be abolished and the proposed mechanism for monitoring students' progress be adopted.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/342)

3. The broad principles of the abolition of the Class Certificate system were approved. However, it was noted that a proposal had been made that for certain courses Departments could apply to the ASC to split a course into sections, whereby one section would gain credit for a practical element and the other section would gain credit for a theoretical element. This would allow a student who did not attend practical classes to be given limited credits for their theoretical study.
4. It was suggested that the proposal above be incorporated into the proposals in either paragraph (ix) on page 3 or immediately following that paragraph.
5. The Committee also considered the recommendation from the Working Group that the University Policy on Medical Certification be revised.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/342)

6. There was general confusion regarding Section B of the recommendation on Medical Certification. It appeared to the Committee that paragraphs (ii)-(iv) were not relevant to that section but were more relevant to the section on the abolition of Class Certificates.

7. It was requested that a new paragraph be added to Section B advising students to submit medical certificates signed by a medical practitioner where they failed to attend a specified teaching session to which an assessment was directly attached.
8. It was agreed that the Policy on Medical Certificates be revised and circulated to the Committee members for approval.

Action: Clerk and Academic Registrar

9. The Committee also considered a recommendation from the Working Group that Departments be required to stipulate their penalties for late submission of coursework on proposal forms when making application to the ASC for approval of a new course.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/342)

10. The Committee agreed that, rather than amend the course proposal forms, the ASCs would be asked to write to Heads of Departments to seek information on the range of penalties for late submission of coursework and the rationale for the penalties. The ASCs would then review the information provided by Departments and report back to the UCTL in the next 12 months.

Action: Clerk

11. Members of the Committee were asked to submit detailed comments on Annexes B-E and H by 19 April.

Action: All

1. **Introduction of a Formal Category of 'Students Suspended from Study'**
2. The Committee received and approved a recommendation from the Working Group on Students' Progress Issues that a proposed scheme be introduced for a category of students whose studies were formally regarded as being in suspense.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/343)

3. The Committee approved the proposal that students suspended from study should be granted Associate Student status (if the introduction of the status was approved by the UMG). The Committee, however, requested that the Director of Studies (Advising) be contacted to discuss the level of support Advisers of Studies would be expected to provide to such students.
4. There was discussion concerning the length of time a student should be registered at the University before they could suspend their study and gain Associate Student status. The committee suggested that the time period should be three months but agreed to refer this matter to the Registry for consideration.

Action: Clerk

PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING PROGRESSION AND AWARD IN MODULARISED

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY (*GRADE SPECTRUM*)

1. The Committee received a paper on the Procedures for Determining Progression and Award in Modularised Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study which had been approved, for its part, by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) at its meeting on 8 March 2002.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/344)

2. Significant discussion took place concerning the paper and the following comments were made:
 - In paragraph 8 of the paper 'It will be flexibly interpreted' should be replaced by 'This resit policy will be....'
 - It was requested that the references to Senate Rulings in paragraph 9 be replaced to read 'Guidance Note on Academic Appeals'.
 - In various criteria in paragraph 7 the words 'marks of 12 or better in sufficient elements' was used: a definition was required of 'sufficient elements'
 - It was requested that the first sentence in Note 3 be deleted as it was felt to be too absolute and restrictive.
1. Regarding the penultimate paragraph of section 7, the Committee was not happy with Examiners having the discretion to depart from an award or progression requirement in a downward direction. Since this principle was also in the *Grade Spectrum* for determining honours classification, it was agreed that the paper and also the undergraduate *Grade Spectrum* should be revisited to take into account the above comments.

Action: Assistant Registrar (Postgraduate)/Clerk

ISSUES RELATING TO DISABILITIES IN REGARD TO

COURSE AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

477. The Committee approved the recommendations concerning disability issues in regard to course and programme proposals.

(Copy filed as UCTL/220302/345)

NOTES OF GUIDANCE FOR THOSE WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES

478. The Committee approved the revised Notes of Guidance for Those with Responsibility for making Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities which had been approved by the Sub-Committee on Disabilities.

(Copy filed as UCTL/220302/346)

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH UNSATISFACTORY STUDENTS

479. The Committee approved the proposed Guidelines for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Student Progress for research and taught postgraduate students which had been approved by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate).

(Copy filed as UCTL/220302/347)

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

480. The Committee approved the recommendation from the Knowledge Economy Initiative Task Group that an Education Development Committee be established. It was noted that the approval of the Staffing and Development Committee would be required.

Furthermore, the Committee felt it would be more appropriate for the new Educational Development Committee to be a sub-committee of the UCTL.

(copy filed as UCTL/220302/348)

SHEFC CONSULTATION ON AN ENHANCEMENT-LED

APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. The Committee noted that HE Institutions in Scotland and other parties with an interest in higher education had been invited to comment on proposals for a new enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish HE. The draft response had been circulated simultaneously to the UCTL and QUEST. Members were invited to pass any comments on the draft response to the Academic Registrar by 27 March 2002. It was noted that following this date a final draft would be proposed which would be circulated for comment on a University-wide basis with a view to submission of the finalised response to SHEFC by the deadline of 26 April 2002.
2. The Committee also noted that three representatives from the University had attended a workshop on 18 March 2002 organised by SHEFC to discuss the proposals in the consultation document.

QUEST

481. The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 27 February 2002, had approved the remit and composition of QUEST and that its first meeting was held on 11 March 2002.

DEGREE EXAMINATION STATISTICS

482. The Committee noted that a report setting out the pass rates for levels 1 and 2 assessments for the January 2002 examination diet had been passed to Deans and ASC Conveners for review. Further, it noted that where failure rates exceeded 20%, the Heads of the relevant Departments would be asked for their comments, and to suggest remedies where appropriate. It was requested that Deans forward the comments from the relevant Heads of Departments for consideration by the ASCs.

Action: Clerk

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR FIRST DEGREES GOVERNING STUDENT PROGRESS

483. The Committee noted that the Senate, for its part, had approved the recommendations from the UCTL, that the General Regulations governing students' progress for First Degrees be revised (minute 458 refers).

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND PLAN ON THE PROVISION OF

CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

484. The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 27 February 2002, had approved the Institutional Policy and Plan on the Provision of Careers Education, Information and Guidance. The Committee also noted that the Convener of the UCTL had agreed that these documents would not require to be also approved by the University Court.

UCTL REVISED REMIT AND COMPOSITION

486.1 The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 27 February 2002, had approved the revised remit and composition of the UCTL subject to the addition of the Vice-President (Representation) of the Students' Association being in attendance, and subject to further consideration being given to the appointment of additional members of academic staff who had a primary role in teaching and learning. It was noted that Deans' views were being sought as to whether the proposal would be achieved by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee Conveners becoming members of the Committee.

2. It was reported that the revised remit and composition had been approved by the University Court at its meeting on 19 March 2002. The revised membership would now be adopted from the May 2002 meeting of the Committee

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS (UCTL MINUTE 400.3,

SENATE MINUTES 499 AND 536 REFER)

486. The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 27 February 2002, in approving the proposal from the UCTL, regarding the standard information which should be provided in hard-copy for all students, agreed that where possible this information should be provided in a single booklet to students at the beginning of each session. It was further noted that the Senate had agreed that if it were impractical to provide information on in-course deadlines and penalties for all courses in a single booklet, the booklet provided at the start of the session should indicate how and when students would receive that information for particular courses e.g. in individual course handbooks.

ADVISERS OF STUDIES FOR SESSION 2002/03

487. The Committee noted that meetings had been held with the Deans (or their representatives) and the Directors of Studies (Advising) for Arts & Social Sciences and Science to discuss provision of Advisers of Studies for session 2002/03. The Deans of Arts & Divinity and Social Sciences & Law had undertaken to recruit sufficient Advisers of Studies for session 2002/03 to reduce the caseload to approximately 40. The Dean of the Faculty of Science & Engineering had undertaken to make substantial progress in session 2002/03 towards moving to a target caseload of 40. Deans had agreed to try to identify new Advisers in time for the New Adviser Training Session scheduled for 16 May 2002.

PLAGIARISM DETECTION

488. The Committee noted that a provisional date of Wednesday 17 April 2002 from 12 noon until 2.00pm had been arranged for a session on Plagiarism organised by the Education Development Unit in cooperation with the Learning Technology Unit.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

489. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 24 May 2002 at 2.00pm.

