

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of meeting held on 12 December 2003

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Clerk), Professor G Burgess, Dr A Clarke, Mrs K Slessor (*vice* Professor MA Cotter), Ms J Duncan, Miss A Harper, Dr WF Long, Mrs D McKenzie-Skene, Ms M Barraclough (*vice* Professor AA Rodger), Professor T Salmon, Professor DW Urwin and Dr G Walkden with Dr D Comber, Mr SV Duggan (*vice* Ms D McDowall), Ms C Macaslan, Mrs J McAndrews, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb and Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professor MA Cotter, Professor JH Farrington, Ms D McDowall, Professor M Player, Professor AA Rodger, Professor JG Simpson, Mrs L Stephen and Mr D Donaldson

MINUTES

- 31.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2003.
(copy filed as UCTL/121203/463)
- 31.2 The Committee noted that the issues under Minutes 4, 5, 8, 11, 14 and 15 had been approved by the Senate on 19 November 2003.

MATTERS ARISING

- 32.1 In regard to Minute 3.2, it was noted that the Students' Association had still to prepare leaflets for students giving advice on how to appeal or submit a complaint.
Action: JD
- 32.2 In regard to Minute 19, the Committee noted that a meeting had been held to discuss the issues set out in the paper from Professor J Hunter concerning provision of special exam arrangements. A report setting out recommendations would be brought to the February meeting of the UCTL.

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES

- 33.1 The Committee received a report from the Committee on Disabilities.
(copy filed as UCTL/121203/464)
- 33.2 In discussing the paper, the following issues were highlighted:
- In regard to paragraph 2 'Disclosure and Confidentiality', the Convener reminded members that academic staff need only be aware of the provisions required for the student's disability and not the actual nature of their condition. Any queries about the provision should not be addressed directly to the student but referred to Student Support.
 - In regard to paragraph 3 it was noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of students registered at the University who had disclosed a disability.
 - In regard to paragraph 5 concerning examination arrangements, it was noted that the meeting held to discuss Professor Hunter's paper (Minute 32.2 refers) would be reporting on these issues to the February UCTL.
 - In regard to paragraph 8 'Composition of Committee on Disabilities', the UCTL endorsed the Committee on Disabilities' view that the membership of the Sub-Committee on Disabilities should be at School rather than College level.

REVISED QAA CODE OF PRACTICE ON EXTERNAL EXAMINING

- 34.1 The Committee received a draft copy of the revised QAA Code of Practice on External Examining.
(*copy filed as UCTL/121203/465*)
- 34.2 The Convener informed members that the QAA was undertaking a review of the whole Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education and that this revised Code on External Examining was the first section to be revised. He informed members that the majority of the changes were being made to the style rather than the content of the document. He reminded members that the University had reviewed all its policies when the Code was first published and that a comparison of the revised Code with the existing Code had suggested there were no major changes of substance in the revised Code.
- 34.3 The Convener informed members that the institution had been asked to comment on the draft Code and it was agreed that, in regard to Precept 12 of the Code, as there was a greater emphasis on quality enhancement, the University should propose to the QAA that External Examiners should also be encouraged to highlight in the reports areas of good practice.

Action: Clerk

TIMING OF PRACTICAL CLASSES – LETTER FROM SA PRESIDENT

- 35.1 The Committee was invited to consider a letter from the President of the Students' Association regarding the timing of practical classes.
(*copy filed as UCTL/121203/466*)
- 35.2 The President of the Students' Association informed members that she had been approached by a group of students who were concerned about having laboratory classes from 3–6 p.m. and in particular the personal and safety concerns associated with this. Some students had also raised concern that they were required to attend classes scheduled to run continuously between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. and it was also noted that there may be issues in regard to students with disabilities having to attend classes after 5 p.m. The President recognised that the issue could not be resolved immediately.
- 35.3 It was noted that the President of the Students' Association and the Director of Teaching & Learning for the College of Life Sciences and Medicine had been discussing the issue as work was already on-going in that College to look at ways to rationalise teaching. It was, however, noted that it may be a wider institutional issue and that it may now be appropriate to review the matter on an institutional-wide basis. It was further noted that the issues of lab classes running between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. may not be the only issue with the timetable and that the whole issue of the teaching timetable should be discussed in connection with the matter of flexible learning. It was agreed that a remit and composition of a Working Group would be brought to a future meeting of the UCTL to include the Directors of Teaching & Learning in order that this matter could be further discussed.

Action: Clerk

- 35.4 The President of the Students' Association agreed to respond to the students to inform them that their concerns were being addressed.

Action: JD

REPORT ON CLASS REPRESENTATION FROM SA

- 36.1 The Committee received an Interim Report from the Students' Association on the Class Representative system and its operation in the first half-session of 2003/2004.
(*copy filed as UCTL/121203/467*)
- 36.2 The President of the Students' Association outlined some of the key features of the Report as summarised below:
- A Sub-Group of the Students' Association Academic Affairs Committee had been established to review the class representative system.

- The Students' Association had experienced a number of difficulties in obtaining names of class representatives from Schools and in view of this had written to Heads of School at the beginning of October highlighting the role of the Students' Association in training and supporting class representatives and giving details of when training was planned for the representatives. This letter had been distributed to Heads of School at their meeting on 9 October 2003 and Heads of School had been invited to provide details of their class representatives to the Students' Association in a timely manner.
- It was noted that Medicine had used a system of electronic election for their class representatives and this had led to a 60% response rate which was considered most favourable.

36.3 The President of the Students' Association asked members for any comments or suggestions in regard to ways to improve the class representative system. It was noted that there was a real difficulty in finding students wishing to serve as class representatives and that in many cases the system operated via self-selection rather than by election.

36.4 In view of the above it was agreed that College Teaching & Learning Committees should be invited to discuss the issue of class representation and that the Students' Association representatives should be invited to attend these meetings.

Action: DirT&L

36.5 It was further noted that part-time distance learning students from KEY Learning are not included in the class representative training and it was agreed that the Students' Association should work with KEY Learning to address this issue.

Action: JD/JMcA

EDUCATIONAL AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT UNIT ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2002/03

37.1 The Committee were invited to consider the Report from the Educational and Staff Development Unit for 2002/03 which had been circulated at the October meeting and filed as UCTL/241003/462.

37.2 Dr Comber outlined some of the key issues in the Report as summarised below:

- The AUPHET programme had been approved by the ASC (Postgraduate) in December 2002 and extended study element was now available to staff as two 30-credit courses leading to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching. The programme had been submitted for accreditation by the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) and the accreditation visit was scheduled for 21 January 2004. It was noted that this provision would bring the institution in line with other programmes offered by similar HEIs.
- In regard to membership of the ILT, it was noted that the institution currently has approximately 40 members. The University pays the joining fee and the individual is responsible for paying the annual fee. It was agreed that the University should be encouraging membership of the ILT and should look at ways to reward staff for taking up membership. Ms Macaslan and Dr Comber agreed to bring forward a paper to a future meeting of the UCTL setting out some points for discussion in regard to this issue.

Action: CM/DC

- It was noted that it was not easy to determine the actual uptake of staff development and it was agreed that the Convener should meet with the Directors of Teaching & Learning to discuss this matter.

Action: JGR

37.3 It was agreed that the Report from the Educational and Staff Development Unit should be considered by College Teaching & Learning Committees and that a relevant member of staff from the Educational and Staff Development Unit should be invited to be in attendance.

Action: DirT&L

REMIT AND COMPOSITION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PLACEMENT LEARNING

38. The Committee approved the proposed remit and composition of the Working Group on Placement Learning.

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/468)

POLICY DOCUMENTS AND GUIDANCE NOTES ON ACADEMIC APPEALS AND STUDENT COMPLAINTS

39. The Committee approved the revised Policy Documents and Guidance Notes on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints, subject to revision to paragraphs 7.1 and 8 of Section B of the Annex D 'Status of Students Pending the Outcome of Consideration of (a) an Academic Appeals; (b) Representations Against Discontinuation of Attendance/Suspension or Termination of Studies/Termination of Candidature for an Award; or (c) a Complaint, as outlined below.

"7.1 Normally, if you submit representations against discontinuation of attendance on courses or against suspension or termination of study or candidature for an award ~~on academic grounds~~, then you will be allowed to continue as a registered student, pending a decision on your representations. ~~You will also be permitted, if applicable, to register as a student for the following academic year of your existing programme. If a decision on your representations has not been reached by the start of the next academic year, you would not normally be eligible to register for the next programme year of your studies but you would be eligible to register to repeat your current programme year.~~ However, any such re-registration will be temporary only and will lapse if your representations are not upheld. If your representations are upheld, you will then become eligible for full registration, subject to the usual financial requirements being fulfilled."

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/469)

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR NORTH AMERICAN EXCHANGE STUDENTS IN THE FIRST HALF-SESSION

40. The Committee approved the first half-session examination arrangements for North American Exchange students who required to leave before the end-of-course assessments, subject to revision to Recommendation (vi) as outlined below.

"(vi) that requests from North American Exchange/Study Abroad students wishing to leave early in the second half-session or from Socrates students wishing to leave early be dealt with on an individual exceptional basis by the student making a case to the relevant Head(s) or School ~~in a similar manner to requests from our own undergraduate students~~ and where such requests are approved, with alternative provision being provided as outlined in (iii), (iv) and (v) above."

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/470)

MAXIMUM CREDIT LOAD

- 41.1 The Committee received a paper setting out proposed revisions to General Regulation 4 to indicate the maximum credit load permitted to be undertaken by a full-time student.

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/471)

- 41.2 In discussion, it was noted that where a student takes more than the normal full-time credit load it leads to a dilution of resource and this is an institutional-wide issue. It was further noted that while the issue had arisen in regard to Socrates students, it was important to set a maximum credit limit for all students to ensure that standards were not diluted.

- 41.3 Concern was expressed that very able students may still wish to take more than the maximum credit load; however, it was noted that this possibility would remain through the UPC Convener being able to approve exceptions to the maximum credit limit. It was agreed that this possibility should be drawn to the attention of Advisers.

Action: Clerk

- 41.4 Following discussion, it was agreed to approve the Recommendations as set out in the paper.

UCTL REPORT TO SENATE - REVISED APPENDIX 2

- 42.1 The Committee approved Appendix 2 of the UCTL Report to Senate for 2002/03, updated following the October meeting of the UCTL. This Appendix showed the final position on full-time student withdrawals for 2002/03.

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/472)

- 42.2 The Committee noted that the recent HEFCE Performance Indicator had been published showing a non-completion rate of 20%. It was noted that this was an estimated projected nett loss from an entry cohort of full-time UK-domiciled students, including Summer School students. In comparison it was noted that the figures presented in the UCLT Report measure actual withdrawals for all full-time students excluding those from the Summer School and are based on registered students in 2002/2003. It was further noted that there would therefore be a greater loss from a cohort than that from a particular year.
- 42.3 In discussion it was queried whether the Summer School drop-out rate may be pulling down the HEFCE Performance Indicator figures. These are included in the HEFCE data as the University receives funding for these students. It was, however, noted that KEY Learning was following-up those students withdrawing from the Summer School programme and that many of these students are choosing to go onto the Access programme rather than registered directly as undergraduate students.

MONITORING STUDENTS' PROGRESS - C3 STATUS

- 43.1 The Committee considered the proposals in regard to the status of C3 in the system for monitoring students' progress and the implications of this for candidate lists.

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/473)

- 43.2 In regard to the proposals set out in the attached paper, it was queried whether a student receiving a C3 should be treated in the same way as one receiving a C7. It was proposed that the Recommendations as set out in the paper did not give any real role to the SPC Convener when meeting with a student as they would only be able to encourage the student to attend but would have no stick to stop them from sitting end-of-course assessments.
- 43.3 Following discussion, it was agreed that a C3 should be treated in the same way as a C7. A student receiving a C3 and who subsequently takes the end-of-course assessment would require to appeal to the SPC Convener to have their paper marked and their mark released. Students with a C3 who sit an examination would be required to meet the SPC Convener should they wish to have their mark released.
- 43.4 Subject to this amendment the proposals as set out in the attached paper were approved and it was agreed that Heads of School should be informed of this in time for the January examinations and that as wide a circulation of this information as possible should be achieved to ensure that all relevant staff were made aware of the situation.

Action: Clerk

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT THEMES

- 44.1 The Committee noted that SHEFC/QAA were running two Quality Enhancement Themes in 2003/04: one on 'Assessment' and one focusing on 'Responding to Student Needs'.
- 44.2 In regard to the Assessment Theme, the first event in the QAA Enhancement Programme of Assessment workshops would be a one-day workshop on "Streamlining Assessment: How to make Assessment More Efficient and Effective". The workshop would take place on Tuesday 13 January 2004, at Discovery Point, Dundee at 10.00 for 10.30am-4pm. This would be the first of a series of eight workshops on aspects of assessment, the programme for which would be published in mid-December. Further details are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/scottishenhancement
- 44.3 Directors of Teaching & Learning were encouraged to advertise these assessment workshops within their College and to encourage staff to attend.

Action: DirT&L

- 44.4 In regard to the Theme on Responding to Student Needs, two sector-wide research projects were being undertaken, one in relation to student needs and one in relation to student evaluation and feedback on their learning experience. The aim of the former was to investigate student needs in Scottish HE Institutions, and identify the areas to be targeted for improved student support. The second was to determine the main issues and barriers in improving practice in collecting and using student evaluation of and feedback on their learning experience.
- 44.5 Each Institution had been asked to arrange four focus groups (2 groups of staff and 2 of students) and interviews with these Focus Groups would be undertaken by the QAA before the end of December 2003 in order to provide a picture of the current position in Scottish HEIs and to identify any areas of good practice. The outcome of this work would feed into development work to be carried out between February and July. The University's Focus Group interviews had been conducted on 1st and 3rd December 2003.
- 44.6 The Committee further noted that in 2004/05 the two Enhancement Themes would be on 'Employability' and 'Flexible Learning'. Dr Graeme Roberts had agreed to convene the Steering Group for the 'Employability' theme and Ms Gill Tucker from Napier would convene the Steering Group for the 'Flexible Learning' Theme. It was planned that the Steering Groups would start their work in January 2004.
- 44.7 The Committee received a copy of a Circular Letter from SHEFC HE/45/03 concerning an update on the Quality Enhancement Themes.
(copy filed as UCTL/121203/476)
- 44.8 The Convener drew the Committee's attention to the request from SHEFC for institutions to identify individuals with appropriate expertise to serve as members of the Planning Groups for the Quality Enhancements Themes. It was noted that, as Dr Roberts was convening the Planning Group for the Employability Theme, there was no need to nominate anybody to serve on this Planning Group; however, it was agreed that Ms Macaslan and Mrs McAndrews should be nominated to serve on the Flexible Delivery Planning Group.

Action: Clerk

WORKING GROUP ON ADVISING AND REGISTRATION

- 45.1 The Committee noted the remit, composition and reporting schedule of the Working Group on Advising which has been established by the University Secretary.
(copy filed as UCTL/121203/474)
- 45.2 The Convener of the Undergraduate Programme Committee in Science drew the Committee's attention to the fact that Advising had operated well in the areas of Science and Engineering. He urged the Working Group to take on board the positive comments from Science and in this regard informed the Committee that he had written to Mr Cannon expressing his concerns.
- 45.3 The Convener informed members that the Working Group had been established as part of the agreement reached with the AUT in 2002/2003. He informed members that the main reason for the Working Group was to address the issue of the appointment of Advisers and the problems which exist due to the fact that the current system is a voluntary one.
- 45.4 Following discussion it was recommended that the views of UPC Conveners should be sought by the Working Group as part of their deliberations and it was agreed that Mr Cannon should be requested to ensure that this takes place.
Action: Clerk
- 45.5 It was further agreed to recommend to Mr Cannon that the Conveners of the two undergraduate Academic Standards Committees should be co-opted as members of the Committee.
Action: Clerk

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

46. The Committee noted that the Senate approved the Quality Enhancement Strategy at its meeting on 19 November 2003.

MEETING WITH DIRECTORS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

47. The Committee noted that a meeting had been arranged with Directors of Teaching & Learning, Assistant College Registrars (Teaching & Learning), Conveners of Academic Standards Committees, the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning), the Academic Registrar and the Clerks to the UCTL and Quest to enable discussion of *inter alia* the relationship between School and College Teaching and Learning Committees with the UCTL, QUEST, ASCs and UPCs.

USE OF PORTALS FOR RESIT APPLICATIONS (minute 5.3 refers)

48. The Committee noted that the Registry had discussed the possibility of using Student Portals to enable students to apply for resits directly online with the Development Team in DISS. The Developers were currently investigating, in detail, the feasibility of this proposal. It was hoped that it might be possible, subject to availability of programming resource, to have this in place for the August 2004 resit diet.

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS FOR 2003/04

49. The Committee noted that Internal Teaching Review arrangements for 2003/04 had been confirmed. Reviews would be conducted of the following disciplines: Molecular and Cell Biology, Chemistry and History & History of Art.

CONTACT HOURS (minute 17.2 refers)

50. The Committee noted that following a meeting of UPC Conveners, it had been agreed that College Teaching & Learning Committees be invited to come forward with proposed Guidelines on the relationship between contact hours, level and credit points for courses offered by Schools within their College.

HIGHER QUALITY – BULLETIN OF THE QAA

51. The Committee noted the November 2003 edition of 'Higher Quality' the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

(copy filed as UCTL/121203/475)

AMENDMENTS TO GENERAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLLEGES

52. The Committee noted that following approval of the Resolution regarding Reform of Academic Structure by the Court on 4 November 2003, the University Regulations would be revised to replace all references to Deans of Faculty and Heads of Department with Heads of College and Heads of School, respectively, in all cases.

DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2003/2004

53. The Committee noted the following dates of meetings in 2003/04 (all to be held at 2.00 p.m.):-

Friday 6 February 2004

Friday 26 March 2004

Friday 28 May 2004 (**Note – NOT Thursday 27 May as detailed on the Schedule of Meetings**)