UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2004

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Professor MA Cotter, Dr P Davidson, Miss A Harper, Dr D Hay, Ms C Macaslan, Mr C Mair, Dr D McCausland, Mrs D McKenzie Skene, Dr G Walkden, Dr M Young with Mrs M Barraclough (vice Professor M Baker), Dr D Comber, Mr JLA Madden, Mrs J McAndrews, Mr G Pryor, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb, Ms M Wylie, Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) and Dr R Bernard in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Baker, Dr WF Long, Mr D Marr, Dr I McFarland, Ms J Niven, Professor T Salmon, Mrs L Stephen, and Professor DW Urwin

MINUTES

16.   The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2004 were approved.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/001)

THE REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS AND AN UPDATE ON ELIR

17.1   The Committee received a draft of the University's Reflective Analysis.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/002)

17.1.1 The Committee noted that the document had been made available to all staff via the University's intranet and would be discussed at forthcoming meetings of College Teaching and Learning Committees, with all comments to be forwarded to Dr Mackintosh by 17 December 2004. Members were invited to forward any comments to Dr Mackintosh.

Action: All

17.3   The Convener thanked Dr Mackintosh and Dr Spedding for their hard work in producing the Reflective Analysis.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

18.1   The Committee received the Educational & Staff Development Unit Annual Report (2003/2004)

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/003a)

18.2   In presenting the Report, Dr Comber highlighted to the Committee several key developments which had occurred during 2003/2004:

- The development of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCertHE), which provides a pathway for staff members to become registered practitioners of the HEA.
- The development of Personal Development Planning (PDP) tools for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Committee noted that PDP would be of particular importance in the future in promoting the employability graduates of the University.
- The establishment, in response to the Roberts' Report, of a generic skills programme for postgraduate students.

18.3   The Committee noted the tabled data relating to ESDU course evaluation surveys which showed that the majority of staff attending development events felt they had benefited from attending the events in question.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/003ai)

18.3   In the discussion which followed, the Committee raised the following issues:
- The Committee were concerned to note that the majority of staff attending events arranged by ESDU were those employed on short-term contracts.
- The Committee were particularly concerned to note that there was evidence that some Heads of School were actively discouraging staff from registering for the PGCertHE.
- The Committee agreed to seek clarification from Human Resources regarding the contention that Human Resources cannot provide Heads of School with lists of academic staff from within their school who have attended courses due to issues of confidentiality.

Action: Clerk

- The Committee were concerned that, despite current discussions within the Higher Education Sector as a whole, the University has no clear policy requiring staff to commit to their pedagogic development. The Committee agreed that their concerns on this issue, and also regarding the need to re-examine the University's staff induction process to further ensure that staff are equipped for their role, should be referred to the Staffing and Development Committee.

Action: Clerk

18.4   The Committee received a discussion paper in which possibilities for the restructuring of the organisation of Staff Development for Teaching and Learning, through the establishment of a Learning and Teaching Centre to include the Educational and Staff Development Unit (EDSU), the Learning Technology Unit (LTU) and the Academic Learning and Study Unit (ALSU), were presented.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/003b)

18.5   The Committee noted that the paper had already been widely circulated and had provoked much discussion, both positive and negative. It was further noted that the paper would receive further consideration on 23 December 2004 at a meeting of the 'stakeholders' involved, to be chaired by Professor Logan.

18.6   The Committee received a paper from DISS in response to the Staff Development Discussion Paper.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/003c)

18.7   The Committee noted that the paper highlighted the view from DISS that excision of the Learning Technology Unit (LTU) from DISS would damage both DISS and the LTU. The Committee further noted that the paper proposed that, as the LTU already works with both EDSU and ALSU, the current DISS review should look at the possibility of siting any new teaching and learning centre within DISS.

18.8   Whilst the Committee endorsed the proposal to establish a single centre for learning and teaching, with the aim of providing a school focused approach to development supported from the centre, they were of the opinion that the University should consider a range of options for the location and final structure of such a single centre.

DRAFT UCTL REPORT TO SENATE

19.   In approving the Draft UCTL Report to Senate for academic year 2003/2004, the Committee noted that, in general, there had been no significant change from previous years in regard to student progression, withdrawals, academic appeals and complaints. The Committee agreed that the Convener should approve the final version of the report for submission to the Senate on 26 January 2005.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/004)

ORAL EXAMINATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

20.1   The Committee received a paper in which discrepancies between University policy and the practices adopted within one school were highlighted in regard to oral examinations and interviews.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/005)

20.2   In recognising that not all disciplines within the University use oral examinations to confirm degree classification, the Committee were in agreement that policy in this regard should be at the institutional, and not school or college, level.

20.3   The Committee noted that there is no clear guidance available in this context in either of the QAA Codes of Practice on Assessment or External Examining.

20.4   Whilst some members of the Committee were firmly committed to upholding the current policy in order to ensure transparency of process, a view supported by the Students' Association, this view was clearly at odds with that of the School concerned. The Committee therefore agreed that the matter should be investigated further prior to referring the issue the Senate.

Action: Clerk

WAIVER OF CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

21.1   The Committee received a paper outlining a proposal to formalise the maximum level of credit waiver the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) should approve.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/006)

21.2   The Committee noted an amendment to the proposal that the maximum credit limits should be:
- For non-Honours degrees, a maximum of 30 credit points
- For Undergraduate Certificates & Diplomas, a maximum of 15 credit points
- Credit points that count towards Honours classification will not normally be waived.

21.3   After some discussion, the Committee concluded that although, in light of the University's alignment with SCQF, there was a need for a clear position regarding students seeking credit waivers in order to graduate, this should not be a rigid rule. The Committee agreed that the Vice-Principal should be able to view each case on an individual basis. It was therefore agreed that guidelines should be drawn up for consideration by the Committee in February.

Action: Clerk

AMENDMENT TO THE REGULATION GOVERNING
PART-TIME STUDY (GENERAL REGULATION 4)

22.1   The Committee approved an amendment to the credit regulations governing part-time study.

'Candidates registered for part-time study may not register for more than 80 credit points in any academic year, nor more than ~~45~~ 50 credit points in either half-session.'

22.2 This amendment had been proposed in response to a number of students who were taking a repeat year on a part-time basis in order to accumulate sufficient credits to progress to the next programme year. Such students were often taking courses from different levels at the same time in order to make up a credit shortfall and/or gain passes in compulsory courses. Given the relative credit ratings of courses at different levels such students sometimes needed to take, for example, one 20 credit Level 1 course in the same half-session as one 30 credit Level 2 course. As this amendment would enable students in this situation to be classified as part-time, providing the total number of credits taken during the course of the year did not exceed 80, the underlying principle of the regulation remained unchanged.

EXIT ROUTES FOR STUDENTS ENTERING WITH ADVANCED STANDING

23. Although this proposal had received support at the Heads of School meeting on 25 November 2004, the Committee agreed that work should be undertaken to consider the wider context of the proposal. In particular concern was expressed in relation to the standards of admission required for students seeking 'advanced standing' on the basis A Level passes. The Committee agreed that the matter should be deferred until February in order that a more detailed paper might be prepared.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/007)
Action: Clerk

PLAGIARISM DETECTION

24. The Committee approved the recommendation that the University sign-up to the Plagiarism Detection Service for the next three years.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/008)

PROGRAMME REVIEW

25. The Committee approved amendments to the University's Programme Review and ITR procedure.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/009)

UPDATES TO THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

26. The Committee approved the revisions to the Quality Enhancement Strategy (QES). These were being made to align the Strategy with the new Strategic Plan. The Committee noted the action taken in response to the QES Action Plan for 2003/04 and approved the Action Plan for 2004/05.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/010)

RESITS AT HONOURS – REPORTING OF LEVEL 4 COMPENSATION

27.1 The Committee noted that the Senate had approved the proposal to introduce a system of compensatory credit for students achieving CAS 6, 7 or 8 in a level 4 course taken as part of an Honours programme.

27.2   The Committee approved the following procedure as the mechanism for awarding such compensatory credit:

- Compensation should be awarded in respect of performance in the programme as a whole and not the individual course. As such, the Examiners should only determine the amount of compensatory credit to be awarded when the final degree class is determined. The hard-copy programme results list should be annotated to indicate the number of compensatory credit, where appropriate. This will ensure that a student who has failed more than 30 credit points of level 4 courses is not awarded too much compensatory credit.
- Such credit will be entered as 'unnamed' credit on the student's record.

QAA CODES OF PRACTICE

28.1   The Committee noted that the QAA had commenced a process of revising its Code of Practice to take account of developments in UK Higher Education since 2001 when the first edition of the Code was published. To date, three sections of the Code had been revised: Section 1 on Postgraduate Research Programmes, Section 2 on Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning, and Section 4 on External Examining. It was important that the University reviewed these revised sections of the Code to ensure that any revisions made to the Code were reflected in university policies and procedures. It was planned that these reviews be conducted as follows:

28.2   (i) <u>Section 1: Postgraduate Research Programmes</u>

The Head of the Postgraduate Registry would undertake an initial mapping exercise of this section of the Code. This would be considered by the newly-established Postgraduate Strategy Advisory Group, convened by the Vice-Principal (Research & Commercialisation) and which includes the Heads of Graduate Schools, in consultation with the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate).

28.3   (ii) <u>Section 2: Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning</u>

The Registry would co-ordinate, in consultation with the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the School of Education, a review of the revised Code and identify any issues to be taken forward by the UCTL.

28.4   (iii) <u>Section 4: External Examining</u>

A number of issues concerning the External Examiner process, in particular the reporting system, had been identified recently and it had been planned that these be addressed by the UCTL in 2004/05. It was therefore proposed that any issues arising from the revised section of the Code be addressed as part of this process. The initial work would be undertaken by the Registry who, after liaison with College Directors of Teaching & Learning and the ASC Conveners through QUEST, would bring forward recommendations to the UCTL.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT THEMES – FIVE YEAR PLAN

29.   The Committee noted the letter and paper from Dr David Bottomley (QAA Scottish Office) introducing the new arrangements for the national Quality Enhancement Themes.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/011)

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

30.   The Committee noted the SHEFC Annual Report on the Quality Enhancement Framework, available at:

http://www.shefc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd00000100511ce5ff

HIGHER QUALITY: BULLETIN FROM THE QAA

31.   The Committee noted the October 2004 edition of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/012)

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS

32.   The Committee noted that further to discussions at the October meeting of UCTL regarding the requirement for the provision of Programme Specifications (minute 5.2 refers), the Registry were working with DISS to ascertain the feasibility of establishing a database to manage Programme Specification data.

LEVELS DESCRIPTORS

33.1   The Committee noted that Alan Runcie (QAA Scottish Office/Universities Scotland) had agreed to run a workshop for the University on the use of the SCQF level descriptors to enhance students' learning. Details to be arranged.

33.2   The Committee further noted that comments had been received from the ASC (Science, Engineering & Medicine) in May 2004 concerning the recommendation of an External Examiner that a greater degree of detail be provided to distinguish individual CAS marks within each 'level'. The External Examiner proposed that a series of detailed, self-contained definitions be produced for each CAS mark. In view of the planned discussions on Levels Descriptors, as outlined above, it was proposed that these comments be taken forward as part of this debate.

HONOURS DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

34.   The Committee noted that as part of the work of the Quality Enhancement Theme on Assessment, which reviewed the recommendations from the UK Government White Paper *The Future of Higher Education*, several issues were currently being reviewed at a sector level. Work was currently being undertaken to review the system of Honours Degree Classification: the Theme Group had identified and considered a number of approaches and systems, and agreed that there was a need for wider discussions with the higher education sector in Scotland, and throughout the UK, about the issues and emerging options. Any future developments in this area would be brought to the attention of the Committee in due course.

POST QUALIFICATIONS APPLICATIONS SYSTEMS

35.   The Committee noted that further to the publication of the final report from the Admissions to Higher Education Review in September 2004, an implementation group had been formed, at the request of Charles Clarke, to examine how a post-qualification application system could be established. The Committee would be kept informed of any relevant future developments in this area.

INTERIM REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT FEEDBACK

36.1   The Committee noted an interim report received from the Working Group on Student Feedback

(copy filed as UCTL/101204/013)

36.2   The Committee noted the comments of a member concerning the desirability of introducing electronic mechanisms for student satisfaction surveys.

MONITORING STUDENTS' PROGRESS

37.   The Committee noted that the modified system for monitoring students' progress, with the Registry action as 'gatekeeper', had been running since week 5 of teaching. To date monitoring reports had been issued as detailed below. A full report on the operation of the system during the first half-session would be included for discussion at the meeting of the UCTL in February 2005.

WEEK	C6 Reports issued	Reports remaining unexplained at 2 week deadline – student withdrawn from course & referred to SPC Convener (C3)	Response rate to initial C6 report
5	203	65	68%
6	182	80	56%
7	259	121	53%
8	269	132	51%
9	350		

REVIEW OF GROUP WORK

38.   The Committee noted that the outcome of the survey on group work would be reported to the February meeting of UCTL (minute 2.4).

DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2004/2005

39.   The Committee noted that the following dates had been scheduled for meetings in 2004/05 (**venues in bold**):

Wednesday 12 January 2005 (special meeting to approve the final Reflective Analysis) –
        Court Room The Committee noted that this meeting might not be required dependant on the nature of any changes made to the draft Reflective Analysis.
Friday 4 February 2005 – **Committee Room 2**
Friday 25 March 2005 – **Committee Room 2**
Friday 27 May 2005 – **Committee Room 2**