

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2005

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Professor M Baker, Dr D Hay, Dr WF Long, Ms C Macaslan, Mr C Mair, Mr D Marr, Dr I McFarland, , Professor T Salmon, Dr M Young with Dr D Comber, Professor CHW Gane, Mr JLA Madden, Mrs J McAndrews, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb, Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) and Dr R Bernard in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor MA Cotter, Miss A Harper, Dr D McCausland, Mrs D McKenzie Skene, Mrs L Stephen, Professor DW Urwin, Mr G Pryor and Ms M Wylie,

The Convener welcomed Professor Gane who was attending for item 2 on the agenda.

Minutes

73. The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2005 were approved subject to the insertion of "Divison I" to the wording regarding entry to PhD programmes in minute 63.3.
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/001)

Review of Code of Practice on Student Discipline

- 74.1 The Committee received a revised version of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline. The Committee noted that the proposed revisions were being made in response to issues raised by staff who had been working with the Code in the course of session 2004/2005.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/002)
- 74.2 In discussing the proposed changes the Committee highlighted several sections which required minor revisions in order to ensure clarity of the Code. These would be drawn to the attention of the Clerk to the Working Group on Student Discipline.
- 74.3 The Committee agreed that section 8.2.2 of the Code should be amended so that the penalty for being judged to have cheated in any component of assessment for more than one course in undergraduate programme years 3 or above be expulsion. The Committee were in agreement that expulsion, as the ultimate sanction, seemed more appropriate where the penalty also prevents the transfer of credit to another Aberdeen degree programme. The Committee further agreed that the penalties for taught postgraduate programmes (8.3) should be amended to be brought in line with the revised undergraduate penalties regarding multiple cheating offences and prevention of credit transfer.
- 74.4 The Committee discussed the possibility, raised by one member, that there should be more lenient provision within the Code for dealing with disciplinary offences committed by students undertaking conversion programmes. The Committee were, however, in agreement that due to the level of entry of such students, there should be no such need as these students should be well trained academically even if they are not trained in the specific discipline they are registered for. The Committee, therefore, agreed to remind Schools of their responsibilities for ensuring that all students are thoroughly inducted in the expectations of the institution at their point of entry and that part of this induction must include making students aware of the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline.
- 74.5 Subject to the noted points, the Committee agreed to recommend that the Senate be asked to approve the revisions to the Code of Practice.

Enhancement-led Institutional Review – Key Themes Letter

- 75.1 The Committee received a copy of the Key Themes Letter received by the University following the ELIR visits undertaken by the QAA. It was noted that the University would receive a draft of the final report on 27 June 2005. There would be an opportunity for the University to respond to the draft before the final report is published in September 2005.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/003)
- 75.2 The Convener thanked the Committee for their input to the ELIR process and in particular thanked Dr Mackintosh for her work in producing the Reflective Analysis document.

Review of Learning and Teaching Strategy

- 76.1 The Committee received a draft of the Action Plan for 2005/06 which was produced as part of the review of Learning and Teaching strategy.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/004)
- 76.2 The Committee agreed that the Draft Action Plan should be circulated to Schools and Colleges for comment, with comments to be received by the end of August 2005.
Action: Dr Spedding
- 76.3 The Committee noted the concerns of a member who felt that the Learning and Teaching Strategy should be fully debated at Senate. The Committee agreed that one possible route for ensuring a full debate would be for a document, highlighting the contentious issues identified by the Colleges as part of the consultation process, to be included for discussion at the October meeting of Senate. This debate could be used to inform the production of the final report from the review group due to be considered by the UCTL on 21 October 2005.

Educational and Staff Development Unit Annual Report (2004/2005)

- 77.1 The Committee received the annual report from the Educational and Staff Development Unit (ESDU).
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/005)
- 77.2 The Committee noted that the report had been produced in a summary format for the first time due to the wider circulation required for the report. In presenting the report Dr Comber highlighted some of the key areas of engagement for ESDU during session 2004/2005. These included:
- The first cohort has now completed, to External Examining level, the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching, with positive feedback being received on the programme from the External.
 - The introduction of a successful combined marketing strategy for ESDU, the Learning Technology Unit and the Training and Documentation Team
 - Positive feedback received on the pilot of the ASPIRE programme, which provides generic skills training for research postgraduate students
 - Increasing use of discipline specific sessions tailored to individual School/College needs has allowed more effective targeting of sessions.
- 77.3 The Committee agreed that the Report should be circulated to College Teaching and Learning Committees for information.

Action: Clerk

Review of SENAS forms – Report from the Academic Standards Committees

- 78.1 The Committee received a report from the Academic Standards Committees reviewing the current SENAS form.

(copy filed as UCTL/270505/006)

- 78.2 The Committee noted that the original proposals for changes to the form and the Guidance Note had been modified as a result of the views expressed by Heads of School at their meeting on 13 May 2005.

- 78.3 The Committee approved minor revisions to the SENAS form and the associated Guidance Note. These revisions will require Schools to provide enhanced details of the elements making up in-course assessment but do not, at this stage, require Schools to include details of the word length of in-course essays or dissertations.

- 78.4 The Committee agreed to oversee the production of a Guidance Note on Assessment which will include guidance on issues such as word limits, taking into account guidance as it becomes available from the Quality Enhancement Theme on Assessment and the forthcoming Project on Formative Assessment.

Action: Clerk

- 78.5 The Committee further agreed that guidance would be drawn up by the Registry in consultation with Colleges, to clearly identify responsibilities of Schools, College Directors of Teaching and Learning and ASCs in the approval of SENAS forms.

Action: Clerk

Final Report from the Working Group on External Examining

- 79.1 The Committee received the Final Report from the Working Group on External Examining.

(copy filed as UCTL/270505/007)

- 79.2 The Committee agreed that, although there was a recommendation to amend University procedures relating to oral examinations and interviews in the final report, this recommendation should not be taken forward at this time. The Working Group had highlighted in the report that there were differing practices across the University regarding the use of oral examinations. The Committee agreed that this issue should be considered more fully as part of the review of assessment practices to be undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Strategy Review Group, with a view to reconsidering procedures for oral examinations and interviews after the review is complete.

- 79.3 The Committee agreed that, with the exception of recommendation 7 relating to oral examinations and interviews, the remaining 13 recommendations should be taken forward.

Action: Clerk

Interim Report from the Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback

- 80.1 The Committee received an interim report from the Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback.

(copy filed as UCTL/270505/008)

- 80.2 The Committee noted that majority of the work undertaken by the Group to date had focused on the SCEF exercise. In general, the Committee welcomed the proposed new draft format for the SCEF and agreed that the form, together with the interim report, should be forwarded to College Teaching and Learning Committees for comment. Feedback received would be considered by the Working Group with a view to a further report being included at the October 2005 meeting of the UCTL.

Action: Clerk

- 80.3 The Committee expressed concern that the current draft version of the revised form did not permit the inclusion of discipline specific questions (Part B Questions). It was noted that one possible solution would be to undertake such surveys at those times in the cycle when a full SCEF exercise was not required: under the current proposals all courses would not be required to be surveyed on an annual basis. However, a view was expressed, that the proposals for changes to the required frequency of survey were in fact a retrograde step, although it was noted that this had been proposed in order to attempt to combat questionnaire fatigue amongst students.

Disclosure of Marks and Feedback to Students

- 81.1 The Committee received a paper outlining changes made to the Data Protection Act by the [UK] Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to requirements to disclose marks for and feedback on performance in individual elements of assessment in written examinations.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/009)
- 81.2 The Committee agreed that current University policy on releasing individual marks from end of course assessments should be reviewed and that consideration be given to providing better feedback to students on assessments. This would be taken forward during session 2005/2006.

Action: Clerk

Guidance Note on Fitness to Practise for students in Education

82. The Committee approved the Guidance Note for Education students in relation to Fitness to Practise. The Committee noted that the Guidance Note had been based on the existing Guidance Note for MBChB students whose studies are being considered for suspension or termination on grounds that they are not 'fit to practise'.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/012)

Grade Spectrum (Postgraduate Taught Programmes)

83. The Committee approved amendments to the Grade Spectrum (Postgraduate Taught Programmes) which had been proposed to ensure alignment of the Grade Spectrum to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
(copy filed as UCTL/270505/010)

Postgraduate Catalogue of Courses and New Style Programme Specifications

84. The Committee noted that, at their meeting on 13 May 2005, the Heads of School had agreed a deadline of 16 December 2005 for uploading by Schools of information into the new online Postgraduate Catalogue of Courses and the new style programme specifications.

Development of the Approach to Quality Enhancement Themes

- 85.1.1 The Committee noted the SHEFC Circular Letter of April 2005 containing details of developments in regard to the approach to QE themes.

(Circular Letter available at: <http://www.shefc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd0000010368eacbe2>)

- 85.2 In particular, the Committee noted the initial outline timetable of enhancement themes/projects detailed in the SHEFC Circular Letter of 25 April 2005:

2005 to 2010	Systematic Theme – Embedding Enhancement
2005	Project on Formative Assessment
Early-mid 2005 – mid 2007	The First Year
Early 2006 to Early 2008	Developing the Effective Learner
Mid 2007 to Mid 2008	Project on the Inclusive Curriculum
Early 2008 to early 2010	Progression and Success
To be determined	Linkages between research and teaching

Issues arising from recent appeals heard by the University Court Appeals Committee

86. The Committee noted two issues which had been raised following a Court Appeal.
- Concern was raised by one member of the Court Appeals Committee in regard to the adequacy of the University's preparation of students before they commence work placements. This will be forwarded to the Working Group on Placement Learning for consideration.
 - The University Court Appeals Committee noted that, in the case concerned, the student had not received prior notification of the composition of the Students' Progress Committee. The Committee felt this information should be provided in advance to enable the students, in certain circumstances, to object to an individual being a member of the Committee. The Registry have agreed to ensure that students who are to appear before Progress Committees will be informed in writing, in advance, of whom the members of that Committee will be.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

87. The Committee noted that QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland had reviewed the guidelines on Progress files with particular reference to the guideline on implementing strategies for Personal Development Planning (PDP). It had been agreed that, as current work on the Effective Learning Framework together with that on employability have the potential to make a significant contribution to HEIs' work to develop and implement approaches to PDP, the 2005-06 guide date for having policies on PDP in place would be set aside and the situation reviewed at the end of 2005.

Monitoring Students' Progress

88. The Committee noted that the amendments to the Student Monitoring System proposed for session 2005/2006 at the meeting of the UCTL on 25 March 2005 had been approved by the Senate at their meeting on 4 May 2005.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Update: 4 March 2005

89. The Committee noted an update from the SCQF.

(copy filed as UCTL/270505/011)

Closing Comments

In closing the meeting, the Convener thanked Professor Urwin, Dr McFarland and Mr Mair for their contributions to the work of the UCTL.

On behalf of the Committee, Ms Macaslan thanked Dr Roberts for his hard work as Convener of the UCTL and in particular his work in promoting the cause of teaching and learning and students both within the University, and at a national level.

Dates of meetings in 2005/2006

90. The Committee noted the dates of meetings for 2005/2006. All meetings will be held at 2pm.

Friday 21 October 2005, Friday 9 December 2005, Friday 3 February 2006, Friday 24 March 2006 & Friday 26 May 2006