

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting hold on 23 March 2007

Present: Ms CA Macaslan (Convener), Professor G Burgess, Mr J Hardey, Professor WF Long, Mrs M Pearson, Professor T Salmon, Dr P Schlicke and Dr M Young with Mr D Bernard, Mrs J McAndrews, Ms P Spence and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Professor MA Cotter, Miss A Harper, Dr W Naphy, Mr M Radford, Professor G Walkden, Professor FB Watson and Dr G Mackintosh

The Convener informed the Committee that agenda item 5.1 had been withdrawn. The amended regulations for the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education would be considered at the next meeting.

The Convener congratulated Dr Young on his appointment as the first Academic Director for the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

MINUTES

79. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2007.
(copy filed as UCTL/230307/65)

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 80.1 The Committee noted that, further to submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) of the University's plan and proposed intended expenditure of the employability funding being made available by the SFC, the University's plans had been approved (minutes 67.4 and ??? refer). The SFC had awarded the University in excess of £50,000 each year for a four year period to take forward its plans.
- 80.2 The Convener informed the Committee that Professor Salmon would be leading a working group to look at issues relating university induction. In its initial work the group will be focussing on induction for session 2007/08 with this being widened to encompass a longer term view (minute 68.3 refers).

**RETENTION: IMPLICATION FOR ASSESSMENT. IS THERE A NEED FOR
A FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 81.1 The Convener informed the Committee that, at their meeting on 5 March, Heads of School had discussed a possible guide to good practice in assessment. These discussions had been initiated as a result of the commitment made in the Learning and Teaching Strategy to the development of an assessment strategy and also the current discussion relating to the issues of student retention.

- 81.2 The Committee noted that the Heads of School had indicated that, in their opinion, it would be more useful for the University to develop examples of good practice, which could be referred to give an indication of the types of practice which could be considered to be good, rather than creating another strategy.
- 81.3 From the Committee's wide-ranging discussion of various aspects of assessment practice, the following key themes emerged:
- The Committee were generally supportive of the idea that students need to undertake some form of assessment early in their courses. In general, it was agreed that the University should be seeking to move towards a model where students are engaged earlier and differently, particularly in their first year. It was, however, acknowledged that, whilst early assessment is generally desirable, there are practical problems in implementing this with many of the very large classes which exist at non-honours levels.
 - The Committee agreed that 'early engagement' could be achieved through means other than assessment, and that when assessment is used in this way it does not have to be summative.
 - The Committee acknowledged that work needs to be done to harness the existing good practice and disseminate this information more widely within the institution. This information is often highlighted on External Examiner reports but at present there is no mechanism for distributing the examples outside the school for whom the report is intended.
 - It was stressed that in seeking to identify examples of good practice it would be important to clearly define what such good practice is seeking to promote. Good practice in the context of assessment can exist for many different purposes. For example: some practices can improve the pass rate; others test attainment; while some practices increase learning. In order to develop examples of good practice it will be important to identify what the institution is seeking to achieve.

GUIDANCE NOTE ON PLACEMENT LEARNING

- 82.1 The Committee received a draft of a Guidance Note on Placement Learning which would be included in the Academic Quality Handbook as Appendix 6.1
(copy filed as UCTL/230307/66)
- 82.2 The Committee noted that the University had developed the Guidance note as part of its commitment to ensure that the institution remained compliant with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Code of Practice. It was further noted that Section 9 of the QAA code, which relates to placement learning, was currently being revised. If this review resulted in any substantial changes to the QAA code, revisions would be made to the Guidance Note and brought to a future meeting of UCTL.
- 82.3 The Committee noted that, with the current emphasis being place on workplace learning as part of the employability agenda, periods of placement learning would take have increased importance within the curricula.
- 82.4 In considering the broad issues associated with periods of placement learning, the Committee noted that in some subject areas the University is not in a position to guarantee to provide placements for all students who may wish them. This is reflected in the degrees awarded, as the degree titles differ. In this context, it was further noted that with increasing student numbers, increased demand for placements would have the potential to impact on the University's ability to provide access to placement opportunities.

- 82.5 It was noted that periods of placement learning are subject to scrutiny by external examiners in exactly the same way as any other period of learning within the University.
- 82.6 The Committee approved the Guidance Note and noted that it would be forwarded to the meeting of Senate on 2 May 2007.

Action: Clerk

APPROVAL OF EXAMINATION PAPERS

- 83.1 The Committee received a paper detailing proposed amendments to the guidance for the approval of examination papers following changes requested by external examiners and a proposal to establish a central repository of the deadlines being used by schools for the submission of examination papers to external examiners.
(copy filed as UCTL/230307/67)
- 83.2 In approving the proposed revisions to the final approval process for papers following changes requested by external examiners, the Committee agreed that the amendments clarified precise approval process.
- 83.3 The Committee noted that an earlier proposal to introduce a common deadline for the approval of examination papers had been considered by Heads of School and College Executives. This proposal had not received support.
- 83.4 The Committee approved the proposal to establish a central repository of school deadlines in order that an awareness of the institutional position regarding examination preparations may be established. The Committee agreed that the central repository should be established in the Registry. The Registry would contact schools by email in October each year to remind them to submit details of deadlines.

CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (PGDE)

84. The Committee noted that this paper had been withdrawn temporarily. The amendments to the supplementary regulations would be included for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

EMPLOYABILITY: PROPOSAL RE STRATEGIC FUNDING FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

85. The Committee noted the University's plan and the proposed intended expenditure of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) employability funding, which following discussion by the University Management Group, was submitted to the SFC.
(copy filed as UCTL/230307/69)

HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

86. The Committee noted the paper detailing the key points from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Annual Report for 2005 – 2006 together with the full institutional report for the University of Aberdeen.
(copy filed as UCTL/230307/70)

**PROGRESS UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN FOR SECTION 3 (QUALITY
LEARNING) OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

87. The Committee noted updates on the action plan for the Quality Learning section of the Strategic Plan.

(copy filed as UCTL/230307/71)

**PROGRESS UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN FOR SECTION 9.2 (QUALITY
ENHANCEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY) IN THE COMMUNICATIONS
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (C & IT) STRATEGY**

88. The Committee noted updates on the action plan for the for the Quality Enhancement and Sustainability section of the C & IT Strategy.

(copy filed as UCTL/230307/72)

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

89. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 18 May 2007 at 2.00 pm, in Committee Room 2 of the University Office.