UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2008

Present: Ms CA Macaslan (Convener), Professor G Burgess, Dr B Connolly, Professor MA Cotter, Dr P Edwards, Ms J Elliott, Mr D Hay, Dr MJ Hole, Professor WF Long, Dr GTA McEwan, Mr D Mackay, Professor W Naphy, Professor G Walkden and Dr MR Young, with Ms K Christie, Ms A Hogg, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr N Edwards and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Dr D Duff, Dr J Geddes, Miss A Harper, Professor T Salmon, Mrs L Stephen, Mr D Paterson and Ms P Spence

Ms Yvonne Gordon and Ms Jenny Fernandes were in attendance for item 187, and Dr Joy Perkins was in attendance for item 188.

MINUTES

186.   The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2008.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/01)

POINTS BASED IMMIGRATION

187.1   The Committee were joined by Ms Yvonne Gordon, Registry and Ms Jenny Fernandes, Student Recruitment and Admissions, who gave a presentation regarding the new Points Based Immigration System currently being implemented. All international students will now require an immigration sponsor and this would be the institution where they are planning to study. The Committee noted the increase of institutional responsibility and accountability in terms of managing admissions and attendance of international students.

187.2   The Committee agreed that the speed of the decision making and the admissions process were critical in helping to ensure maximum numbers of international students.

187.3   The Committee noted that the University will be required to report to the UK Borders Agency any unauthorised student absences (10 expected interactions). The Committee also noted this would require substantial changes to the current student monitoring system in order to cope with this requirement.

187.4   Following further discussion it was agreed that an update on the planning process be brought to the Committee in February 2009.

Action: Dr G Mackintosh

UPDATE ON PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR UNDERGRADUATES

188.1   The Committee received an update from Dr Joy Perkins regarding Personal Development Plans (PDP) for undergraduate students. The Committee noted that although PDP had developed substantially over the past year, it was still very much in the developmental stages. The Committee agreed that this was an extremely useful tool used by students.

188.2 The Committee were reminded that the enhanced online PDP ePortfolio system was made available to both Level 1 and 2 undergraduate students during the last academic year and was currently being piloted at postgraduate level in the College of Life Science and Medicine.

188.3 The Committee requested further details regarding the actual uptake and usage of PDP. The Committee were informed that official statistics were currently being sought and that students were being asked to complete a questionnaire on their thoughts of PDP to help aid feedback.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/02)
Action: Dr J Perkins/Clerk

CURRICULUM REFORM

189.1 The Committee discussed the Final Report of the Curriculum Commission which was available for download from:

www.abdn.ac.uk/cref/uploads/files/Final%20report%2010%20October%202008%20AMENDED_1.pdf

189.2 Following a wide ranging discussion the main issues highlighted by the Committee can be summarised as follows:
- Members queried how the Implementation Group will interact with existing structures and procedures/functions of the University i.e. University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and the resource implications in a learning and teaching context.
- Concerns were raised by members regarding the large resource implication firstly in terms of timescale and secondly in terms of resources e.g. approval of all new programmes and courses, updating of course information, University regulations etc.

189.3 The Committee noted that a resources group meeting has been set up to discuss the implementations.

DRAFT LEARNING AND OPERATIONAL ACTION PLAN

190.1 The Committee received the Draft Operational Plan for 2008/2009.

190.2 The Convener explained to the Committee that there had been a full consultation process with several sections within the University including Heads of Graduate School, Directors of Teaching and Learning, Centre for Learning and Teaching, Careers and Registry. The Committee noted that the draft plan had been taken to Heads of School meeting for comment and that following that changes had been incorporated.

190.3 The Committee noted key changes within the plan and key additions incorporated this year. The Committee further noted that the plan contains many of the development themes that are endorsed within the final report of the Curriculum Commission.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/03)

REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON ACADEMIC AND PASTORAL SUPPORT

191.1 The Committee received an oral report from Professor Long, Convener of the Working Group on Academic and Pastoral Support.

191.2 The Committee noted that the Group were currently reviewing the support systems provided for students and their intention is to put forward recommendations for enhancements to the existing academic and pastoral support system. Key themes which have arisen so far include: exploring pre-September contact with students, desirability of one-on-one meetings, the relationship between induction and advising week, development of a one-stop shop for Central Support Services, co-ordination of support available with Colleges, Schools and Disciplines, and appointment and training of Advisers.

191.3 The Committee also noted that the Group intends to meet with the Students' Association, new students and academics to discuss the current academic and pastoral support given to students. It was agreed that there would be a further update from the Working Group at the next meeting of UCTL in February 2009.

UPDATE ON CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

192.1 The Committee received an update in relation to the Class Representative System from Joy Elliott, Students' Association.

192.2 The Committee noted the challenges faced each year by the Students' Association and in particular problems with Schools/Departments reporting names and contact details of Class Representatives to the Students' Association. Although it was noted in the paper that Registry were involved in this process, it was highlighted that Colleges and in particular Assistant Colleges Registrars should be dealing with this directly and not Registry.

192.3 The Committee were encouraged by the increased promotion of the class representative system by the Students' Association. It was noted that the Students' Association has decided to use the expertise of sparqs to create a set of toolkits that can be used at the School level for staff and students to reflect upon and improve their individual practices in student engagement, and in particular how best to elect class representatives. This would hopefully help alleviate the difficulty in obtaining class representatives.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/04)

TERM DATES

193. The Committee approved the Dates of Term for 2009-2010, and, provisionally, those for the sessions to 2018-2019.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/05)

EXAMINATION DEADLINES

194. The Committee approved the latest dates for the return of examination results for session 2008-2009.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/06)

DEADLINES FOR THE REFUSAL OF CLASS CERTIFICATES

195. The Committee approved the recommendation that the deadline for notification to the Registry of the refusal of Class Certificates to those students previously reported as "at risk" under the student Monitoring Scheme, be as follows:

First half-session courses: (other than those below)	5.00 p.m. on 23 December 2008 i.e. on the Tuesday following the last day of teaching
Second half-session courses: than those below)	5.00 p.m. on 19 May 2009 i.e. on the Tuesday (other following the last day of teaching
MBChB programme:	5.00 p.m. on the Tuesday following the last day of teaching i.e.:

Phase I   19 May 2009
Phase II 2M   9 June 2009
Phase II 3M   3 March 2009
Phase III   9 June 2009
Phase IV   9 June 2009

INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT SUMMARISING OVERALL ARRANGEMENTS FOR QUALITY

196. The Committee noted that the Institutional Statement summarising arrangements for quality to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in December 2008 was in the process of being produced.

Clerk's Note: Following the meeting the Institutional Statement was approved by Convener's Action before being considered by Senate on 19 November and Court on the 9 December. The report was submitted to the Funding Council on 10 December.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/07)

EXTRACT FROM THE UNIVERSITY REGISTER OF STRATEGIC RISKS

197. The Committee approved the entry for "Market Exposure: Teaching" from the University's Register of Strategic Risks. The UCTL acts as monitoring committee for this element, which had been amended as indicated (deletions are ~~scored through~~ and additions are in **bold**).

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/08)

REMIT AND COMPOSITION 2008/09

198. The Committee noted the Remit and Composition of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/09)

ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT ON INTERNAL REVIEW ACTIVITY: 2007-2008

199. The Committee noted the Annual Institutional Statement on Internal Review Activity: 2007-2008, submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in September 2008.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/10)

RECOGNISING THE NON-ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS
UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2008

200. The Committee noted the attached update, originally considered by the Student Affairs Committee, on stage 1 of the pilot project to recognise the non-academic contribution of students.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/11)

SPARQS CONSULTANCY 2007-2008

201. The Committee noted the attached report on the pilot scheme run by sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) to 'Support Individual Institutional Agendas' to develop the involvement of students in quality processes.

(copy filed as UCTL/051108/12)

GRADUATION DATES

202. The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November ceremonies, as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the UCTL during the summer. The Committee also noted particularly the amended dates which differ from those published previously. In addition, it was noted that ceremonies would take place in Elphinstone Hall:

Thursday 27 November 2008 at 6.30 p.m.	Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Law, Language & Literature, Divinity, History & Philosophy and Social Science
Friday 28 November 2008 at 11.00 a.m.	Higher and First Degrees in the Business School
Friday 28 November 2008 at 3.00 p.m.	Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Medical Sciences, Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology
Friday 28 November 2008 at 6.30 p.m.	Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering, Natural & Computing Sciences, Geosciences and Education

UCTL WORKING GROUPS

203.1 The Committee noted that compositions of the UCTL Working Groups on the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum and Examiners' Meetings for Joint and Combined Degrees had been approved by the Convener of the UCTL as follows:

Working Group on Postgraduate Grade Spectrum
Convener: Dr Douglas Hay
A Head of School
A Head of Graduate School
A Postgraduate Programme Co-ordinator from each College
A College Postgraduate Officer
A student

Working Group on Examiners' Meetings for Joint and Combined Degrees
Convener: Professor Trevor Salmon
A Head of School
A School Director of Teaching
An Examinations Officer from each College
A student

203.2   The membership of the Groups is currently being finalised.

DATES OF MEETINGS IN 2008/09

204.   The Committee noted the dates of meetings for the current session:

Wednesday 4 February 2009 at 2 p.m. in Committee Room 2
Wednesday 25 March 2009 at 2 p.m. in Committee Room 2
Wednesday 20 May 2009 at 2 p.m. in Committee Room 2