UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2009

Present: Professor WF Long (Convener), Professor G Burgess, Dr B Connolly, Professor MA Cotter, Mr D Hay, Dr MJ Hole, Professor J King, Mr B Lockhart, Dr GTA McEwan, Professor W Naphy, Mr R Parker, Professor T Salmon, Dr K Shennan, Mr J Simpson, Professor G Walkden and Dr MR Young with Ms A Hogg, Ms K Ross, Ms P Spence and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance.

Mrs C Baverstock, Ms E Forster, Mr F Lovie, Dr PJ Murray and Ms R Sandison were also in attendance for this meeting only.

Apologies: Mrs L Johnson, Ms K Christie, Dr G Mackintosh and Mr P Fantom

MINUTES

253.   The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 20 May and 3 June 2009.
(copy filed as UCTL/041109/01)

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

254.1   The Committee received a paper from Ms Forster, Policy, Planning and Governance, summarising the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) which the University took part for the third time in 2009.
(copy filed as UCTL/041109/02)

254.2   The Committee noted that, generally, there was overall satisfaction amongst students, with the University ranked relatively highly within the survey. However, the Committee noted there were low levels of student satisfaction in respect of assessment and feedback. The Committee noted that action had already been taken in this context with the production of the Institutional Feedback Framework (minute 274 refers). The Committee further noted that Colleges would be asked to report to the meeting of UCTL in January 2010 providing an update on actions taken following the publication of the survey results.

254.3   In relation to addressing issues, following general discussion, the Committee agreed that the University needs to promote areas which have clearly been addressed as a result of the survey to ensure that students are able to see that their views are important and taken into consideration.

254.4   The Committee also agreed that Colleges and Schools need to help promote the survey amongst students and ensure that a response is provided to the student community on improvements implemented. The Committee further agreed that a useful way to ensure this information was disseminated appropriately would be to ensure that the email sent out to all students inviting them to participate in the survey included a link to last year's feedback. This would then permit students to see the improvements/changes which had been made as a result of their comments/feedback.

254.5   The Committee noted that in some areas in particular the University had moved significantly in the rankings compared to last year; however they were reminded that even a small percentage change can result in a change in the University's position in the list.

254.6   Finally, the Committee noted the preparations for the 2010 Survey were already underway, with fieldwork due to start some point in early February 2010. The Committee further noted that the paper would go to Senate in November for information.

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A GENERAL DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (PART-TIME)**

255.1   The Committee discussed a paper from the Centre for Lifelong Learning outlining the proposal to establish a General Degree of Master of Arts (Part-Time).

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/03)

255.2   The Committee noted that this paper had already been approved by the CASS Executive meeting as well as the University Management Group. The Committee further noted that although this was a general proposal, with much of the finer detail still to be worked out, in principle both the College and most Schools within it supported the introduction of the General MA degree.

255.3   The Committee noted that the courses would be identical to the full-time versions and students would be allocated an Adviser of Studies in line with current practice for full-time students.

255.4   The Committee acknowledged that this proposal would enable students, who, for practical reasons, cannot attend full-time on-campus undergraduate programmes, to study on a part-time basis. Following general discussion, it was agreed that particularly with the direction the sector is moving in at the moment, the University needs to attract new audience of students with a different mode of delivery i.e. part-time students. The Student Recruitments and Admissions Service were also fully supportive of the proposal and felt it would be a welcome addition to the University. It was also seen as an extremely marketable option for potential new students.

255.5   The Committee noted the projected substantial decline in the number of 18-year-olds entering higher education between 2010 and 2025, with the highest decline being in the North-East of Scotland (24% at its peak). The Committee agreed that targeting an area such as part-time study could help to alleviate/offset the decline in traditional entrants.

255.6   In summary, most members of the Committee were supportive of the proposal although there were slight concerns regarding the delivery and practice of the degree. It was acknowledged that this was only a proposal and that the proposed structure would now be discussed in more detail by the Centre for Lifelong Learning.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO UNDERGRADUATE REQUIREMENTS FOR 2011 ENTRY

256.1   The Committee discussed a paper from Ms Rachel Sandison, Head of SRAS regarding the proposed changes to Undergraduate Requirements for 2011 entry.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/04)

256.2   The Committee noted that SRAS were keen to increase the currently advertised A-Level Entry Requirements for MA and BSc degree programmes for entry into first year from CCC to BBB. It was felt that at a time when the institution is seeking to improve the quality of applicants and further extend the geographical pool outside of Scotland, the current A-Level Going Rates are proving detrimental to the University's recruitment effort.

256.3   The Committee noted that the University's recruitment position is not consistent with its academic reputation and standing as one of the UK's top institutions and it further noted that the University's published A-Level Entry Requirements are significantly lower than its competitive set and other institutions in the UK's top 20. It was noted that it was SRAS' intention to begin to attract a higher calibre student to the University.

256.4   Members further noted that SRAS are often asked by interested students why the University's A-Level entry requirements are so low. The Committee agreed that it was extremely important for the University to increase its profile amongst potential students and in particular, to benchmark itself appropriately against its competitors.

256.5 Following general discussion, there was wide-spread support for the changes amongst the Committee with several members agreeing that the introduction of the reformed Curriculum was the perfect opportunity to change. There was, however, slight concern that the proposed change would result in a decline in applications and the Students' Association representatives in particular sought clarification of the implications of these changes for the widening participating agenda. SRAS however were extremely confident that there would be no detrimental impact to the University's application numbers and explained that if anything it could have the opposite effect and encourage other students, who would not have considered Aberdeen previously, to apply.

256.6 It was noted that discussion regarding degree programmes in Biomedical Sciences (BSc BMS) and Master of Chemistry (MChem) would need to be undertaken with Colleges in the first instance before any changes to these entry requirements could be made.

256.7 The Committee approved the suggested changes to the University's Entry Requirements and agreed that the new Going Rates should be published in the 2011 Undergraduate Prospectus.

PILOTING THE GRADUATE MANAGEMENT ADMISSIONS TEST (GMAT)

257.1 The Committee received a paper outlining the proposal to adjust the entry requirements for the MSc International Business, Energy and Petroleum, and MSc International Business and Finance to allow for the submission of a GMAT test score a supplementary aid for application decisions.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/05)

257.2 The Committee noted that this was a pilot proposal to improve the quality of the students being admitted to the University. This would be an optional, standardised test run by the Graduate Management Admission Council® as an aid to Business Schools to select qualified candidates.

257.3 The Committee further noted that the test aids the application process by providing more information to Schools to help make an informed decision. It would be particularly helpful to Schools considering applicants who are 'marginal' or difficult to judge from their submitted qualifications.

257.4 The Committee approved the Test's introduction on a pilot basis as outlined in the paper.
Action: Clerk

SUSTAINABILITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE CURRICULUM

258.1 Mr Lovie, Policy Planning and Governance, presented a paper to the Committee on behalf of the University's Corporate Social Responsibility Steering Group.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/06)

258.2 The Committee noted that there is increasing recognition within the sector that the sector's contribution to the sustainability agenda should reflect all aspects of core institutional business and hence includes teaching output.

258.3 The Committee agreed that this was clearly an important issue which should be discussed further but were unsure of what was being asked of them from the paper. The Committee requested that further detailed information, including specific proposals for consideration, should be brought to a future meeting.
Action: Clerk

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT MONITORING

259.1 The Committee received a paper from Registry outlining the proposed changes to streamlining the current monitoring system.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/07)

259.2 The Committee noted that the proposed system (currently only used at undergraduate level) be extended and used for all taught (UG and PgT) students to address the UKBA monitoring requirements. It was further noted that the system would operate throughout the whole year and apply to <u>all</u> taught students, and to PgR students who fall under Tier 4 immigration.

259.3 The Committee noted that the three main recommendations put forward by Registry were to (i) automatically reinstate students (C6 → C4) without requiring them to first make contact with the Registry, (ii) remove the current C3 status (referred to the Students' Progress Committee) and (iii) as a result of removing the C3, the monitoring status of a student would therefore remain at C6 unless the School moved it to C7 (refusal of Class Certificate). It would then be up to the Head of School to determine if the student could have his/her Class Certificate reinstated, under standard C7 rules.

259.4 The Committee failed to agree with all of the recommendations put forward by Registry. Instead, members agreed that the current practice worked relatively well and it was suggested that minor amendments be made to this to satisfy Tier 4 immigration rules.

259.5 Following lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that instead of removing the C3 status, this should remain as it is. Currently, students reported as C3 are asked to meet with the Convener of the Students' Progress Committee. The Committee were of the view that these students should **not** be reinstated on to the course without appropriate consultation with the course co-ordinator. The Committee also requested that the recommendation to automatically reinstate students back on to courses after the first occasion of reporting be removed. Members strongly objected to this recommendation and were in agreement that students **must** make contact with Student Monitoring before being reinstated on to a course. It was agreed that it is important to distinguish those who poorly attended from those who appeared erroneously on class lists.

Action: Clerk

UKBA AND RESITS

260.1 The Committee received a paper from Registry outlining the new UK Immigration Policy on re-sits/repeating.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/08)

260.2 The Committee noted that the University's current undergraduate general regulations permit a student up to three re-sit opportunities (comprising the year in which the student registered for the course and the year directly thereafter). However this currently conflicts with the UKBA rule of only permitting two opportunities to repeat or re-sit a course.

260.3 Members felt strongly that UKBA should not be allowed to prescribe such academic requirements. The Committee noted that this was a major concern throughout the sector and that UUK are continuing to lobby on behalf of the sector in regard to this issue.

260.4 The paper outlined two main options, one for Tier 4 students only and the other affecting all students. There was overall agreement/consensus within the Committee that students should be treated equally and it was unfair to change the rules for Tier 4 students only. If there were to be any change to policy then it would have to apply to all students.

260.5 Following general discussion, the Committee agreed that the University amend the Regulations to align to the UKBA requirements of two re-sit opportunities for all students *i.e.* three opportunities to sit the exam.

260.6 It was agreed that a degree of flexibility could still be given to the student by allowing them to choose when to register for the two re-sit opportunities. The Committee therefore agreed that Class Certificates should remain valid for two years with the opportunities for reassessment within that period being limited to two.

Action: Clerk

EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

261.1 The Committee received a progress update from Peter Fantom/Careers Service on the Employability Development Plan 2009/2010.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/09)

261.2 Members noted the following six objectives which the University are in the process of developing as part of the Employability Development Plan:
- Work Placements
- Career Development Learning
- Personal Development Planning (PDP)
- Employer Engagement
- Curricula Development
- Co-curricular Activities

261.3 The Committee noted that no significant issues were raised at the meeting of Heads of School.

UPDATE ON QAA ENHANCEMENT THEME: GRADUATES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

262.1 The Committee noted a paper providing an update on QAA Enhancement Theme: Graduates for the 21st Century.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/10)

262.2 Members noted that the Aberdeen Working Group taking forward the development of the Theme comprises of 3 Directors of Teaching and Learning, the Chair of UCTL, representatives from the Centre for Learning and Teaching and a student representative.

262.3 The Committee noted that in support of local development of the theme the University has received the first tranche of funding (£4000) from the QAA with a further £8000 to follow over the course of session 2010/2011.

262.4 The Committee further noted the other primary focus internally would be the provision of Learning and Teaching Enhancement awards within each College for the development of aspects pertaining to graduate attributes, details of which will be released later in the year.

DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AND POSTDOCTORAL STAFF WHO TEACH

263.1 The Committee received a paper from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) outlining a proposal to introduce a structured, accredited short programme of development opportunities for postgraduate and postdoctoral staff at the University.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/11)

263.2 The Committee noted that the proposal would update the current provision, pulling together the stand-alone sessions into a coherent programme that can then be accredited by the Higher Education Academy. It would aim to provide tailored support to develop the teaching skills for two groups of staff who may get little exposure to formal development opportunities, and yet who teach our students.

263.3 The Committee noted that this would be a logical extension of the development on offer from the individual Colleges. The Committee further noted that this new proposal would provide a streamlined route into the higher level PG Certificate in HE Learning & Teaching programme at the University as well as equivalent programmes in other HEIs.

263.4 The Committee noted that Heads of School were broadly supportive of the proposal however concerns were raised from one Committee member regarding the timeline of such a framework *i.e.* allowing too much time to the detriment of their PhD.

263.5 Overall, the Committee was in support of the proposal so long as the sessions were **not** made compulsory.

Action: CLT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF 2009-10

264.1 The Committee received a paper from the Centre for Learning and Teaching outlining the Centre's Professional Development Opportunities for Staff in Academic Year 2009-2010.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/12)

264.2 The Committee noted the wide variety of professional development opportunities and events for staff on offer throughout the year including short workshops and the Centre's Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium (The 21st Century Learner and Lecturer).

264.3 The Committee approved the above theme and noted that it aligns with the QAA's current Quality Enhancement Theme 'Graduates for the 21st Century' and Curriculum Reform's emphasis on Graduate Attributes.

ELIR UPDATE

265.1 The Committee received an oral update from the Convener regarding ELIR.

265.2 The Committee noted that an early version of the reflective analysis would be sent to UMG in advance of in being put forward to Senate on 18 November 2009.

LEARNING AND TEACHING OPERATIONAL PLAN 2009/10

266.1 The Committee received a paper outlining the Learning Operational Plan for 2009/2010.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/13)

266.2 The Committee noted the Learning Operational Plan incorporated the CREF recommendations.

266.3 The Committee were informed that the only comment from Heads of School related to the outstanding deadline date for the action point within 'Supporting Students' in taking forward the recommendations of the Senate Working Group on Academic and Pastoral Care for enhanced Pastoral Support and Advising system. The Committee noted that this had been updated and the deadline was included in the Operational Plan.

UPDATE ON THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

267.1 The Committee received a paper and brief oral update from the Students' Association on the Class Representative System.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/14)

267.2 The Committee noted that the Students' Association had experienced problems with Schools failing to provide information regarding their nominated Class Representative until the last minute, and sometimes even after the deadline, despite several reminders.

267.3 The Committee further noted that this then caused problems in terms of training as several ad hoc sessions were required to cater for these late students.

267.4 The Committee agreed that the Students' Association should contact the individual Schools concerned and address this issue directly with them.

Action: Students' Association

267.5 The Committee noted that a further update would be provided at the next meeting of UCTL.

REVISED SENAS FORMS AND GUIDANCE FOR NEW UNDERGRADUATE COURSES AND PROGRAMMES FOR COURSES AND PROGRAMMES FROM 2010 ONWARDS

268.1 The Committee received an oral update from Registry on the revised SENAS forms and guidance for new undergraduate courses and programmes as well as the new online procedure.

268.2 The Committee notes that the briefing sessions undertaken jointly by Registry and the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) had been productive and helpful to University colleagues. The Committee also noted that it was Registry's intention to go 'Live' with the new online system by the end of the week (6th November 2009).

268.3 The Committee further noted that the online system was for courses and programmes relating to the new curriculum only. All other documentation must be submitted through the usual Planning Cycle process and meet the usual deadline of the end of November.

REVIEW OF TURNITIN UK

269.1 The Committee received a paper outlining the review of TurnitinUK (Electronic Plagiarism Avoidance & Detection Service).

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/15)

269.2 The Committee noted that there would be further discussion on this paper at the next meeting of UCTL.

ONLINE MARKING AND FEEDBACK

270.1 The Committee received a paper outlining Pilots to Explore Provision of Online Feedback on Assessment.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/16)

270.2 The Committee noted the development of the institutional framework for the provision of feedback on assessment highlights the need for *timely, supportive, and understandable feedback focused on student improvement*.

270.3 As a result of this the Centre for Learning and Teaching are proposing to formally evaluate the use of the TurnitinUK Grademark tool through pilots of its use in each College. The Committee noted that this Grademark tool, which enables the provision of comprehensive feedback to assignments online, was not widely used across the University.

270.4 The Committee agreed that the pilot should not be compulsory and noted that the Centre would like to hear from anyone wishing to pilot it.

270.5 The Committee requested that feedback/comments from the pilot be brought to a later meeting of UCTL.

TERM DATES

271. The Committee noted that the Dates of Term for 2010-2011 will be considered by Senate at the meeting to be held on 18 November 2009.

Clerk's Note: Following discussion at Senate the dates of Term have been approved by the Convener of UCTL.

EXAMINATION DEADLINES

272. The Committee approved the latest dates for the return of examination results for session 2009-2010.

(copy filed as UCTL/110409/17)

DEADLINE FOR THE REFUSAL OF CLASS CERTIFICATES

273. The Committee approved 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: 5.00 p.m. on 22 December 2009 i.e. on the Tuesday
(other than those below) following the last day of teaching

Second half-session courses: 5.00 p.m. on 8 May 2010 i.e. on the Tuesday following
(other than those below) the last day of teaching

MBChB programme: 5.00 p.m. on the Tuesday following the last day of
Teaching i.e.:
Phase I   18 May 2010
Phase II 2M   8 June 2010
Phase II 3M   23 February 2010
Phase III   8 June 2010
Phase IV   8 June 2010

CURRICULUM REFORM

274. Following previous consideration at the University Committee on Teaching & Learning, the Curriculum Reform Implementation Board and College Teaching and Learning Committees, the Committee approved the following items:

(a) Strategy for the identification and dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching 2009-10;

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/18)

(b) Institutional framework for the provision of feedback on assessment.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/19)

AMENDMENTS TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK

275.   The Committee approved amendments as detailed in the attached papers:

(a)   Section 9 External Examining   *(copy filed as UCTL/041109/20)*
(b)   Section 10 Collaborative Arrangements   *(copy filed as UCTL/041109/21)*

REMIT AND COMPOSITION 2009/10

276.   The Committee noted the Remit and Composition of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning which had been amended in light of the responsibilities gained by the Committee following the dissolution of the Student Recruitment & Admissions Committee (SRAC).

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/22)

GRADUATION DATES

277.   The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

Thursday 26 November at 11 a.m.   Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Medical Sciences, Medicine & Dentistry and Psychology

Thursday 26 November at 3 p.m.   Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering, Geosciences and Natural & Computing Sciences

Friday 27 November at 11 a.m.   Higher and First Degrees in the Business School and the School of Social Sciences

Friday 27 November at 3 p.m.   Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy, Law, Language & Literature and Education

CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ANNUAL REPORT

278.   The Committee noted the Centre for Learning and Teaching's Annual Report.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/23)

**ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT ON INTERNAL REVIEW
ACTIVITY 2008-2009**

279.   The Committee noted the Annual Institutional Statement on Internal Review Activity 2008-2009, submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in September 2009.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/24)

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING WORKING GROUPS ON
THE COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE AND STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORMS**

280.   The Committee noted the remits and compositions of the UCTL Working Groups as attached, which had been approved the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer.

(copy filed as UCTL/041109/25a&b)

LECTURE START AND END TIMES

281.   The Committee noted the text of an email circulated to the community on 12 October 2009:

"We would be grateful if you would note and adhere to **section 6.12.3 of the University's Academic Quality Handbook** which details conventions regarding start and end times of classes:

6.12.3 It is University policy that, although classes are timetabled to commence on the hour, they should start at five minutes past the hour and finish at five minutes to the hour. This convention is intended to permit students sufficient time to move between classes in different buildings. It also assists academic and support staff to organise materials and technology for subsequent classes.

Adherence to this policy enables students to move between classes in time and provides time for classrooms to be *safely* vacated by one class before they are required by the next.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Professor Mary Cotter, Director of Teaching & Learning, College of Life Sciences & Medicine
Professor Trevor Salmon, Director of Learning & Teaching, College of Arts & Social Sciences
Professor Gordon Walkden, Director of Teaching & Learning, College of Physical Sciences"

HIGHER QUALITY BULLETIN FROM THE QAA

282.   The Committee noted the most recent edition (July 2009) of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which is available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/default.asp

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

283.   The Committee noted that future meetings would be held as follows:

Wednesday 27 January 2010 at 2 p.m.
Wednesday 17 March 2010 at 2 p.m.
Wednesday 19 May 2010 at 2 p.m.