UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING
(26 October 2011)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2011

Present: Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Ms J Batty, Dr B Connolly, Professor M Cotter, Professor P Edwards, Mr P Fantom, Mr B Lockhart, Professor W Long, Dr G Mackintosh, Ms M McHaney, Dr J Morrison, Professor W Naphy, Mr R Parker, Mr D R Paterson, Ms P Spence, Dr R Wells, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), in attendance: Ms T Birley, Ms Emma Hay, Mrs S Vigers

Apologies: Dr PJ Murray, Professor G Walkden

MINUTES

389.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2011.
(copy filed as UCTL/180511/001)

389.2 It was noted that item 377.3 had not been put to the most recent meeting of the Heads of School and the Convenor agreed that this would be added to the agenda for the next meeting
(Clerk to add to the agenda of the next meeting of the Heads of School)

ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT

390.1 The Convenor noted that this paper had been to the meeting of the Heads of School and the Undergraduate Committee. The Convenor of the Undergraduate Committee noted that that Committee recognised that changes needed to be made but that there was unease regarding the timescale for changes. It was also noted that the current system was agreed following negotiations with the Unions. The Convenor stated that the changes were intended to be brought in in 2012-13 and that this Committee was being asked to endorse taking the paper forward.
(copy filed as UCTL/180511/002)

390.2 It was noted that there is a need for more Advisers of Study for September 2011 but there was doubt as to whether this could be achieved by the deadline of 10 June. The Convenor stated that it was important not to keep the call for more Advisers open-ended.

390.3 The Convenor noted that agreement was needed on the issue of the move to Personal Tutors and that a small group could then deal with the detail. He noted that there are two aspects of advising: course choices and pastoral care. Course choices are easier to manage with appropriate IT support, especially in honours years where there is often little flexibility. The harder aspect is pastoral care. It was agreed that IT support is essential and further discussion on this is needed.

390.4 The Convenor asked for suggestions as to who might sit on a small group to discuss the detail of the scheme and asked colleagues to contact Dr Mackintosh with suggestions. The Students' Association asked that the section of the paper on peer mentoring be split from the section on Personal Tutors as they cover different things.

390.5 It was agreed that the endorsement of UCTL for the general idea could be taken to Senate with the indication that a small group would look at detail.

FACILITATING THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING QUALITY

391.1 The Convenor of the Undergraduate Committee stated that that Committee endorsed this paper as a way of assessing quality but not a means of enhancing quality. It was also noted that Heads of School had expressed concern about whether this was the correct mechanism to use. There was concern about the time pressure if all staff were required to undertake reviews and that it might be more suited to staff coming off probation or being put forward for promotion. There was also concern about adding in something extra as opposed to improving current mechanisms. The Convenor noted that linking to appraisals raises other issues.

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/003)

391.2 It was agreed that encouraging staff to undertake the PGCert was very important and that this is now explicit in the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan. It was also noted that identifying appropriate CPD opportunities was essential following self-reflection and peer / student perceptions.

391.3 It was agreed that a small group should take this idea forward focussing on the Teaching and Learning aspects. It was suggested that there should be two representatives from each College, one member of staff who is on probation and one who is not, an AUSA representative, some Heads of School and line managers, a representative from CLT and a representative from HR.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT RECORD (HEAR) UPDATE

392.1 It was noted that the University is taking part in Phase II of the HEAR project and that discussions are ongoing with DIT and Careers regarding how to record co-curricular activities in the Student Record so that this information will be available at graduation for our current level 1 students. The Committee is asked to approve the template in order for further development work to be undertaken. The Committee is also invited to comment on the possible discontinuation of issuing papers copies of the transcript once the HEAR is in use.

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/004)

392.2 It was noted that other institutions are looking at only providing the HEAR electronically. However, it was noted that this raises issues regarding how to archive links to the catalogue and calendars over many years. It has been suggested that data should be available for the duration of a working life (about 40 years) and that there are companies which can assist with this.

392.3 The Committee was informed that the screens would be visible through the student portal so that students can tell the University what they have done and request that something qualifies for 6.1. Such requests would go through Careers to UCTL. The Committee was also informed that fails would be noted on the HEAR.

392.4 The Committee asked if things can be removed from the HEAR, for example political or religious affiliations. It was noted that the idea is that the HEAR will be frozen at graduation but that prior to graduation students will be asked if they want any information removed. It was noted that discussions on all these issues are ongoing.

STUDENT MONITORING

393.1 The Committee was invited to consider a proposal to modify the existing monitoring process such that subsequent to receiving an initial monitoring report (C6) students are required to

respond to the School rather than to the Registry. Schools therefore become responsible for the removal of the C6 In the Student Record. This proposal is a precursor to a wider review of student monitoring.

393.2　It was noted that the proposal depends upon DIT making necessary changes and the Convenor stated that once the proposal was formalised it would be put to DIT to make it work.

393.3　It was recognised that these students are often not engaged with any University mechanism and that dealing with monitoring via University email accounts may not be the most appropriate method. The Convenor noted that in lots of Schools students are contacted long before they are close to receiving a C6 and that this is good practice. The intention is to encourage the student to engage with the School.

REPORTS FROM THE CONVENORS OF THE UCTL SUB-GROUPS

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

394.1　The Convenor of the Quality Assurance Committee explained that both the PG and the UG strands of this Committee had met. The PG strand noted that External Examiners highlighted inconsistencies in the way extenuating circumstances are dealt with. The UG strand discussed SCEFs and the impact of staff shortages on teaching and learning. The Convenor of the UCTL noted that College Teaching and Learning Committees had been asked to look at the issue.

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

394.2　The Convenor of the Postgraduate Committee noted a change in UKBA requirements regarding the countries from which students would be required to meet English language requirements. There is also a new framework for skills training. The Convenor also drew attention to changes to the Code of Practice regarding, amongst other things, Supervisory Teams.

394.3　The Convenor of the UCTL noted that he will convene a group to look at these issues in more detail.

UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE

394.4　The Convenor of the Undergraduate Committee noted that many of the papers discussed by that Committee were the same as those discussed today, and many of the same people sit on both Committees. He noted that the Committee structure needs rationalisation. It was noted that there was a meeting scheduled to discuss the Committee structures.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)

395.1　The Committee noted and approved the amendments to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/005)

AMENDMENTS TO THE POSTGRADUATE CODES OF PRACTICE

396.1　The Committee noted and approved the amendments to:
a) the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Taught Students

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/006)

b) the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/007)

EMBEDDING WORK PLACEMENTS IN TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES (LEARNING TO WORK 2)

397.1   The Committee noted the update on the Learning to Work 2 project

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/008)

LEARNING AND TEACHING OPERATIONAL PLAN

398.1   The Committee noted the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/009)

UCTL ANNUAL REPORT TO SENATE FOR 2009/10

399.1   The Committee noted the Annual Report which was submitted to Senate relating to academic year 2009-10.

(copy filed as UCTL/180511/010)

REVIEW OF EXTERNAL EXAMINING ARRANGEMENTS IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN THE UK

400.1   The Committee noted the final report and recommendations produced by the Universities UK and Guild HE working group.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT THEMES

401.1   The Committee noted that an outline of the new Enhancement Theme 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum' has just been published and been made available across the HE sector.

GRADUATES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM SERIES

402.1   The Committee noted that as part of the Enhancement Themes programme, the third event in this symposium series looks to address the two key questions to the current Enhancement Theme: what should be the attributes of a graduate from Scottish higher education in the 21st century in order that they can contribute to future cultural, civic and economic prosperity; and how can the achievement of these attributes best be supported?

REVISED APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

403.1   The Committee noted the information relating to the revised appeals and complaints policy.

CURRICULUM REFORM

404.1   The Committee noted that as curriculum reform has become mainstream activity, it is proposed that it is no longer necessary to hold separate Curriculum Reform Implementation Board meetings, but rather that business is subsumed with the UCTL.

THANKS

405.1   The Convenor thanked Mr Robin Parker and Ms Megan McHaney for their excellent work on this Committee and wished them well. He also thanked Professor Mary Cotter and Professor Bill Long for their service on this Committee.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

406.1   The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held as follows:
Wednesday 26 October 2011 at 2 p.m.