

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

DRAFT Minute of the Meeting held on 3 May 2017

*Present:* Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr T Baker, Mr C Duncan, Mr L Fuller, Professor H Hutchison, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor J Masthoff, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Dr B Scharlau, Professor K Shennan and Dr S Tucker, with Dr R Bernard, Ms K Christie, Mr P Fantom, Ms P Spence and Ms E Hay (Clerk) in attendance

*Apologies:* Mr D Philips

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2017**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/001)*

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 8 March 2017. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held subject to a revision to minute point 5.6.

**Action: Clerk**

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 2.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health and Safety.

**INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW (ITR)**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/002)*

- 3.1 The Committee received a paper on proposed revisions to the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process to be introduced as a pilot in academic year 2017/18. The Committee noted that the current process is particularly onerous and focuses almost entirely on the assurance of quality rather than the enhancement of quality. The Committee further noted the introduction, over the course of recent academic years, of the Annual Course Review (ACR), Annual Programme Review (APR) and revised External Examiner Report (EER) forms ensuring the annual assurance of the quality of provision provided by each School/discipline and therefore allowing the ITR process to become more focussed in its objective to enhance the quality of existing provision.
- 3.2 The Committee noted the proposed process would require a School undergoing review to submit a Critical Analysis and Curriculum Map(s), a significantly lesser requirement than that under the existing process. These documents, coupled with ACR, APR and EER forms, would allow the reviewing panel to conduct a discussion based visit to a School, addressing approximately 2 or 3 key themes as derived from the documentation and through consultation with the School themselves. The Committee noted the review output would be a report, confirming the assurance of quality and an action plan, developed in collaboration between the School under review and the reviewing panel.
- 3.3 Members of the Committee acknowledged that the exact length of a pilot period was difficult to determine, however, it was expected that the Schools of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, Education and Engineering would take part.

- 3.4 The Conveners of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Committees confirmed the approval of their Committees for the revised process and for the involvement of their members in forming reviewing panels, subject to the appropriate training of all involved. The Committee agreed that, where appropriate, academics not members of either Committee could be nominated to take part if appropriate for their own development. The Conveners of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Postgraduate Research Committee (PRC) agreed to discuss a review of the new Graduate School in further detail.
- 3.5 Members of the Committee acknowledged the proposals as positive and agreed that a pilot of the new process was a sensible course of action to ensure the process could be successful in achieving its aims. The Committee noted that the Head of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture had agreed to his School being the first to trial the new process in 2018. The Committee agreed to report the pilot to the Senate.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **CLASS REPRESENTATIVES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/003)*

- 4.1 The Committee received a tabled paper providing an update on Class Representatives and seeking the Committee's approval for the expansion of the Student Association's recognition of roles in conjunction with the University's Enhanced Transcript Initiative and Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). Members of the Committee noted that while there are a considerable number of roles recognised by way of completion of the STAR award, not all students are able to complete the award as a consequence of other commitments and, as such, do not received University recognition for their efforts.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the success and high standard of Class Representatives over the past two academic years and expressed their thanks to the Students' Association and Mr Fuller, Education Officer, for their hard work in establishing such a successful programme. The Committee acknowledged the level of monitoring of Class Representatives undertaken and agreed, subject to the assurance of the quality required, that approval be granted for the proposal.
- 4.3 The Committee recommended that the QAC undertake the role of reviewing the quality assurance of the initiative, consider reports from the Students' Association as appropriate and review any further roles proposed for recognition.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **WEIGHTING OF HONOURS YEARS**

- 5.1 The Committee considered the issue of the Weighting of Honours Years as raised by the Convener of the QAC, following discussions at a recent meeting of the Committee. The UCTL noted that despite agreement by the Senate that all Schools should move to a consistent model of classifying degrees, there remained one discipline, Medical Sciences, classifying on the basis of the fourth year of study alone.
- 5.2 The Committee expressed concern as to the existence of the model and were informed that the reasoning behind it was to accommodate the large number of student who articulate into Medical Science degrees. The Committee queried whether exceptions could be made for articulating students given the approved exception of students who undertake Erasmus or Study Abroad programmes in their third year of study. It was noted that there was concern

that this could lead to a differential result in degree classification for students on these degree programmes.

- 5.3 The Committee also noted further concerns of the discipline that a two-year honours programme would prove less attractive to students, or affect their very high National Student Survey (NSS) results.
- 5.4 The Committee agreed that a paper, including detailed data in terms of degree outcomes, be prepared and submitted to the next meeting of the UCTL in September 2017.

**Action: Clerk**

### ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received an oral update on ongoing discussions surrounding assessment and how best to facilitate revisions to assessment methods and practices. The Committee acknowledged the commitment of Heads of School to reduce Institutional assessment effort by 20%. They noted the emphasis on 'effort' and its incorporation of all elements of the assessment process and the involvement of academic and administrative staff and the clear message that this reduction was not a 'dumbing down' of courses or degree programmes but an efficiency exercise, seeking to modernise assessment methods and provide greater transparency to students.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee agreed with the proposals and noted an email had been sent to Heads of School confirming the position and their agreed commitment. The Convener agreed to circulate a copy of this email to the Committee for their information and reference.
- 6.3 The Committee agreed the importance of communicating the change and the reasoning for change to both staff and students to avoid a misunderstanding of the policy. Furthermore, the Committee agreed upon the benefit of demonstrating to students 'You said, we did' in response to feedback on assessment. They further acknowledged the importance of transparency to students with regards to how, when and why they are assessed in terms of the improvement of NSS results.
- 6.4 The Committee noted that Schools had been asked to submit email proposals for changes to assessment, to be considered and approved by the QAC, to [senas@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:senas@abdn.ac.uk). The Committee agreed that a review of approved and rejected proposals be brought to the next meeting of the UCTL in September 2017.

**Action: Clerk**

### ATTENDANCE MONITORING

- 7.1 The Committee were updated on the progress of proposals in regards to attendance monitoring and the agreement that the use of QR codes be trialled in lectures. The Committee noted the reasoning for the trial as:
- Registering attendance electronically and without the need for significant administrative intervention.
  - As a driver for student attendance.
  - To allow for the opportunity for intervention when a student is not engaging.

- 7.2 Members of the Committee agreed with the proposals as a means of encouraging conversation and intervention for students who don't engage or may be experiencing difficulties. The Committee noted a pilot of the proposals would be undertaken with Schools volunteering appropriate courses. The Committee agreed results of the pilot would be considered at the next UCTL in September 2017.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **UNDERGRADUATE OFFER MAKING PROTOCOLS FOR SEPTEMBER 2018 ENTRY**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/004)*

- 8.1 The Committee considered a paper proposing new Undergraduate offer making protocols for September 2018 and setting out a process by which the University would widen its criteria for making unconditional offers with the aim of attracting and converting more Rest of UK (RUK) applicants. The Committee noted the minimal risk associated with the proposals, aimed at the very best of the RUK population, but also the uncertainty surrounding whether or not they would result in a significant impact on the recruitment of Undergraduate students.
- 8.2 The Committee noted the proposal would take the following criteria into account when making unconditional offers:
- Existing academic profile, measured through, e.g. GCSE results, Higher results
  - Predicted grades that are above a certain threshold.
  - Interview
- 8.3 Members of the Committee noted that Schools would not be forced to take part in the process and would be able to opt it or out, acknowledging that the validity and readability of predicted grades do vary by discipline.
- 8.4 The Committee acknowledged the importance of appropriate timing and communication associated with the process and the possibility of a use of incentive for students made an offer to attract them to accepting a place at Aberdeen.
- 8.5 The Committee noted that the University Management Group (UMG) would now consider the proposals and if approved, the process would be carefully evaluated following the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year.

#### **ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND GOOD PRACTICE**

- 9.1 The Committee received an update on work, led by Student Support, to prepare a guidance document on Accessible and Inclusive Learning and Good Practice. The Committee noted that a finalised document would be circulated to the Committee for consideration in due course.

#### **UPDATES AND MINUTES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 10.1 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the sub-committees of the UCTL.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE***(copy filed as UCTL/030517/005)*

- 10.2 Further to the minute, the Convener of the QAC raised the issue of the practice of counting fail (and not resit) marks in degree classifications as highlighted by External Examiners. The Committee agreed that this issue should be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for further discussion.

**Action: Clerk****POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT COMMITTEE**

- 10.3 The Convener of the Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) confirmed the PGTC had also discussed resit examinations. The Convener further updated the UCTL of the success of the recent Postgraduate Open day. Acknowledging the limited notice and marketing provided, the Convener stated a relatively high turnout. It was noted that feedback would be provided to Schools directly. On behalf of the UCTL, the Convener expressed his thanks to those involved in the organisation of the event, under difficult circumstances. The Committee agreed that the organisation and resourcing of such events needs to be planned in advance to ensure their success. While they issues may not fall fully within the remit of the UCTL, the Committee noted concern given that the outcomes of such events are.

**UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

- 10.4 The Convener of the Undergraduate Committee (UGC) confirmed that the Committee had discussed the issues of resit exams and misconduct and plagiarism. The Convener confirmed that a paper on the issue of misconduct and plagiarism would follow in due course.

**AOCB**

- 11.1 The Committee discussed whether or not it was appropriate to circulate UCTL papers to Heads of School in advance of meetings, to allow them to contribute to discussions. Members noted that Heads of School have the opportunity to contribute by way of meetings of Heads of School. The Committee further agreed that the circulation of the agenda (but not the associated papers) would be appropriate.
- 11.2 On behalf of the Committee as a whole, the Convener expressed his thanks to Mr Fuller for all his work on behalf of the Committee and the student body during his term as Education Officer.

**REVISED ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW FORM (APR)***(copy filed as UCTL/030517/006)*

- 12.1 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Annual Programme Review (APR) form. The Committee noted that the APR proforma has been revised to include programmes offered collaboratively with other institutions. It was further noted that currently, all such partnerships should submit an annual report to the QAC, but that it is felt that including them in the overall School APR will (i) streamline the process, (ii) be less burdensome for Schools and (iii) allow opportunity for greater comparative reflection where programmes are delivered both jointly with partners and singly by the School. NB: this does not apply to TNE programmes where Delivery Partners will be expected to complete separate APRs for each programme (groups of cognate programmes) delivered or Validated Programmes.

**PARTNERSHIP PROCESS CHANGES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/007)*

- 12.2 The Committee approved, for its part, the proposed changes to the partnership approval process, subject to a typographical revision to section 3.8.

**TERM DATES**

- 12.3 The Committee noted that the term dates for academic year 2019/20 would follow by way of circulation.

**STRATEGIC RISK REGISTERS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/030517/009)*

- 13.1 The Committee noted the Strategic Risk Registers.

**DATES OF 2017/18 MEETINGS**

- 13.2 The Committee noted the meetings of the UCTL to be held in 2017/18 as follows:

Wednesday 13 September 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 8 November 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 24 January 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 28 March 2018 at 2.00 p.m.