UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 28 March 2018

Present: Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr T Baker, Ms D Connolly, Mr C Duncan, Professor H Hutchison, Professor A Jenkinson, Mr O Kucerak, Professor K Shennan and Professor R Wells with Dr R Bernard, Ms K Christie, Mr P Fantom, Ms N Kinchin-Williams, Dr G Mackintosh and Ms E Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Professor C Kee, Dr B Scharlau, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Dr S Tucker and Ms P Spence

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2018
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/001)

1.1   The Convener opened the meeting and welcomed members of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) to the last meeting of the academic year.

1.2   The Convener expressed his apologies to the Committee for the delay in the circulation of the minutes of the sub-Committee meetings. He explained that the Committee timelines were very tight, with meetings of the Committees in any cycle increasingly close together. He stated that he was hopeful that improvements to the Committee schedule in academic year 2018/19 would mitigate such effects.

1.3   The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 30 January 2018. The Committee agreed that the minute was representative of discussions held.

1.4   The Convener updated the Committee on the progress of the policy on Lecture Capture. He confirmed that the policy had been considered and approved at the Senate. He issued his thanks to all those involved in the debate at the Senate and, in particular, thanked the student body for their contribution to discussion and the success of the paper.

HEALTH & SAFETY

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

2.2   The Committee were, however, made aware of an incident in the MacRobert car park involving a member of the Committee. The Committee agreed that the pedestrian crossings in the car park were unclear and, in the interests of staff and student safety, this should be reported to Estates.

Action: Clerk
Clerk's Update: This issue has been reported to Estates

PRESENTATION FROM THE SENATE TASK FORCES

3.1   The Committee noted that this item would be postponed to the next meeting of the Committee. The Committee agreed, however, that slides as prepared by the Senate Task Forces should be circulated to the Committee.

Action: Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been noted for inclusion at the meeting of the UCTL on 5 September 2018

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (QAC) ANNUAL REPORT TO THE UCTL
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/002)

4.1   The Committee considered the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Annual Report to the UCTL, acknowledging the information provided with regards to an analysis of External Examiner reports, Annual Course and Programme Reviews, areas for further discussion and areas specifically for the attention of the UCTL.

4.2   The Convener thanked the QAC for the very informative report and noted the success of recent QAC initiatives such as QA focussed visits to Schools. On behalf of the UCTL, the Committee issued his thanks to the QAC for all their work in ensuring the quality of provision across the academic year. He further stated that the report was very beneficial in pulling together this work for consideration.

4.3   The Committee noted the recent Internal Teaching Review (ITR) of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC) under the revised ITR process. The Committee acknowledged that initial feedback from the School of LLMVC had been very positive and that the visit had gone very well as a consequence of the engagement of the staff and students of the School. The Convener of the QAC informed the Committee that a report providing an analysis of the pilot would be provided to a future meeting of the UCTL. The Committee noted the importance of this, particularly as the initiative was potentially sector leading and therefore of interest to the ELIR panel.

4.4   The Committee noted the reference within the Annual Report to staffing levels and the commitment of the QAC to monitor the impact of reduced staffing on provision. The Convener of the QAC confirmed that this would be monitored by way of feedback from External Examiners by way of their annual report and feedback from students by way of the Student Course Evaluation Form (SECF) and Annual Course Review (ACR) forms. The Committee acknowledged the importance of internal and external feedback in this regard. Members of the Committee noted the importance of feedback from External Examiners acknowledging, however, that the reports were a source of information for further investigation.

Action: Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been reported to the Senate and the Court

TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION (TNE) PROCEDURES
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/003a and UCTL/280318/003b)

5.1   The Committee received the paper on Transnational Education (TNE) Procedures, in addition to the existing and Senate approved, TNE Procedures Handbook. The Committee were reminded of the background to the production of the revised document and noted that at the Senate meeting of 7 June 2017 a motion was passed requesting that a Senate Working Group be established to 'design a proper procedure for the approval of overseas campuses'.

5.2   Members of the Committee acknowledged the degree of unhappiness amongst some members of the Senate with regards to the University's existing TNE procedures. The Committee noted that the Working Group had formed and met multiple times, resulting in the document for consideration. The Committee was informed that there had been some debate with the Convener of the Working Group as to whether the document should follow the standard procedures for Teaching and Learning Policy and be considered by the UCTL and

its sub-Committees. The Convener confirmed that the paper should go through the rigorous and Senate and Court approved sub-Committee structure. He further noted that TNE is a matter for both the Senate and the Court and, as the UCTL is a joint Committee of both, it had a duty to report to both Committees on its findings.

5.3   The Committee was informed that the Working Group had been offered the opportunity to meet with the authors of the existing TNE Procedures Handbook to discuss issues in further detail, however, this offer was turned down.

5.4   Members of the UCTL queried why, when the Undergraduate (UGC) and Postgraduate Taught Committees (PGTC) and the QAC had all agreed that the document should not be approved, why it was progressing for consideration by the UCTL and the Senate. The Convener of the UCTL confirmed that the sub-Committees did not have decision making powers in this regard and that they resided with the UCTL. The Committee acknowledged that the sub-Committees inform the UCTL and bring all views together, allowing the UCTL to consider the views of all aspects of the University and reports its findings to both the Senate and the Court. The Convener also informed the Committee that the paper's progression to the Senate was more complex and that the feeling amongst the Senate Business Committee (SBC) had been that there was a strong likelihood the document would be raised for discussion by the Working Group itself, regardless of any decision taken not to add it to the agenda.

5.5   The Committee acknowledged that the existing TNE Procedures Handbook, approved by the Senate at the meeting of 25 January 2017, were the procedures the University was currently operating to. The Committee noted that the current document was largely QA in focus and that it set out procedures to set up and maintain a partnership, with an appropriate level of detail provided to ensure the QAC can appropriately consider and monitor each partnership. The Committee noted that the QAC had confirmed that the proposed document had no such process within it. The Committee further acknowledged the concerns of the QAC that while some content had been taken from the existing procedures, critical elements to allow for appropriate QA oversight were missing. The Committee noted that the QAC considered that there were a lack of stated requirements to manage such a process appropriately including, but not limited to, no reference to validation visits, the oversight of assessments or staff training. The Committee were further informed that there was no explicit reference to the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code (Chapter B10) governing such initiatives. The QAC further expressed concern regarding the lack of reference to students, the student experience or student support.

5.6   The Committee were informed that the Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) had made similar conclusions and it was noted that they considered the document to be lacking in critical detail and to be unfit for purpose.

5.7   The Convener of the Undergraduate Committee (UGC) confirmed to the UCTL that there was no support within the UGC for the document in its current form. The UGC expressed concern to the UCTL that there had been no opportunity for School consultation, that the document lacked appropriate rigour and that there had been a lack of input from the QAC.

5.8   The Committee expressed concern that the Students Association had confirmed they had not been engaged in the process or been asked to sit on the Working Group. The Committee noted that University practice was for student representation on all Committees and Groups.

5.9   Members of the Committee queried the appropriateness of the composition of the Working

Group and noted a lack of experience of its members in any TNE venture. The Committee further stated confusion as to the reference to partnerships throughout the document, when the document's focus was on collaborative provision with delivery partners. The Committee expressed concern that there was a perceived lack of understanding of the original document or what was sought by its adoption. The Committee also noted the document presented technically unworkable or undeliverable proposals.

5.10   The Committee noted that no member of the QAC had been consulted in the development of the document. The Committee acknowledged that the Working Group's convener had become a member of the QAC, however, that the level of expertise required for such matters took time to develop. The Committee further noted that the existing document had been developed following consultation with several other institutions to obtain advice on best practice and was mapped to the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code (Chapter B10).

5.11   The Committee were informed that to adopt this document, would leave the University non-compliant with the Quality Code.

5.12   Members of the Committee expressed concern regarding sections 1.1 and 1.1.1 of the document and their reference to online delivery. The Committee agreed that such initiatives were not covered by such procedures and that, with targets to achieve, the establishment of a Working Group to look at online provision would not be appropriate.

5.13   The Committee expressed concern over the principle within the document that no initiatives should be established where there is not a research impact. The Committee acknowledged that the Qatar project would not have gone ahead on this basis. The Committee also noted concern with regards to a focus on individual Schools and a lack of cross-institutional references.

5.14   Overall, the UCTL, were concerned that the document presented could not be mapped to the UK Quality Code and would therefore place the University in breach of it. The Committee noted that the procedures outlined did not provide a required level of Quality Assurance and/or may be technically unworkable. The Committee further noted concerns over the lack of attention to ensuring equivalents of student experience and a range of issues regarding the development of the document, including the level of consultation across the University in areas of academic and professional services expertise or from the student body. The Committee further concluded that it was unclear whether the document matched the sector wide expectations embodied in many documents dealing with these issues. The Committee recognised that the document appeared to be attempting to address issues, such as research or online education, beyond the initial motion approved by the Senate around overseas partners.

5.15   Having discussed the document provided on TNE procedures, UCTL, for its part, was unable to approve the document and felt unable to recommend it to the Senate or the Court.

Action: Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been reported to the Senate and the Court

CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/004)

6.1   The Committee received the revised Code of Practice on Student Discipline. The Committee noted that feedback on the use of the Code of Practice from Schools had resulted in the

changes proposed, specifically the amendment of the first stage to give schools more flexibility around penalty and build more educational component around a first offence situation.

6.2   The Committee noted that the PGTC was content with the proposals.

6.3   The Committee received feedback from the QAC and acknowledged while they were overall content with the proposals, they sought an amendment from 'possession' of mobile phone to 'use' of mobile phone to reflect instances where students may have a phone on their person which is switched off, however, they are penalised for it. The Committee noted the concerns of the QAC but felt that the burden of proving evidence of 'use' to be very difficult.

6.4   The Committee agreed that the rules of the exam hall, which require phones or other devices must be switched off and placed at the front of the hall or under the desk should be consistently applied and provided to students by the senior invigilator. The Committee further suggested the use of posters in exam venues to highlight these rules.

6.5   The Committee noted feedback from the UGC which sought clarity around the discretion of Heads of School to escalate 1st time offences, and that although the award of G3 is a standard penalty, all options as provided in section 4.2.5 can be considered. The UGC further emphasised the importance of consultation with the student body.

6.6   The Committee acknowledged the appetite for change amongst Schools, however, agreed the need for training to ensure the application of a consistent approach. The Committee noted the success of the proposed changes would be drawn from consultation and the sharing of practical experiences.

6.7   For its part, the Committee agreed to approve the amended Code of Practice and to forward it to the Senate for approval.

Action: Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been progressed to the Senate for approval

SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL (SFC) ANALYSIS OF HEI ANNUAL RETURNS
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/005)

7.1   The Committee noted that this item would be postponed to the next meeting of the Committee.

Action: Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been noted for inclusion at the meeting of the UCTL on 5 September 2018

HONOURS CLASSIFICATION METHOD: COMPARISON OF GS VS GPA
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/006)

8.1   The Committee received the paper on the Comparison of the Grade Spectrum (GS) and the Grade Point Average (GPA) methods of Degree Classification. The Committee noted that the paper would be on the agenda at the Senate scheduled for Monday 23 April for discussion only, with a view to a decision being taken at the Senate scheduled for Wednesday 16 May 2018.

8.2   Professor Shennan, introducing the paper, noted that overall, classification by way of the two

methods demonstrated that 78% of students would receive the degree classification under either system. The Committee noted that while the Grade Spectrum can be seen to advantage more students, this is variable across the University's disciplines. The Committee noted that while students may be more likely to achieve a First Class degree under the GS, this was likely as a consequence of improper use of the A scale.

8.3   The Committee queried whether equivalent data of previous years existed for comparison. The Committee noted that such detail was difficult to obtain but that the Student Experience Paper (paper UCTL/081117/002 refers) had demonstrated an increase in the award of First Class marks at course level and therefore some movement in the use of the scale. The Committee acknowledged that further movement in the use of the A scale would likely result in a more normal distribution.

8.4   Members of the Committee stated that the longer the use of two systems provided a safety net to mitigate incorrect use, the longer the habits of staff not to use the whole scale remain. The Committee also acknowledged, however, that particularly from an Arts and Social Sciences perspective, where marks for multiple pieces of assessment are averaged, the overall mark is brought down.

8.5   The Convener of the UGC reported a relatively equal split at the UGC with regards to their perception of the systems. Concern around implementation and a requirement for clear guidelines particularly around borderlines and the award of compensatory credits were noted. The Convener of the UGC further expressed concern that it was not well understood how the scale operates.

8.6   Members of the Committee queried whether, if the number of First Class degrees awarded were to suddenly drop if the UCTL would be comfortable with that. The Convener stated that the Committee must be comfortable that degrees are being awarded in the fairest and most appropriate way of awarding a degree. The Committee acknowledged that if the GPA method was to be adopted, cutting borderline conditions in a broader way would ensure a safety net remains and that the final decision on the award of a degree classification in such instances is considered by an exam board rather than an algorithm.

8.7   The Committee noted the importance of the implementation of any one scheme and the monitoring of its impact. The Committee acknowledged that staff are often focussed on the grading of one piece of work and not how that piece of assessment forms the overall award for a course. The Committee agreed that the raising of awareness in this regard would be useful.

8.8   The Committee noted that agreement to change to the use of one system would require IT resource.

8.9   Overall, the Committee recognised the pros and cons of both systems. The expressed a need for consistency and clarity across UG and PGT provision. The Convener of the QAC sought the support of the Deans in receiving data from Schools to inform the paper to the Senate and agreed to contact Heads of School directly in this regard.

Action: Professor Shennan and Clerk
Clerks Update: This item has been reported to the Senate and Heads of School have been contacted.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)

9.1 The Committee received an update on the progress with ELIR and the preparation of the University's Reflective Analysis (RA). The Committee noted that a meeting of the Steering Group had recently taken place and that workshops with School staff contacts and School conveners had recently been held. The Committee noted that the first draft of the RA would be presented to the Senate at their meeting in May. The Convener issued his thanks to Ms Christie for all her work on ELIR to date.

ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING UPDATE

10.1 The Committee received a brief update on Accessible and Inclusive Learning and noted that a paper on the issue had been considered by the Equality and Diversity Committee. The Committee noted that a short paper would be provided to the next meeting of the UCTL.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be an extraordinary meeting, to be held on Monday 4 June 2018 at 2pm, in Committee Room 2, University Office.

APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINE REPORTING
(to follow, UCTL/280318/007)

12.1 The Committee noted that this item would follow by way of circulation, taking into consideration those points raised in section 6 above.

OMNIBUS RESOLUTION
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/008)

13.1 On the recommendation of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) the Committee approved, for its part, and to forward to the Senate, the Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees.

MINUTES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

14.1 The Committee noted the minutes of the sub-committees as follows:

(i)	Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	*(copy filed as, UCTL/280318/009a)*
(ii)	Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC)	*(copy filed as, UCTL/280318/009b)*
(iii)	Undergraduate Committee (UGC)	*(copy filed as, UCTL/280318/009c)*

CAREERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/010)

15.1 The Committee noted that this meeting of the UCTL would be Mr Fantom's last. On behalf of the UTCL, the Convener thanked him for his hard work and that of his team.

15.2 The Committee considered the Careers Service Annual Report for 2016/17. They acknowledged the use of infographics and stated how useful they were. The Committee asked whether it would be appropriate to provide the infographics to students, in order to further raise the profile of the Careers Service and to target students not currently engaged with it. The Committee proposed the benefits of Schools publicising the Service too.

15.3   The Committee noted the achievement of the Service during 2016/17, specifically acknowledging the implementation of Professional Development courses and the engagement students with them.

15.4   The Committee emphasised the importance of the Curriculum and the co-Curriculum as a package and the importance of both in contributing to a Student's experience of being at University. The Committee agreed that such opportunities are fundamental to the University.

15.5   The Committee noted the impact of the fall in staffing levels within the Service. The Committee noted that while this is challenging, particularly as a consequence of TNE venture and online initiatives, the Service continues to utilise technology and work more closely with Schools to engage all staff in delivering careers information.

15.6   The Committee agreed that embedding Careers and Employability within the curriculum is exciting and a great development. The Committee agreed that the report should be more widely circulated amongst the University community.

Action: Mr Fantom

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT (PGT) STUDENT EXPERIENCE UPDATE
(copy filed as UCTL/280318/011)

16.1   The Committee noted the responses from Schools and the update from the Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Student Experience working group.

SECTOR UPDATES

17.1   The Committee noted and agreed to disseminate as appropriate, the following recent sector updates:

(i)   Enterprise and entrepreneurship: new advice for universities

The QAA have launched revised guidance intended to inform, enhance and promote the development of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education across UK higher education. This guidance, led by Professor Andrew Penaluna of the International Institute for Creative Entrepreneurship, reflects current thinking and practice in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education.

(ii)   QAA Scotland publishes annual report 2016-17

QAA Scotland has published its annual report, highlighting achievements and key events from 2016-17. The report includes details of the launch of the current Enhancement Theme - Evidence for Enhancement, as well as the revised review method in Scotland and Focus On: Institution-led Review and Postgraduate Student Experience projects.

AOCB

18.1   The Committee received the paper on non-academic prizes. The Committee were informed that the paper, which sets out criteria on which non-academic prizes should be awarded, followed discussion with the School Conveners and practice identified within the School of

Biological Sciences where students are awarded non-academic as well as academic awards for their contribution to the culture and community of the School.

18.2   The Committee noted the proposal that all Schools adopt this initiative and that it be recognised on the Enhanced Transcript.

18.3   Overall, the Committee was supportive of the proposal, however, requested that more specific process information be provided. The Committee noted that it may be worth engaging the Development Trust in the proposal.