

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

Minute of the Meeting held on 12 November 2020

*Present:* Ruth Taylor (Chair), John Barrow, Abbe Brown, Javier Gonzaelez Cuervos, Hazel Hutchison, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, Graeme Nixon and Kath Shennan with Rachael Bernard, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Gillian Mackintosh, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

*Apologies:* Tim Baker, Steve Tucker and Richard Wells

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER AND 14 OCTOBER 2020**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/001a and UCTL/121120/001b)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL).
- 1.2 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 7 October and 14 October 2020 as accurate representations of discussions held.

**MATTERS ARISING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/001c)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meetings of the Committee held on 7 October and 14 October 2020. All actions were noted as complete or in-progress. The clerk agreed to circulate a revised version of the action log to members of the Committee, for completeness.

**Action: Clerk**

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings. No specific concerns were raised with regards Health, Safety and Wellbeing and the meeting proceeded.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

**(i) UCTL Remit and Composition**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/002a)*

- 4.1 Members of the Committee noted the revised UCTL remit and composition for 2020/21. Members of the Committee were content to approve the remit and composition for use, subject to typographical revisions and the inclusion of the Recruitment Deans as members of the UCTL. The clerk agreed to circulate an updated version of the remit and composition of the Committee to members, for completeness.

**Action: Clerk**

**(ii) Proposed Education Committee Structure**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/002b)*

- 4.2 Members of the Committee received the paper on the revised Education Committee Structure. Members noted the revised structure, the renaming of the UCTL to the University

Education Committee (UEC) and the proposal that the UCTL's existing sub-committees be replaced with the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Student Support Committee (SSC) and Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EER). Members of the Committee noted that the UEC would remain a joint Committee of the Senate and Court, pending a review being undertaken by the Senate Effectiveness Review (SER) group.

- 4.3 The attention of members of the Committee was drawn to the aim of the paper and revised structure, to ensure robust communication in both directions, between the UEC and Schools. The Committee noted that the paper had been considered at a joint meeting of the Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Quality Assurance Committees. It was noted that feedback from this meeting would be incorporated into the paper prior to its consideration at the Senate. It was noted that this feedback included:

- Ensuring references to Postgraduate Taught were contained within the papers;
- The inclusion of a Planning representative on the SSC;
- That the remit of the UEC be amended to better reflect a commitment to Learning, Teaching and Assessment enhancement and innovation;
- The addition of a School Administration Manager (SAM) to the membership of the UEC.

It was further noted that the proposed structure, if approved for implementation, would be reviewed after around 12 months to ensure its effectiveness.

- 4.4 Overall, members of the Committees were content to support the proposals and to forward them to the SER and the Senate for further consideration. The following feedback for incorporation was received:

- The addition of the PGR Committee as a Committee with which the UEC will interact;
- Representation of the Graduate School on all sub-committees;
- The consideration of representatives of Alumni, Research and Innovation and the Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion on the EEC;
- With regard to School representation on the SSC, the addition of 'balanced representation' to ensure a balanced composition of personal tutors, PG leads, and SAMs;
- The amendment of the UEC remit to reflect the fact that the Committee also informs the work of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD).

**Action: Clerk**

#### **UPDATED RISK REGISTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/003)*

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received an updated version of an excerpt of the University's Risk Register, listing risks specific to Learning and Teaching. Members of the Committee noted that the Register had been updated by the Chair prior to its circulation. Members further noted an update to section 4.6 from Richard Wells, Vice-Principal (International Partnerships). Members of the Committee noted that this risk could be downgraded from critical to severe. The Committee noted that while greatly reduced, study abroad opportunities are in place for students, supply was currently outstripping demand, which is significantly reduced. It was noted that guidance in this regard had been issued to both students and go-abroad tutors.

- 5.2 The Committee agreed the addition of risks with regard to Academic Integrity and Placement Activity. Kath Shennan, Dean for Quality Enhancement and Assurance, and Tracey Innes, Head of the Careers and Employability Service, agreed to provide wording for these new risks.  
**Action: Kath Shennan/ Tracey Innes/Chair/Clerk**

#### **UPDATE ON THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/004)*

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received a paper providing an update on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). Members noted that work was underway to prepare guidance on blended learning for staff ahead of the second half-session. Members also noted that a pulse survey of students was underway, to gauge initial feedback on their satisfaction with blended learning. The Committee noted initial feedback indicated a 79% satisfaction rate.

#### **ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) UPDATE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/005)*

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on the University's progress with the recommendations arising from Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The Committee noted that some recommendations were now complete and embedded in practice, while others, such as those relating to External Examining and Partnership tracking remained ongoing.
- 7.2 With regard the ELIR recommendation seeking that the University '*reflect on the balance between institutional and School responsibilities for establishing and implementing policy and practice to assure itself that all those studying for a University of Aberdeen award have parity of experience*', the Committee acknowledged the recent work of the BLITFG and the consequent evident improvements in collaborative working, communications and adherence to consistency between Schools and the centre.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee acknowledged the importance of keeping activity under review, ahead of the next ELIR. The Committee agreed that an ELIR update should be brought to the UCTL on a biannual basis.

#### **QAC ANNUAL REPORT TO UCTL 2019/20**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/006)*

- 8.1 Members of the Committee received the annual update from the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). The Committee noted updates regarding External Examining (EE) and, in particular, positive responses from EEs regarding the No Detriment procedures, adopted as a consequence of the impact of Covid-19. Where criticisms had been made, the Committee acknowledged that these largely reflected the continued use of a dual classification system. Members agreed that this issue would be resolved following the conclusion of the academic year and the move to the Grade Point Average system, a single classification procedure.
- 8.2 Members of the Committee also received updates on Internal Teaching Review (ITR), Annual Course and Programme Review and QAC annual visits to Schools. The academic services team were thanked for their work in supporting the QAC over the course of the academic year.

## **LATE SUBMISSION PAPER**

*(copy filed as UCTL/121120/007)*

- 9.1 Members of the UCTL received the paper on the Unauthorised Late Submission of Work Policy. It was noted that an earlier version of the paper had been considered prior to the impact of Covid-19, however, its consideration had been put on hold as the University responded to the pandemic. Members of the Committee considered the paper and the options outlined within it, agreeing with the following proposals:
- The standard penalty of a two CGS point deduction up to 24h late and one CGS point deduction for each subsequent day, or part of a day, up to a maximum of 7 days late, beyond which G3 is awarded.
  - Weekends and holidays must be included in the count of number of days late
- 9.2 Members of the Committee agreed that the paper should proceed to the Senate for further consideration and approval.

**Action: Kath Shennan/Clerk**

## **QAA ENHANCEMENT THEME**

*(copy filed as UCTL/071020/008a and UCTL/071020/008b)*

- 10.1 Members of the Committee received the end of theme report as submitted to the QAA following the conclusion of the Enhancement Theme, *Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience*. Members of the Committee acknowledged the work of all those engaged in the theme and noted the planned transition between the old and new themes.
- 10.2 Members also received an update on initial work being undertaken on the new theme, *Building Resilient Learning Communities*. The Committee noted that the theme would be co- led by Steve Tucker and Ondrej Kucerak, with preparation of the Institutional Plan for the Enhancement Theme underway, with final submission to the QAA required by 14 December 2020.
- 10.3 Members of the Committee expressed the importance of the engagement of Schools and Professional Services with the theme. Members proposed the involvement of the International Deans in ensuring the international applicant and student voice can contribute to discussion.

## **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)**

- 11.1 Members of the Committee noted the updates on the National Student Survey (NSS).

## **POLICY ON INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

- 12.1 Members of the Committee received an initial draft of a proposed policy on Inclusion and Accessibility in Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Committee noted that consideration of the draft by other groups had resulted in significant feedback, which would be incorporated into a revised draft. The Committee expressed the importance of noting existing processes where the recommendations outlined in the paper could be met. The Committee agreed that a revised policy should be considered at the next Committee round.

**Action: Abbe Brown**

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 13.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 2pm by way of Microsoft Teams.

### **DEADLINE FOR THE RETURN OF POSTGRADUATE RESULTS**

- 14.1 Members of the Committee approved an amendment to the deadline for return of exam results as below:

Postgraduate Taught programmes by Friday 5 February 2021 (changed from 29 January 2021)

### **BLENDED LEARNING TASK AND FINISH GROUP (BLITFG)**

- 15.1 Members of the Committee noted the agendas and minutes of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG), available on the UCTL webpages [here](#).