UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 12 November 2019

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Tim Baker, Alison Jenkinson, Dariya Koleva, Ondrej Kucerak, Ekaterina Pavlovskaia, Bruce Scharlau, Kath Shennan and Steve Tucker, with Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Colin Duncan and Natalie Kinchin-Williams

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2018
(copy filed as UCTL/121119/001)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 18 September as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Committee noted that the actions arising from the meeting held on 12 December 2018 had been taken forward. In particular, the Committee noted that regarding the discussion held on the National Student Survey (NSS) results, a follow up meeting comprised of members of the Undergraduate Committee, Heads of School and School Administrative Officers had been held. It was agreed that the notes of this meeting should be circulated to the UCTL for information.
Action: Clerk
Clerk's Note: The notes of the meeting held on 21 October 2019 are attached as UCTL/121119/007

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

3.1 Regarding Health, Safety and Wellbeing, the Committee noted the redevelopment of the space on the ground floor of the Sir Duncan Rice Library, the aim of the which is to provide University students and staff with a space that supports their wellbeing, and to offer more opportunities for local communities to engage with the University.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION 2019/20
(copy filed UCTL/121119/002)

4.1 Members of the Committee received the Remit and Composition, last updated for the 2018/19 academic year. Members of the Committee noted the following points:

- That the composition of the Committee should be amended to reflect the change in the Dean structure and to reflect the appointment of the new education deans.
- The Committee discussed the appropriateness of the Dean for Recruitment being invited to attend meetings of the Committee. It was agreed that this proposal would be further discussed.
- It was noted that 'the Director of IT Services' should be amended to read 'the Director of Digital and Information Services'.
- It was proposed and agreed that Simon Bains, University Librarian, should be invited to attend the Committee.

- That consideration be given to the Committee's role in considering Transnational Education provision with a view to avoiding overlap with other University committees.

4.2   The Chair thanked members for their contribution. It was noted that the Remit and Composition would be taken away to allow the Chair to consider it and to reflect on it with colleagues. It was agreed that it would be helpful to the Committee as a whole for a document, mapping the remit to a calendar of Committee activity in order to reflect when the Committee addresses specific aspects of its remit..

Action: Chair/Clerk

PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SENATE TASK FORCES

5.1   The Committee received a presentation from the Chair of the Retention Task Force. A copy of the presentation is available as *UCTL/121119/008*. Following the presentation, a discussion amongst the Committee ensued. The main tenets of the discussion were as follows:

- Members of the Committee asked whether there was any evidence to suggest that QR codes, being used to monitor attendance, were being misused by students. The Committee heard that there was some anecdotal evidence of misuse, however, there is currently no clear evidence of misuse.
- Members of the Committee asked whether, in terms of QR codes, there were any plans to see if there were any barriers etc. to their use. Members of the Committee were reassured that initial barriers had now been largely overcome and that there were refresher sessions planned to remind the University community of the QRCode process.
- Members of the Committee queried the level of student engagement in the work of the Task Force. Members noted that there was student representation on the Task Force and that students had been heavily involved in each respective project.

5.2   The Committee received a joint presentation from the Chairs of the Assessment and Feedback and Positive Outcomes Task Forces. A copy of the presentation is available as *UCTL/121119/009*. Following the presentation, a discussion amongst the Committee ensued. The main tenets of the discussion were as follows:

- Some members of the Committee noted their support for the potential replacement of the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes. Members of the Committee did, however, express some concern as to the potential for Schools to have concerns abouta replacement for the Graduate Attributes, which are so heavily embedded in the curriculum.
- The Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the University does not take steps to replace the Graduate Attributes with a model which also requires extensive explanation. The Committee noted the importance of Employer consultation throughout in this regard.
- Members of the Committee acknowledged a funded small research project being undertaken by the Careers Service which could compliment this work and provide further information on transferrable skills.
- It was noted that the project would also be applicable to Postgraduate Research (PGR) students.
- Members of the Committee noted that no strategic decision had been take to date to replace the Graduate Attributes and therefore the awareness of the project of other

members of the University community, including the Principal and Senior Vice-Principal was unknown.

- It was agreed that the project would report back to the next meeting of the UCTL.

Action: Clerk

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE AND ELIR RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

6.1 The Committee received an update on the work of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the recommendation of the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) panel.

6.2 The Committee noted the following updates on the recommendations of the ELIR panel:

- **Institutional and School Responsibilities:** The Committee noted the recommendation to ensure appropriate balance between the University and School responsibilities. They noted the work being taken to improve consistency across the University, by way of the revisions to methods of Undergraduate Degree Classification and initial drafts of a Policy on Late Submission. Members of the Committee acknowledged the difficulties in ensuring consistency at Examiners Meetings, without a member of Registry staff present. The Committee noted capacity issues prevented this from being a possibility and that further discussion would take place.

Action: Chair and Rachael Bernard

- **Personal Tutoring:** The Committee noted the recommendation regarding personal tutors. Members of the Committee noted the recent recommendation to Schools that Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students be assigned personal tutors. The Committee proposed that focus groups be held to gauge student feedback on personal tutoring.

Action: Chair and Dean (Student Support)

- **Postgraduate Research School:** With regards to the Postgraduate Research School, the Committee acknowledged the work ongoing to better define the work of the School and to ensure supervisors undertake required training. The Committee were informed of the development of:
  - a mandatory training programme for supervisors and a requirement that retraining be undertaken every 5 years
  - an online supervisor handbook
  - masterclasses for those wishing to extend their knowledge
  - supervisor discussion groups.

  The Committee noted that the PGR School would keep a record of attendees and those engaging in the training provision but acknowledged that it was the responsibility of Heads of School to ensure adherence to the training requirements.

- **Preparation for Teaching:** Members of the Committee received an update on progress with regards to ensuring all staff and students with teaching responsibilities undertake the University's Learning and Teaching in Higher Education course, run by the Centre for Academic Development (CAD). The Committee noted that timelines for completion of the course would be reduced from within 3 years of joining the University to within 1 year. It was also noted that the CAD was working to produce a welcome email for all teaching staff, providing information on the course and associated teaching resources. The Committee noted that CAD planned to deliver the course in Qatar in 2020.

- **Review of Professional Services:** Members of the Committee noted that discussions around a review of Professional Services had stalled. The Chair agreed to discuss this recommendation in further detail with the Acting Director of Operations.

Action: Chair

- **External Examiners:** The Committee received an update on the amendment of External Examiners Reports to include a section for completion which would be made available online to students. The Committee noted work was also ongoing to improve the training provided to Examiners.
- **Collaborative Provision:** Finally, the Committee noted the recommendation regarding the maintenance of the Register of Partnerships and Collaborative Provision. The Committee acknowledged the appointment of new member of staff assisting with the quality assurance of Collaborative Provision and the maintenance of the University records in this regard.

6.3 The Committee received a short update on the work of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Members noted that forum meetings between the QAC and Schools were currently underway and that a report on these and other quality assurance activity would follow to the UCTL in the new year. The Committee noted that a working group on joint degrees had now been established.

LATE SUBMISSION PAPER

(copy filed as UCTL/121119/003)

7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on a proposed Late Submission of Work Policy, seeking to ensure consistency in the penalties incurred by students for the late submission of work, across the University. Members of the Committee noted that the paper had originated from discussions amongst members of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) who sought to ensure the equal treatment of students across all courses. The Committee were informed that the paper included information on the approaches taken by other Institutions and that the proposals sought to achieve a reasonable approach for adoption. Members noted that the paper was still in its early stages of development and that input was welcomed, particularly regarding issues such as the standard penalty issued and whether weekends should count as days for submission. It was noted that members of the QAC had agreed that a penalty of two CGS marks was too much.

7.2 Members of the Committee received feedback from the Undergraduate Committee (UGC) on the draft paper. It was noted that UGC were, in principle, happy with the policy. Detailed feedback received included:
- That the suggested maximum deadline be extended from 5 days to 7 days, to include the weekend;
- That further consideration be given to the point at which penalties are applied. It was noted that if the deadline for submission of a piece of assessment is Friday, consideration must be given to when a student submits over the weekend, whether they should be penalised;
- Concern over the award of a G3 (fail) where work is submitted after 10 days, particularly in scenarios where courses require a pass in both coursework and exam to ensure an overall pass;
- That feedback should be provided, despite late submission;
- The preference of the UGC that the standard penalty should be 1 CGS and not 2.

7.4 The Committee acknowledged concerns raised by the UGC regarding section 3 and the publication of definitions of mitigating circumstances. Members of the Committee noted feedback from the UGC that Student Support should be engaged in the drafting of this section. Concern was, in particular, raised as to the publication of what cannot be considered as mitigation and the definition and judgements around anxiety/low mood. The UGC proposed

the shortening of the list considerably and the cross-referencing of the policy with the Medical Absence Policy.

7.5 The Committee also noted feedback from the Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGT). It was acknowledged that the feedback from the PGTC was similar to that provided by the UGC. In addition, it was noted that the list in section 3 was sometimes contradictory and that debate had ensued over some of the detail of the list. Members of the Committee acknowledged the feeling of the PGTC that there was a real danger of publishing the list to students and that, once agreed, it should only be made available to special circumstances committees. It was noted that the list should be flexible and confirmed that this was the intention behind it.

7.6 Members of the Committee agreed that the paper should be amended with the feedback provided by the QAC, UGC and PGTC and forwarded to Senate (as a draft) for an academic view.

Action: Clerk/Kath Shennan
Clerk's Note: This paper will be considered by the Senate for an academic view at the meeting scheduled for 9 December.

LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS) UPDATE

8.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the imminent changes to the Library Management System (LMS). The Committee noted that the Library's existing five legacy systems would be replaced by one system, delivering many direct as well as hidden benefits to the University community. Members of the Committee acknowledged the complex undertaking of the project and the huge amount of time dedicated to it by members of Library staff. The Committee were informed of the improvements the new system would bring, including improved research capabilities, increased functionality digitalised systems, a reading list system and better integrated functionality for special collections. The Committee further noted that the system was Cloud based, allowing for a more useful, secure and easier-to-use system. Members of the Committee were informed that the system would go live at the beginning of January 2020 and that work was moving quickly in order to hit the deadline. The Committee acknowledged that the system may allow for functionality in the context of the learning analytics agenda. It was noted that a communication strategy, to inform the wider University community of the change was ongoing.

Clerk's Note: Slides to accompany the update on the LMS are attached as UCTL/121119/010

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 15 January 2020 at 2pm, in Committee Room 2, University Office.

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT (DOHA CAMPUS)
(copy filed as UCTL/121119/004)

10.1 Members of the Committee noted the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) report on the Doha, Qatar Campus (February 2019), as considered by the Committee by way of circulation.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE: MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY
(copy filed as UCTL/121119/005)

10.2 Members of the Committee noted the changes to the Fitness to Practise Policy and associated documentation. These changes primarily concern Fitness to Practise with the School of

Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition and were approved by the Committee by way of circulation.

LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS
(copy filed as UCTL/121119/006)

10.3   Members of the Committee noted the Latest Dates for the Return of Examination Results, approved by the Committee by way of circulation.