

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 22 October 2014

Present: Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr B Connolly, Dr S Davies, Mr C Duncan, Mr P Fantom, Mr R Henthorn, Dr C Kee, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Masthoff, Mr D Philips, Dr K Shennan, Ms P Spence, Dr R Wells, Ms K Christie, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary)

Apologies: Ms E Beaver

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2014

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/001)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 May 2014. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/002)

- 2.1 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the UCTL for academic year 2014/15 subject to the following amendments:

- The inclusion of the MyAberdeen Steering Group as a sub-committee of the UCTL
- The removal of 'Ms E Dunn' and replacement with 'Ms E Beaver'

Action: Clerk

HEALTH & SAFETY

- 3.1 The Committee noted the following update on Health and Safety with regards to Teaching and Learning:

There were **ten** accidents reported in 2013/14 involving **undergraduate** students which occurred during teaching/learning.

- Four of the accidents occurred in the Clinical Skills Centre at the Suttie Centre and were needlestick injuries in a simulated clinical environment – no risk from blood borne viruses.
- A student studying anatomy in the Suttie Centre received a minor cut to thumb from a scalpel blade.
- There were two accidents in the CLSM Teaching Facility - a cut finger from a scalpel while dissecting fish and a spillage of a dilute chemical onto clothing.
- There were three accidents reported from Chemistry practicals: Two were cuts from broken glassware and one was a minor burn from hydrogen peroxide which was on the side of a reagent bottle.

All of the incidents required only first aid or self-treatment by the student concerned. None require hospital attendance or other medical attention and none resulted in absence from studies.

There were **nine** accidents reported in 2013/14 involving **postgraduate** students which occurred during teaching/learning.

- Biological Sciences - Superglue on hands – picked up broken ice scoop which person unknown had tried to repair And left covered in glue
- IMS – needlestick in lab while trying to recap needle
- IMS – splash to eye while cleaning lab equipment
- IMS – cut to thumb while using scissors
- IMS – rubbed eye with contaminated glove in lab – no apparent injury
- Chemistry – picked up bottle of hazardous chemical which was leaking – no apparent injury
- Geosciences – splash of caustic soda to face – minor injury
- Geosciences - cut finger from broken glass rod.
- Rowett – Arm splashed with hot gel when bottle broke – minor burn

None of the injuries was serious and none resulted in time lost from studies.

- 3.2 The Committee agreed that, in recognition of a student population of approximately 16 000, the figures were encouraging, however, the Committee wished to ensure safety procedures across the University were strongly enforced and that all students were reminded of these.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/003 and UCTL/221014/003a)

- 4.1 The Committee noted the draft paper on the Student Experience ahead of its submission to Senate. The Committee noted the different approach taken to the paper for the 2014 year and were supportive of the switch to the consideration of data at a School rather than Institutional level. Members of the Committee were very positive in their response to this approach, acknowledging that Institutional data can often mask the true picture seen at School level.
- 4.2 The Committee also noted the change in the way retention data was recorded. Whilst previously these had only ever been presented as an annual figure, the Committee noted that as HESA require different calculations, this should be acknowledged and represented in the paper. Members of the Committee were supportive of this.
- 4.3 The Committee noted the importance of recognising key projects, particularly those of good practice, in the executive summary. The Committee agreed that there are many good initiatives throughout the University which should be both recognised and shared.
- 4.4 Members of the Committee acknowledged the section on proposed actions had yet to be finalised, however, were supportive of the proposal to create project groups for each of the key areas requiring focus, including retention, feedback and positive outcomes. The Committee acknowledged that each focus group would report to UCTL.
- 4.5 The Committee suggested that the report could include more data regarding the Postgraduate Student Experience. The Heads of Graduate School agreed to forward data for inclusion to the Convener.

Action: Heads of Graduate School

- 4.6 The Committee agreed that the report, subject to some amendments, should be presented to Senate. The Committee noted it may be helpful to pose questions of Senate to allow for specific discussion points.

Action: Convener

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW – AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/004)

- 5.1 The Committee noted that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) would visit the University on Monday 27 October for the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review annual meeting. In advance of this, the Committee noted the paper on Areas for Development and the six key areas for consideration.
- 5.2 Members of the Committee suggested the following in regard to the development of these points:
- i. **Evaluating Success of Initiatives**
The Committee acknowledged the difficulty in evaluating initiatives, such as Curriculum Reform, too early in their implementation. While noting the importance of identifying how evaluation should take place, the Committee agreed that to do so too early would not provide fair or measurable data.
 - ii. **Support for a More Diverse Student Population**
The Committee queried whether it would be possible to gather information, such as that on retention, for part time students.
 - iii. **Pace of Responding**
The Committee acknowledged that some steps were already being taken across the University to address this point, including looking at the process for feedback to External Examiners. The Committee agreed that, particularly in light of changes to the academic year, deadlines should be considered and moved where possible to improve response times.
 - iv. **Strengthening the Links between Assurance and Enhancement**
The Committee raised no specific points relating to this.
 - v. **Availability of Information**
The Committee noted that Policy, Planning and Governance had been made aware of this specific point in recognition of their wider Committee review. The Committee noted the importance of good practice in the consistency of approach to minutes to help enable their usability.
 - vi. **Detailed Use of External Reference Points**
The Committee agreed that this point was somewhat difficult to address. The committee agreed that consideration be given to where in the SENAS process this should be validated.

CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/005)

- 6.1 The Committee noted the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) Annual Report for 2013/14. The Committee commended the impressive nature of the work being undertaken by the Centre which was highlighted in the report.
- 6.2 The Committee acknowledged the importance of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Professional Standards Framework (PSF) and requested that this section be expanded upon.
- 6.3 The Committee noted that the report would be made available online and at College Teaching and Learning Committees. In addition to this, the Committee agreed that the report should be widely disseminated in hard copy version throughout the University to raise awareness of the work being undertaken by the CAD and in doing so, highlight good practice.

Action: PS

CAREERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/005b)

- 6.4 The Committee also noted the Careers Service Annual Report for 2013/14. The Committee noted the positive work being undertaken by the Service and the high level of interactions with the student population.
- 6.5 The Committee noted the decrease in students continuing to postgraduate study. While acknowledging this as a sector wide issue, the Committee noted the importance of postgraduate recruitment and initiatives to help drive an increase in recruitment amongst existing undergraduate students.
- 6.6 The Committee specifically discussed the alumni discount offered to graduates of the University undertaking postgraduate study. The Committee agreed that the prevalence of this should be highlighted to students.
- 6.7 As with the CAD report, the Committee agreed that Careers report should be widely disseminated in hard copy version throughout the University to raise awareness of the work being undertaken by the Careers Service and in doing so, highlight good practice.

Action: PF and Heads of Graduate School

PROPOSALS FOR SIXTH CENTURY COURSES AND SUSTAINED STUDY PROGRAMMES

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/006 and UCTL/221014/006a)

- 7.1 The Committee considered two new Sixth Century course proposals in addition to two new Sustained Study routes. The Committee agreed the following outcomes:
 - i. **Sixth Century Course: Logic, Language and Information**
The Committee noted the proposal for a new level 1 sixth century course. The Committee noted some concern as to the level of involvement of one staff member and suggested that this be reviewed. The Committee approved the proposal in principle, requesting that the appropriate SENAS proposal form now be submitted.
 - ii. **Sixth Century Course: Global Issues, Global Religion**

The Committee noted the proposal for a second new level 1 sixth century course. The Committee approved the proposal in principle, requesting that the appropriate SENAS proposal form now be submitted.

iii. Sustained Study Route: History and Philosophy of Science

The Committee noted the proposal for a new sustained study route in the History and Philosophy of Science. The Committee noted some concern in the timetable impact of such a proposal, where little knowledge of the market for the route existed. The Committee requested further information to this effect, and including that of the success of courses of this nature run elsewhere, before approval would be granted.

iv. Sustained Study Route: Ethics in Public Life

The Committee noted the second proposal for a new sustained study route in Ethics in Public Life. The Committee noted some concern in the timetable impact of such a proposal, where little knowledge of the market for the route existed. The Committee requested further information to this effect, and including that of the success of courses of this nature run elsewhere, before approval would be granted.

Action: Clerk

UPDATE FROM COLLEGES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON GRADING SCALE

- 8.1 As a consequence of an earlier meeting on this issue, the Committee agreed to revisit the implantation of the Common Grading Scale at a later date.

ACADEMIC FLEXIBILITY FOR ELITE/HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORTS

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/007)

- 9.1 The Committee noted the paper on Academic Flexibility for Elite/High Performance Sports. The Committee acknowledged that the paper had been considered by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees and Heads of School who had all been positive to its endorsement.
- 9.2 The Committee agreed that, in taking forward the proposal's implementation, consideration be given to widening the recommendations contained within the proposal to other areas such as that of gifted musicians. An implementation programme, to include all elite activities, will be considered at a future meeting.

Action: Clerk

PROGRESSION INTO HONOURS

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/008)

- 10.1 The Committee noted the paper Progression into Honours. The Committee acknowledged that the paper had been considered by the Senior Management Team and Heads of School who had viewed the proposal positively. Proposals on the details of implementation will be considered at a future meeting.
- 10.2 The Committee approved the proposals as laid out in the paper, noting that there may on occasion be exceptions to the rules, such as that of Integrated Masters programmes. The Committee agreed that where exceptions exist, these should be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Committee for approval. The Committee agreed that exceptions should be dealt with in as streamlined a manner as possible.

STUDY ABROAD

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/009)

- 11.1 The Committee recognised the ongoing issue of students not taking the opportunity to study abroad. The Committee agreed that in order to ensure students have the opportunity to do so, and in order to meet Government targets of 20% of the student population studying abroad, the University should, where possible, remove all barriers which may prevent a student from doing so.
- 11.2 The Committee agreed with the proposal as laid out in the paper to ensure students at Level 3 are not discouraged from going abroad. In order to ensure this is as streamlined as possible, the Committee were also supportive of the initiative that students will automatically receive full credit (i.e. 120 credit points) for a year spent abroad, if all courses have been passed.
- 11.3 The Committee noted that a decrease in the number of partners with whom the University works, may allow for stronger working relationships.
- 11.4 The Committee noted that Heads of School discussed the proposal at their meeting on 15 October and their feedback on the issue would be fed into further discussion of the proposal at the next meeting. The Committee also agreed that no grade barrier (other than that of a pass) should apply for students wishing to undertake a period of study abroad, and that if concerns exist as to whether a student should be undertaking time abroad, these should be addressed at interview.

RISK REGISTERS

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/010a and UCTL/221014/010b)

- 12.1 The Committee noted the risk register as circulated. The Committee acknowledged a query raised by the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) with regard to the section on 'Failure to Meet Student Expectations'. While noting the current figure as 12, the SAC had noted that the reliance of projects that were very much 'long term' should result in a higher score. Following discussion, the Committee agreed with the SAC and agreed to raise the likelihood score to 4, thus raising the overall score for this section to 16.
- 12.2 The Committee agreed to return all further comments on the Risk Register to Academic Services.

Action: Committee and Clerk

UPDATE ON REVIEW OF QUALITY IN SCOTLAND

- 13.1 The Committee postponed the consideration of this item of the agenda.

MINUTES AND UPDATE REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/011)

- 14.1 The Committee were issued copies of the minutes of the meetings of each of the sub-committees. No further issues were raised.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- 15.1 The next meetings will be held as follows:

Wednesday 21 January 2015 in the Court Room

Wednesday 13 May 2015 in the Court Room

AMENDMENT TO DATES OF TERM

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/012)

- 16.1 The Committee noted that, following the change in the academic year, the first half-session no longer starts on the Aberdeen Local holiday. The Committee approved the proposal that, from 2015/16, the start of first half-session should change to be Monday. The Committee further noted the Dates of Term to 2024/25, revised to take account of this change.

SUBMISSION DATES FOR SUMMARY ANNUAL COURSE REVIEW REPORTS

- 16.2 In light of the new academic year timetable, the Committee approved the dates for the submission of Annual Course Review Discipline Summary Reports. The Committee approved the proposal that summary reports are submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee on or before 28 February 2015 for first half-session reviews and 30 June 2015 for second half-session reviews.

RENEWAL OF THE ACCREDITATION AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH DEGREES WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/013)

- 16.3 The Committee noted the contents of the Final Report and the Panel's recommendations, in addition to those of the QAC. The Committee approved the recommendation of the QAC that UHI research degrees should be accredited by the University of Aberdeen for a period of a further 5 years.

DATES OF RESIT EXAMINATIONS 2014/15

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/014)

- 16.4 The Committee approved the dates for the summer resit diet: resits will take place from 27 June 2015 for a two week period, with the corresponding deadline for the return of marks being 24 July 2015.

Action: Clerk

LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS IN MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/014a)

- 16.5 The Committee approved the dates for the summer resit diet for students within the School of Medicine and Dentistry.

LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF JANUARY START POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMME RESULTS

- 16.6 The Committee approved the date for the return of January Start Postgraduate Taught programme results as 31 January 2015.

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE

- 17.1 The Committee was reminded that work is underway to consult on the development on the new Strategic Plan. Please see www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/strategic-planning/index.php.

GRADUATION DATES

- 17.2 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

Thursday 27 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Language & Literature, Social Science and Law.

Thursday 27 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School, Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy and Education.

Friday 28 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Geosciences, Engineering and Natural & Computing Sciences.

Friday 28 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Psychology, Medical Sciences, Medicine & Dentistry and Biological Sciences.

STANDARD TERMS GOVERNING OFFERS – POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

(copy filed as UCTL/221014/015)

- 17.3 The Committee noted the Standard Terms Governing Offers – Postgraduate Admissions approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer.