UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 1 October 2024

Present: Jo-Anne Murray (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Julie Bray, Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Jacqui Hutchison (in place of Helen Knight), Ken Jeffrey, Kirsty Kiezebrink, David McCausland, Stuart Piertney, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Miles Roetherl, Steve Tucker, Asha Venkatesh and Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Scott Carle, Robin Cummins, Nick Edwards, Isabella Fausti, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Rhona Moore, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton and Emma Tough (Clerk) and Morag MacRae (Minute Secretary) in attendance

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Nigel Beacham, Alison Jenkinson, Colin Lumsden, John Mynott, Michelle Pinard, Anne-Michelle Slater, Debbie Dyker and Ian Robotham.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MAY 2024

(copy filed as UEC/011024/001)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC), including members who were new to the Committee. Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 13 May 2024 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

(copy filed as UEC/011024/002)

2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 13 May 2024 as follows:

(i) The Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship reported that the name of Induction, Transition and Employability Week had changed to Get Set Week for new students. The name of Welcome Week remains the same for returning students, and there are now two streams of communications for new students and returning students.

(ii) The Dean for Student Support reported that training on the new institutional Extensions policy had not yet been completed, but there were plans to provide bespoke training in response to specific feedback from Schools. He also stated that the non-continuation data had been fed back to the Directorate of Planning.

(iii) The Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement reported that the action referring to the Marking and Moderation policy was now complete. He also reported that the action regarding the involvement of Library Services in the Internal Teaching Review process would be discussed as part of a wider conversation surrounding ITR.

(iv) The new Vice President for Education reported that the Students Association was currently in the process of electing the Student Education Committee, and as such it was not yet in place.

THE TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK (TQEF) AND THE TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (TQER)

3.1 Members of the UEC heard a presentation from the Dean for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement on the updated quality arrangements for Scotland. The presentation detailed the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and its six principles, as well as the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and the requirements thereof.

3.2 Members queried the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process, and to what extent Schools could input into that aspect of activity. The Dean responded that the Schools' experiences of ITR would be positively received. Members also mused that the closer relationship between universities and colleges should improve widening access targets. It was remarked that the Student Recruitment and Admissions team are successful at enabling students to start their University career, but that less focus was placed on their degree award. Conversations had taken place with the Directorate of Planning, but it was suggested that members of School staff needed to speak to the Directorate to ascertain how useful information for School use could be obtained. ***Action: S Tucker***

3.3 It was reported by the Clerk that discussion was ongoing surrounding the policy update schedule, and that Academic Services would need to reflect on it in terms of individual Schools.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2024 RESULTS

(copy filed as UEC/011024/003)

4.1 The Dean for Student Support provided a summary of the paper on the National Student Survey (NSS) results and related information. The Chair congratulated everyone on the Schools' recent successes and noted that there was a need to consider the forthcoming academic year. The Dean reported that only key people had access to the NSS information, but other staff could be granted access should they require it.

4.2 Members of the Committee discussed the results, with the following queries being raised:

(i) It was questioned whether the University could provide an AI-generated summary of the data, and additionally some Schools requested an unredacted version of the comments made. It was reported that the University could only undertake this in-house, not through an AI tool freely available on the web. There were also concerns about the Planning process, and GDPR implications for the University.

(ii) A concern was raised regarding joint degrees, and the potential confusion of data with no discipline being mentioned.

(iii) It was noted that concerns were raised about the feedback-related scores, and the number of assessments which do not provide quality feedback to suggest ways in which students can improve. The Marking and Moderation procedures should go some way to negate this issue.

(iv) It was also commented that there may be EDI implications on providing actionable feedback, such as staff or student neurodiversity.

GRADUATE OUTCOMES

(copy filed as UEC/011024/004)

5.1 The Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship gave a summary of the paper on Graduate Outcomes. He outlined the main highlights of the document, which detailed whether graduates of the University were reported to be undertaking further study or in employment.

5.2 It was commented that the University needs to further consider the international student experience, as there is a 4.9% disparity between UK domiciled students versus non-UK domiciled students. It was ascertained that within the UK, there were likely more responses given due to measures taken (e.g. phone calls) that would not happen if the student were living abroad. Nevertheless, the Committee noted that the University needs to support our international graduates. It was suggested that the Committee would be grateful to see the response rates breakdown from the Directorate of Planning. ***Action: J Barrow***

ONLINE EDUCATION

(copy filed as UEC/011024/005)

6.1 The Chair gave a summary of the paper on the proposed strategy for online education. She outlined the main facets of the proposal, and the expansion of Online Education including the use of satellite campuses in target market countries.

6.2 Members of the Committee discussed the proposal, with the following queries being raised:

(i) It was commented that it was equally important that the online student experience is of a high standard, in comparison with the on-campus experience, in terms of Students' Association involvement and opportunities to be a class representative.

(ii) It was queried whether the use of a satellite campus was a common model for online education. The Chair responded that the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions had experience of employing satellite campuses, but that it was key to work with Schools to determine what is a successful approach.

(iii) It was asked whether there had been any consideration of potential EDI implications, and it was noted that the postgraduate research student experience may suffer most severely due to visa restrictions. It was also commented that the language used was important, as postgraduate researchers are distance learners, whereas postgraduate taught are online learners. The Chair noted that the issue of postgraduate research distance learning would be kept under close monitoring.

SECTOR UPDATES/RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/011024/006)

7.1 The oral updates on the Higher Education sector, along with the Risk Register, are to be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

GRADES JOURNEY: TRANSPARENCY AND ENHANCING THE RETURN OF GRADES TO SRS

(copy filed as UEC/011024/007)

8.1 The Dean for Educational Innovation provided a summary of the paper on the Grades Journey, and the related enhancement of returning the grades awarded to the Student Records System (SRS).

8.2 There was general support for the paper and its contents, although there was some objection to the terminology of use of the word "grade" versus "mark". The reason for not displaying the component grades of assessment on MyAberdeen was queried, with the final overall grade being available through the Student Hub portal. It was also commented that the University should stop grading out of 22 as it leads to miscalculations by students. The Dean noted the comments and told the Committee she would investigate.

Action: K Kiezebrink/ S Preston

8.3 It was noted that all comments would be required by 22 October 2024.

Action: Directors of Education

REPORT AND REQUEST TOOL OF USE WITH MONITORING AND EXTENSION REQUESTS;

COMPUTER ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP;

MYSKILLS ENGAGEMENT

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM POLICY

(copy filed as UEC/130524/009)

9.1 These oral items are to be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee. The paper on Sustainability in the Curriculum Policy is to be approved by way of circulation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 5 November at 1:05pm in the Court Room, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.