UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 20 November 2024

Present: Jo-Anne Murray (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Nigel Beacham, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Sandie Cleland (in place of Helen Knight), Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Colin Lumsden, David McCausland, John Mynott, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Miles Roetherl, Asha Venkatesh and Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Robin Cummins, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Rhona Moore, Sara Preston, Ian Robotham, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Emma Tough and Isabella Fausti (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Debbie Dyker, Nick Edwards, Ken Jeffrey, Helen Knight, Anne-Michelle Slater, and Steve Tucker.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2024
(copy filed as UEC/201124/001)

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. The Chair thanked members for their patience as the meeting was rescheduled and emphasised that feedback is always welcome from members. Members considered the minute of the meeting held on 1 October 2024 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS
(copy filed as UEC/201124/002)

2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 1 October 2024 as follows:

   (i) The Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability reported that the action relating to the response rates breakdown on the Graduate Outcomes was in progress.
   (ii) The AUSA VP Education reported that sufficient reassurance has been provided to students with regards to the Marking and Moderation policy so the action can now be considered complete.

MICROCREDENTIAL DIGITAL BADGES: MILESTONE PILOT
(copy filed as UEC/201124/003)

3.1 Members of the UEC heard a presentation from the Dean for Employability on acquiring Milestone, a platform provided by Anthology for awarding microcredential digital badges, for a year. The proposal had been previously considered by the Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, where it was approved unanimously. If approved at UEC, the proposal will be brought to the Digital Strategy Committee next.

3.2 Beyond the initial first year, and if the pilot is successful, the platform would be included in the already existing contract with Anthology for Blackboard Learn. In addition, it was proposed to adapt the current project board for the Training and Documentation Manager to also include Milestone.

3.3   Members of the Committee discussed the proposals, with the following points being raised:
- Use with the bespoke VLEs: students in programmes that use bespoke VLEs would not be precluded from using Milestone, but the implementation details require further discussion and planning.
- At the moment, the plan is for this platform to be used for co-curricular activities and to showcase skills developed, including go abroad and international experiences. There are currently no plans to integrate the platform into curricular activities, unless specific Schools or programmes identify areas where microcredential digital badges would prove valuable without significantly increasing workloads.
- One query related to the potential use of the platform for highlighting skills developed through extra-curricular activities, such as part-time jobs or sports clubs. It was noted that this would be very beneficial, but that further discussion would be needed to determine its practical application. The reflection and articulation of skills gained from part-time work would require some form of verification, which the careers team would be available to facilitate.
- There was also a brief discussion about where the funding identified would come from.

3.4   The Chair noted a concern shared by a member of UEC relating to the lack of transparency of the Digital Strategy Committee, and agreed that further discussions would take place outside of UEC to ensure greater transparency. It was also noted that all University staff can attend the Digital Strategy Forum, which is used for engagement and dissemination of current institutional priorities and projects in this area. Additionally, it was suggested that further discussions occur outside this meeting to determine the appropriate sequence for submitting papers (whether UEC should approve them before DSC, or vice versa) (**Action: Chair and IR**).

3.5   Following the discussion, UEC members agreed to approve the pilot.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) OPTIONS
(copy filed as UEC/201124/004)

4.1   The Dean for Student Support provided an overview of the National Student Survey (NSS) options and key dates for next cycle. One of the tasks to complete by 29 November was to check the lists of student contact details. The Dean informed UEC members that School Leads (SAMs and DoEs) would be contacted by Planning soon.

4.2   A UEC member requested last year's employability data to be provided broken down by questions and Schools, rather than just amalgamated (**Action: JBo**).

4.3   A discussion ensued on the importance of the National Student Survey, with the Chair thanking to everyone who attended the NSS Results & Actions workshop.

4.4   Members of UEC approved the options for the NSS 2025.

ACADEMIC STUDENT SURVEY SEASON
(copy filed as UEC/201124/005)

5.1   Members of the UEC heard an overview of the Survey Season, which takes place during Term 2 and comprises the National Student Survey (NSS), the Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and the Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES). During this period no other large-scale educational surveys are allowed to take

place. The UEC heard the current plans for promoting the surveys – include school stories of how feedback has been acted on. Use ezine and blackboard for promotion.

5.2   A discussion ensued, with the following points being raised:
- It was emphasised that PTES and PRES should be given equal importance as the NSS. This includes presenting a report on these surveys at a UEC meeting to enhance their visibility. Additionally, it was suggested that more time be dedicated to considering how the data from these surveys can be used to inform action plans and other strategic initiatives.
- A suggestion to run PRES every two years instead of annually was discussed, with both advantages and disadvantages being considered.
- It was proposed to work more closely with the Planning Directorate to ensure that the data from these surveys is made available at a granular level and in a useable format.
- The idea of having a single action plan to simplify processes was considered favourably by both academic and administrative members. The Chair noted this suggestion for further consideration.
- It was also discussed whether students are being asked to provide too much feedback.

SECTOR UPDATES

6.1   The Chair briefly mentioned the rise of tuition fees in England. Discussions are ongoing on the impact on the Scottish Sector.

6.2   The Chair asked UEC members to provide feedback on the way committee agendas, minutes and papers are shared in order to improve the transparency. Inconsistencies were highlighted between processes in different committees and the need for everyone to use one single system was emphasised. It was suggested that leveraging the staff intranet could enhance accessibility and visibility of these documents within the university community while ensuring these are protected by a staff login so that they cannot be accessed by the general public (**Action: Chair**).

RISK REGISTER
(copy filed as UEC/201124/006)
7.1   It was noted that attendance and engagement has not been monitored at the Doha campus this Term due to limited staffing.

UPDATE ON PGT PORTFOLIO REVIEW

8.1   The Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development provided an update on the PgT Portfolio review, following meetings with all twelve Schools. The need to promote best practices and the PgT Portfolio was noted. The UEC acknowledged that the PMC process is currently being streamlined and colleagues were invited to volunteer for the role of DoE representative on the PMC committee. A paper with these updates will be circulated (**Action: JMy**).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1   Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 1:05pm in the Court Room, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.