UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 9 March 2021

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Alfred Akisanya, Lyn Batchelor, John Barrow, Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Hazel Hutchison, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, David McCausland, Colin North, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Kath Shennan, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker and Russell Williams with Tracey Innes, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Gillian Mackintosh, Pamela Maclean, Fiona Ritchie, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Leigh Bjorkvoll, Julie Bray, Liz Curtis, Javier Gonzaelez Cuervos, Malcolm Harvey, Gerry Hough, Alison Jenkinson, Tim Mighall, David Muirhead, Graeme Nixon, Richard Wells, Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard and Sarah Duncan

BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN
(copy filed as UCTL/140421/001)

1.1   The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and representatives of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). Members of the Committee noted that this would be the last meeting of the UCTL, ahead of its replacement with the University Education Committee (UEC).

1.2   Members of the Committee noted the updated Blended Implementation Action Plan and acknowledged that further actions had been closed since last consideration. Members of the Committee noted the following points regarding actions which remained open:
- **Item 4.1:** Guidance for staff on assessment had now been finalised and circulated to BLITFG leads and School Administration Managers (SAMs). The Committee noted that the guidance would shortly be made available online.
- **Item 4.2:** Work regarding academic integrity remained ongoing, with further updates to web resources in this regard to follow. Members of the Committee agreed that an update on academic integrity should follow to the UEC. It was agreed that, as part of this work, further work should take place on the training of students in avoiding plagiarism.

Action: Clerk/KS
- **Item 5.2:** Evaluation remained ongoing, with further updates on progress in this regard to follow to the UEC.

Action: Clerk/KK
- **Item 9.**2: Minute point 2.1 below further refers.

1.3   The Committee agreed that the BLITFG Action Plan should now be closed, with outstanding or ongoing actions integrated into the work of the UEC and its sub-committees. Members of the Committee issued their thanks to Pam Maclean, Project Manager, for her work in project managing the BLITFG and the UCTL in the actions associated with Blended Learning.

CAPTIONING UPDATE

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee received the paper on captioning, providing an update on the work of the short term Captioning Working Group, set up to identify options for captioning support in the 2021/22 academic year, and to identify options and potential direction for captioning in the longer term. Members of the Committee noted that in the second half session of the 2020/21 academic year, 13,100 videos were created, 56% of which had captions (edited or unedited), an improvement on the first half session (37%). Members noted the importance of maintaining this upward trajectory and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

2.2   Members of the Committee noted concern with regard section 4.5 of the paper and the excerpt from the JISC guidance provided, 'Captions that are accurate are compliant. Captions that have not been checked and that contain mistakes are not'. The Committee noted that the University had not required the checking of captions and to ask to do so would have a significant impact on staff. Members acknowledged the importance of ensuring accurate guidance was available for staff and agreed that this issue should be further discussed between Digital and Information Services and other relevant parties. An update would be provided to the next UEC.

Action: PM/AB

2.3   Overall, the Committee were content to paper, its recommendations, and the approaches to be utilised going forward. The Committee agreed that, under the revised Education Committee structure, captioning would fall under the remit of the Student Support Committee (SSC) and reported to UEC.

PLANNING FOR AY2021/22

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/003)

3.1   Members of the Committee received the paper on 'Principles and Planning Assumptions' in respect of the teaching learning and assessment of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in the 2021/22 academic year. It was noted that the paper sought to bring together outcomes of a scoping exercise, conducted at a high level with each School, and current knowledge of the external context to recommend a number of planning assumptions. Members of the Committee noted that the assumptions provided were high-level and would be underpinned by detailed planning at University-level, and through Schools and Professional Services.

3.2   Members of the Committee noted that the paper provided was being consulted on widely, prior to its consideration by the Senate on 12 May. The Committee acknowledged the need to begin planning for the 2021/22 academic year as soon as possible. The attention of Committee members was drawn to the proposal contained within the paper to amend the January 2022 term dates.

3.3   Members of the Committee discussed the definition of 'small' in relation to teaching events and whether it would be possible to provide lectures on campus. The Committee noted that it was not yet possible to further define references to 'small' and that regulations around physical distancing would inform room, and therefore teaching event, capacity. It was suggested by a member of the Committee, that the spirit of the message provided to students

should be that lectures will be held on campus where possible. This feedback will be considered in developing the final set of planning assumptions for Senate.

3.4   Members of the Committee sought clarification as to what extent of distancing the preparation of a teaching timetable would be based upon. The Committee was informed that timetabling would be based on 1+ metre distancing. Members of the Committee noted that some planning for a 2 metre 'backup' timetable will be undertaken, should the University need to revert to such a model. However, for short-term increases in restrictions, or restrictions that come into play part way through the first half-session, it is proposed that teaching would revert to being fully online due to the complexities of the timetable and the process for student course choice.

3.5   Further points discussed by members of the Committee included:
- The prioritisation of resources, members of the Committee noted that computer classrooms may be significantly constrained for on-campus delivery;
- Ensuring appropriate signage and pathways for entry and exit from a room are provided;
- The proposal that the term 'alternative assessment' be removed;
- Ensuring that a proposed reduction in assessment is appropriate;
- The introduction of a communities strand to the proposals;
- That, following feedback from staff, training on teaching in a physically distanced room would be provided.

It was agreed that all points would be considered in developing the final set of planning assumptions.

Action: Chair/GM

TRANSITION FOR NEW AND RETURNING STUDENTS AY2021/22

4.1   Members of the Committee received the Universities Scotland paper, on Supporting New and Continuing Students *(copy filed as UCTL/140421/004a)* in addition to a paper on the University's approach to The Transition of Existing Students *(copy filed as UCTL/140421/004b)*. The Committee received an update from the Dean for Student Support on the proactive work ongoing to engage returning students, including work around communication, orientation, web resources and in-person support. The Committee endorsed the work ongoing in this regard. Members were invited to approach the Dean for Student Support or Welcome Week colleagues with any further comments or suggestions.

<u>TEACHING AND LEARNING</u>

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2021
(copy filed as UCTL/140421/005)

5.1   Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING
(copy filed as UCTL/140421/006)

6.1   Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2021. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress.

6.2   The Chair provided a brief update on Aberdeen 2040, noting that work to establish overall 4-year objectives for each of the Commitments, and high level actions for prioritisation in 2021/22 was underway and that further information on this work related to Education would follow to the Committee for further discussion.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

7.1   Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings, available [here](#). No further issues regarding Health, Safety and Wellbeing were raised.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/007)

8.1   Members of the Committee received the update on the Education Committee Structure, following approval of changes by the University Court. Members of the Committee acknowledged that the UCTL and its sub-committees would be replaced by the UEC and its sub-committees with immediate effect. Members of the Committee noted that work to implement the revised structure was underway. The Chair and the Committee as a whole recorded their thanks to all those who had been engaged in the work of the UCTL and its various sub-Committees.

Action: Chair/Clerk

ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL) POLICY

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/008)

9.1   Members of the Committee received the paper, proposing an amendment to the existing University policy for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) to include more detail on the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). The Committee noted that the change to the policy had followed a request from an applicant to recognise APEL and, on this basis, allow entry to a degree programme. Members of the Committee were advised that while existing, established processes to recognise certified learning were largely straightforward and managed by Admissions/Admissions Selectors, recognising experiential learning was more difficult and would require more School level/programme level engagement. Members of the Committee noted that the paper would be amended slightly before its progression to Senate, to respond to requests for clarification and to include an additional flowchart.

9.2   Members of the Committee noted that work to establish an appropriate fee for the consideration of APEL was ongoing. Members noted that while charging a fee was appropriate, given the work the University would need to undertake in the consideration of APEL, such charges should be in line with the sector. Members of the Committee agreed that consideration should be given to fee discounts for applicants from partner organisations, such as the NHS. Members of the Committee agreed to the approval of the revised policy, subject to the amendments discussed.

Action: KS/GM/RB

ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT UPDATE

10.1   Members of the Committee received the following proposals for initiatives to be added to the Enhanced Transcript as recognised activities from September 2020:

(i)	Green Champion	(*copy filed as UCTL/140421/009a*)
(ii)	S4S Mentors	(*copy filed as UCTL/140421/009b*)
(iii)	ABDNConnect Programme	(*copy filed as UCTL/140421/009c*)

Members of the Committee were content to approve each of the initiatives outlined for introduction from September 2021.

Action: Clerk

SCIENCEDIRECT NEGOTIATIONS

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/012)

11.1 Members of the Committee received the briefing paper on forthcoming work ahead of the end of the current ScienceDirect multiyear agreement at the end of December 2021. The Committee noted the context and associated financial and academic risks to the University of national efforts to renegotiate for ScienceDirect (ejournal content) with Elsevier over the course of 2021 ahead of the end of the sector agreement in December. It was noted that regular updates would be provided to the Committee, amongst other key stakeholders, as work progresses. It was specifically noted that he risks (extent of the cost, or loss of research and teaching resources) are significant.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 25 May 2021, at 10am, by Microsoft Teams.

ABERDEEN STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/010)

13.1 Members of the committee noted the outcomes of the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/140421/011)

13.2 Members of the Committee are asked to note the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment undertaken on the Comprehensive Measures for Fair and Consistent Assessment in the Context of Covid-19.