UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 26 February 2025

Present: Jason Bohan (Chair, in place of Jo-Anne Murray), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, Lyn Batchelor, John Barrow, Nigel Beacham, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Ken Jeffrey, Helen Knight, Colin Lumsden, David McCausland, John Mynott, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Steve Tucker, Eddy Wifa (in place of Anne-Michelle Slater) and Joshua Wright, with Robin Cummins, Nick Edwards, Tracey Innes, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Rhona Moore, Sara Preston, Ian Robotham, Patricia Spence, Emma Tough, and Isabella Fausti (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Jo-Anne Murray, Harminder Battu, Amudha Poobalan, Miles Roetherl, Anne-Michelle Slater, Asha Venkatesh, Simon Bains, Scott Carle, Debbie Dyker, Graeme Kirkpatrick, and Louisa Stratton.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2025

(copy filed as UEC/260225/001)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting. Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 14 January 2025 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

(copies filed as UEC/260225/002, UEC/260225/003, and UEC/260225/004)

2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of the UEC held on 14 January 2025 were complete.

2.2 In addition, some outstanding actions arising from the meeting held on 20 November 2025 were noted as follows:

(i) A SharePoint site is now in place to store the Digital Strategy Committee documentation from this Academic Year and improve its transparency.
(ii) The action related to reconciling inconsistencies between processes in different committees and choosing one single system is still in progress.
(iii) All other actions were noted as completed.

MYABERDEEN COURSES' ROLLOVER 2025-26 AND INSTITUTIONAL COURSE TEMPLATE

(copy filed as UEC/260225/005)

3.1 Members heard an update on the rollover process for MyAberdeen course areas, highlighting changes in the way course areas will be created from Academic Year 2025-26. The main recommendations presented to the committee were:

(i) For AY 2025-26 and subsequent academic years, the creation of all MyAberdeen courses areas for that academic year will use an institutional template, which will be reviewed and updated in consultation with the Directors of Education and the Education Deans prior to the start of each academic year.
(ii) Course materials and assessments from last year's course areas in MyAberdeen will not be copied across during the rollover process.

(iii) Course areas in MyAberdeen should be made available to students a week before the start of teaching so that students can access the course guide and reading lists.

3.2 A discussion took place and, in response to suggestions made by members of the committee, it was proposed that:

a. Course areas for next AY would be created and made available to course coordinators earlier in the cycle, to ensure realistic timescales for copying content across and updating it in time for the start of teaching;
b. Training and resources on how to effectively copy content from one course area to another would be provided to staff, to ensure the process is streamlined and efficient;
c. The eLearning Team would liaise with each School and provide tailored support as needed;
d. A communication plan would be developed to ensure that staff are made aware of the changes in a timely manner.

3.3 The updates were generally well received by the Committee and the recommendations (listed in 3.1) were approved, with the Committee asked to note that the School of Engineering would be happy to approve recommendations (i) and (iii).

COMPUTER-BASED AND ONLINE ASSESSMENTS TFG: ASSESSMENT TAXONOMY

(copy filed as UEC/260225/006)

4.1 The committee discussed the proposals for the creation of a standardised assessment taxonomy, to help both staff and students understand them better. If approved, the taxonomy would be integrated into the university systems so that assessment information is consistent across different systems and programmes.

4.2 It was proposed that, once this new framework has been approved, it could be included in the two-day course for new teaching staff and that Toolkit resources would be developed for both staff and students.

4.3 It was noted that the proposals were presented at the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) meeting, where they were received with support. In order to implement any feedback received, the proposals are due to be approved by the QAC at its next meeting, following which the finalised document will be circulated with the UEC for information.

COMPUTER-BASED AND ONLINE ASSESSMENTS TFG: ONLINE ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

(copy filed as UEC/260225/007)

5.1 The UEC heard an update from the Computer-Based and Online Assessments Task and Finish Group, which was established by the Exam Planning Group to address concerns raised by staff and students regarding digital assessments, including invigilated computer-based assessments and online assessments, which have become more popular post-COVID.

5.2 Members of the UEC discussed the proposals for School guidance on the delivery of both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments, and on the recommendations related to the use of Respondus LockDown Browser, including exceptions when other software used for the assessment if not compatible with the use of the lockdown browser.

5.3 Clarification was sought on the support that would be provided by IT if there are technical difficulties during invigilated and non-invigilated computer-based assessments. In addition some suggestions were made:

i. If a whole class has been affected by an issue in a particular venue, only one report should be made to the ServiceDesk, rather than one for each individual student;
ii. If a technical issue occurs during an invigilated assessment and the invigilator is aware of this, there may not be a need for students to support their claims via the ServiceDesk;
iii. In certain circumstances, such as with issues with home Wi-Fi, the amount of support the ServiceDesk may be able to provide is limited.

5.4 It was agreed that the University agreed role description for the Inclusion Coordinator would be circulated (**Action: JBo**).

5.5 It was noted that the finalised version of the guidance would be presented for approval at the next meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee, following which it will be circulated with the UEC for information.

PGT PORTFOLIO AND PROCESS REVIEW UPDATES

(copy filed as UEC/140125/008)

6.1 Members of the UEC heard an update on the initial results of the PGT Portfolio Review carried out in the last three months of 2024. The findings included five areas of potential risk that require further attention and a list of relevant recommendations for each of these areas.

6.2 A discussion took place, primarily focussing on naming conventions, possible single points of failure in standalone programmes, and the challenges related to interdisciplinary programmes. It was noted that the UG Portfolio Review was now taking place, so there may be some overlap in the areas of potential risk and related recommendations.

6.3 In addition, UEC members also received an oral update on the review of the PMC process. The plan to streamline the process would include having one single point of data entry in order to reduce workload. Work on making these improvements is ongoing.

6.4 It was agreed that further guidance documentation would be developed and any volunteers who would be interested in helping to take forward some of this work were invited to get in touch with the Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development.

STUDENT CASEWORK DATA

(Copies filed as UEC/260225/009 and UEC/260225/010)

8.1 The Committee received an update on the student casework data for AY 2023-2024. It was noted that, while changes have been made to the appeals process (a competency check before cases are progressed for investigation), the data reflecting this will be available next year.

8.2 A discussion took place on a review of the academic discipline procedures, to make the process more supportive and educational, rather than punitive.

STUDENT WITHDRAWALS REPORT

(Copy filed as UEC/260225/011)

9.1 Members of the UEC discussed the data presented in the Student Withdrawals Report, noting a positive trend with improvements across various schools, despite some variation. It was noted that the data around reasons for withdrawals is limited due to its sensitive nature, but health issues appear to be a factor. While efforts are being made to provide targeted support to students during critical times to improve retention, communication and processes around withdrawals need further refinement. It was agreed that further discussions would take place with the School engagement leads.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 22 April 2025 at 1:05pm in the Committee Room 2, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.