

UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 10th January 2014

Present: Professor R Wells (Convenor), Dr P Bishop, R Henthorn, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr G McEwan, Dr R Miller, Dr J Perkins, Dr M Pinard, Ms E Hay (Registry), Ms C McWilliams (Clerk), Dr D Wood, Dr A Widfeldt

Apologies: Mr D Auchie

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2013

(copy filed as UG/100114/005)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 11th October 2013.

CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT

(copy filed as UG/100114/001)

- 2.1 The Committee was informed that a paper on this subject was taken to Senate in November 2012. The principle driver was to improve how the University calculates classification of degrees as well as transparency.
- 2.2 The Committee was asked to consider whether students should be required to pass all prescribed courses in order to graduate with an Honours degree. The Committee agreed that this was in the interests of fairness to the student as professional bodies will expect students to have the essential components. The Committee did note however that this may cause problems for some degrees where the Honours year is prescribed as is the case with many science-based degrees but that it would only impact on a small number of students.
- 2.3 The Committee was asked to consider whether students failing an Honours course should be required either to pass that course or another at that level in order to graduate with an Honours Degree. The Committee agreed that this should proceed as it brought about little change in what is done already.
- 2.4 The Committee was asked to consider whether non-accredited Honours degrees should be provided as exit routes for accredited degree programmes where specific requirements must be met for graduation with the accredited degree. Members of the Committee agreed with this proposal on the basis that if students do not acquire the essential components, other options should be made available to them.
- 2.5 The Committee was asked to consider whether it should be a requirement for the award of all Honours degrees that a student has passed their thesis/dissertation. The Committee acknowledged the effect the credit rating has on the importance of a thesis/dissertation to an Honours year and that this may dictate the significance of a thesis/dissertation to a particular degree. The Committee agreed that students should have to pass their thesis/dissertation on the basis that the University is a research-driven institution. The Committee therefore proposed the introduction of the requirement for students to pass their thesis/dissertation in order to receive an Honours degree.
- 2.6 The Committee was asked to consider the proposal that there would be an increase in the number of bands at both the higher and lower end of the University Assessment Scale. The purpose of this was to moderate the reluctance of examiners to award marks at the higher

end of the spectrum. The Committee noted that while they were in favour of the proposal, the importance of the use of descriptors when marking was not to be underestimated.

- 2.7 The Committee discussed the proposal to remove examiners' ability to make a judgement about the extent of the impact of an illness or absence on assessment and to replace this with a further opportunity of assessment. The Committee noted with concern the possibility that this may result in a delay in graduating for some students.

NSS2014

(copy filed as UG/100114/002)

- 3.1 The Committee was advised that the University response rate for the National Student Survey is below the sector average and is problematic for the University in a number of ways. It has been found that there is a correlation between high return rates and high performance in the NSS and there are similar sized institutions which enjoy higher response rates.
- 3.2 The Committee was updated on the measures which are to be introduced to address this issue. This includes a £5 provision print credit for each student upon completing the survey. This is in addition to improving the 'You Said, We Did' feedback at school and discipline level, using Personal Tutors to encourage completion, working with AUSA student societies and clubs to promote the survey and implementing IT facilities in main student areas at key stages of the process.
- 3.3 The Committee whilst being supportive of the measures, acknowledged that the use of the £5 print credit may result in questions surrounding the anonymity of the responses to the survey. The Committee agreed that communication was crucial in assuring students that their responses would be anonymous and that this particular incentive would be limited to the National Student Survey.

SCEF PROCESS

- 4.1 The Committee was advised that a low percentage of SCEF forms were being returned throughout the University. Members of the Committee agreed that this was a major issue and considered the idea of a forum for creating best practice examples. The Committee was informed that an app for filling in SCEF forms was being developed for next session.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

SUMMER SCHOOL

- 5.1 The Committee was informed that the duration of the Summer School is to be reduced from 10 weeks to 6 weeks. Courses will be discipline specific and will be delivered by core resources.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6 The next meeting of the Undergraduate Committee is scheduled to take place 2pm Friday 28th March in the Video Conference Suite, University Office.