

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the Meeting held on 11th October 2013

Present: Professor R Wells (Convenor), Ms M Beaton, Dr P Bishop, Dr P Davidson, Professor S Davies, Professor Alison Lumsden, Miss Z McKellar, Dr R Miller, Dr R Patey, Dr J Perkins, Dr M Pinard, Ms Emma Hay (Registry), Ms Clare McWilliams (Clerk)

Apologies: Dr W D McCausland, Dr G McEwan, Dr M Law, Dr A Widfeldt

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 27 MARCH AND 19 SEPTEMBER 2013

(copy filed as UG/111013/001a)

(copy filed as UG/111013/001b)

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 27 March 2013 and 19 September 2013.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as UG/111013/003)

- 2.1 The Committee agreed with the remit and composition of the Committee with no proposed changes.

STUDENT ABSENCE POLICY

(copy filed as UG/111013/003)

- 3.1 The Committee were advised of the changes to the policy, as approved by Senate. The Committee acknowledged the issues raised in the paper and considered whether or not students who submit a self-certificate should be entitled to register for the resit exam without charge. The Committee discussed the possibility of students who self-certify doing so as a means of strategically choosing which exams to sit and when. The Committee considered that the current charge for resits may not be substantial enough to prevent students from doing this and that potentially another mechanism to counter such action this would be required.
- 3.2 The Committee acknowledged the duty of care the University has to students who are frequently absent. The Committee proposed the introduction of a 'trigger' to alert personal tutors to situations where there tutees are frequently self-certifying or where a pattern of self-certification is evident.
- 3.3 The Committee agreed that a self-certificate marker should exist on the student record to record self-certificate submissions and to differentiate them from a medical certificate (MC) or good cause (GC).
- 3.4 The Committee considered the option of displaying a self-certification marker on student transcripts as a means of deterring strategic exam taking. Members of the Committee considered that making absence visible to future employers, could be a more effective deterrent to strategic exam sitting than the initial fee.

ACADEMIC YEAR UPDATE

- 4.1 The Convenor updated the Committee on the progress of discussions taking place regarding the implementation of the revised Academic Year. The Committee were informed that the proposed dates for the resit diet next year had been agreed. The Committee were informed that the 2013/14 summer resits would begin on 19 July 2014 and end on 1 August 2014, with results being due for submission by 13 August 2013.
- 4.2 The Committee were informed that the possibility of invigilators being outsourced for this resit diet, to ease pressure on staff, was being investigated.
- 4.3 The Committee were asked to give consideration to a proposal, in its very early stages, to allow students a mid-term break during 2014-15, by beginning teaching slightly earlier and on the Thursday of the former advising or Fresher's week. The Committee noted that by taking this action, two days could be liberated to facilitate a mid-term break, action strongly recommended by staff and students at the University of St. Andrews, who had also gone through a recent change to their academic year.
- 4.4 Members of the Committee agreed with the sentiment behind the proposal but noted concerns in relation to the significance of a 4 day break for students or staff, as well as the effects of the implementing too much change at one time. Members of the Committee suggested that such a proposal be postponed for one year given the number of significant changes already due to take place next year. The Students' Association raised issues to the Committee regarding the potentially serious impact of cutting short Fresher's week, for the Association as well as the student body.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

UPDATE ON ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)

- 5.1 The Committee noted that the Senior Vice-Principal had approved the final version of the ELIR documentation – Reflective Analysis, Case Study and Advance Information Set - on behalf of the Court on 14 August 2013, prior to its submission to the QAA on 23 August 2013. The documentation is available from www.abdn.ac.uk/elir. The Committee were informed that the first ELIR panel visit had taken place and that they would return on 18 November 2013 for 5 days. The Committee wished to express their thanks to all those involved in the process, and in particular to Katja Christie, Deputy Academic Registrar, for her role in preparing the Reflective Analysis.

ONESOURCE PROJECT

(copy filed as UG/111013/004)

- 5.2 The Committee noted the attached paper, providing an update on the OneSource project.

GUIDANCE NOTE ON PRE-, CO- AND ANTI-REQUISITES

(copy filed as UG/111013/005)

- 5.3 The Committee noted the deadline for SENAS form submission to be the 30 November 2013. The Committee were advised that the deadline was fixed and could not be moved, under any circumstances. Members of the Committee agreed to disseminate this information within their Schools.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 6 The next meeting of the Undergraduate Committee will be held on Friday 6 December at 2pm, in the Video Conferencing Suite, University Office.