## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2016

**Present:** Mrs J Sheriffs (Convener), Mrs M Anderson, Dr A Arnason (from 3pm), Ms D Bruxvoort,

Mrs J Chalmers (until 2.30pm), Ms M Chapman, Ms K Christie (for Dr Mackintosh) Ms G Clarke, Professor B Connolly, Ms L Cristea, Professor S Davies (until 2.50) Dr L Foley, Mr L Forsyth, Mr L Fuller, Mr D Haywood, Ms V Hofmann, Mrs C Inglis, Mr J McManus, Professor J Morrison, with Ms E Forster (Clerk), Ms L Ginsberg (for minute 19), Mr N Qamar (for minute 18) and Ms K Scaife

**Apologies** were received from Ms M Burgoyne, Ms H Bruce, Dr G Mackintosh, Professor P McGeorge and Professor J Masthoff

16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 19 October 2015 were approved subject to the inclusion of Ms Chapman in the apologies list.

17. MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the following matters arising from the previous minutes, which were not reported under other items on the agenda.

17.1 **Student Support: Mental Health Working Group (minute 7.2 refers)**

The possibility of working in partnership with RGU and NESCol in relation to support for students with mental health was being taken forward with the Convener of the Group.

17.2 **Shared Planet (minute 13 refers)**

Possible new space had been identified for the re-location of the Shared Plant co-operative, and the options were being considered to determine what would be most appropriate.

18. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Naveed Qamar, University Director of Health and Wellbeing, on future plans and initiatives to promote health and wellbeing.

It discussed the link between the *Because we care* health and wellbeing campaign aimed at staff, and the *Clued-up* campaign aimed at students. Consistent messaging was required across both campaigns.

The Committee discussed the resourcing of those student services also supporting staff (such as the Counselling Service), an issue which was also raised later on the agenda. It noted the short-term plan to recruit additional staff in order to reduce waiting times.

19. STUDENT BAROMETER

The Committee received and considered a paper summarising the University’s performance in the autumn 2015 Student Barometer. This was a survey carried out of all students at participating universities by an external company, i-graduate.

The Committee noted the high response rate from University students, giving the University one of the highest response rates. It also noted that feedback had improved in a number of areas. The University’s Student Survey Working Group would now review the feedback, requesting the relevant areas to provide action plans to address issues raised.

Further details of the Barometer results were available to members on request.

20. REVIEW OF *MYCURRICULUM* AND *MYTIMETABLE*

The Committee received and considered a paper on the review of the September 2015 implementation of:

* *MyCurriculum,* the online system for students to select the courses they would study as part of their degree programme; and
* *MyTimetable*, the class selection system and student personal timetable.

The Committee noted that overall the implementation had been successful in terms of the number of students who had successfully completed registration. The main challenge for the University had been responding to the large number of queries raised. Frequently Asked Questions were being developed to help address this for future registrations. However, it was noted that although the system could address the requirements of the majority of students, there would always be a small number who required more personal support.

The potential difference in responses from students on different degree programmes was discussed, as students on degree programmes with the most choice in courses might have found the process more complex than those on more prescribed programmes.

*Note from Clerk:* Following the meeting it was clarified that the review did not break down respondents by degree programme or discipline and therefore this breakdown was not available.

21. PERSONAL TUTORING

The Committee received a report that updated it on the activity currently being undertaken in Schools and in conjunction with the Senior Personal Tutors Forum to develop the Personal Tutor System further by responding to the different needs of Schools. This activity allowed Schools to tailor the organisation of the Personal Tutoring system in a way that best matched their specific requirements e.g. some multi-discipline schools found it most effective to organise Tutoring by discipline.

It recommended that discussion of Personal Tutoring arrangements from part of School Internal Teaching Reviews.

22. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Committee received and considered a paper proposing that the University should work with the Students’ Association to develop a Student Partnership Agreement. Partnership Agreements were outlined briefly in the Scottish Government’s vision for post-16 education in Scotland *Putting Learners at the Centre* and a number of institutions in Scotland had developed such agreements. The Committee noted that a Partnership Agreement should provide 1) a section describing the ways in which students can work with staff to bring about change and 2) a section which details the areas on which the institution and students have agreed to work together.

The Committee endorsed the proposal to develop a Student Partnership Agreement.

23. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF STUDENT LIFE

The Committee received and considered a report from the Directorate of Student Life. It discussed the following matters arising from the report:

23.1 **Student Accommodation and Hillhead Facility**

The University, along with other institutions in the city, had seen a drop in demand for accommodation, and this had been linked to changes in the private rental market with the downturn in the oil industry. The University continued to look for ways to work with RGU and NESCol in relation to student accommodation.

The redevelopment of the Central Services building at Hillhead was close to final completion, and had been handed over by the contractor to the University today.

23.2 **Student Support Services**

Consideration was now being given as to how to address staffing changes in Counselling. The short-term priority was to ensure that provision did not drop at times of peak demand. In parallel wider consideration was being given to the long-term strategy for service provision.

23.3 **Chaplaincy**

The Chaplaincy was congratulated on a successful Founder’s Day Service, and it was noted that this had been strongly supported by Alumni Relations. There might also be opportunities for Alumni Relations involvement in preparation for the Seven Incorporated Traders Service taking place on 13 March. **Action: MA/KS**

23.4 **International Student Recruitment**

The Committee noted a new University initiative, Project 500, established to focus on achieving a significant increase in international student numbers for 2016/17.

24. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Committee received and considered a report from the Directorate of Academic Affairs. It noted the ongoing work to identify and support students at risk of non-progression.

25. REPORT FROM AUSA

The Committee received and considered a report from AUSA. It discussed the following matters arising from the report:

25.1 **Student Wellbeing**

The Committee noted a summary of Niteline Service activity, with the Service having received 528 contacts this academic year (including telephone calls, instant messaging service, and anonymous email). This increased use of the service appeared to reflect the pressure being experienced by other support services, although it was noted that Niteline had been more heavily promoted than in previous years.

AUSA had been granted almost £10K to run workshops through the PIPS programme (Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self-harm), a social enterprise developing and delivering suicide prevention, resilience building and mental health training.

25.2 **Democratic Review**

AUSA is taking forward a Democratic Review, including a Review of the number of Sabbatical Officers, currently higher than at other Scottish universities. Proposals would be discussed at an Emergency General Meeting that evening. The AUSA Constitution was also being reviewed, and the Executive Committee being restructured to improve the representation of Liberation and equality groups.

25.3 **Torcher Parade**

The Committee noted recent discussions with the City Council about arrangements for the Torcher Parade and challenges in relation to this. It was suggested that there might be other routes to resolve any issues with the Council. **Action: CI**

In relation to promoting the parade and associated activity, Alumni Relations could assist with this, and include the event in the Alumni e-zine.

26. VOTE OF THANKS

The Convener reported that this was Dr Lucy Foley’s last meeting of the Committee before she joined the University of Kent at Canterbury in April 2016, and she expressed her thanks to Dr Foley for her valuable contribution.

27. FUTURE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Future meetings of the Student Experience Committee in 2015/16 had been scheduled as follows: (all held at **2.00 pm**):

Monday 9 May 2016

EF

29.02.16