## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11 MAY 2015

Present: Mrs J Shirreffs (Convener), Mrs M Anderson, Ms E Beever, Ms M Chapman, Mrs J Chalmers, Ms G Clarke, Ms B Farr, Dr L Foley, Mr L Forsyth, Ms V Hofmann, Mrs C Inglis, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr M McCorkell, Ms J McKay, Mr R Murray, Mr D O’Hagan,  Ms J Waters and Ms E Forster (Clerk) with Ms L Ginsberg (for minute 34) and Ms T Merrick (for minute 35)

30 CONVENER’S OPENING REMARKS

On behalf of the Committee the Convener expressed congratulations on the appointment of Megan Dunn, former AUSA President, to the role of NUS President.

The Convener noted that the proposal to establish the Student Experience Committee in place of the current Student Affairs Committee was being presented to Senate on 10 June 2015 for final approval.

31 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Student Affairs Committee held on 16 February 2015 were approved.

32 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee received a report on matters arising from its previous meeting (SAC110515/02) from which the following points were noted:

32.1 **Accommodation fees (minute 19 refers)**

In applying increases to meet additional costs, inconsistency in fees across similar standard accommodation had been addressed:

* New Carnegie Court and Kings Hall both provided accommodation exclusively with en suite facilities and are of a similar quality. Kings Hall rent would therefore be increased to that of New Carnegie Court, with NCC remaining at the same rate as the previous year.
* The recent investment and refurbishment of the accommodation with shared facilities had ensured that the majority were of a similar standard, and the new rents would reflect this.
* Johnston which offered a catered package was the final building to undergo major refurbishment. Due to the delay in closing the building the rent would remain the same in 2015/16.

The Committee asked for further information on benchmarking of the University’s accommodation fees with other institutions and it was agreed to circulate this. **Action: LF**

32.2 **Partnership agreement (minute 21 refers)**

The new Relationship Agreement between AUSA and the University had been noted and endorsed by the University Court at its meeting on 24 March 2015.

32.3 **Freshers week (minute 28 refers)**

A meeting had been held between Student Life and AUSA to discuss better joint working on events such as Freshers Week and regular discussions would continue.

33 HEALTH AND SAFETY

No Health and Safety issues were raised under this item.

34 FEEDBACK AND SURVEYS

34.1 **Student Barometer**

The Committee received a presentation on the Student Barometer, a survey carried out of students at a variety of institutions across the world, seeking feedback on different aspects of the students’ experience including arrival at the university; learning; living; and the application process. 211 institutions from eighteen countries had elected to take part, including the University of Aberdeen. The survey was carried out by an external company, i-graduate, in the late autumn of 2014.

The Committee noted the feedback scores around student accommodation, which reflected the challenges that the University had faced at the start of academic year 2014/15.

The Committee discussed how to increase participation rates in future surveys, and the need to respond to the issues raised by survey respondents. It noted that a University Group had been established to address these two issues.

It was agreed to circulate the presentation slides to Committee members. **Action: Clerk**

34.2 **Times Higher Student Experience Survey**

The Committee received and noted a summary of the recent survey carried out by the Times Higher (SAC110515/03), which asked a small sample of students at each UK institution for feedback, and then used the results to compile a ranking.

35 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Committee received and considered a paper on the development of the University’s Strategic Plan, to cover the next five years to 2020 (SAC110515/04). There was still a limited period of time to give feedback on the draft, prior to the Plan being presented to the next meeting of Court.

The Committee discussed the draft vision (*A world with greater knowledge)* noting that this was intended to reflect the University’s impact and the difference that the University made.

In response to a question around the position of the theme of Equality and Diversity in the Plan, and whether this should be a separate section, it was indicated that there would be targets and key performance indicators relating to Equality & Diversity.

36 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Committee received and considered the action plan relating to risk Corp\_2011-10 *Failure to meet student expectations* (SAC/110515/05).

It agreed that in the action plan *Online advising* should be updated to *MyCurriculum*.

The Committee also discussed the position of capital projects referred to in the action plan, noting that:

* A working group had not yet been established for the Interfaith Centre, but preparatory work was progressing in consultation with appropriate stakeholders, and in due course a Project Board would be established.
* There had been a slight delay to the Nursery project as result of weather conditions.
* The refurbishment of the central building at Hillhead was intended to be complete in October 2015.

The Committee agreed to hold a 2015/16 meeting in the refurbished central meeting at Hillhead. **Action: Clerk**

37 REVISED CODE OF PRACTICE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE EDUCATION ACT 1994

The Committee received and considered a paper setting out a revised University code of compliance with the Act (SAC/110515/06). It noted that AUSA and its Trustees had a number of comments that it would feed back to Policy, Planning & Governance in advance of the Code being presented to the Court meeting on 30 June 2015. **Action: JM**

38 AUSA

38.1 **2015/16 Business Plan**

The Committee received an oral update on AUSA’s 2015/16 Business Plan including a summary of key achievements in 2014/15.

It noted the intention to link future strategy with the University’s Strategic Plan.

The Committee also noted that the disbursement request for 2015/16 included £50K to cover a forecast deficit for vehicle costs and a further £20K to cover the cost of lease vehicle returns under the terms of the lease agreement. It discussed whether there was a more cost effective way to lease vehicles, but noted that University procurement processes had been followed to arrive at the current arrangement.

The Committee discussed the importance of progressing the new student union project.

For its part, the Committee were broadly supportive of the Business Plan and budget request, but noted that further discussion would be required around the detail of this. It was noted a formal proposal from AUSA would be submitted, as usual, to the University Secretary.

38.2 **AUSA Report**

The Committee received and considered an update report from AUSA summarising recent activity (SAC/110515/07). It noted the challenges around community outreach faced by AUSA, and the activities being put in place by AUSA to address these issues including:

* ‘Adopt a Charity’ scheme
* Annual Torcher Parade which ran smoothly
* Successful litter pick up in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council in Old Aberdeen
* Discussions around forming a Student Community Partnership Strategy with RGU, NESColl and relevant community groups
* Monthly attendance at Old Aberdeen Community Council meetings
* Engagement with Aberdeen City Council around HMO regulation

39 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF STUDENT LIFE

The Committee received and considered a report from the Directorate of Student Life (SAC/110515/08).

It noted the timing of the opening of the refurbished central building at Hillhead (minute 36 refers) and that ideas were being sought for the celebration of the opening.

The Committee commended staff in Student Support and the Chaplaincy for their pastoral support in relation to a recent student death.

40 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Committee received and noted a report from the Director of Academic Affairs (SAC/110515/09).

41 TITLE OPTIONS ON UNIVERSITY FORMS

The President of the Student Association asked if University forms could include the option to select the designation Mx as a non-gender option. It was agreed to investigate this. However it was noted that this would require systems development work and there could be problems if this title was not recognised by external organisations with which University systems shared data such as HESA or UCAS. **Action: GM**

42 FUTURE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

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

Monday 19 October 2015

Monday 15 February 2016

Monday 9 May 2016

EF

11.06.15