**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**

**STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**Minute of the meeting held on 20 October 2014**

(Unconfirmed)

Present: Rev M Anderson, Ms E Beever, Ms J Chalmers, Ms K Christie (Clerk), Prof S Davies, Ms G Clarke, Dr L Foley, Ms E Forster, Mr L Forsyth, Mr R Henthorn, Ms V Hofmann, Mr G Hunter, Mrs C Inglis, Dr G Mackintosh, Prof J Masthoff, Mr D O’Hagan, Mr R Murray, Mrs J Shirreffs (Convener), Ms J Waters,

Apologies: Mr L Bebbington, Mr M McCorkell, Professor P McGeorge, Ms J McKay, Rev E Smart, Mr A Wight

**1. Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2014**

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 12 May 2014 were approved, subject to an amendment to the list of attendees.

*(copy filed as SAC/201014/01)*

**2. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Medical Absence and the Return of Library Books **(**Minute 2.3 refers)

2.1 The Committee noted that the President for Education and Employability had met with the University Librarian and begun discussions regarding possible linkage between students who are absent for medical/mitigating circumstances and their inability to return Library materials on time.

Buttle Trust Quality Mark **(**Minute 5.3 refers)

2.2 The Committee noted that the University had applied for the Buttle Trust Quality Mark and had been asked to resubmit its action plan in this regard; the University would be working with the Buttle Trust to make the amendments required.

Student Parents, Pregnancy and Maternity (Minute 8.3 refers)

2.3 The Committee noted that work towards developing a policy statement was still in progress, and was assured that the Committee would have sight of the document when available.

University of Aberdeen Sports Advisory Body (Minute 9.1 refers)

2.4 The Committee noted that key stakeholders had been contacted regarding membership of the Advisory Body, and that work to clarify its remit in order to avoid duplication of the work of the Aberdeen Sports Village Advisory Body had taken place.

Halal Food (Minute 12.3 refers)

2.5 The Committee noted that Halls of Residences will be introducing Halal meal options from 4 November 2014, and that the next meeting of the Campus Services Catering Forum would be looking at how best to roll this out across the wider campus.

**3. Health and Safety**

3.1 The Director of Student Life briefed the Committee on the work undertaken during Freshers’ Week to promote Health and Safety issues to students and advised members that, together with representatives of the Aberdeen University Students’ Association (AUSA), Student Life was developing plans to move the ‘Clued Up’ campaign forward.

**4. Remit, Composition and Membership**

4.1 The Committee noted the remit, composition and membership of the Student Experience Committee (SEC) for 2014/15.

*(copy filed as SAC/201014/02)*

4.2 The Committee received the draft remit, composition and membership for the proposed Student Experience Committee which would supersede the SAC. The Committee recommended that (i) the Head of Student Support and the Chaplain be added to the membership and (ii) that rather than specify Colleges Directors of Learning and Teaching and Heads of Graduate School, there should be two members of staff from each College with an interest in the undergraduate and postgraduate student experience respectively.

*(copy filed as SAC/201014/03)*

 **Action: Clerk**

4.3 AUSA suggested that the work of Personal Tutors should be considered by the Student Experience Committee. The Director of Academic Affairs agreed to take this away for consideration.

**Action: Director of Academic Affairs**

**5. Corporate Risk Register**

5.1 The Committee received the updated Corporate Risk Register ‘Failure to Meet Student Expectations’. The Committee queried the revised risk register score, and it was agreed that the Director of Academic Affairs and the Director of Student Life would review the original and revised risk scores outwith the meeting.

 *(copy filed as SAC/201014/04*)

**Action: Directors of Academic Affairs and Student Life**

**6. Gender Segregation**

6.1 The Committee noted the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (EHRC) ‘*Gender Segregation at Events and Meetings Guidance for Universities and Students’ Unions*’ document which sought to provide clarity regarding the circumstances in which segregation according to gender is prohibited under equality and human rights law at events which take place at, or under, the auspices of universities and students’ unions.

*(copy filed as SAC/201014/05)*

6.2 It further noted a proposed addition to the University’s Religion and Belief Policy in light of the EHRC guidance. Prior to being considered at SAC the amended Religion and Belief Policy had been discussed at the Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting where further change had been requested.

*(copy filed as SAC/201014/06*)

6.3 It was agreed that the guidance document should be widely circulated throughout the institution, ensuring that other student groups not governed by AUSA (eg the Debater) should also be informed.

**Action: Equality and Diversity Adviser**

6.4 Members noted that AUSA was also in the process of reviewing its policies in light of the EHRC guidance.

**7. Ethical Framework on the Boundaries of Confidentiality**

7.1 The Committee received the draft ‘Ethical Framework on the Boundaries of Confidentiality’ which aimed to provide advice and guidance in relation to dealing which the management and disclosure of sensitive information. In addition, the framework highlighted additional avenues of support and guidance which are available to both the information provider and receiver.

 *(copy filed as SAC/201014/07*)

7.2 Whilst being supportive of the intention of the document, some concern was expressed regarding (amongst others) the destroying of all confidential records and the seniority of the people to whom advice should be sought. It was agreed that the Head of Student Support would discuss these issues with the Director of Academic Affairs outwith the meeting.

**Action: Head of Student Support/Clerk**

**8. Smoking in the Workplace**

8.1 The Committee noted the proposed changes to the University’s Policy on Smoking in the Workplace to prohibit smoking anywhere on the University’s Campuses beyond designated smoking areas. It further noted that the changes were initially proposed at the Foresterhill Campus in support of an NHS Grampian policy and that changes at other Campuses were proposed to ensure that staff across the University are treated equally. It was also noted that the proposals applied to staff and students only, and not to members of the general public.

 *(copy filed as SAC/20101408*)

8.2 In discussing the proposals the Committee voiced its concerns as to the practicality of policing a smoke-free campus and suggested that the location of designated smoking areas should be carefully considered so as not to discourage students from using services e.g. the Library. The Clerk undertook to feed this back to Human Resources and Estates.

**Action: Clerk**

8.3 The Committee was fully in favour of actions to discourage smoking and noted that the University provided support to staff to do so. Members agreed that support should also be available to students, and that such encouragement should not be punitive but sympathetic and supportive; the Director of Student Life and the SA agreed to pursue this jointly.

**Action: Director of Student Life/Student President**

**9. Aberdeen University Students’ Association (AUSA)**

9.1 Items for discussion raised by the President and Sabbatical Officers of AUSA:

(a) Student Union Project Board

The Committee noted that the Student Union Project Board had met three times. Benchmarking was in process and the Universities of St Andrews, Dundee and Abertay had been visited in this regard. A new Project Sponsor and Project Manager had been appointed, and interviews were to be held in December for a design team.

(b) AUSA Block Grant

The Committee noted that a new process was being developed as to how AUSA would request funds, and how the University would respond to such requests; the proposal would be taken to the next meeting of Court for approval. As part of this process it was intended that there would be a more systematic way in which the block grant would be calculated.

(c) Student Accommodation

The Committee noted the questions from AUSA together with a written response thereto from the Director of Student Life.  *(copy filed as SAC/201014/09*)

The Committee was pleased to note that there was no longer any student in temporary accommodation; this included all students who had arrived at campus with no prior accommodation plans. Where students felt that they had been financially disadvantaged by the activities to address the accommodation shortage, the Director of Student Life would meet with them on an individual basis. It was further noted that a new accommodation strategy was being finalised and that 620 new rooms would be available for September 2015. Planning for the January 2015 postgraduate taught cohort was in process.

9.2 The Committee received the report from AUSA and the Sabbatical Officers, noting in particular the planned upcoming ‘Postgraduate Workers’, ‘Body Confidence’, ‘We Get It’ and ‘Priced out of Education’ campaigns.

**10. The Directorate of Academic Affairs and Directorate of Student Life**

10.1 The Committee noted the reports from the Directors of Academic Affairs and Student Life on recent activities within their respective areas. In particular, plans to appoint a Director of Sport were noted. The role would be to develop the Sports Union and Clubs and encourage high performance students; AUSA would be involved in the recruitment process.

*(copies filed as SAC/201014/11 and SAC/201214/12)*