

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING**

**Minute of the meeting held on 30 October 2013**

*Present:* Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr B Connolly, Dr S Davies, Mr C Duncan, Mr P Fantom, Mr R Henthorn, Dr C Kee, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Masthoff, Dr M Pryor, Dr K Shennan, Dr R Wells, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary) Miss C McWilliams (Registry)

*Apologies:* Ms M Dunn

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2013**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/001)*

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of 15 May 2013. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held.

**ACCREDITED PRIOR LEARNING POLICY**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/002)*

- 2.1 The Committee noted the draft proposed policy on Accredited Prior Learning (APL). The Committee acknowledged previous consideration of APL by the Committee in May 2012. The Committee noted that the draft policy recognised earlier discussions in addition to the recognition of practice elsewhere. The Committee approved the policy subject to the following clarifications.
- 2.2 Regarding Quality Assurance processes, the Committee agreed the importance of how students awarded recognition for APL progress through their studies. Members of the Committee agreed that the consideration of this should be referred to the Students' Progress Committee (SPC) to ensure consistency.
- 2.3 With regards to the proposal to introduce a fee for the consideration of APL, the Committee noted that students submitting Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) within the School of Education are charged. The Committee agreed the sense in doing so as a consequence of the volume of submissions considered. The Committee agreed to reconsider the issue of charging for APL once a sense of the volume of submission had been gained. The Committee agreed to amend text within the policy to state 'a charge may be incurred.'

**Action: Clerk**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT ABSENCE – OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/003)*

- 3.1 The Committee received the paper on the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence and discussed the outstanding issues raised. With regards to charging students who submit a Self-Certificate to cover a missed exam, members of the Committee noted that as Students who submit a Medical Certificate are not charged, the same rule should be applied. Members of the Committee did acknowledge concerns raised, particularly by the Undergraduate Committee, that failing to charge students who self-certify may encourage strategic exam taking.
- 3.2 Members of the Committee noted the duty of care the University should show to students who repeatedly self-certify and agreed that a 'trigger' should alert Personal Tutors to their students who self-certify more than 3 times in an Academic Year.

- 3.3 Members of the Committee agreed with the proposal that a marker, such as SC, should be used in the Student Record to record students who self-certify., however, that the SC label should not appear on a student's transcript.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **ACADEMIC YEAR UPDATE**

- 4.1 Members of the Committee were update on the progress of preparations for the implementation of the revised Academic Year in 2014-15. The Committee were updated that a proposal, to allow students a mid-term break during 2014-15, had been placed on hold for the time being.
- 4.2 The Committee was made aware of a potential issue in accommodation for postgraduate students as a consequence of their dissertation deadlines. The Committee noted that this issue had been referred to the Graduate Schools as a matter of urgency as steps to negate this issue with a change to dissertation deadlines, may be possible.
- 4.3 The Committee acknowledged the next steps of the Academic Year Group, to take forward a communication strategy regarding the change for all students.

#### **UNDERGRADUATE RESITS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/004)*

- 5.1 The Committee were informed that the 2013/14 summer resits were being proposed to begin on 19 July 2014 and end on 1 August 2014, with results being due for submission by 13 August 2013 but that the logistics associated with this were being considered. The Committee were assured that the resource implications of this diet had been acknowledged.

**Action: Clerk**

- 5.2 In discussing undergraduate resits, the Committee noted that current policy; to allow students a first attempt followed by 2 resit attempts at any one examination was out of sync with other Institutions within the sector. Members of the Committee agreed that this issue should be further researched and discussed at a future meeting.

#### **RE-SITS FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

- 6.1 The Committee agreed that this item should be discussed by way of circulation.

#### **REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/006)*

- 7.1 The Committee noted the report from the Working Group on Widening Participation, a joint working group of the UCTL and the Advisory Group on Student Recruitment and Admissions (AGSRA). The Committee noted the importance of the work of the Widening Participation Group and the commitment of the University to Widening Participation and the development of appropriate measures of activity.
- 7.2 The Committee noted and endorsed the approaches proposed within the paper. The Committee noted that work would begin with Schools within Aberdeen City and Shire before consideration was given to widening this further. The Committee noted the importance of determining the differing needs of Schools.

## **UNDERGRADUATE GRADE SPECTRUM UPDATE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/007)*

- 8.1 The Committee noted the paper on the Undergraduate Grade Spectrum and acknowledged the recent modelling exercise undertaken. The Committee noted that for the majority of students whose results were mapped to the new CAS scale and the revised Grade Spectrum, there would be no change in the degree class awarded. The Committee agreed with the proposal that further work should be undertaken to establish whether or not the boundaries between classes of degree on the new scale had been appropriately set.
- 8.2 The Committee acknowledged the issue of staff being reluctant to award grades high on the CAS scale and specifically above 18. The Committee recognised this as a cultural issue which required to be addressed.

## **ACADEMIC APPEALS – ISSUE RAISED BY THE BUSINESS SCHOOL**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/008)*

- 9.1 The Committee received the paper on Academic Appeals, summarising an issue proposed by the Business School to reintroduce a test for competency before an appeal is sent to a School or Section by the Registry. Members of the Committee recognised that appeals do; on occasion, only question academic judgement, however, noted the importance of feedback to students in these instances.
- 9.2 The Committee agreed that the School (or Section) remains the most appropriate contact to consider the competency of appeals in the first instance. The Committee further endorsed the feedback provided to students by way of the initial meeting held.
- 9.3 The Committee agreed that the reasoning for this action should be clarified with all Schools.

**Action: Clerk**

## **POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON RELIGION AND BELIEF FOR STUDENTS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/009)*

- 10.1 The Committee considered the paper and oral report from Professor Lumsden as to the work of the UCTL Working Group on Religion and Belief. Members of the Committee noted the proposed policy and its intention to negate the anxieties of students as well as staff.
- 10.2 The Committee extended their thanks to those involved in the working group and more their work in creating the policy. Members of the Committee acknowledged that the policy clearly aimed to cover all religions and beliefs.
- 10.3 The Committee agreed the importance of consistency, as far as possible, across the University in dealing with cases as they arise. It was agreed that to record instances, by way of Janine Chalmers Equality and Diversity adviser, would be advisable.

**Action: Clerk**

## **STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION RECOGNISED ROLES FOR INCLUSION ON THE TRANSCRIPT**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/010)*

- 11.1 The Committee approved the criteria for the inclusion of Students' Association roles to be incorporated within the enhanced transcripts which will be issued to students from July 2014.

## **SUSTAINED STUDY**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/011)*

- 12.1 The Committee acknowledged the issue of Sustained Study routes and whether any subject taken consistently, out with a student's degree discipline, could be considered as sustained study. Members of the Committee noted the ambiguity on the issue and acknowledged that there seemed to be no apparent reason why a more concentrated study undertaken by a student shouldn't be recognised.
- 12.2 The Committee acknowledged bodies such as the General Teaching Council (GTC) would recognise the study of a second subject over a two year period.
- 12.3 Members of the Committee agreed that the potential impact of such a change should be investigated with Schools, however, acknowledged the timing impact of doing this taking into account other deadlines currently being asked of Schools.

## **ONLINE DELIVERY**

- 13.1 The Committee was informed that following the outcome of a UCTL Working Group, work was being undertaken to develop Sixth Century courses for online delivery. The Committee was assured that the resource implications of such a project had been recognised.

## **CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/012)*

- 14.1 The Committee noted the Centre for Academic Development's Annual Report for academic year 2012/13. Members of the Committee agreed to appropriately disseminate the report to colleagues.  
**Action: Committee**

## **RISK REGISTER**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/013)*

- 15.1 The Committee noted the draft version of the Risk Register and agreed to forward comments on it to [academicservices@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:academicservices@abdn.ac.uk) no later than Monday 4 November 2013.  
**Action: Committee**

## **MINUTES AND UPDATE REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/014)*

- 16.1 The Committee noted the minutes provided by the Quality Assurance, Postgraduate and Undergraduate Committees.

## **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 17.1 The Committee noted that the next meetings of the UCTL would be held as follows:

Wednesday 22 January 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 14 May 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

## **LATEST DATE FOR RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2013-14**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/015)*

- 18.1 The Committee approved the paper on the Latest Dates for the Return of Examination Results for 2013-14.

### **DEADLINE FOR THE REFUSAL OF CLASS CERTIFICATES**

- 18.2 The Committee approved the deadline for notification to the Registry of the refusal of Class Certificates to those students previously reported as “at risk” under the student Monitoring Scheme, as follows:

First half-session courses: 5.00 p.m. on 10th January 2014  
Second half-session courses: 5.00 p.m. on 30th May 2014

### **REMIT & COMPOSITION: ONLINE DELIVERY GROUP**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/016)*

- 18.3 The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Online Delivery Group.

### **REMIT & COMPOSITION**

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/017)*

- 19.1 The Committee noted the remit and composition for academic year 2013-14.

### **GRADUATION DATES**

- 19.2 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

**Thursday 28 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School, Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy and Education.

**Thursday 28 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Language & Literature, Law and Social Science.

**Friday 29 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering and Geosciences.

**Friday 29 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Medical Sciences, Medicine & Dentistry, Natural & Computing Sciences and Psychology.

### **ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

- 19.3 The Committee noted that the Convener approved the Advanced Information Set to be submitted as part of the documentation for ELIR. The Senior Vice-Principal 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](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/elir). The first visit of the ELIR Panel will take place 9-10 October 2013, with a second visit scheduled for the week of 18 November 2013.

### **UPDATES TO THE ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK**

- 19.4 The Committee noted the amended version of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) which is now available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/academic-quality-handbook-838.php>

During the summer, the Convenors of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning and the Quality Assurance Committee approved changes to ensure the AQH reflects policy changes which had been approved by relevant Committees but was not entirely reflected in the previous version. Further specific changes were approved as below:

Section 3 was rewritten to reflect current structures and practise.  
Appendix 5.17d was updated to reflect the new MA in Education  
Section 7 was updated to reflect current assessment practices  
Appendix 7.8 references to PDP were replace with 'Feedback Logs'  
Section 10 was revised to ensure alignment with the revisions to processes surrounding collaborative provision.

### **CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY DEFINITION**

- 21.5 The Committee noted the approval of the definition of co-curricular activity for use within the University:

**What is the difference between co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities?**

The phrase 'co-curricular activities' refers to opportunities which complement the academic curriculum and which are recognised by the University (e.g. work placements, study abroad & volunteering). In comparison, involvement in off-campus community initiatives and/or other recreational activities are referred to as 'extra-curricular activities'. Both co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities are important to students' personal development and their CV profile, and are valued by employers.

### **TERM DATES**

- 21.6 The Committee noted that the Convener has approved changed terminology for the BDS: in line with an EU Directive the four year degree will comprise of years 2,3,4 & 5. The Committee is further invited to note the following amendments to the dates of term for the BDS, approved by Convener's action since the last meeting:

2013/14            Third & Fourth Year Summer Term closes Friday 11 July 2014  
                         Fifth Year Winter Term Summer Term closes Friday 13 June 2014

### **ONESOURCE STUDENT LIFECYCLE UPDATE**

- 21.7 The Committee noted the OneSource - Student Lifecycle Project (Phase 1) update for September 2013  
*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/018)*

The Committee is further invited to note the *Guidance Note on Pre-, Co & Anti-Requisites* and the *Proposed methodology for allocating students to capped courses* which were approved by circulation during the summer, in the context of the OneSource implementation.

*(copy filed as UCTL/301013/019 & 020)*