

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING 27 APRIL 2017

Present: Prof C Kee (Convenor), Ms E Harding, Dr A Kindness, Dr B Lord, Prof A Lumsden, Dr D MacCallum, Prof J Nelson, Ms S Paterson, Prof E Pavlovskaia, Ms AM Slater, Dr D Sutherland, Mr R Williams, Dr S Woodin, with Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr C Calder, Prof K Shennan and Ms J Wilson in attendance.

Apologies: Mr L Fuller, Prof J Masthoff, Dr J McEvoy, Dr D Muirhead

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING 3 MARCH 2017

- 1.1 The committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 3 March 2017
- 1.2 The Convenor confirmed that all actions had been taken.

DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR REVISED ITR PROCESS

- 2.1 Professor Kath Shennan attended the meeting and gave the Committee an overview of the paper, noting that the Scottish Funding Council requires the University to undertake ITRs on teaching provision and that the QAA had praised the University on their robust practice in the past.
- 2.2 Prof Shennan noted that there had been concerns over the makeup of the Panel at the UG Committee in terms of additional workload for members. Prof Shennan reassured that committee that they would, at most, have to sit on a panel once every three years. It was raised that there may not be enough PG Student Reps to sit on the Panel due to the current Student Senator allocation.
- 2.3 The new ITR process will have a focus on enhancement themes and these themes will be communicated back to the appropriate committees. Prof Shennan noted that they would look at how best to disseminate best practice throughout the entire University.
- 2.4 The new ITR process will be trialled at the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture in March 2018.

PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE TO RESIT EXAMINATIONS

- 3.1 Prof Shennan provided background to the proposal for alternative resit examinations and explained that this shift was due to feedback from External Examiners who felt our resit process could be modernised.
- 3.2 The PGT Committee was asked to discuss providing resits off campus and in international locations and also diversifying what type of assessment was used for resits. The PGT Committee noted that in many instances they already provided a substantial amount of non-exam based assessment, which could better facilitate off campus examination. It was also noted that where programmes have external accreditation it will not always be possible to replace exams with other forms of assessment.
- 3.3 The Committee wanted it noted that there should be a distinction between resits as a first attempt and resits. Given that the purpose of a resit was to assess whether a student had met the learning outcomes or not, and a grade would not be assigned, the Committee were in agreement that students who had not achieved a pass on their first attempt could potentially be given alternative reassessment to ensure they have met the learning outcomes on the course. However, the Committee wanted to ensure that students taking a resit assessment as a first attempt would follow the original format of assessment. By having this distinction, the Committee agreed that greater flexibility could be used for resits.

CONVERNOR'S REMARKS

- 4.1 The Convenor told the Committee that Senate had voted to abolish the current College system and that this would take effect from 1 August 2017. The Convenor noted that from a Teaching and Learning perspective the institution already reflected this change, but the Convenor requested the Committee to

give some thought on how best to ensure continued and constructive communication between schools that have common interests.

- 4.2 The Convenor discussed the current review on assessment, and encouraged the Committee to look at whether the current assessment adequately assessed the Learning Objectives for a course. The Convenor has asked the Committee to consider whether courses are being over-assessed and to consider if there was potential for different types of assessment to be implemented. The Student Experience Survey had more comments on assessment than any other area and Mr C Calder will work with the Convenor to explore how to get this data to Schools.

ACTION: DR CALDER & PROF KEE

- 4.3 The Committee was informed that any changes to assessment that come from these discussions can be implemented for the coming academic year emailing senas@abdn.ac.uk. Deadline 31 July.

- 4.4 The Committee enquired about the progress of the new Virtual Learning Environment. The Convenor explained that a tendering process was underway and that the University was embarking on an extensive consultation process to ensure the needs of all areas are met. It is likely the decision will be made this year, with implementation in September 2018.

STUDENT POPULATION FIGURES

- 5.1 The Committee discussed the figures presented on PGT headcount and what kind of data they would like for the Committee going forwards. The Committee requested to see historical data in order to better assess trends in PGT student population and demographics. They have also requested that data be provided in a more visual format. The Committee felt the data was useful in order to assess whether there were teaching and learning issues arising from changes in the PGT population.

- 5.2 Dr Calder raised awareness of Heidi Plus, which is a HESA database and advised that members could discuss access with him.

- 5.3 The Convenor agreed to explore how the Committee can be provided information in a way that is appropriate to their mandate.

ACTION: PROF KEE

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

SAAS FUNDING FOR POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS 2016/17

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the information and noted that the shift in funding should be considered in relation to the price of current degrees.

COMMONWEALTH SHARED SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING 2018/19

- 7.1 The Committee agreed that this scheme is worth pursuing overall and were informed that any programmes that would like to participate need respond by 18 May 2017.

- 7.2 The Committee noted that the scheme has a large administrative commitment for dealing with a high volume of applications for a low number of awards.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Committee enquired about scheduling for the PG Open Day and asked whether this could be done further in advance. The Convenor assured the Committee that going forward he, alongside the co-Convenor, would meet with SRAS and Marketing to draft a proposal on the Scheduling of PGT Open Days.