

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING 3 MARCH 2017

Present: Prof C Kee (Convenor), Mr L Fuller, Ms E Harding, Dr A Kindness, Dr B Lord, Prof A Lumsden, Dr J McEvoy, Dr D MacCallum, Prof J Nelson, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Dr D Sutherland, Mr R Williams, Dr S Woodin, Dr O Woolley, with Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr C Calder Ms L Grant, Prof K Shennan and Ms J Wilson in attendance.

Apologies: Prof J Masthoff, Dr D Muirhead, Ms S Paterson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING 5 DECEMBER 2016

- 1.1 Dr B Lord requested that she be noted as not being present.
- 1.2 The Committee requested that references to 'distance learning' be changed to 'online'.
- 1.3 It was noted that there was typo in 6.1 and 'fir' should be changed to 'for'.
- 1.4 Subject to the above corrections the Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 5 December 2016.

ACTION: CLERK
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RENAMING OF THE COMMITTEE – POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

2. The Convenor then moved forward Agenda Item 11 and informed the Committee that it was now called Postgraduate Committee (Taught).

CONVENOR'S REMARKS

3. The Convenor then informed the Committee about the Engagement and Communications Group (PG) and their work on ensuring a coordinated approach, institutionally, throughout the full lifecycle of potential Postgraduate (Taught) applicants, with focus on the merits of holding a Postgraduate (Taught) Open Day. The Convenor then asked the member's feedback as to whether there was Academic Merit to hold a Postgraduate (Taught) Open Day with staff commitment in mind.

UPDATE OF THE CONVENOR OF THE QAA SCOTLAND ENHANCEMENT THEME INSTITUTIONAL GROUP

- 4.1 Professor K Shennan updated the Committee on the work of the institutional team that are engaged in the current QAA Scotland theme of Student Transitions, which ends in June. Going forward the Committee will receive regular updates from Prof Shennan.
- 4.2 The Committee were informed of the resources available to them on both the University website and the QAA Scotland website. Members were encouraged to browse them and feedback the information to their respective schools. Prof Shennan to provide the Clerk with links to then distribute to the Committee.
ACTION: CLERK/PROF SHENNAN
- 4.3 It was noted that PGT students struggle with transitions and need more focus and support institutionally.
- 4.4 The Committee were made aware that limited funding was available via the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme, to explore the way in which they as an individual, or as a member of a School, might develop approaches to any aspect of student transitions. (More information: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/current-theme-student-transitions-4047.php>)

PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING POLICY

- 5.1 The Committee discussed the paper on proposed Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy.

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- 5.2 The Committee were informed that at the Undergraduate Committee meeting it was noted that there has already been a policy drafted in regards to recording lectures that had been passed to the University Committee for Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The Committee noted that further guidance on recording was to be clarified, and therefore, the Committee cannot accept a position today in regards to the recording of lecture.
- 5.3 The Committee agreed with the spirit and the aims of the policy but raised concerns regarding the language of the policy. The Committee agreed that the policy should be redrafted to be more flexible in its wording to ensure that the policy was not restrictive and also adaptable to the needs of specific courses.
- 5.2 The Committee, whilst agreeing with the aims of the policy, concluded that they would not be able to endorse the policy in its current form.

PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A DEADLINE FOR STUDENTS REQUIRING SPECIFIC EXAM ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the paper on the Proposal to Introduce a Deadline for Students Requiring Specific Exam Arrangements.

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- 6.2 The Committee approved the policy after ensuring that there would be sufficient flexibility in place to cover emergency situations.

SNAPSHOT 3 – TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE POPULATION, 7 FEBRUARY 2017

- 7.1 The Committee discussed the Snapshot 3 – Taught Postgraduate Population figures.

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- 7.1 The Committee raised concerns that the figures provided did not reflect the actual population of PGT students throughout the University. The Convenor requested that clarification be sought on how they were compiled.
- 7.2 The Convenor asked the Committee what further data the Committee may find useful. The Committee requested a Headcount of PGT students broken in Full-time, Part-time and Online students per School and FTE figures broken into home and international students for income purposes.

ACTION: CLERK

SCHOOL UPDATE ON DELIVERY OF NEW ONLINE TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES FOR 2017/18

- 8.1 The School Representatives updated the Committee on new online taught postgraduate programmes they had coming in for 2017/18.
- 8.2 The Committee also discussed some of the difficulties they have had introducing existing courses, noting that new programmes should have a substantial lead in for marketing purposes, and even with adequate marketing time it can be challenging to recruit new students.
- 8.3 It was noted that some members of the Committee had queries and concerns on the fee structures for the new programmes, particularly in regards to charging home and international students the same fees. In particular, some members of the Committee were concerned with the increase in fees for home students.
- 8.4 The Convenor encouraged all members of the Committee to undertake the storyboarding exercise as it could provide a useful tool to reflect upon courses and create opportunities to develop courses suitable

for online learning. The Convenor also reminded the Committee that there were central resources available to assist in the development of online courses.

UPDATE ON LAUNCH OF POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY FOR 2017

- 9.2 Dr C Calder provided the Committee with a brief overview of the results from the 2016 Survey and advised Schools that they can contact him to request a full overview of their individual statistics for the School.
- 9.1 The Committee discussed concerns surrounding the use of the data from the survey and particularly if other institutions or the wider public could see data specific to the University. Dr C Calder assured the committee that data was only used for benchmarking purposes and results for specific institutions could not be identified.
- 9.1 The Committee agreed that the survey could be launched immediately.

DEGREE CLASSIFICATION – CONTINUATION OF THE DUAL SYSTEM

- 10.1 The Convenor asked the Committee to consider whether it was necessary for new PGT students to be classified on the dual system.

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TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATION

- 11.1 The Convenor asked Mr L Fuller to set up a meeting with School Representatives to discuss ways to ensure Taught Postgraduate Student Representation.

ACTION: MR L FULLER