

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Prof J Masthoff (Convenor), Dr A Cuest Ciscar, Dr H Hutchison, Dr B Lord, Dr D Maccallum, Prof N Mauthner, Dr A McKinnon, Dr J Oliver, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Dr R Shanks, Dr S Woodin, with Mr R Findlay (Clerk), and Ms K Christie and Prof R Wells in attendance for item 3.

Apologies: Dr C Bestwick, Dr M Bodig, Mr L Fuller, Prof C Montagna, and Ms S Paterson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING 24 MARCH 2016

1. The minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2016 were approved.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

- 2.1 The Committee noted the new remit and composition and the focus on Postgraduate Taught provision. The Convenor confirmed that there were proposals awaiting approval by Court to establish a separate committee that would oversee Postgraduate Research student provision.
- 2.2 The Convenor confirmed that the Committee would be chaired by one of the Deans of Postgraduate Study.
- 2.2 The Committee requested that the Composition be amended to include both the Deans of Postgraduate Studies.

ACTION: CLERK
- 2.3 The Committee requested that the remit be revisited when the new Convenor was in place.

DELIVERY PARTNERS – PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

- 3.1 Professor Wells outlined that the purpose of the document concerning Delivery Partners was to formalise the methods and principles by which partners for the delivery of programmes would be chosen. The document was intended to cover situations where a third party organisation worked with University of Aberdeen to provide infrastructure and personnel to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- 3.2 The Committee expressed concern as to whether freedom was given for partners to set assessment and marking procedures. Professor Wells stated that assessment and marking procedures would continue to be subject to Aberdeen Quality Assurance procedures, and that, where practical, assessment at a Delivery Partner should be the same as the Aberdeen version of the programme. The Committee did express concern that the document did not make that sufficiently explicit, or make sufficient mention of Senate and Quality Assurance procedures.
- 3.3 Professor Wells stated that the Delivery Partner would do the marking of assessment. The Committee asked how it could be assured that marking was in accordance with Aberdeen criteria. Professor Wells confirmed that Aberdeen would undertake moderation.
- 3.4 Professor Wells confirmed that Aberdeen would set the criteria for recruitment of staff at the Delivery Partner, but the Committee expressed concern that the document did not mention what the criteria for appointment would be. The Committee was unclear how it would be assured that the recruitment of staff had been undertaken according to Aberdeen criteria.

- 3.5 The Committee expressed concern that the partnership review was to be done every 5 years. It was asked if it would be more suitable to review the partnership at the end of the first year of operation. Professor Wells stated that all programmes would be subject to the same annual course and programme reviews as Aberdeen programmes.
- 3.6 Concern was expressed that research programmes are not currently subjected to the same annual review process as taught programmes; therefore, a review at the end of 5 years might be too late to discover any issues with delivery. Professor Wells stated that the Quality Assurance Committee would continue to be required to approve the establishment of research programmes.
- 3.7 The Committee asked if student applications for admission could be scrutinised by Aberdeen in order to ensure the quality of students being admitted, or at least for Aberdeen to look at the borderline cases. Professor Wells questioned if there was a need given Aberdeen will set the criteria for admission.
- 3.8 The Committee expressed concern that the expansion of campuses overseas might lead to a withdrawal of expertise at Aberdeen. Professor Wells stated that the Quality Assurance Agency required institutions to have expertise within their institution before they could deliver programmes at an external partner; therefore, the withdrawal of expertise at home would require the withdrawal of the Delivery Partner arrangement.
- 3.9 The Committee asked how plagiarism would be managed. Professor Wells stated that Aberdeen could insist that all submissions were made through Turnitin. The Delivery Partner would be required to follow Aberdeen procedures where plagiarism was suspected.
- 3.10 The Committee expressed concern about the resource available at Aberdeen for carrying out moderation of assessments. Professor Wells confirmed that, where a partnership was set up through the procedures outlined, there would be a link tutor established within the relevant School who would have responsibility for liaising with the Delivery Partner. This role would have FTE associated with it. It would be funded by the centre initially, but, as income would go back to the School, it would then be funded by the School.
- 3.11 Professor Wells and Ms Christie requested that any further comments be fed back to the Clerk by close of play on Wednesday 21 September.

MARKING TIME IN FIRST HALF SESSION

- 4.1 The Committee discussed the proposal on how to extend marking time for the first half session.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that, because the curriculum was more fixed, Postgraduate students were not affected in the same way as Undergraduates in regard to returning marks in time for the start of the second half session.
- 4.3 The Committee agreed that an extension of the deadline into the first week of teaching was most practical.
- 4.4 The Committee noted the statement in 4.4 that first half session marks could be provisional and did not require External Examiner until the final Examiners' meeting. The Committee noted that January start PGT programmes would need to have External Examiner approval of first half session marks.
- 4.5 Concern was expressed about the lack of time for staff involved with Postgraduate Taught programmes to take holidays during the summer. It was noted that resits, marking and supervision of dissertation/projects reduced the window in which holidays could be taken before the start of the new academic year. It was agreed to refer this issue to the Vice Principal of People Strategy.

ACTION: CLERK

DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

- 5.1 The Committee discussed the proposal to continue with the use of the Grade Spectrum alongside the Grade Point Average until it was demonstrated that the full range of the marking scale was being used.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that marking had been done according to the criteria set and that, if you admitted students to Postgraduate degrees on the basis of 2:1s, you would not necessarily expect to see a high proportion of grades below B3. Given the data presented was for the university as a whole, so combining UG and PG, the committee felt that you would normally expect to see the curve of grade distribution around the C mark region. The Committee expressed concern about possible grade inflation if the target was to ensure that there were more A1s and A2s.
- 5.3 The Committee did not feel that results could justify the continued use of the Grade Spectrum alongside the Grade Point Average. The Committee requested to see the results for Postgraduate courses only, on a School-by-School basis. The Committee also requested to see the results on a percentage basis rather than numbers.
- ACTION: CLERK**
- 5.4 The Committee felt that continuing the use of two marking schemes would be complicated for students, particularly because new students for 2016/17 had already been informed of the criteria used for marking.
- 5.5 It was queried whether the requirement to obtain a B3 mark in the dissertation/project in order to receive a Commendation, or an A5 for a Distinction, was justified in a Grade Point Average system. Some members felt that the dissertation/project mark was a sign of quality, but others felt there might be a case for different Schools to be able to choose different models for determining classification, depending on the structure and requirements of the particular programme. It was agreed to revisit this issue when the new Convenor was in place.

ISSUES /PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

6. The Committee felt the following were immediate priorities for the Postgraduate Committee:
- revisit the Committee's remit
 - degree classification for Postgraduate Taught programmes
 - Common Grade Scale distribution, with results of the marking spread to be given by School and by percentage.

CPD FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING: UPDATE ON SECOND YEAR OF OPERATION

7. The Committee noted an updated on the operation of the CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching.