

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING 6 OCTOBER 2014

Present: Dr J Mastoff (Convenor), Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Prof R Evans-Jones, Dr P Fernandes, Dr A Halsall, Prof P Hannaford, Mr R Henthorn, Dr C Kee, Dr D Maccallum, Dr A Mckinnon, with Ms C Croydon, Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr L Leiper, MR M Roberts, Mrs K Smith in attendance.

Apologies: Dr H Battu, Dr C Bestwick, Prof B Connolly, Dr S Cornelius, Dr H Hutchison, Dr D Marais, Prof P McGeorge, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Mrs K Slessor,

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 7 APRIL 2014

1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2014.
Copy filed as PGC/061014/001

MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 An amendment was requested regarding 23.2 on the previous minutes to state that although SSLCs should be held later in the academic year, this should not be so late that feedback cannot be actioned.
- 2.2 The Committee noted that there was no update regarding number 24 on the previous minutes.

ACTION: CLERK

UPDATE FROM RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT UNIT – ORAL UPDATE

- 3.1 The Committee noted that all new PhD students would receive skills development and career development assistance on 7th and 14th November 2014.
- 3.2 New Supervisors would receive training over three sessions; initially this would be within CASS, with COPS following next February. It would then be rolled out to CLSM. There would also be refresher training provided for existing supervisors.
- 3.3 The training had been provided with the goal of improving completion rates.

**UPDATE FROM SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE REPRESENTATIVES ON 2014 PGT
REGISTRATION**

- 4.1 The Committee received feedback from School representatives on registration for 2014/15.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that, in general, registration had gone well and overall student numbers had slightly increased from last year. However it should be noted that many schools reported that while numbers of home students had increased in certain areas, numbers of overseas students had slightly decreased.
- 4.3 The Committee also noted that many Schools reported a high number of deferrals. One reason for this may have been that there were issues with the visa process for Nigerian students. It was agreed that the University should seek to diversify its student profile so as not to be overly reliant on a specific market.

- 4.4 The Committee noted that lack of available accommodation may also impact upon student numbers. It was recognised that discussion had taken place to address these issues.
- 4.5 The Committee noted that Schools had been looking at ways to improve their conversion rates.
- 4.6 Prof P Hanford offered his appreciation and acknowledgment of the hard work undertaken in order to make recruitment a success. .

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES) 2014- REPORT ON RESULTS

- 5.1 The Committee discussed the results of the 2014 PTES survey.
Copy filed as PGC/061014/002
- 5.2 The Committee noted the small number of responses to this survey and the Convenor stated that this should be considered when interpreting the report. Ways of increasing the level of response were discussed and included timetabling a session for this to be completed.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that students had felt they had not been given adequate opportunity to provide feedback on the programme. Students had also felt that feedback they had provided would not benefit them directly, but would only be felt by the following year's cohort. The Committee noted that Engineering have brought in a mini Scfe exercises to gather feedback at an early stage, with the aim of enacting for the present cohort. The Committee requested that Dr Thevar pass a copy of this form to Robert to distribute.
ACTION: CLERK/ DR THEVAR
- 5.4 The Committee discussed ways to improve the organisation section of the survey and the feedback regarding the following statement: 'The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance'. The Convenor requested that each representative ensured this information was published in a prominent place and reinforced to students so that they were aware.
- 5.5 The Committee discussed ways to improve the assessment section of the survey and the feedback regarding the following statement: 'Feedback on my work has been prompt'. The Committee noted that the University regulations stated the deadline was 3 weeks after the submission date, but it was agreed this is not always adhered to.
- 5.6 The Committee noted that satisfactory individual feedback regarding assignments was also about ensuring students had time to act on any issues before forthcoming assignments were due.
- 5.7 The Committee noted that it was important for the University to address students' expectations and to make them aware at the start of their study as to when they can expect to receive feedback and why it may take as long as it does to receive it.
ACTION: CLERK

CURRICULUM REFORM FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE

- 6.1 The Committee discussed arrangements for CREF at taught postgraduate level.
Copy filed as PGC/061014/003
- 6.2 The Convenor clarified that it had been agreed that CREF would be done on the programme level by showing how each programme will meet graduate attributes.
- 6.3 It was agreed that the details of graduate attributes should be collated by the end of February 2015 - in time for the meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee in March 2015.

NEW OFF CAMPUS FORM FOR PGR STUDENTS

- 7.1 The Committee discussed the proposed new off campus form, designed to facilitate the charging of full tuition fees where appropriate, rather than a reduction.
Copy filed as PGC/061014/004
- 7.2 The Committee discussed concerns about the recommendation as to whether higher fees should be charged or not resting with the supervisor. The Committee noted that it would be necessary to ensure that students were treated equally. It was noted that Graduate Schools would have to scrutinise the forms closely in order to ensure this happened.
- 7.3 The Committee also noted concerns that the assumption was still for a reduction in fees to be applied, unless otherwise stated.
- 7.3 Although concerns were expressed, the Committee agreed to approve the form in order for to be in place for new research students, with the option for possible review at a later date.
ACTION: CLERK

AT RISK MONITORING OF RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES

- 8.1 It was agreed to postpone this item until the next meeting.

HEFCE GUIDANCE ON PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR PGT STUDENTS – issued June 2014

- 9.1 The Committee noted guidance provided from HEFCE on providing information to PGT students.
Copy filed as PGC/061014/005
- 9.2 The Convenor requested that Colleges distribute the guidance to their Marketing Officers.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1 The Committee noted that the Teaching Award was only made for undergraduate teaching and not taught postgraduate. The Committee agreed to recommend to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning that a taught postgraduate equivalent be created.
ACTION: CLERK
- 10.2 Dr Maccalum asked that the Committee be aware that new rules had been due to come in to force to provide flexibility to elite sports/music students so they can pursue their additional activities. If a student was unable to meet a deadline on an assignment due to sporting commitments, then they could apply for an extension, which could be considered on the following grounds:
- The students' academic record
 - The student must be considered 'elite' in their additional activity.