

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 8 March 2017

Present: Professor C Kee (Convener), Mr C Anucha, Dr T Baker, Mr C Duncan, Mr L Fuller, Professor H Hutchison, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Dr B Scharlau, Professor K Shennan and Dr S Tucker, with Ms K Christie, Mr P Fantom, Dr R Bernard and Ms E Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Professor Wells was in attendance for item 5.
Mrs Fernandes was in attendance for item 7.

Apologies: Professor P McGeorge, Professor J Masthoff, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr D Philips and Ms P Spence

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2016

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/001)

- 1.1 Members of the Committee noted that items 4.10, 4.11 and 5.1, listed as deferred to the next meeting of the UCTL, would be considered at the meeting to be held on 3 May 2017 at which the Convener, Professor McGeorge would be in attendance.
- 1.2 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 The Committee noted that the following in regards to the actions arising from the meeting held on 7 December 2016:
 - Minute point 2.2: The figures requested regarding the number of RUK students registered in 2016/17 had been circulated to the Committee.
 - Minute point 2.5: The proposal regarding the removal of the Enhanced Study tab had been appropriately forwarded to the Senate. The Committee were informed that the Senate had approved the proposal.
 - Minute point 4.1: Professor Kee confirmed that this action remained outstanding, pending a scheduled meeting to be held with the Planning Directorate.
 - Minute point 4.5: Dr Baker updated the Committee on the Assessment and Feedback sub-group's work in regards setting and guidance on 2020 targets. Dr Baker confirmed that individual, detailed School plans were now under discussion at School level and with the Undergraduate Committee.
 - Minute point 4.9: Dr Tucker informed the Committee that regular update meetings were now being held with the Teaching Deans and Professional Services.

Action: Professor Kee

- 2.2 Members of the Committee requested an update on the consideration of the University's participation in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in January 2017. The Committee were informed that the Senate had agreed that the University should not take part in the TEF at this time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 3.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health and Safety.

PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A DEADLINE FOR STUDENTS REQUIRING SPECIFIC EXAM ARRANGEMENTS

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/002)

- 4.1 The Committee received a paper proposing the introduction of a deadline for students who require specific exam arrangements. The Committee noted that the lack of a formal deadline has resulted in a lack of clarity for both students and staff about what arrangements may be possible, reasonable and manageable, often at very short notice, for forthcoming examination diets.
- 4.2 Members of the Committee were informed that both the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Committees had agreed with the proposal, subject to the inclusion of specific deadline dates as now included in the paper.
- 4.3 The Committee approved the proposal with no objections raised.

Action: Clerk

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY IN QATAR – AFG LIMITED: PROPOSED QATAR (DOHA) CAMPUS

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/003)

- 5.1 The Committee received the proposal (and associated Quality Assurance report) regarding a partnership with the Al Faleh Group for Educational and Academic Services (AFG) to set up a branch campus in Doha, Qatar. The Committee were informed that the proposal had been developed using the agreed procedures for a partnership of this type. The Committee noted the two stage nature of the proposal, with a limited number of programmes to be launched in September 2017 with more to follow at least 3 years later.
- 5.2 The Committee were informed that the Operating Board, for its part, had approved the partnership and proposed campus.
- 5.3 Members of the Committee questioned how financially lucrative the project would be. Although the business plan was not a matter for the UCTL, the Committee were informed that income revenue was likely to begin at 10% in year one, and increase steadily to 25% by year 3 and beyond.
- 5.4 The Convener of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) confirmed her satisfaction with the quality of the proposal and confirming that the Committee as a whole had also given their approval, subject to the strict adherence of the University's Quality Assurance processes.
- 5.5 The Committee noted the positive opportunities the Qatar project, in addition to other Transnational Education (TNE) projects, would have for students wishing to engage in student exchange.
- 5.6 Members of Committee questioned whether or not Trade Unions were permitted in-country. The Committee were informed that the partner and the University had undertaken full due diligence in this regard, noting the willingness of the partner to engage in staff issues and in sharing the same views, rights and obligations as are held within Aberdeen.

- 5.7 The Committee noted that programme representatives would be required to visit the campus twice per course and that this was expected to take place during fresher's (or induction) week and at another point to be determined. The Committee noted the requirement of the partner for this minimum level of interaction and agreed that this would allow for the observation of quality assurance processes in addition to teaching opportunities.
- 5.7 For its part, the UCTL approved the proposal, agreeing that it should now be passed to the Senate for discussion.

CAREERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/004)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received the annual report for 2015-16 from the Careers service, noting the main tenets of the report as follows:

- The introduction of *PD1001/1501: Professional Skills* as a compulsory online course for all first year undergraduate students. The Committee were informed that approximately 800 students had completed the course to date and that the course was also to be adopted by the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition for students undertaking the MBChB. Members of the Committee proposed that post-summer resit diet may be an appropriate time to remind students of the course, before they return to undertake second year.
- Members of the Committee noted that a CRM tool was now in use in the Careers Service to record engagement. Members of the Committee noted that this data could now provide Schools with information on the number of their students engaging with the service.
- Members of the Committee noted the Placements run by the service, including those financially sponsored by Santander.
- The Committee noted that the Schools of Engineering and Social Science were working to promote Work Based Learning and develop projects in this regard.
- The Committee noted the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data and the difficult environment currently faced by graduating Engineers and Geologists. Overall, however, the Committee recognised that the University maintains a low level of unemployment in its graduates. The Committee noted work being undertaken by the Positive Outcomes sub-group with Schools in regards DLHE data. Members of the Committee proposed that this data be used more positively and perhaps within the prospectus as a marketing tool.
- The Committee noted the difficulties currently being faced by the Careers Service in terms of staffing levels and were informed of the importance of maintaining a strong team, particularly as employability remains an important focus of the University and Higher Education (HE) sector as a whole.

GO ABROAD TUTORS AND OUTWARD MOBILITY DEMAND

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/005)

- 7.1 The Committee received the paper on Go Abroad Tutors and Outward Mobility Demand. The attention of the Committee was drawn to the main tenets of the paper as follows:
- The increase in demand for both incoming and outgoing student exchange places.

- The pressure such demand now places on tutors and the perceived requirement for a clear definition of this role and its duties as a consequence.
 - The introduction of an administrative contact with schools to allow for the updating of information such as when staff are on sabbatical.
 - The proposal to split exchanges in half, allowing a separate incoming or outgoing cohort in each half session.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee agreed that it would be useful to more clearly stipulate the requirements of a tutor, noting that tutors had previously requested networking amongst tutors to allow for training, an increased knowledge base and sharing of experience. It was noted that while a handbook for tutors currently existed, this could be further developed. The Deans offered their support in providing training and networking in this regard.
- 7.3 The Committee noted the figures as provided in the paper and questioned why fewer student pursue exchanges than those who apply. The Committee noted that not all students will go through with an exchange (for a variety of reasons) but that there exists far greater demand than there are exchange opportunities.
- 7.4 The Committee noted the difficulties experienced by tutors and incoming tutees in being able to appropriately timetable courses they wished to undertake. The Committee recognised that while this University seeks confirmation of the courses a student can undertake before an exchange will be confirmed, this is not the case for students coming to Aberdeen.
- 7.5 Members of the Committee recognised the points raised in the paper and expressed views as to the importance of training and networking for tutors. Whilst agreeing with the general sentiment of the paper the Committee agreed that the specific nature of the recommendations meant that these were matters which were outside its scope and should therefore be referred to the next meeting of the Heads of School.

Action: Clerk/Mrs Fernandes

UPDATES AND MINUTES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 8.1 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the sub-committees of the UCTL.

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/006a)

- 8.2 Members of the Committee received an update from the Convener of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) on the recent work of the QAC. This included the consideration of the proposed campus in Qatar, Annual Programme Review submission from schools and responses to External Examining reports.
- 8.3 The Convener of the QAC expressed her concern to the Committee regarding the resource implications for the QAC involved in the number of ongoing Transnational Education (TNE) projects.

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT COMMITTEE

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/006b)

- 8.4 The Convener of the Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) updated the UCTL on the most recent meeting of the Committee. The UCTL were informed of the Committee's change in name to reflect the fact that issues relating to Postgraduate Research would no longer be considered by this Committee. The Convener further informed the Committee of the consideration of online learning, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and discussions surrounding the use of Postgraduate Student representatives.
- 8.5 The Convener of the PGTC noted that the Committee had considered a paper from Student Support regarding a proposed Accessible and Inclusive Learning policy. It was noted that this item had not proceeded to the UCTL for discussion, pending redrafting (minute 8.6 below also refers).

UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE

(copy filed as UCTL/080316/006c)

- 8.6 The Convener of the Undergraduate Committee (UGC) confirmed that the UGC had also considered the proposed Accessible and Inclusive Learning policy, agreeing that it was not yet suitable for progression to the UCTL. The Committee were further informed that the UGC had considered the deadline for students who require specific exam arrangements (minute point 4 above refers), proposed guidelines on evacuation from an examination venue in the event of a fire and initial discussions regarding how plagiarism is dealt with (particularly in a formative manner) by the University.

INSTITUTIONALLY VERIFIABLE CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

(copy filed as UCTL/080317/007)

- 9.1 The Committee approved the proposal from the Careers Service that both the InternPlus and Leadership Academy be included within the Enhanced Transcript as accredited activities from September 2016. The Committee further approved the inclusion of the role of Athena SWAN Self-assessment Team student member as a recognised activity from September 2016.

STUDENT GUIDE TO SUPPORT ONLINE PROFESSIONALISM AND EMPLOYABILITY: OUTCOME FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN LEARNING & TEACHING ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

(copy filed as UCTL/080317/008)

- 9.2 The Committee received the student guide to support Online Professionalism and Employability, an outcome from the University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme. The Committee noted the successful output from the project and was content to endorse its use and wider circulation across the University. In this regard the Committee suggested consideration be additionally given to electronic distribution. The Committee also noted the value of the LTEP.

GRADUATION DATES

(copy filed as UCTL/080317/009)

- 10.1 The Committee note the dates and allocations of students for the June 2017 Graduation Ceremonies as approved by the Convener in February.

DATES OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 3 May 2017 at 2pm, in Committee Room 2, University Office.