

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the meeting held on 15 May 2013

*Present:* Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Ms J Bjorkqvist, Ms K Christie, Dr B Connolly, Dr S Davies, Mr C Duncan, Mr P Fantom, Mr R Henthorn, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Masthoff, Professor B Naphy, Dr M Pryor, Dr K Shennan, Dr R Wells, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary)

*Apologies:* Ms A Deseilligny, Mr D Paterson

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2013**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/001)*

- 1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 23 January 2013 were approved as an accurate record of discussions held.

**ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/002)*

- 2.1 The Committee acknowledged the paper on Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and noted the confirmation of the dates of the panel visit in addition to the composition of the reviewing panel itself. The Committee acknowledged the work being undertaken to produce the Reflective Analysis, the analytical documentation required for ELIR, and noted the draft of *Section 3: Enhancing the Student Learning Experience* presented to them.
- 2.2 The Committee acknowledged the importance of demonstrating to the ELIR panel the initiatives the University has in place for students; and, in doing so, agreed that in addition to providing facts it was imperative to be able to appropriately reflect on the work the University undertakes.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed that there is a considerable amount of good practice across the University that could and should be reported to the ELIR panel. Members of the Committee proposed that a summary list of ongoing initiatives and outcomes may be a useful tool for the Reflective Analysis.
- 2.4 The Committee were reminded that the ELIR documentation will be submitted by the 9 August and were asked to re-issue calls to Schools for examples for inclusion in the documentation. The Committee agreed that any further comments should be returned to [elir@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:elir@abdn.ac.uk).

**MODEL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

*(Copy filed UCTL/150513/003)*

- 3.1 The Committee noted the paper on the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) and the requirement that the University adhere to it. The Committee noted that adherence was now a condition of grant.
- 3.2 The Committee expressed dissatisfaction that the University's current Appeals and Complaints policy would be forced to change as a consequence of the MCHP but acknowledged the intention to maintain as much of the existing process as would be permissible.
- 3.3 The Committee agreed that the University should now operate a separate Complaints Handling Procedure and an Appeals Policy but that the spirit of the integrated policy would be maintained as far as possible. The Committee noted the intention to produce revised leaflets and guidance for students

and to ensure that the changes have as little an impact as possible by keeping elements such as a single form for students to complete.

- 3.4 The Committee agreed with the proposal to introduce an Unacceptable Actions Policy and that this new policy should apply to both appeals and complaints in addition to student discipline and fitness to practise investigations.
- 3.5 The Committee further noted the requirement of the SPSO to record all complaints whether made informally or formally. The Committee acknowledged the potential complexity of this task and associated resource implications. The Committee agreed that a pragmatic approach should be followed and that the University should discuss its proposed methods for doing so with other Institutions required to implement the SPSO requirement.
- 3.6 The Committee noted that further guidance, including appropriate training, would be provided once a decision had been taken on how best to approach this requirement.
- 3.7 The Committee approved the proposed Policy and Procedure and agreed to forward to Senate for further approval.

#### **POLICY ON STUDENT ABSENCE**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/004)*

- 4.1 The Committee acknowledged the Policy on Student Absence, brought to the Committee following discussions at the January meetings of the UCTL and Heads of School. The Committee noted the inclusion of allowing students at levels 1 and 2 to self-certificate absence from assessments as previously discussed and approved.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the tightening up of absence rules and the revision of the time period for reporting an absence to a maximum of 3 working days, with the expectation that absence would be reported 'on the day'. The Committee agreed that a form within MyAberdeen for completion by students was the most appropriate way of asking students to report absence.
- 4.3 The Committee raised the issue of monitoring the number of absences a student may report and whether or not the University has a duty of care to introduce a 'trigger' should a student incur a certain number of absences. The Committee agreed that the University's monitoring processes should pick up on issues such as these, however, agreed that the process should be continually reviewed.
- 4.4 The Committee noted some concern at the introduction of 'SC' (self-certificate) to the student record. The Committee were informed that an SC would reflect an occurrence where a self-certificate had been submitted and while it would entitle a student to a first sitting at the next available opportunity, it was unlikely that it would exempt a student from the payment of the resit fee.
- 4.5 The Committee approved the proposed policy and agreed that it should proceed to Senate for further approval to allow it to be piloted amongst all Schools.

#### **LEARNING & TEACHING OPERATIONAL PLAN AND RISK REGISTER**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/005)*

- 5.1 The Committee noted the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan and Risk Register. The Committee acknowledged the significant number of tasks to be addressed.
- 5.2 The Committee agreed that the Learning and Teaching Operational Plan could align with College Teaching and Learning Plans and that these should be submitted to the UCTL for information.

**Action: RW, SD, AL**

- 5.3 The Committee acknowledged that the section on Employability should be edited to include progress updates.

**Action: PF**

- 5.4 In considering the Risk Register the Committee agreed that the OneSource project and its associated mitigating actions should be included.

### **CURRICULUM REFORM AND PGT PROVISION**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/006)*

- 6.1 The Committee considered the paper on Curriculum Reform and Postgraduate Taught Provision. The Committee acknowledged the work of the Postgraduate Committee to consider the issue and provide recommendations for consideration.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the feeling of the Postgraduate Committee that postgraduate courses should be aligned with Undergraduate courses and that courses should be worth 15 credit points or multiples thereof. The Committee agreed with this proposal.
- 6.3 The Committee acknowledged that for Postgraduate Taught it would be difficult to identify Graduate Attributes on a course basis. The Committee agreed that Graduate Attributes should therefore be gathered on a programme basis.

**Action: Clerk**

### **PGR GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/007)*

- 7.1 The Committee noted and approved the paper on Postgraduate Research Graduate Attributes. The Committee agreed that it was vital to identify how best to embed these within PGR programmes.

### **FEES FOR EXTERNAL ITR PANEL MEMBERS**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/008)*

- 8.1 The Committee considered the attached paper on fees for External ITR Panel Members following a complaint received from an External Subject Specialist. The Committee acknowledged the complaint in addition to a summary of the fees paid by other institutions to External panel members.
- 8.2 The Committee acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by panel members, however, noted that the University was not out of line with other Institutions. The Committee agreed that the Convener should respond to the External Subject Specialist.

**Action: Convener**

### **CURRICULUM REFORM EVALUATION**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/009)*

- 9.1 The Committee considered the attached paper on Evaluating Curriculum Reform (CRef). The Committee noted that the current Programme Year 4 students would be the last cohort to graduate who had begun their studies prior to the introduction of CRef and therefore would represent the last opportunity for the gathering of baseline data for evaluation.
- 9.2 The Committee acknowledged the suggestions for surveying these students and in doing so noted concern at the introduction of another survey of students. Members of the Committee suggested that alternatives to a survey such as focus groups or the use of a blog where students could provide detailed comments may be more suitable.

- 9.3 In discussing Curriculum Reform (CRef) the Committee agreed that the Enhanced Study Group (ESG) could now be disbanded and its responsibilities absorbed into the work of the UCTL.

**UNIVERSITY WIDE EMPLOYER/ACADEMIC PROGRAMME ADVISORY BOARDS (PAB'S) PROGRESS REPORT:  
FIRST YEAR OUTCOMES**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/010)*

- 10.1 The Committee noted the paper documenting the outcomes of Programme Advisory Boards (PABs). The Committee were informed of the broadly good progress of the PABs and that they would now meet at least once a year. 13 PABs currently exist across the University and the Committee noted that where any gaps exist, these should be identified and steps taken to fill them as soon as possible.
- 10.2 The Committee agreed that a summary of PABs should be submitted to the UCTL for review.

**MINUTES AND UPDATE REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/011)*

- 11.1 The Committee noted the minutes from the Quality Assurance, Postgraduate and Undergraduate Committees.
- 11.2 The Committee considered the issue raised by the Convener of the Quality Assurance Committee regarding the review of External Examining reports.
- 11.3 The Committee noted the issue raised by the Convener of the Postgraduate Committee identifying an issue in the submission of PhDs without express support from supervisors. The Committee agreed with the Postgraduate Committees proposal that the nomination form be amended to alert a supervisor to the fact that a PhD will be submitted within 30 days, thus allowing them to make comment should they wish to do so.

**FOR ROUTINE APPROVAL**

**RETENTION FORUM**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/012)*

- 12.1 The Committee approved the establishment of a Retention Forum with a focus on the dissemination and sharing of good practice in regard to retention.

**QUALITY CODE ON ACADEMIC APPEALS & COMPLAINTS**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/013)*

- 12.2 The Committee approved the mapping of the University policies and procedures onto Section B9 of the QAA Quality Code on Academic Appeals & Complaints. This section of the QAA Code which has recently been published can be accessed at:  
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-B9.pdf>

**EVALUATING TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/014)*

- 12.3 The Committee approved the proposed piloting of the methodology for evaluating teaching quality as set out in the attached paper. This was developed by the Working Group on Teaching Quality. It is proposed that to approach the Teaching Fellows Network to ask if they will pilot the system during the first half-session 2013/14 with a view to a report on its outcome being brought to the meeting of UCTL in January 2014.

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/015)*

- 12.4 The Committee approved the Partnership Agreement for use in 2013/14. As noted at the meeting in October 2012, the Agreement should be reviewed annually to ensure its continued fitness for purpose.

## **OFF CAMPUS FEES FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/016)*

- 12.5 The Committee, for its part, approved proposed changes to off campus fees for research students.

## **CONTINUATION FEES FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS DURING THEIR EXTENSION PERIOD**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/017)*

- 12.6 The Committee, for its part, approved proposals for fees for research students after supervised study.

## **REPORTS FROM PROFESSIONAL & STATUTORY BODIES**

- 12.7 The Committee approved a requirement that all reports from Professional & Statutory Bodies should be considered by the Quality Assurance Committee to enable any issues to be addressed and any aspects of good practice to be identified for wider dissemination.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/018)*

- 12.8 The Committee approved the draft Policy Statement on Sustainability in the Curriculum.

## **RESITS FOR POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/019)*

- 12.9 The Committee considered proposed changes (set out in the attached paper) to the University's policy on resits for taught postgraduate programmes. The Committee noted some concerns raised in relation to the proposals and agreed to circulate the paper for comment to members of the PGC and the QAC.

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/020)*

- 12.10 The Committee noted that, in addition to the work on Recognition of Prior Learning considered by the Committee in May 2012, work has also been ongoing in the sector through the QAA Scotland National RPL Framework for Higher Education Project and the new Quality Code Section B6 on Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning. In the light of this, the Committee agreed to invite Student Recruitment and Admissions to develop, drawing on this material, a Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning for consideration at the October 2013 meeting of UCTL.

## **POLICY ON ALCOHOL AND DRUGS MISUSE (STUDENTS)**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/021)*

- 12.11 The Committee, for its part, approved the draft Policy on Alcohol and Drugs Misuse (Students).

## **CHANGES TO GENERAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/022)*

- 12.12 The Committee approved, for its part, the draft Resolution 'Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees'. The Resolution enacts the changes in degree regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee since January 2013. The Committee further approved, for its part, the draft Resolution 'Changes to the Supplementary Regulations for the Degrees in Education'. This Resolution enacts to change of the Degree of BEd to the Degree of MA in Education.

## **STUDENTS ANSWERING MORE THAN REQUIRED NUMBER OF EXAM QUESTIONS**

- 12.13 Following queries received from Schools, the Committee approved the proposal that Schools should ensure consistency of approach in dealing with situations where students answer more than the required number of exam questions and should make students aware of how such situations will be treated.

## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **PERSONAL TUTOR UPDATE**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/023)*

- 13.1 The Committee noted the attached update on the implementation of the personal tutor system. The Committee in particular noted the role descriptor for the role of Personal Tutor which was approved by Senate at its meeting on 1 May.

### **POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT SENAS**

- 13.2 The Committee noted that it is planned, subject to appropriate changes being able to be made, it is intended to move the SENAS system for postgraduate taught provision online rather than the current paper-based system.

### **ONESOURCE STUDENT LIFECYCLE PROJECT UPDATE**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/024)*

- 13.3 The Committee noted the update from the OneSource Student Lifecycle Project.

### **QAA QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

- 13.4 The Committee noted the publication of Chapter B4 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: *Enabling student development and achievement* which can be accessed at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B4.aspx>

The Committee further noted that Chapters B1 *Programme Design and Approval*, B2 *Admissions*, B6 *Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning* and B8 *Programme monitoring and review* and *Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards* are currently out for consultation. Copies of these will be circulated once available.

## **CLASS REPRESENTATIVE REFORM AND IMPROVEMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/025)*

- 13.5 The Committee noted the progress of the Class Representative Reform and the Universal Academic Representation Scheme.

## **REVIEW OF CAS AND GRADE SPECTRUM**

- 13.6 The Committee noted that, in order to test further the proposed revisions to the Common Assessment Scale and the Grade Spectrum, it is planned to do further modelling work using data from the June 2013 Exam Boards. Having undertaken this work and having also reviewed the comments made by Senate in November 2012, it is intended to bring forward recommendations for revisions to CAS and the Grade Spectrum to UCTL in early in 2013/14.

The Committee noted that implementation of any revisions to the CAS and Grade Spectrum once approved are likely not to be implemented in the current student record and rather will be introduced as part of the OneSource Student Lifecycle Project. It is however important that agreement is reached on the assessment schemes in advance of this aspect of the OneSource project being scoped.

### **ONLINE DELIVERY**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/026)*

- 13.7 The Committee noted the paper on Online Delivery.

### **MINIMUM CAREER ENTITLEMENT**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/027)*

- 13.8 The Committee noted plans from the Careers Service for the introduction of a minimum careers entitlement for all undergraduates to enhance student employability.

### **REVIEW OF CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)**

- 13.9 The Committee noted that Professor Duff will chair the sub-group reviewing the academic aspects of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline.

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/028)*

- 13.10 The Committee noted the review of findings of the Autumn 2012 ISB (International Student Barometer) and SB (Student Barometer).

### **TERM DATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/15**

*(Copy filed as UCTL/150513/029)*

- 13.11 The Committee noted the term dates for academic year 2014/15 which were approved by circulation.

### **DATES OF MEETING IN 2013/14**

- 13.12 The Committee noted that meetings in 2013/14 will be held as follows:

Wednesday 30 October 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 22 January 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

Wednesday 14 May 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

### **AOCB**

- 14.1 The Committee were reminded of the impending exam diet and the requirement for the timely return of results. The Committee were also reminded that results sheets must be signed by two members of the exam board, however, this does not have to include the External Examiner.