

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**  
**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Minute of the Meeting held on 21 October 2015

*Present:* Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr T Baker, Dr S Davies, Mr P Fantom, Mr L Fuller, Professor C Kee, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr D Philips, Dr B Scharlau, Professor K Shennan, Ms P Spence, Ms K Christie, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary)

*Apologies:* Ms G Clarke, Dr B Connolly, Mr C Duncan, Dr J Masthoff, Dr S Tucker

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MAY 2015**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/001)*

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2015, subject to the addition to the attendees of Dr T Baker. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held.

**MATTERS ARISING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/002)*

- 2.1 The Committee noted the paper on Marking and Moderation. Members of the Committee were reminded of the work undertaken by the QAC to review University policy on Marking and Moderation, following the introduction of the Common Grading Scale (CGS), to ensure the processes, as defined in the Academic Quality Handbook, remain both appropriate and fit for purpose. The Committee noted that, further to their original consideration by UCTL and prior to their consideration by Senate, some concerns were raised by a Senate member. To allow these issues to be addressed, consideration of the paper at Senate was postponed.
- 2.2 Members of the Committee considered the revised paper, noting key changes to sections 4.4, 6.1, 6.2 and the terminology used throughout. Members of the Committee agreed with the proposals made – noting specifically the need to remind schools that External Examiners should not be changing individual marks, only recommending changes within a boundary as derived from the CGS. Members of the Committee agreed that where External Examiners could not be expected to comment on marks awards (i.e. in a presentation setting) they should be commenting on the examination process.

***Action: Professor K Shennan, Clerk***

- 2.2 The Committee considered a proposal, as requested by the Graduate Schools, to include the induction period for January start programmes within the term dates as published. Members of the Committee specifically noted the importance of term dates in relation to the length of time visas are provided to students. Members of the Committee expressed general support for the proposal commenting, however, of the importance of careful marketing. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the issue should be referred in this regard to Student Recruitment and Admissions (SRAS).

***Action: Clerk***

## REMIT AND COMPOSITION

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/003)*

- 3.1 The Committee agreed that the Remit and Composition of the Committee for 2015/16 was both accurate and representative.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- 4.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health and Safety other than again noting a lack of resolution to the previously identified issue of trips off campus as an area for investigation, an issue arising from a recent College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) business continuity exercise (*point 2.1 of UCTL/130515/001 refers*).
- 4.2 Members of the Committee requested that the Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing be contacted with regards to the consideration of a formal method of collecting information or data in this regard.

**Action: Clerk**

## UPDATE ON UK QUALITY STRUCTURES

- 5.1 The Convener informed the Committee of the current position within UK Higher Education (HE) Quality Structures, noting the unknown position at this time. The Convener impressed upon the Committee the impact any change, even outwith Scotland, would have on the Scottish HE Sector. The Convener assured the Committee that further information would be provided as soon as it became available.

## ADOPTING AN INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/004)*

- 6.1 The Committee noted the paper proposing the adoption of an Institutional Engagement Survey, as created by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), to replace the Institutional Student Survey (ISS) currently operating for non-final year students at undergraduate level. Members of the Committee noted the existing research in support of the Engagement approach, acknowledging the useful outcomes for teaching and learning the proposed questions could obtain. Members of the Committee further acknowledged the issues with the engagement of the student body the University was experiencing and the potential of the Engagement Survey in taking steps to improve this.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee did note concern that the current ISS provided the ability to expose students to a National Student Survey (NSS) style of survey in advance of them being asked to complete the NSS during their final year. While acknowledging the reasoning behind the introduction of the ISS in this regard, the Committee agreed that the results had not been as beneficial as hoped. The Committee agreed to pilot the Institutional Engagement Survey.

**Action: Clerk**

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/005)*

- 7.1 The Committee noted the paper on the Student Experience as drafted for consideration at Senate. The attention of members was drawn to the changes in the style of the report in comparison to previous academic years. Members of the Committee were informed of the

expectation of schools to comment on sections relevant to their area. The Convener stressed to the Committee the importance of not only recognising areas where improvements could be made, but also in focusing on the excellent work being undertaken, to both acknowledge and allow for the sharing of good practice.

- 7.2 Members of the Committee noted data included in the report in relation to the PTES survey. The Committee acknowledged very low and perhaps worrying student engagement with the survey and agreed that this should be referred to the Surveys Group for their consideration.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **REPORT ON ACADEMIC REPRESENTATIVES FROM ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/006)*

- 8.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper, as provided by the Students' Association (SA), on Academic Representatives. The Committee acknowledged the steps being undertaken by the SA to both develop and encourage a community – between the SA and the University – to ensure student representatives fulfil their role effectively and for the benefit of all. Members of the Committee expressed their appreciation of the extremely good and professional resource.
- 8.2 Members of the Committee did note some concern in first year students undertaking manifestos as a means of becoming a representative, so early in their studies, acknowledging that finding the right balance in having students take responsibility for the role, in addition to the stage of their academic career.

#### **STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION RECOGNITION OF ROLES FOR THE TRANSCRIPT**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/007)*

- 9.1 The Committee noted the paper, as provided by the SA, on the Recognition of Roles for the Transcript. Members noted that the Co-Curricular Award, STAR had been included from 2013/14 on the University Transcript as the initial 'accredited' co-curricular activity within enhanced transcript developed as part of Curriculum Reform. At that time it was agreed that the Students' Association (SA) would bring forward proposals for SA activities that would be included as 'recognised' activities on the transcript. Members of the Committee acknowledged the now developed, robust method for recording these activities and the proposal for a pilot scheme aimed at structuring the recognised roles, starting with the Academic Representative System with a view to this information being included on transcripts from the current academic year. The Committee approved the proposals as detailed.

#### **CONSUMER MARKETS AUTHORITY UPDATE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/008)*

- 10.1 Members of the Committee were reminded of the Consumer Markets Authority (CMA) guidance in regard to HEIs compliance with Consumer Protection Law. The Committee were informed of ongoing work to ensure adherence to the guidance, including the consistency of information provided to students in addition to the importance of appropriate communication of information when things do change.

- 10.2 Members of the Committee were reminded of the requirement for adherence across the HE Sector, noting the potential for issues in relation to the constraining of the flexible Scottish degree.

#### **CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/009)*

- 11.1 The Committee considered the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) Annual Report for Academic Year 2014/15. The Committee acknowledged the quality and extent of the work highlighted in the report's content. The Committee agreed that the Report should be made widely available and be disseminated to colleagues within the Colleges as appropriate.

#### **CLSM RESITS DURING 2014/15**

- 12.1 The Committee noted that the paper on the CLSM Resits had not yet been received, nor was Professor Connolly in attendance to speak to the item. Members of the Committee agreed to postpone consideration of this item to January 2016.

**Action: Clerk**

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

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/011)*

- 13.1 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Members of the Committee acknowledged the recent consideration of undergraduate External Examiner reports by the QAC and the issue, as highlighted by some External Examiners, of Enhanced Study at levels 3 and 4, including its inclusion in determining classification. The Committee agreed that Enhanced Study and all issues arising in relation to it, should comprise a topic for discussion at the next meeting of the UCTL.

**Action: Clerk**

- 13.2 The Committee further noted an issue arising from the Convener of the QAC of the supervision of dissertations/theses at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught level. The Committee acknowledged that this issue had arisen from the consideration of a cluster of discipline cases and that a specific school's practices had been identified. The Committee acknowledged the need to collect data relating to discipline cases, or indeed appeals or complaints, and ensure that where an issue may occur it is appropriately identified.

**Action: Clerk**

- 13.3 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the Undergraduate Committee (UGC). The Committee noted the consideration of New Student Pre-arrival Information, Registration and Induction at the meeting. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the information as provided to incoming students, between the acceptance of their place and the start of University. Members of the Committee stressed the importance of the information provided to new students and the methods by which this is provided.

- 13.4 The Committee noted the minutes as provided from the Postgraduate Committee (PGC). The Committee noted the specific issue of the length of PhD enrolment and the differing views as expressed by the PGC. The Committee were informed that Heads of Graduate School were to discuss this issue further. The Committee further noted the issue of Shared Parental Leave and its potential implications for some Postgraduate Research students. Members of the

Committee noted the importance of this issue and its potential implications, agreeing that discussions should be pursued with HR in this regard. Finally, the PGC expressed to the Committee concerns with regards to the return of results deadlines. The Committee agreed to consider these where, and if, possible.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

14.1 Members noted the next meetings of the Committee, to be held as follows:

- (i) Wednesday 20 January 2016 in Committee Room 2
- (ii) Wednesday 11 May 2016 in Committee Room 2

#### **LATEST DATES FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2015/16**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/012)*

15.1 The Committee is approved the dates for the return of results for 2015/16.

#### **UPDATES TO THE GUIDANCE NOTES ON FITNESS TO PRACTICE FOR STUDENTS IN MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY (ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK APPENDIX 5.17C)**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/013)*

15.2 The Committee is asked to approve changes to Appendix 5.17c of the Academic Quality Handbook required to take account of the inclusion of students registered for the Postgraduate Diploma in Physicians Associate Studies (PA); and to align the appeals processes with the mainstream University appeals process.

#### **PROPOSED CHANGE TO OFF-CAMPUS STUDY FORM**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/014)*

15.3 The Committee approved the recommendation of the Postgraduate Committee that the off campus study form be revised so that the default assumption is that full fees will be charged, unless the Head of School authorises a reduction.

#### **GRADUATION DATES**

16.1 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

##### **Thursday 26 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering, Education and Natural & Computing Sciences.

##### **Thursday 26 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School, Schools of Language & Literature and Social Science.

##### **Friday 27 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy, Law and Geosciences.

**Friday 27 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Medical Sciences, Medicine & Dentistry and Psychology

**CPD FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING & TEACHING: UPDATE ON FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/015)*

- 16.2 The Committee noted the update on the CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching.

**ACADEMIC FLEXIBILITY FOR ELITE/HIGH PERFORMANCE – UPDATE OCT 2015**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/016)*

- 16.3 The Committee noted the update on the implementation of the processes for providing academic flexibility to students participating in sports at an elite level.

**GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/017)*

- 17.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper on Grade Point Average (GPA) as prepared for consideration at the forthcoming meeting of the Senate. The Committee acknowledged previous discussions regarding the introduction of an 'Aberdeen GPA' and the proposal as laid out, to introduce a GPA as a Higher Education (HE) Sector move and not one limited to the University of Aberdeen. The Committee noted some concern, particularly expressed by the QAC, with regards to the introduction of another means of assessment to the student population, while the Common Grading Scale (CGS) was still new to existing students.
- 17.2 Members of the Committee noted concern that the GPA could incorporate all four years undertaken by a student and therefore not be comparable to a three year English degree. The Committee discussed the possibility of providing a student with two figures, that of a four year calculation and that of a three year calculation produced to complement their degree classification.
- 17.3 The Committee were assured that their comments would be incorporated into the paper, prior to consideration at Senate.

**INTRODUCTION OF ONLINE 'PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COURSES' FOR ALL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/211015/018)*

- 18.1 The Committee considered the proposal that the Careers and Employability course, currently available to students as part of the introduction of a suite of professional development courses, be made compulsory for all new students from 2016/17. The courses, Careers and Employability, is currently available for students to select as part of their curriculum through MyCurriculum. Members of the Committee noted, however, in order to increase the numbers of students completing the course the request to make the course compulsory for all first year students commencing studies in 2016/17.
- 18.2 The Committee discussed concerns that, for those students who did not engage with the course, it would still appear on the transcript as 'not achieved'; for this reason it was agreed that the first course should be compulsory at this stage so that levels of engagement could be monitored.