

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING 25 OCTOBER 2010

Present: Dr B. Connolly (Convenor), Prof. P. Edwards, Prof. P. McGeorge, and with Ms K. Christie, Mr P. Fantom, Ms Y. Gordon, Dr M. Pryor, Ms R. Sandison, and Mr R. Findlay (Clerk) and Mr A. Wallace in attendance.

Apologies: Prof. D. Houlihan, Prof. B. Long and Prof. B. Naphy.

REMIT/COMPOSITION

- 1.1 The Committee noted and discussed the remit and composition of the Committee.
Copy filed as PGC/251010/001
- 1.2 The Committee agreed to recommend to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning that the appropriate Assistant College Registrar from each of the three Colleges be invited to sit in attendance at the meetings of the Committee, as they were responsible for much of the follow-through on items raised at the Committee.
- 1.3 The Committee agreed to recommend to the UCTL that a representative from Postgraduate Admissions be invited to sit in attendance at the meetings of the Committee.

POSTGRADUATE GRADE SPECTRUM

- 2.1 The Committee approved revisions to the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum.
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POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

- 3.1 The Committee discussed the figures from Snapshot 1 of new registrations for October 2010.
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- 3.2 The Committee noted a significant decline in Overseas Taught Postgraduate students across the three Colleges, compared to the increase in previous years. It was noted that requirements from UKBA may have been responsible, due to visa refusals.
- 3.3 The Committee discussed the figures for Postgraduate applications taken at 18 October 2010.
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- 3.4 The Committee discussed the issue of financial deposits for Postgraduate programmes.
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- 3.5 The Committee agreed there would be benefits to financial deposits being brought in across the whole University for Postgraduate programmes as it would give a stronger indication of how many applicants with offers were to actually register as students. It was noted that there are difficulties in the system in regard to monitoring deposits but that these might be eased if there was a consistent approach across the whole of the University.

3.6 The Committee felt that a deposit of 50% would be consistent with the requirement to meet 50% of the tuition fees at registration.

3.7 The Committee agreed it was in favour in principle, but requested that Student Recruitment provide information on the practices within other Universities in the UK.

ACTION: RS

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT AGENDA (ROBERTS' AGENDA)

4.1 The Committee discussed a paper on the future of research training at the University previously submitted to the University Management Group.

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4.2 The Committee noted the proposal from Roberts' that an extra £200 would be levied on tuition fees for Postgraduates, which would be used to cover costs of research student training. However, it was not clear whether this was to be levied on all Postgraduates Research students or just RCUK funded students.

4.3 The Committee noted that the Skills for Research Excellence website was currently being re-written.

4.4 The Committee was unsure of whether the recommendations contained within the paper had been approved by UMG and requested that confirmation be sought.

ACTION: CLERK

4.5 The Committee agreed that a central skills training unit should be maintained, but that resources should be made available from the money accrued from the fee levy for special initiatives at College level. The Committee requested that this be fed into future discussions at University management-level.

ACTION: CLERK

POSTGRADUATE GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

5.1 The Committee discussed the issue of Graduate Attributes for Postgraduate students.

5.2 The Committee agreed that the Researcher Development Framework, endorsed by the UK Research Councils, should form the basis of any Graduate Attributes for Postgraduate Research students.

5.3 The Committee agreed that a small working group should be formed to discuss and make recommendations on the Graduate Attributes that should be adopted for Taught Postgraduate students.

ACTION: CLERK

STRATEGIC PLAN

6.1 The Committee discussed a draft of the Teaching and Learning section of the Strategic Plan.

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- 6.2 The Committee noted initiatives discussed within Colleges geared towards helping to achieve admissions targets and agreed that there was a need to look at how internal scholarships are used and how they may be used as fee discounts.
- 6.3 The Committee agreed that the University needed to engage in a broad audit of the Postgraduate experience at the University of Aberdeen, i.e. inductions, teaching etc. Once that information is gathered, it will be possible to identify what needs to be done and what should be outlined in the Strategic Plan.
- 6.4 The Committee agreed that responses to the draft Teaching and Learning section should be circulated via email to the Convenor for collation and feedback to UCTL.

ACTION: BC

LEARNING TO WORK 2: POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT WORK PLACEMENT BID

- 7.1 Mr Fantom provided a verbal update for the Committee on the Learning to Work scheme.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the University had been successful in its bid and that four Universities in total would be participating. The scheme was scheduled to start in January 2011 and it was hoped that 20-30 students would participate in year 1, 60 would participate in year 2, and 80 would participate in year 2.
- 7.3 Mr Fantom confirmed that he would liaise with each of the Heads of the Graduate Schools directly as to how the scheme would work.

STUDENT MONITORING

- 8.1 Prof. McGeorge provided a verbal update on proposals to change the current system of student monitoring.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that a working group would be formed to look at the issue and any proposals for changes to Postgraduate monitoring would be submitted to the Committee for consideration.

ANNUAL LOCAL SURVEY OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS 2010 AND POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2010 – REPORT ON RESULTS

- 9.1 The Committee discussed the results of the 2010 surveys of Postgraduate Research students and Postgraduate Taught students.
Copies filed as PGC/251010/006 and PGC/251010/007
- 9.2 The Committee expressed concern over the validity of the data from PTES 2010, due to the survey been openly accessible over the web.
- 9.3 The Committee discussed whether to participate in PTES 2011 and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2011, both national surveys run by the Higher Education Academy. The Committee agreed that local surveys had the benefit of contextualisation, i.e. they could be tailored to the University's specific concerns.
- 9.5 The Committee agreed that the separate local surveys should be run in 2011 to evaluate the experiences of both Taught and Research Postgraduate students. These can then be used to

inform the objectives to be stated in the University's Strategic Plan. The Committee agreed that drafts of each survey should be submitted to the Committee for approval.

ACTION: CLERK