

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2010

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

Apologies: Prof. D. Houlihan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 25 OCTOBER 2010

10 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 25 October 2010.

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JANUARY 2011 START PROGRAMMES (STATUS OF POSTGRADUATE APPLICATIONS, 5 DECEMBER 2010)

11.1 The Committee discussed the status of postgraduate applications at December 2010.

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11.2 The Committee agreed that SRAS should liaise directly with the Graduate Schools in order to discuss the reporting of admissions' statistics and the format in which the information is provided.

ACTION: SRAS/GRADUATE SCHOOLS

FINANCIAL DEPOSITS FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

12.1 The Committee discussed a report from SRAS on the use of financial deposits for PGT programmes at other Scottish institutions.

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12.2 The Committee noted that the suggestion made by the Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2010 of a deposit of 50% of the full tuition fee seemed high in comparison to other Scottish institutions.

12.3 The Committee agreed that financial deposits for PGT programmes, payable by Overseas students, was necessary in order to make predictions on the number of Overseas students who actually come to the University more accurate. It was noted that Overseas students often make multiple applications to different Universities.

12.4 The Committee noted that an Overseas student's likelihood of securing a visa might be increased if they have paid a financial deposit towards their tuition fees.

12.5 The Committee noted that the issue of financial deposits would likely be taken forward by the International Student Recruitment Group and agreed that it was supportive of the introduction of financial deposits for Overseas students. The Committee requested that their advice on future proposals be sought.

ACTION: SRAS

UPDATE ON UKPASS

- 13 The Committee noted that UKPASS was scheduled to be launched at the end of the first quarter of 2011. Initially it would hold the generic postgraduate application form, but that it would, in the long-term, host applications tailored for the needs of each School.

REPORT ON POSTGRADUATE OPEN DAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2010

- 14.1 The Committee discussed the report on the Postgraduate Open Day that was held on 10 November 2010.

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- 14.2 The Committee requested that SRAS provide information on how many visitors to the open day go on to register for a PG degree at Aberdeen as one of the means of evaluating the effectiveness of the day.

ACTION: SRAS

MAKING THE POSTGRADUATE CHOICE – SYNDICATED MARKET RESEARCH REPORT

- 15.1 The Committee discussed a report produced by DVL Smith, in conjunction with several Higher Education Institutions, on the appetite for postgraduate study. Those targeted as part of the report were alumni students, current postgraduate students, prospective postgraduates and undergraduates.

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- 15.2 The Committee noted that respondents felt they lacked programme specific details throughout the application process. SRAS stated that they had offered to prepare programme specific e-zines and School web-chats, but that these had rarely been taken up by Schools.

- 15.3 The Committee agreed that the University had not done enough to sell the benefits of postgraduate study, and the unique selling points of each programme.

- 15.4 The Committee agreed that postgraduate graduate attributes could be used to make the University distinctive to prospective students, and to inform prospective students of what they will get from studying at the University. Different attributes for research postgraduates and taught postgraduates would help to make clear the different aims and learning outcomes of research and taught postgraduates.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY PAPER

- 16.1 The Committee discussed the International Student Recruitment Strategy paper that had been submitted to the University Management Group in November 2010.

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- 16.2 The Committee noted that the Heads of Graduate Schools had not seen or had the opportunity to comment on the paper before it went to UMG.

- 16.3 The Committee noted that the paper had been approved by UMG and a working group had been set up to review the international recruitment strategy, but that any urgent concerns should be put to Rachel Sandison as soon as possible.

GENERIC SKILLS TRAINING FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS/SKILLS FOR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

- 17.1 The Committee discussed proposals for future Generic Skills training for research postgraduate students.
- 17.2 The Committee agreed that ethics and research governance training should be provided as part of the courses to be made available to research students.
- 17.3 The Committee requested clarification on whether £200 to be recovered towards research student training was to be added to the tuition fees for all research postgraduates or just those funded by one of the UK Research Councils.

ACTION: CLERK

WORKING GROUP ON COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE (CAS) – DRAFT REPORT

- 18.1 The Committee discussed the draft report from the working group of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning on the University's CAS scale.
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- 18.2 The Committee agreed that a zero should be included in the scale and requested that this be reported to the working group.
- 18.3 The Committee agreed that the conversion scales used by Schools needed to be clearly, and comprehensively communicated to students, and at as early a stage in their studies as possible.

ACTION: CLERK

POSTGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEYS 2010

- 19 The Committee discussed actions from the 2010 postgraduate experience surveys and agreed that a set of action points should be circulated amongst the Committee for comment before being submitted to the University Management Group.

ACTION: CLERK

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE ADVISING

- 20.1 The Committee discussed the issue of Adviser of Study for taught postgraduate students.
- 20.2 The Committee requested that the Students' Association submit a proposal on PGT advising to the next Committee meeting on 7 March 2011. The Committee also requested that the Heads of Schools be asked to submit details of any informal advisory practices within their Schools.

ACTION: SA/CLERK

RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE STUDENT OFFICE SPACE

- 21.1 The Committee discussed the issue of office space for research postgraduate students.

- 21.2 The Committee noted that there was not a general University policy on the allocation of office space for research students.
- 21.3 The Committee noted there was different practice between Schools depending on the physical space each School had.
- 21.4 The Committee noted the development of a Partnership Agreement for Undergraduate students and agreed that it would be appropriate to work towards developing something similar for Postgraduates that may detail issues such as office space.

ACTION: CLERK

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE AL-MAKTOUM INSTITUTE

- 22.1 The Committee discussed the annual report from the Al-Makotum Institute.
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- 22.2 The Committee agreed that the student support officer role at the Institute needed to continue.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

- 23.1 The Committee discussed the annual report from the International Christian College.
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- 23.3 The Committee recommended that the details of the University's own discussions on deposits be communicated to the College.
- 23.2 The Committee agreed that communication of relevant institutional developments to the College and other validated/accredited institutions needed to be more efficient and recommended that the outcomes of the Committee be forwarded to them once approved.

ACTION: CLERK

ACTION: CLERK

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

- 24 The Committee discussed the annual report from the University of the Highlands and Islands.
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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 25 The Committee noted that the date of the meeting was Monday 7 March 2011, 2pm in Committee Room 2, University Office.