

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING 7 MARCH 2011

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

Apologies: Mr P. Fantom, Prof. D. Houlihan, Dr M. Pinard, Ms R. Sandison, Ms A. Slater.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 13 DECEMBER 2010

26 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 13 December 2010
Copy filed as PGC/070311/020

MATTERS ARISING

Minute 14.2

26.1 The Committee requested that information on the number of visitors to the open day who then go on to register for a postgraduate degree at the University be provided.

ACTION: SRAS

Minute 17.3

26.2 It was confirmed that £200 would be recovered from the tuition fees paid by all research postgraduates, and not just those funded by the UK Research Councils. This money would then be allocated to research student training.

Minute 19

26.3 The Committee discussed and agreed action points from the 2010 taught and research postgraduate surveys. The following actions were identified:

- Increase student engagement with surveys
- Develop an institutional policy on research postgraduate office space
- Provide training on research ethics and research governance for research postgraduates
- Through the Heads of Graduate Schools, raise awareness of expectations in regard to contact time between research postgraduates and supervisors and the number of supervisors that a student should have
- Increase profile of Students' Association amongst the University's postgraduate population

Minute 20.2

26.4 Schools confirmed that programme coordinators fulfilled the role of advisor for their taught postgraduate students. The exception to this was the School of Law, where each PGT student was assigned an advisor separate from their programme coordinator. Law advisors received remuneration, paid for by the School, in line with the levels paid to undergraduate advisors.

SNAPSHOT 3 – TOTAL POSTGRADUATE POPULATION FOR 2010/11

27.1 The Committee discussed the Snapshot 3 figures taken on 28 February 2011
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27.2 Dr Connolly tabled figures comparing Snapshot 3 2010/11 with the one taken during 2009/10.

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27.3 The Committee noted that, broadly speaking, the trend was on a par with last year, but that there had been a decrease in fee income from non-fundable students due to a decline in international student numbers.

27.4 The Committee agreed that Colleges should decide which programmes they would run with a January 2012 start and confirm to SRAS within the next month for the purposes of promotion.

ACTION: HEADS OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

STATUS OF POSTGRADUATE APPLICATIONS, 24 FEBRUARY 2011

28.1 The Committee discussed the status of postgraduate applications as of 24 February 2011.

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28.2 The Committee noted that applications were down across the sector, in part due to the uncertainty over whether post-study work visas would continue.

28.3 The Committee requested an update on the development of UKPASS.

ACTION: SRAS

28.4 The Committee requested that monthly updates on the status of postgraduate applications be given to the Graduate Schools.

ACTION: SRAS

CLOSING DATES FOR OVERSEAS TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT

29 The Committee agreed a closing date of 30 June 2011 for applications for September 2011, and a closing date of 5 November 2011 for applications for January 2012.

OVERSEAS TUITION FEES: THE UNIVERSITY'S PRICING STRATEGY

30.1 The Committee discussed the paper that went to the University Management Group on 21 February 2011 concerning tuition fees for Overseas students.

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30.2 The Committee raised concern that it had not been given an opportunity to discuss the paper before it went to UMG for approval.

30.3 The Committee raised concern over the requirement for deposits of 100% and noted that, at its meeting on 25 October 2010, it had agreed that a 50% deposit would be suitable.

30.4 Although no UK institutions currently require deposits of 100%, the Committee noted that, anecdotally, the movement in the sector was towards full payment of fees before issuing a CAS for tier 4 visas.

30.4 The Committee noted that the issue of deposits would be reviewed before 2012/13 to determine whether it should be introduced.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

- 31.1 The Committee approved the request from the College of Arts and Social Sciences to raise its English Language requirements for entry onto its taught and research postgraduate programmes.

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- 31.2 The Committee requested that all Colleges undertake analysis to compare the English Language requirements for its programmes with similar programmes at other UK institutions.

ACTION: HEADS OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS' APPLICATION FORM

- 32.1 The Committee discussed the application form used by prospective postgraduate students to apply to the University for studying.

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- 32.2 The Committee requested that the wording in Section 2 be amended to make it clear that students should provide the name of the University studentship they are applying for.

- 32.3 The Committee requested that, in Section 11, students be asked to specify the websites through which they heard about the programme they applied for.

ACTION: SRAS

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

- 33.1 The Committee discussed postgraduate research student recruitment, including web pages of academic staff and advertising of studentships.

- 33.2 The Committee agreed that Heads of Graduate Schools should take forward ideas on how to effectively promote research opportunities within their College and advise Student Recruitment and Admissions Services on the research areas available.

ACTION: HEADS OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

PROPOSAL FOR POST-ROBERTS' TRANSFERABLE SKILLS TRAINING FOR RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES

- 34 The Committee agreed to defer the issue of transferable skills training until the meeting on 9 May 2011. Dr Connolly agreed to bring a paper to the Committee for discussion.

ACTION: DR CONNOLLY

AMENDMENTS TO POSTGRADUATE REGULATIONS FOR 2011/12

- 35.1 The Committee discussed amendments made to Postgraduate Regulations for 2011/12, approved by Senate on 9 February 2011.

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- 35.2 The Committee agreed that they expected to have had the regulations on the agenda for discussion at the Postgraduate Committee before approval by Senate.

- 35.3 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Quality Assurance Committee that the wording of the proposed change to Regulation 4 ('... accordance with Regulation 6(ii), normally under the supervision of a team appointed...') be amended to the following:

Every candidate will have a minimum of one main supervisor, appointed under Regulation 6(iii) for the purpose. He or she will be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student.

ACTION: PROF LONG

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE MASTERS DEGREES WITH MERIT

- 36.1 The Committee discussed a change to the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum to allow the award of Masters degrees with Merit.

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- 36.2 The Committee expressed concern over the terminology of 'Merit'. It was felt that 'Merit' was not distinguishable enough from 'Commendation' and that external parties may have some difficulty in differentiating between them.

- 36.3 The Committee felt that it may be more appropriate to lower the requirement for Commendations, but agreed that this issue should be looked at by the working group on the Graduate Attributes.

ACTION: CLERK

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

- 37 The Committee approved recommendations from the working group of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning for changes to the Common Assessment Scale.

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RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE STUDENT OFFICE SPACE

- 38.1 The Committee discussed responses submitted by Colleges and Schools detailing their practices in regard to research postgraduate office space.

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- 38.2 The Committee noted that any institutional guidelines would need to account for diversity between disciplines. The Committee agreed that the development of such guidelines would be about ensuring access to the right environment and desk space for research postgraduates.

- 38.3 The Committee requested that the Colleges be asked for whether the details of the number of desks they had available for research postgraduate students can be provided, and also the numbers of research postgraduates they had.

ACTION: CLERK

LIBRARY ACCESS FOR RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES FOLLOWING SUBMISSION OF THESIS

- 39 The Committee noted comments from the Library that registered postgraduate research students, regardless of whether they had submitted their thesis or not, had access rights to the Library. The Committee also noted that, as long as they were registered, students had access to a computer account and email.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 40 The Committee noted that the date of the meeting was Monday 9 May 2011, 2pm in Committee Room 2, University Office.