

**UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN**  
**POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING 12 OCTOBER 2012**

Present: Dr J. Masthoff (Acting Convenor), Dr H. Battu, Prof. P. Hannaford, Dr E. Pavlovskaja, Dr M. Pinard, and with Ms C. Croydon, Dr L. Leiper, Mr D. Milne, Mrs K. Slessor, and Mr R. Findlay (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Mrs K. Allan, Dr B. Connolly, Prof. B. Naphy, Ms R. Sandison, Ms K. Strangward, Prof. C. Wallace.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 19 JUNE 2012**

1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 19 June 2012.  
Copy filed as PGC/121012/001

**MATTERS ARISING**

*Minute 46.*

- 2.1 The Committee noted that Graduate Schools were still to liaise with the library in order to develop a standard system of referencing for each School.

**ACTION: HOGS**

*Minute 49.*

- 2.2 The Committee noted that the Registry was available to meet on request with Schools in order to discuss issues arising from, and provide guidance on, monitoring of Tier 4 students.

*Minute 50.*

- 2.3 The Committee noted that issues concerning the budget for research development had been resolved.

*Minute 51.*

- 2.4 The Committee noted that the regulations for PhDs by Publication were to be put to the Quality Assurance Committee for approval at its meeting in November.

**POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee discussed the admission figures for entry to postgraduate programmes between January 2013 and July 2013.

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- 3.2. The Committee noted the employment of University representative in Nigeria for direct contact with appropriate institutions and potential applicants.

- 3.3 The Committee agreed that there should be a joint meeting between the Graduate Schools and Student Recruitment and Admissions to discuss conversion activities and issues surrounding contact between the University and applicants who had been cleared for admission. The Committee also noted that better articulation about the latest start date needed to be achieved to encourage students to arrive for the start of term.

**ACTION: ACRs**

**RECRUITMENT**

4. The Committee was given an update on recruitment activities for 2013 by Dominic Milne.
- 4.1 The Committee noted that the College of Physical Sciences had provided SRAS with project proposals to be advertised to potential applicants. The Committee agreed that the other Colleges should provide SRAS with a list of project titles and accompanying descriptions that were linked to general research themes.

**ACTION: ACRs**

## RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT UNIT

5. The Committee noted an update on recent activities regarding the Researcher Development Unit.

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## POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2012

- 6.1 The Committee noted the results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey for 2012.

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- 6.2 The Committee noted issues regarding communication to applicants and agreed that the Graduate School and SRAS should map a history of what communication goes out to students and from who, in order to identify gaps or repetition. The Committee noted the involvement of Student Support in issuing registration information to new students and requested that they be included in this discussion.

**ACTION: ACRs**

- 6.3 The Committee felt cleared applicants may benefit from communication from current PGT programme representatives. It was felt that programme representatives may provide a useful point of contact for cleared applicants and may be able to answer questions relating to 'settling in' at the University. The Committee requested that the Students' Association be contacted about the potential for establishing such a system.

**ACTION: CLERK**

- 6.4 The Committee noted issues regarding feedback on assessments. The Committee requested clarification on the University's policy on providing feedback to students, in particular as to whether students are able to request sight of their exam scripts.

**ACTION: CLERK**

- 6.5 The Committee noted that Colleges had been requested by a working group of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning to provide clear dates by which course coordinators were expected to return feedback to students. The Committee requested clarification as to whether this had been for postgraduate programmes as well as undergraduate.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## LOCAL POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SURVEY 2012

- 7.1 The Committee noted the results of the 2012 local Postgraduate Research survey, which surveyed research students on the issue of skills training.

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- 7.2 The Committee noted recent developments of the Researcher Development Unit and felt that this may address a number of the issues raised in the survey. In particular, the Committee noted the following:

- a new Researcher Development Unit website
- the use of a generic Researcher Development email address for contacting students directly about skills training opportunities
- more flexibility in the format of workshops, i.e. shorter workshops, workshops held on Wednesday and Friday afternoons
- courses for new PGRs on what a PhD actually is and what is expected of them as research students
- the development of a Researcher Development handbook, which provided guidance on the importance of research and transferrable skills training and students' responsibilities towards this training.

- 7.3 The Committee agreed that Colleges should amend their bi-annual monitoring forms to include questions on whether students have discussed career opportunities with supervisors.

**ACTION: ACRs**

## STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

- 8.1 The Committee discussed recommendations made by the working group on the structure of the academic year.

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- 8.2 Regarding point 2.3, the Committee that, in general, the only difference between the undergraduate timetable and the taught postgraduate one was the addition of a project, and that, thus, it was possible to align the PGT academic year with that of the undergraduate.

- 8.3 The Committee did feel that the timing of the Easter holidays should always coincide with the local ones, even if it means that, in some years, there will still be teaching to be done after the break.

- 8.4 The Committee agreed to recommend the adoption of model 1.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## WORKING GROUP ON THE COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE (CAS): FINAL REPORT

- 9.1 The Committee discussed recommendations made by the working group that reviewed the Common Assessment Scale.

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- 9.2 The Committee approved of recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7, but made further recommendations regarding the following:

- Recommendation 3: in principle the Committee were in favour. However, the Committee felt that greater consistency and clarity of approach would be better achieved across the institution if a common set of descriptors were adopted by the University for each level of study. As such, the Committee recommended that the working group produce a set of descriptors for levels 1 to 5.
- Recommendation 6: the Committee felt that there should be a consistent system of mapping to percentages to grades across the whole institution. The Committee felt that there should be one mapping for levels 1 to 4 and a separate mapping for level 5. For undergraduate, the Committee that 40% was a reasonable pass mark to set. However, for postgraduate, it felt that it would be more appropriate to set the pass mark at 50%.

The Committee did acknowledge that there may be sound academic reasons for certain courses to have a mapping that was different to the common institutional one. Thus, the Committee felt that exceptions could be permitted, but must receive the appropriate academic approval.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## STUDENT BEHAVIOUR IN EXAMINATIONS

- 10.1 The Committee discussed feedback received from Colleges and Schools on student behaviour in examinations following the May 2012 examination diet.

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- 10.2 The Committee recommended that Schools should be consulted on the selecting of invigilators in order to appoint the best invigilators possible provide better training opportunities for inexperienced invigilators.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## POSTGRADUATE STRUCTURED FRAMEWORK

11. The Committee requested that the Postgraduate Structured Framework be amended to include the framework for students on 3.5 year and 4 year supervised PhDs.

**ACTION: CLERK**

## DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12. The Committee noted that the date of the meeting was 10 December 2012.