

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10 September 2007

Present: Lady Catto (Convener), Professor GJA Burgess, Mr Steve Cannon, Ms A Fraser, Mr J Hardey, Ms C Hobson, Professor WF Long, Ms C Macaslan, Ms H McKay and Ms S Sithamparanathan with Ms Karen Reid, Mr L Forsyth, Mrs J Chalmers, Mr M Seed, Ms YS Gordon (Clerk) and Mr A Carr (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G Cox, Professor CHW Gane, Mr J Leiper and Mr RW Murray.

28. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 May 2007 were approved.
(copy filed as SAC/100907/01)

29. Matters arising from the Minutes

29.1 Radio Station (Minute 21.3 refers)

It was noted that Estates and not Campus Services would be best placed to consider a permanent location for the Radio Station; the Students' Association (SA) President noted that this issue, for the coming year, had been resolved and a venue located.

29.2 Referencing (Minute 21.12 refers)

It was reported that the Centre for Learning & Teaching was seeking further information on the range of referencing systems in use in 1st and 2nd year and discussion had been taking place regarding the possibility of identifying a standard set of generic referencing points which would apply to all schools.

30. Students' Association

30.1 The Committee received a report from the President of the SA, including issues raised by the Sabbatical Officers.

(copy filed as SAC/100907/02)

Unite at Hillhead

30.2 It was noted that the University was considering a number of options, including a guaranteed minimum occupancy arrangement or a leaseback agreement with Unite, however details of these proposals had yet to be finalised and it was agreed that further discussion at this stage would have been premature.

30.3 It was agreed that there should be common standards of welfare and support provision between University accommodation and any accommodation managed under contract by Unite. Further to this it was agreed that a review of support arrangements at Hillhead should be conducted and that preliminary information should be presented at the next meeting.

Action: L Forsyth/S Cannon

Radio Station

- 30.4 It was noted that an arrangement had been reached allowing the new Student Radio Station to be played through The Hub sound system on a number of occasions during Fresher's Week; the particulars of when the Radio Station would be broadcast in this way are to be arranged in light of the demands placed on the shared spaces of The Hub by the services which occupy it.

Action: A Fraser

Communication between University Departments

- 30.5 It was noted that a number of students had contacted the SA as a result of letters from the University regarding unpaid debt and that these students were often distressed by their situation and unsure how best to proceed.
- 30.6 It was agreed that the ultimate responsibility for resolving this situation lay with the student although the Committee requested that the automatic letters used by the University's Finance Section be reviewed to ensure that instructions and contact details were clearly presented.

Action: Clerk

Arts Centre Provision on Campus

- 30.7 It was noted that accommodation for University Societies was an ongoing issue and that ultimately a purpose built Arts Centre, situated behind The Hub, was the preferred solution.
- 30.8 It was also noted that a number of short-term solutions were to be explored including using the Zeste and Johnston dining areas as occasional performance spaces and reviewing the use of the Butchart Recreation Centre once the planned Regional Sports Facility development is underway.

Update on the progress and proposed format for Curriculum Review/Reform

- 30.9 It was noted that seven meeting or working groups had been formed; student representatives would sit on six of these. These groups will meet once a term, normally prior to Senate and will help to keep the student body well informed of new developments.
- 30.10 It was noted that these groups would consist of:
- a "Curriculum Commission" – the largest group (a composition of circa 25 members which will include 3 students) acting as a forum for bringing forward new ideas
 - a Steering Group would funnel ideas from the Curriculum group and begin to generate formal proposals.
 - a group concerned with research led teaching
 - a group concerned with professionally accredited programmes
 - a group concerned with student experience
 - a group concerned with resource provision for new proposals
 - a group concerned with the implementation of new proposals
- 30.11 It was noted that Student Participation and Quality Scotland (sParQS) funded by the Scottish Funding Council, would be reviewing the outcomes of this process.

31. Recognising Non-Academic Contribution

31.1 The Committee considered a report on the above from the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning.

(copy filed as SAC/100907/03)

31.2 It was agreed that a small working group should be formed to address key questions identified in the report. The composition of this group would be determined by the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning in consultation with the SA. President.

Action: C Macaslan

31.3 It was agreed that the aim of this working group would be to draft a proposal to go to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning in the autumn with a view to piloting a core set of recognitions that could then be added to in future. The SA office bearers were suggested as an appropriate pilot group during the 2007/08 year, this group.

32. Remit & Composition

32.1 The Committee received the remit and composition for 2007/08.

(copy filed as SAC/100907/04)

32.2 The Committee noted that the post of the Students' Association Convener of Student Activities was now redundant and should no longer be listed in the committee's "In Attendance" Composition – the position is to be replaced by the President of the Debater.

33. Termly Reports

Students' Association

33.1 The Committee received the termly report from the SA.

(copy filed as SAC/100907/05)

33.2 It was brought to the Committee's attention that the review of the strategic plan would cover the 2006/07 academic year; although the plan itself covered the period 2005/08.

Campus Services

33.3 The Committee received the termly report from the Director of Campus Services.

(copy filed as SAC/100907/06)

33.4 The Committee noted that the Students' Association Bar was scheduled for closure and that RGU's SA had expressed an interest in a possible city centre joint venture. It was agreed that the SA would enter discussion regarding this option.

Action: A Fraser

33.5 It was noted that The Hub continued to receive favourable customer reviews and that a user group had been formed to assist in the operation and management of the venue.

- 33.6 It was noted that a branch of Saks the hairdresser would be moving into The Hub and would begin trading at the start of the second term.
- 33.7 The Committee noted that there was a shortage of Accommodation for new incoming students this year, the root cause of which appeared to be a greater proportion of undergraduate students coming from outwith the Aberdeen area and who were therefore eligible for guaranteed accommodation if they applied by the deadline of the 31st of August.
- 33.8 It was noted that measures had been put in place to temporarily accommodate students, who had applied before the deadline, in the two Premier Lodge hotels in Aberdeen and Westhill. Further accommodation options for medium and long term were also being explored.
- 33.9 Students who had applied for accommodation after the deadline (and for those for whom emergency arrangements will have to be made upon arrival) dormitory accommodation is being arranged.

Student & Academic Services

- 33.10 The Committee received the Report from the Heads of Section in the Directorate of Student & Academic Services.
(copy filed as SAC/100907/07)
- 33.11 The Committee noted that a range of resources had been made available to improve student induction and that particular effort and activity had been focussed on this area with the aim of improving drop-out rates during the first few weeks of term.
- 33.12 The University Secretary reported that the results of the International Student Barometer had been received and he would discuss several areas of concern with the SA President in the near future.

Action: S Cannon

34. Dates of future meetings in 2007/2008

- 34.1 The Committee noted the dates of future meetings below:

Monday 5 November 2007 at 2 p.m. – Committee Room 2
Monday 18 February 2008 at 2 p.m. – Committee Room 2
Monday May 26 2008 at 2 p.m. – Committee Room 2