

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 22 February 2010

Confirmed

Present: Lady Catto (Convener), Mr G Hunter, Mr S Cannon, Professor GJA Burgess, Professor WF Long, Ms C Duncan, Mr L Forsyth, Ms L Foley, Mr S McKinnon, Mr R Parker, Ms K Ross, Mr J Simpson with Mrs J Chalmers, Mr M Seed, Mr A Wight, Ms N McPake and Ms K Christie (Clerk).

Apologies: Mr S Robertson, Mr J Keating.

14. Minute (Minute 8.1 refers)

14.1 Subject to noting in item 8.1 that the Students' Association (SA) was undergoing the final audit of the Student Union Evaluation Initiative (SUEI), the minute was approved.

15. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Timetabling (Minute 2.9 refers)

15.1 The Committee noted that the Registry's Systems and Student Information Team had considered the SA paper and will be presenting a status report on timetabling changes for September 2010 to the Curriculum Reform Implementation Board in March 2010.

16. Single Equality and Diversity Scheme (Minute 9.1 refers)

16.1 The Committee received the draft Single Equality and Diversity Scheme and noted the proposed Scheme will streamline and harmonise the existing Equality Schemes on race, disability and gender, and will comply with forthcoming legislation to be introduced as part of the Equality Bill. The Committee noted that the University is the first HEI in Scotland to develop such a scheme.

16.2 The Committee further noted that consultation with both staff and students had been undertaken and that in order to promote awareness of the Scheme, online staff training and dedicated web pages will be made available.

16.3 It was agreed that the Scheme be circulated to the eLearning Strategy Group for information.

Action: Equality and Diversity Adviser

16.4 The Committee, for its part, approved the Single Equality and Diversity Scheme.

17. Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

17.1 The Committee noted that the QAA undertakes Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) of all HEIs in Scotland on a rolling five-year programme and that the University is scheduled to undergo its second ELIR review in March and May 2010. In advance of the ELIR team's visit, the University had recently submitted its Reflective Analysis (RA) document.

17.2 The RA had been written following extensive discussion with a wide range of colleagues from across the University and input from ELIR Steering Group members and the SA. A note of thanks was given to the SA and other SAC members who had contributed to the production of the RA.

- 17.3 Preparations for the ELIR team's visits were underway, and the SA had been invited to be part of the series of presentations to the ELIR team that would take place during the part 1 visit in March.

18. Students' Association

Evaluation of the Class Representative System

- 18.1 The Committee noted that the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Association of Managers of Student Unions (AMSU) had developed a 'Course Rep System' benchmarking toolkit designed to enable students' unions to measure the effectiveness of their course representative system and identify areas for improvement.
- 18.2 It was agreed that a sub-group of SAC, comprising the SA President, SA President for Education and Employability, Convener of the University Committee for Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and Assistant Registrar (Quality Enhancement) would undertake the benchmarking exercise and present its findings to both SAC and UCTL.

Action: Clerk

Student Feedback: Examinations

- 18.3 The Committee noted SA concerns regarding the increase in the number of evening and weekend examinations that had been scheduled during the recent January 2010 diet. In particular, students felt that evening exams did not provide optimum conditions for demonstrating knowledge, especially for those students who required extra time. Concern was also expressed for students leaving exam venues late at night and for the increasing numbers of students who relied on evening and weekend part-time work and whose employers could not always be flexible as to working hours.
- 18.4 The Committee noted that the University actively tries to minimise the number of evening and weekend exams, however the ability to do so is restricted by the length of the examination diet (as set by the academic calendar), the increase in the number of courses available, the number and capacity of exam venues and Schools' preference for exams to occur early in the diet.
- 18.5 Nevertheless, the Committee acknowledged that evening and weekend examinations were not ideal and should be kept to a minimum; it was agreed that these concerns be brought to the attention of Registry.

Action: Clerk

QML Opening Hours

- 18.6 The Committee noted the results of a recent survey by Library Services to investigate students' preferred opening hours of the Queen Mother Library (QML), which indicated overwhelming support for an extension to the current opening hours.
- 18.7 It was agreed that SAC request the piloting of extended QML opening hours from 0800 - 0200 during peak periods in the run up to the May 2010 diet of examinations; thereafter the pilot scheme should be evaluated for possible use in other UoA libraries and at other peak times of the academic year.

Action: Clerk

Appeals and Complaints

- 18.8 The Committee received a report from the President for Welfare and Equal Opportunities regarding recent trends in the Appeals, Complaints and Discipline cases with which the SA had recently been involved.
- 18.9 The Committee noted SA concern regarding the increasing numbers of such cases and that the majority of cases involved international students and postgraduate taught (PGT) students. The Committee further noted that in several instances there had been significant delays in hearings taking place and outcomes being communicated.
- 18.10 The Committee was assured of the University's quality assurance mechanisms with respect to English language requirements, recruitment standards and course and programme review

procedures. The Committee noted that an audit of the appeals, complaints and discipline procedures was already underway and that the Senate Business Committee had recently approved an increase in the number of staff sitting on hearings in order for cases to be heard more promptly. The Committee further noted that a new PGT Grade Spectrum had been approved by Senate and would be introduced with immediate effect for January 2010 entrants. Nevertheless the Committee agreed that this matter should be looked into further and an update be brought to the next meeting of the SAC.

Action: Secretary to the University

Timing of Students' Association Disbursement

- 18.11 To assist the SA in its budgetary planning, it was agreed that the University will provide an indication of the SA Disbursement at an earlier date, following notification of the main University Grant by the Scottish Funding Council.

Action: Secretary to the University

AUSA move to Butchart (minute 10.8 refers)

- 18.12 The Committee received an update on plans for the SA relocation to Butchart, which will take place during the Easter vacation in order to minimise disruption to students.
- 18.13 The Committee further noted that the SA planned to make space available for students to use for rehearsals and performances and that this space would compliment, not duplicate, the performance space already available in the MacRobert Building.
- 18.14 The Director of Student Affairs confirmed that the new Student Centre was on schedule to open in the Hub in September 2010.

Student Car Parking

- 18.15 The Committee noted that the SA had submitted a formal objection to Aberdeen City Council, regarding plans for the controlled parking zone around the University.
- 18.16 The Committee further noted SA concerns regarding the number of student car parking spaces available; this was of particular concern to students with disabilities and students for whom public transport was not a viable option.
- 18.17 It was noted that the car parks at Butchart and Queen Mother Library are available for student car parking and discussions regarding car parking (both staff and students) were ongoing. An update will be brought to the next meeting of the SAC.

Action: Assistant Estates Director

19. AOCB

- 19.1 The Committee noted the success of the University's Mens' Rugby team and Womens' Volleyball teams on winning their respective Scottish University Leagues.
- 19.2 The SA is currently in talks with Aberdeen City Council and the Guinness Book of Records to investigate the possibility of making the Aberdeen Student Torch Parade the largest in the world.

20. Reports

The Committee noted the following reports:

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| (a) Students' Association | <i>(copy attached as SAC/ 220210/18)</i> |
| (b) Directorate of Academic Affairs | <i>(copy attached as SAC/ 220210/19)</i> |
| (c) Directorate of Student Affairs | <i>(copy attached as SAC/ 220210/20)</i> |

21. Dates of Meetings in 2009/ 2010

The Committee noted that the date of the next is Monday 10 May 2010 at 2 p.m. in Committee Room 2.