

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2000

Present Professor I R Macdonald (Convener), Ms L Brown, Mr A Cole-Hamilton, Dr J H Farrington, Dr W F Long, Dr N L M Milne, Professor P A Racey, Professor L D Ritchie, Dr J G Roberts, Professor A A Rodger, Dr J G Simpson, Professor P J Sloane and Professor D W Urwin with Mr J A Forster, Mr J L A Madden, Dr T Webb and Ms M M Strachan (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor D Houlihan, Mr D P Lessels, Professor S D Logan and Professor I R Torrance

MINUTES

- 252 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 1999.
(*copy filed as UCTL/110200/201*)

SUBJECT REVIEW

(*See minute 247*)

- 253 Professor Macdonald reported that it had now been decided that the University should put forward two or three subject areas for review in 2000/01.
[*Note by Clerk:* It was subsequently agreed that the following two subjects would be reviewed in the next academic year: Theology and Religious Studies: Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies.]

LEARNING TECHNOLOGY UNIT

(*See minute 248*)

- 254 Mr John Milne, the Unit Manager, outlined the work undertaken by the Learning Technology Unit (LTU). He suggested that it would be helpful if departments were to be reminded of the benefits that could be derived from an increased use of learning technology. In response to questions, he made clear that the LTU would be pleased to assist Faculties in mounting workshops designed to demonstrate the effective use of technology in teaching and intended to approach departments who were not currently active in the area. The Committee suggested that the LTU Annual Report, which it had received at the 10 December 1999 meeting, should be made available on the University website.

Action: JM

THE EFFECT ON DEGREE CLASSIFICATION OF CLASS CERTIFICATE
REFUSAL IN A COURSE WHICH IS PART OF AN HONOURS PROGRAMME
AND FAILURE IN AN ELEMENT OF HONOURS ASSESSMENT

- 255 The Committee considered a paper which outlined the current situation with regard to the refusal of a class certificate for, and failure in, or failure to attend or complete without good cause, an element of honours assessment.
(*filed as UCTL/110200/202*)
- 256 The Committee noted that the paper would make a complex situation fairer to students. Its provisions were consistent with the draft *Guidance note for students who either fail, or who fail to attend or complete, and element of prescribed degree assessment*, which had also been circulated with the papers for the meeting (*see minute 261 below*). If the recommendation were approved, relevant information would be given to students with their joining instructions.

- 257 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Senate that a refused class certificate in a course which was part of an honours programme be treated as a no paper (NP), ie, in effect CAS 0 for the course when applied to the *Grade spectrum*. The student would then be in the same position as currently applied to a student who failed, or who failed to attend or complete with good cause, an element of honours assessment, ie, they could normally obtain no higher award than a lower second class honours degree (unless the examiners applied discretion to depart from the class indicated by the *Grade spectrum*).

RELIEF TEACHING

- 258 The Committee noted that, while procedures to monitor the teaching of newly-appointed lecturers were robust, no equivalent procedures existed for relief teachers appointed while experienced staff were absent on study leave. Heads of department sanctioned those interim arrangements for teaching, which were reported to Deans only at the end of each session. The Committee agreed that a paper should be prepared for a future meeting, to include recommendations for improving practice with regard to the appointment and monitoring of relief teaching staff. **Action: Clerk**

WORKING PARTY ON CAREERS GUIDANCE

- 259 Dr Farrington, Convener of the Working Party on Careers Guidance, tabled for approval an amended version of the draft questionnaire already circulated to members. The aim of circulating the questionnaire was to establish the current level of activity in academic departments regarding careers guidance for students and to remind departments that the QAA would expect departments to take an active role in this area. *(copy filed as UCTL/110200/207)*
- 260 Subject to a number of emendations, the Committee approved the questionnaire for circulation to heads of department in the Faculties of Arts & Divinity, Social Sciences & Law, and Science & Engineering, and to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Medical Sciences. **Action: Clerk**

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR STUDENTS WHO EITHER FAIL, OR WHO FAIL TO ATTEND OR COMPLETE, AN ELEMENT OF PRESCRIBED DEGREE ASSESSMENT

- 261 The Committee agreed that the *Guidance note*, which had been revised in the light of discussion at the 10 December 1999 meeting, should be forwarded to the Senate for approval. *(filed as UCTL/070200/204)*

WORKING PARTY ON STANDARDS

- 262 The Committee noted a report from the Working Party on Standards. *(filed as UCTL/070200/205)*

CLASS CERTIFICATES

- 263 The Committee noted that, as requested at the 10 December 1999 meeting, the Universities of Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews had been asked for details of their policy on class certificates. Responses were received from Dundee and Glasgow Universities. Dundee University reported that they operated a system of class certificates that was essentially the same as that in force at Aberdeen. Glasgow University reported that, while relevant regulations varied across Faculties, their system broadly resembled ours, with most areas of study specifying both minimum criteria that students had to satisfy before they were allowed to take examinations and a limited eligibility for retaking any examinations failed at the first and second attempts. *[Note by Clerk After the meeting, responses were received from Edinburgh and St Andrews Universities. Practice at St Andrews was broadly similar to that at Aberdeen. At Edinburgh, while much of the University operated a system like that at Aberdeen, the Arts Faculty had suspended their equivalent of class certificates for a three-year trial period.]*

- 264 The Committee agreed that the Working Party on Standards be asked to come forward with proposals in regard to class certificates. *Action: Clerk*

TEACHING MATERIAL ON THE UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

- 265 The Committee noted that the Academic Standards Committee (A&SS,D&L) had referred to the UCTL a request from the Department of Management Studies for dedicated web authoring staff to facilitate the placing of teaching material on the University website. The Convener had agreed that the matter should be referred to the Deans.
- 266 The Committee agreed that it might be helpful if the need identified by the Department of Management Studies were to be addressed by seminars given by the Learning Technology Unit in conjunction with members of the Department of Zoology. *Action: JM*

QAA: BENCHMARKING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- 267 The Committee noted that draft benchmarking statements had been produced by the QAA for consultation in the following subject areas:

Accountancy	English
Archaeology	Geography
Architecture	Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation, Sports & Tourism
Business and Management	Librarianship and Information Studies
Classical Languages and Ancient History	Philosophy
Computer Science	Politics
Earth and Environmental Studies	Social Policy and Administration and Social Work
Economics	Sociology
Education Studies	Theology and Religious Studies
Engineering	

Heads of the relevant Departments had been asked to prepare responses to the benchmarking statements for their area on behalf of the University.

The consultation paper and the draft benchmarking statements were available on the QAA website at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/benchmark/index.htm>

A report from the Chair of the Advisory Group on Multi-Disciplinary and Modular Programmes had also been received from the QAA for information. Copies had been sent to the Co-ordinators of Inter-Disciplinary Programmes and could be obtained from the Senate Office (x2039).

FUTURE MEETINGS

- 268 The Committee noted that meetings would be held as indicated below:
 24 March 2000 at 2.00 pm
 26 May 2000 at 2.00 pm