

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2000

Present: Professor I R Macdonald (Convener), Ms L Brown, Mr D P Lessels, Dr J H Farrington, Professor D F Houlihan, Dr W F Long, Professor L D Ritchie, Dr J G Roberts, Professor A A Rodger, Dr J G Simpson, Professor I R Torrance and Professor D W Urwin, with Ms B Holohan, Mr J L A Madden, Dr T Webb and Ms M M Strachan (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S D Logan, Dr N L M Milne, Professor P A Racey and Professor P J Sloane.

MINUTES

283 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2000.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/215)

WORKING PARTY ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS

284.1 The Committee approved a series of recommendations from the Working Party on Quality and Standards relating to the design, approval, validation and review of programmes (incorporating the relationship between national subject benchmark statements, programme specifications, level descriptors and the University's programme and course proposal forms), and revisions to the Internal Teaching Review procedures, subject to amendments being made as discussed at the meeting. The recommendations would be forwarded to the Senate for information.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/216)

284.2 The Committee agreed that the Working Party should conclude its remit by holding one further meeting to consider class certificates and by submitting a report to the UCTL on class certificates in due course.

Action: Clerk

**COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
TRAINING**

285 The Committee agreed that all students graduating from the University should have attained a minimum level of C&IT skills, which constituted an important category of transferable skills. It was decided to recommend that the Senate endorse the skill levels defined in Appendix I as representing the basic level of attainment that should be achieved by all graduates.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/217)

Action: TW

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORM EXERCISE

286.1 The Committee noted concerns raised regarding both the utility of questions in section A of the student course evaluation form (SCEF) exercise and the quality of results produced from machine scanning of the completed forms.

286.2 The Committee agreed to invite the Academic Standards Committee (Arts & Social Sciences, Divinity & Law) to frame specific proposals as to how the utility of the SCEF exercise might be improved. It was also agreed that Mr Pryor should be invited to re-examine arrangements for scanning the forms. (*copy filed as UCTL/260500/218*)

Action: Clerk

**GUIDANCE NOTE FOR STUDENTS WHO EITHER FAIL, OR WHO
FAIL TO ATTEND**

**OR COMPLETE, AN ELEMENT OF PRESCRIBED DEGREE
ASSESSMENT**

287.1 The Committee decided to endorse the revised paragraph 9 and to approve the Guidance Note.

287.2 The Committee agreed the principle that it was for the University to decide the conditions for award of its degrees. However, given that the British Psychological Society was considering whether to withdraw its accreditation from Aberdeen's psychology degrees, Professor Macdonald undertook to write to the British Psychological Society to express the University's disquiet.

(*copy filed as UCTL/260500/219*)

Action: Clerk

HONOURS PROGRAMMES BY PART-TIME STUDY

288 The Committee agreed that, subject to the reference to the LLB in paragraph 3 being deleted, the following recommendation should be forwarded to the Senate for its approval with effect from 2000/2001:

(i) that part-time registration on an Honours programme normally should be permitted, unless the relevant Undergraduate Programme Committee (UPC) had approved an application, on an individual programme basis, that part-time study should not be permitted for a particular programme. It should be for an individual UPC to judge the merits of an application not to offer part-time Honours programmes on academic grounds;

(ii) that where an Undergraduate Programme Committee gave permission for a particular Honours programme not to be offered on a part-time basis, the parent department(s) should be required to indicate this prohibition in their level 1 and Honours handbooks i.e. that a named Honours programme could only be studied on a full-time basis; and that the degree programme

prescription annexed to the relevant supplementary regulations should be amended to denote this restriction;

(iii) that the General Regulations be revised to emphasise that, in the context of an Honours programme, periods of part-time registration must normally be continuous, and must not exceed twice the period of time required of a full-time student to complete the Honours programme (or the portion(s) of it in respect of which the student was registered part-time). Examples would be two years for a 1 year Honours programme and four years (or two years part-time and one year full-time) for a 2 year Honours programme.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/220)

Action: TW

RELIEF TEACHING

289 The Committee approved the following recommendations:

1 that Heads of Department should be responsible for identifying relief teachers whom they wished to engage temporarily to undertake the teaching duties of other staff. They should also verify that relief teachers had the experience and ability needed to ensure that the standards and quality of teaching normally required by the Department would be maintained.

2 that Heads of Department should send to their Deans applications for the appointment of relief teachers, together with confirmation of the length of the appointment, and seek authorisation for such appointments. Heads of Department should also copy the information, including the CVs of relief teachers, to the Convener of the relevant Academic Standards Committee for information.

3 that, if a relief teacher was being engaged to undertake the teaching duties of a Course Co-ordinator, the relief teacher should not be identified as the Course Co-ordinator. In such cases, Heads of Department should identify a member of their full-time academic staff to serve as Course Co-ordinator.

4 that, during the period of appointment of a relief teacher, a member of the Departmental academic staff (normally the Course Co-ordinator) normally should act as his/her mentor. At the start of the temporary appointment, the mentor should give the relief teacher full and clear guidance in writing regarding his/her responsibilities. Normally also the mentor or another, senior, member of the academic staff should observe a sample number of the relief teacher's teaching sessions and give him/her appropriate written and oral feedback.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/221)

Action: Clerk

MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

290 The Committee approved arrangements for medical certification by a medical practitioner, for implementation with effect from the start of the 2000/01 academic year, on the understanding that they might need to be revised following any future national changes implemented by the Scottish General Practitioners' Committee. (*copy filed as UCTL/260500/222*)

Action: Clerk

ISSUES REFERRED BY THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

Academic Standards Committee (Science, Engineering & Medicine)

291.1 The Committee agreed that, if student use of mobiles telephones during lectures to send messages caused disruption, the issue should be dealt with by the lecturer in charge of the class.

291.2 The Committee judged that the Department that had raised the issue of falling student attendance at lectures might consider asking students why they did not attend. It was agreed that, if there were evidence that lecture attendances were falling significantly across the University, the issue should be revisited.

Action: Clerk

Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate)

291.3 The Committee considered a recommendation that it should be University policy that every research student (full-time and part-time) should be provided with, at the very least, desk-space and a chair, a filing cabinet and appropriate access to computers.

291.4 It was noted that it would be difficult to stipulate precisely such conditions for postgraduate students in partner institutions. In addition, not all research students had the same study pattern or requirements, with some being absent from the institution for extended periods.

291.5 The Committee agreed that the issue should be referred to Deans. (*copy filed as UCTL/260500/223*)

Action: Clerk

REVIEW OF THE UNDERGRADUATE MODULAR STRUCTURE

(See minute 222)

292 The Committee noted that reports were awaited from Deans regarding recommendations 5-6 and 8-12 of the Review of the Undergraduate Modular Structure.

Action: Deans

[Recommendations 5-6 concerned both the design of biological sciences programmes and the resulting implications for timetabling across all four Faculties, and the development of interdisciplinary programmes across the University. Recommendations 8-12 concerned both

the proposal that the University should move to a 24-credit structure in all years of all undergraduate degrees and the consequences of such a move.]

WORKING PARTY ON CAREERS GUIDANCE

293 The Committee noted the report from the Working Party on Careers Guidance.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/224)

HESA FIRST DESTINATION RETURN -

CHANGES FOR 2000 DATA COLLECTION

294 The Committee noted the changes for 2000 data collection. *(copy filed as UCTL/260500/225)*

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

295 The Committee noted that Dr Roberts and four other members of academic staff had each attended one of three QAA workshops on level descriptors held in Scotland. Another workshop would be held in mid-June, with the final version of the level descriptors paper to be published at the end of that month. A response to the QAA consultation paper on level descriptors was being drafted by the group and would be submitted on behalf of the University. *(copy filed as UCTL/260500/226)*

HIGHER QUALITY

296 The bulletin of the QAA, No 7: April 2000, was circulated for information.

(copy filed as UCTL/260500/227)

COSHEP LEARNING AND TEACHING POLICY

297 The Committee noted the Framework of principles. *(copy filed as UCTL/260500/228)*

QAA BENCHMARK STATEMENTS

298 The Committee noted that copies of the benchmark statements for the 22 subjects to be reviewed in the period 2000/03 were available in the Senate Office for consultation.

POSTGRADUATE STRUCTURED MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS

299.1 The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 10 March 2000, the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) had agreed that postgraduate structured management frameworks should be introduced for research degrees other than the PhD. The new frameworks would be based on the existing frameworks for the degree of PhD by full-time and part-time study.

299.2 In response to a query from Professor Torrance, Dr Webb undertook to check when the postgraduate structured management frameworks would be available. *Action: TW*

[Note by Clerk: The new frameworks would be published in July.]

ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE NEXT MEETING

300 The Committee noted that the following items would be considered at the next meeting:

- * Resits for students who submit medical certificates;
- * Conversion of marks awarded by American institutions. *Action: Clerk*

Appendix I

C&IT skills

1. Ensure students are familiar with Windows-based software [word processing, database and spreadsheet] and are aware that software now has a similar look and feel, which enables users to familiarise themselves more quickly with upgraded versions and new applications.
2. Students should be shown how applications inter-relate and how to use built-in help functions. It is important that individuals become more confident of their own abilities and less reliant on the ‘experts’. Because users will often already have acquired certain IT skills using differing methods, questionnaires should be provided to ensure common skill levels and identify areas of need.
3. Students should be aware of how to use the world wide web to search for information (including jobs), use email appropriately, including email lists to contact others with similar research interests, and be aware of the use of centralised reservoirs of information such as Web CT and Intranets.
4. By the time they leave, University students should also be familiar with the basics of a spreadsheet and use of presentation software as part of their general education and employability.

Basic IT skills

Windows Use of a mouse. Move around in Windows 3.1, 95, NT, 98 or 2000, create folders to file work and be able to copy files correctly from one drive to another

Word Use a word processing package to input text, cut, copy and paste, save and retrieve a file

Email Use email to compose, reply to and forward messages

WWW Use WWW to search efficiently for information and print it off; use of urls and bookmarks

Further IT skills

General Ability to see that applications have similar layout and functionality and know how to move information between different applications without closing them

Windows Ability to use Alt & Tab or the Taskbar to move between files; create a shortcut icon to an application; install/upgrade software from dos/common; create new printer icon

Email Create folders, message groups to filter incoming mail; ability to send & receive attachments; configure email to read attachments; amend signature file; find email addresses; create address book; know when it is appropriate to use centrally held mailing list rather than personal copy

Word Use Headers, Footers, Footnotes, Tabs, Tables, Mail Merge, Importing Spreadsheets and Graphics, use of Bullets & Numbering, Templates, Styles, Fields (and know that these can be used to create and regularly update an index and table of contents efficiently and painlessly), use of revision marks and keywords

WWW Familiarity with use of WWW to search for information efficiently; knowledge of important web sites, subject gateways, datasets etc;

Skills which should be acquired before graduation if not already a course requirement

PowerPoint Create a basic presentation, importing appropriate graphics or data

Spreadsheet Input data; sort data; export data to Word for e.g. input when using mail merge or graphically as illustration of text; perform basic calculations

Database Know how to input data into a database and run a report

WWW Ability to publish/update basic web pages.