

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2002**

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Dr A Clarke, Mr D Cockburn, Miss A Harper, Dr WF Long, Ms C Macaslan, Professor M Player, Professor P Racey, Professor IR Torrance, Professor D Urwin with Dr D Comber, Ms J Duncan, Ms P Linemann, Mr JLA Madden, Dr IA McFarland, Mrs P Muir, Ms L Smith, Dr T Webb and Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor PR Duff, Professor JH Farrington, Professor SD Logan, Professor LD Ritchie, Professor AA Rodger, Professor PJ Sloane, Dr MA Cotter and Mr G Pryor.

Mr Cockburn declared an interest as a member of the QAA Advisory Group.

**MINUTES**

491. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2002, subject to deletion of the word 'however' from the second sentence of minute 473.2.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/350)*

**ISSUES REFERRED FROM THE SENATE - 1 MAY 2002**

492.1 The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 1 May 2002, had deferred consideration of a number of proposals from the UCTL in regard to (i) class certificates and monitoring students' progress, (ii) revisions to the current policy on medical certification, (iii) a proposal to introduce a status of Associate Student, (iv) introduction of a Guidance Note for Heads of Department concerning plagiarism. The Senate had approved in principle the proposal in regard to class certificates and monitoring students' progress and had agreed that members of the Senate should forward any concerns to the Convener of the UCTL for consideration. In regard to the other issues, the Senate had deferred consideration of these until 12 June 2002 and had agreed that any comments should be referred to the Convener for consideration prior to resubmission of the paper to the Senate on 12 June 2002.

492.2 The Committee received a paper outlining the issues which had been received from the members of the Senate in regard to these proposals together with a response to each of the issues. The appendices to this paper highlighted the amendments which had been made to these various proposals in the light of these comments.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/351)*

492.3 The Committee also received a tabled paper outlining further revisions to the proposals in regard to class certificates and monitoring students' progress which had been proposed following circulation of the papers for the meeting.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/351a)*

492.4 In discussing the proposals on class certificates and monitoring students' progress, a number of points were raised as summarised below:-

- Should the sanction of class certificates be withdrawn, Departments would need to review their assessment strategy and learning outcomes. Departments wishing to make a case to retain this sanction will need to make application to the ASC. It was noted that the ASC would need to make robust decisions in regard to these applications. It was agreed that Guidance Notes would be developed to set out clearly the criteria which an ASC might use when reviewing such applications.

**Action: Clerk**

- It was proposed that, in view of the amendments which departments may wish to make to their courses in the light of the removal of the sanction of class certificate refusal, the trial withdrawal of the sanction of class certificate refusal should be deferred until the start of session 2003/04. However, it was proposed that the monitoring aspects of the proposal should commence at the start of 2002/03. It was hoped that departments would use the new system of monitoring student progress to flag students whom they believe to be 'at risk', rather than sending warning letters, prior to refusing a class certificate. While departments could not be forced to use the new system of monitoring student progress before refusing a class certificate, it was proposed that departments should use this system as the routine way of flagging a student as 'at risk' and thereby putting the onus on the Adviser rather than the Department to deal with a students' unsatisfactory attendance.
- It was agreed that clear Guidance Notes would need to be developed to guide departments as to how to deal with an unsatisfactory student

**Action: Clerk**

- It was agreed that there was no need to trial the monitoring aspects of the proposals and that they should be implemented with effect from the start of session 2002/03. The proposals submitted to the Senate on 12 June would reflect this.

**Action: Clerk**

- It was noted that in regard to the proposal on page 3 of paper 351 regarding the suggestion that departments could upgrade a C3 to a C7 for any course, it was proposed that this option should not be incorporated into the proposal. It was felt that introduction of this step would allow departments to refuse a class certificate solely on the basis of non-attendance and would go against the spirit of the proposals.
- It was agreed that the definition of C3 as defined on Annex B of Appendix 1 to paper 351 should be revised to mean 'Resumed Attendance' and not 'Resumed Attendance on Probation'.

492.4 It was agreed that the amendments on paper 351a would be incorporated into the proposals, together with the comments detailed above and that the revised proposals together with the iterative responses to the comments raised by member of the Senate would be put to the meeting of the Senate on 12 June 2002. It was further agreed that individual responses would be sent to those members of the Senate who had submitted comments.

**Action: Clerk**

5. The Committee noted the amendments to the proposed amendments to the current policy on medical certification as detailed in Appendix 2 to paper 351.
6. Concern was raised by the Students' Association that a significant number of students are not registered with the University Medical Practice and there can be a delay in them obtaining a medical certificate when they are ill.
7. Concern was also expressed in regard to the wording of paragraph 4 of the revised Guidance Note on Certification of Absence for Medical Reasons or Other Good Cause. In approving the revisions to this paper, it was agreed that the President of the Students' Association should bring forward a revised form of words to replace the existing wording of paragraph 4.

**Action: DC**

8. The Committee noted the amendments to the proposal for the introduction of a status of Associate Student as detailed in Appendix 3 to paper 351.
9. It was noted that students who withdraw and are eligible for readmission would be given an offer of readmission at their time of withdrawal. This offer would remain valid for 18 months. It was queried whether the proposals could be open to abuse by those hoping to use their University status to gain the right of residence in the UK. It was noted that this possibility had been addressed in paragraph 12 of the proposals as students seeking Associate Student status would have to have been entitled to full registration at their time of withdrawal, have no prior year debt and at their time of withdrawal have been in attendance for a sufficient time (until 31 October for entrants in September/October).
10. It was further noted that Associate Students would not be eligible for exemption from Council Tax as is also the case for part-time students. However, while they were registered as an Associate Student, they would not be required to commence repayment of their student loan.
11. The Committee approved the revisions to the paper on the introduction of a status of Associate Student and agreed that the revised paper should be forwarded to the Senate.
12. The Committee noted the amendments to the proposed Notes of Guidance for Heads of Department in regard to Plagiarism as detailed in Appendix 4 to paper 351.
13. The Committee, in approving the revisions to this paper, agreed that, in view of the fact that the decisions as to whether or not plagiarism has taken place rests with the Senior Vice-Principal and not the Head of Department, footnote 2 of the paper should be further revised to read:

'The Head of Department may elect to delegate authority to another member of academic staff to undertake the task of investigating cases and meeting with students. The final decision in regard to whether plagiarism has not or may have taken place must however rest with the Head of Department.'

[Note by Clerk: the Senate, at its meeting on 12 June 2002, approved the proposals in regard to the award of class certificates and monitoring student progress, certification of absence for medical reasons or other good cause,

introduction of a status of Associate Student and the Notes of Guidance for Heads of Department in regard to Plagiarism.]

### **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

493.1 The Committee considered a paper from Universities Scotland on the *Scheme for Independent consideration of Student Complaints in Scotland*.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/352)*

493.2 A member of the Committee raised concern that the scheme proposed by Universities Scotland may not accord with the European Convention on Human Rights: in particular, the proposal that 'Once the Independent Reviewer or their nominee has made a judgement, it will be for the Governing Body to decide on whether or not to accept the judgement and on any remedial action to be taken.' It was noted, however, that Independent Review would only occur after the University Court Appeals Committee has met and would form an additional layer in the appeals process.

493.3 The Committee noted the Students' Associations support for involvement of an independent ombudsman in the appeals process.

493.4 Following this discussion, the Committee agreed to express their support for an independent element of review and to leave it to the UMG to decide whether or not the University should sign up to the Universities Scotland Scheme. The Committee further agreed that the issues raised by the UCTL in regard to this issue should be drawn to the attention of the UMG.

**Action: Clerk**

493.5 The Convener reminded the Committee that the Senate, at its meeting on 1 May 2002, had deferred consideration of the paper from the UCTL in regard to the Guidance Notes developed by the Working Party on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic Matters. It had been the intention that these papers would be revised in the light of comments made by the Senate with a view to these papers being brought to the UCTL and then to the Senate on 12 June 2002. However, the University Solicitors had considered these documents and had indicated that the documents may be too complex and not especially user-friendly. In view of these comments, it had been agreed that time should be taken to further review these documents. The Committee noted that in further reviewing these documents, there would be an opportunity to take account of the *Scheme for Independent consideration of Student Complaints*. The Committee further noted that there had been a request for formal consultation with the AAUT in regard to these Guidance Notes.

### **INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS FOR SESSION 2002/03**

494.1 The Committee received a paper outlining a proposed structure and timetable for review of the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) procedures.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/353)*

494.2 The Committee noted that, as a consequence of the new arrangements for external quality assurance being introduced by SHEFC in

2002/03, there is a need to revise our current ITR procedures as these were modelled on the procedures for external Subject Review which is to cease in the new system. The main features of the revised system for external quality assurance are Institutional Audit without any drilling down to subject level, a requirement for publication of a public information set and increased emphasis on quality enhancement and on student involvement and feedback.

494.3 The Committee further noted that, while the precise details of the revised system are not yet fully known, it is felt necessary for internal review to continue, particularly as Institutional Audit is currently scheduled for Spring 2004. The system of Internal Review adopted by the University must be owned by the whole community; it is also essential that the system that is introduced is effective and does not impose an unnecessary burden on departments. In view of this, the Committee noted that it was proposed that a revised system of ITR should be developed over the Summer 2002 and be trialled in a small number of departments in 2002/03 with a view to the finalised procedures being implemented across the whole University from 2003/04.

4. The Committee approved the proposal subject to amendment of the proposal to emphasise that student involvement and feedback must be effective.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **QAA CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

495.1 The Committee approved a report from the Sub-Committee on Disabilities on the extent of compliance with and recommended action in regard to the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Quality and Standards in Higher Education Section 3: Students with Disabilities.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/354)*

495.2 The Committee noted that the Code of Practice recommended that institutions consider identifying a member of senior management to take responsibility for issues relating to provision for students with disabilities. This role had been undertaken by the Vice-Principal (Teaching & Learning).

495.3 The Committee noted that there was a significant amount to be done in amending University practice and in modifying University premises to bring in line with the Code of Practice. The Committee further noted that all departments/schools were to go through the Teachability Project in the next year and a half. This project requires departments/schools to review their curriculum and address any areas where there are barriers to students with disabilities.

#### **ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CAREERS AND APPOINTMENTS SERVICE**

496.1 The Committee received the Annual Report from the Careers and Appointments Service for 2001/02.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/355)*

496.2 The Head of the Careers and Appointments Service drew the Committee's attention to the main points of interest in the report as summarised below:-

- The Service had been awarded 'Investors in People' status.
- The Service is moving towards gaining approval to become a Delegated Authority for the City and Guilds Senior Awards Scheme. This will allow them to recommend students on internships and vacation placements for a Personal Development Award.
- The Service is currently bidding for £30,000 from SHEFC to support their partnership with UHI Millennium Institute and Careers Scotland Highlands & Islands in developing graduate level Careers Education, Information and Guidance across the North of Scotland.
- The Service has yet to enter into formal discussions with the Faculty of Education in regard to the resources required to support their students.
- The Service is to host the AGCAS Scotland Conference.

496.3 There followed a wide ranging discussion in regard to the report, the main issues of which are summarised below:-

- In regard to the Faculty of Education, it was noted that the report indicated that the Careers Service may be interested in addressing how it could provide support for graduates at the end of their guaranteed probationary year. The Acting Dean of the Faculty of Education expressed concern about a potential conflict with the mentoring scheme which operates during the probationary year. It was therefore agreed that the Acting Dean should discuss this issue with the Careers and Appointments Service.

**Action: LM/CM**

- It was noted that the First Destination Statistics in Annex 4 of the Report were favourable. The Head of the Careers and Appointments Service expressed concern about graduate under-employment. While it was hard to quantify this, it was noted that the problem was mainly associated with particular degrees (e.g. zoology) where many students do not get jobs related to their degree intention. Likewise, it was noted that it can be an issue associated with particular cohorts of students (e.g. mature students) who are less likely to get graduate level jobs.
- It was further proposed that the University do more to encourage students to reflect on their extra-curricular activities and transferable skills. It was proposed that there should be an institutional strategy in regard to this issue. The Convener confirmed that QUEST would address this issue.
- It was noted that the LTU was developing electronic support for personal development planning (PDP), which would be piloted with Science students and their advisers of studies in 2003/04. The President of the Students' Association commented that the NUS has already developed a similar tool. It was agreed that Darren Comber should discuss this further with the Students' Association.

**Action: D Cockburn/D Comber**

- It was noted that the building which houses the Careers and Appointments Service is not fully accessible to disabled students. The Head of the Careers and Appointments Service noted that this was not ideal but informed the Committee that where students with disabilities wished to meet with a

Careers Adviser, the Adviser would go to the student rather than the student needing to come to them.

496.4 It was proposed that the report from the Careers Service should be passed to the University Court for information.

**Action: Clerk**

## **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

497.1 In February 2001, the UCTL had agreed that, in view of the alignment of Internal Teaching Reviews (ITRs) with the requirements of QAA Subject Review and the time constraints on ITR Panel visits, ITRs should in future no longer relate to research student training. In view of this, the ASC(PG) had decided that Departments/Schools should be required to periodically submit a report to enable the Committee to monitor the provision of postgraduate research students training and supervision.

497.2 The Committee received a draft report form for monitoring the provision of postgraduate research student training and supervision which had been drafted by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate).

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/356)*

497.3 In approving this report form, the Committee agreed that it would be useful to incorporate into the introductory section of this form an explanation as to why this information is being collected. The Committee noted its thanks to the ASC(PG) for the work which had gone into the production of this document.

**Action: Clerk**

## **MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE IN ARTS LECTURE THEATRE**

498.1 The Committee received a copy of a memorandum from the Faculty of Science and Engineering detailing their requested inclusion in the tender documents for the refurbishment of the Arts Lecture Theatre (ALT) of a swipe card facility. It was their intention that the swipe card facility could be used to monitor student attendance in the two level 1 biology courses with a view to tracking the progress of these students, mapping attendance against performance in the in-course MCQs and degree examinations. The memorandum asked the UCTL to provide a view on the proposal and to comment on whether or not these facilities could be used by other courses taught in the ALT.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/357)*

498.2 In discussion, the Committee made a number of comments in regard to the proposal, as detailed below, and agreed that these should be fed back to the Faculty:-

- Concern was raised about the feasibility of the system when there could be classes of up to 600 students entering and leaving through two doors.

- Queries were raised in regard to the value of the data obtained from the swipe card system. If the intention is to use the data to map attendance to performance in in-course MCQs and degree examinations, it was noted that there are many other variables in addition to attendance which affect student performance and would need to be taken into account.
- The proposals go against the spirit of the current proposals from the UCTL in regard to the class certificates and monitoring student progress (minute 492 refers).

**Action: Clerk**

## **FOOD AND DRINK IN TEACHING ACCOMMODATION**

499.1 The Committee was invited to consider whether food and drink should be allowed in teaching accommodation outwith 'normal' teaching times and also whether this should be extended to allow food and drink within 'normal' teaching times.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/358)*

499.2 The existing Recommendations and Guidelines for Teaching Accommodation state in paragraph 1.7 that "Food and drink is banned from all teaching accommodation....Staff are asked to ensure this ban is enforced." The Committee noted that there had recently been a number of requests for Residential and Catering Services to provide refreshments in teaching accommodation for group tutorials, meetings and seminars. At present, these requests are being dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis.

499.3 It was noted that this restriction can affect students who due to timetabling may not have a scheduled lunch break. It was, however, noted that there can be safety issues in regard to permitting eating within laboratories and furthermore, there can be a litter problem if eating is permitted in teaching accommodation.

499.4 Following discussion, it was agreed that the Guidelines should be revised to allow for University-provided food and drink to be served in teaching accommodation when it is ordered by a member of staff. It was agreed that if the Students' Association wished to pursue the issue of students eating their own food in teaching accommodation they could bring forward a motion to the October meeting of the UCTL.

**Action: Clerk**

## **TEACHING FELLOWS AS COURSE CO-ORDINATORS**

500. The Committee approved the proposal that the current University Policy on appointment of course co-ordinators be extended to allow for this role to be undertaken by Teaching Fellows, subject to amendment of the proposed wording of the policy to read as below:-

"Course co-ordinators must be appointed by the Head of Department and be either a member of full-time academic staff of the relevant department, an Honorary member of the



academic staff of the relevant department or a Teaching Fellow from the relevant department. This is because the Department must retain responsibility for the course. It does not preclude 'bought-in' (including relief) teachers having a major role in organising and delivering a course (but not a programme)."

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/359)*

**Action: Clerk**

### **WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

501. The Convener informed the Committee that following circulation of the papers for the meeting, Professor Gane had agreed to convene this Working Group. The Committee in approving the remit and composition for the Working Group on Student Discipline, agreed that in reviewing the Code of Practice on Student Discipline, the Working Group should also take account of the Human Rights Act.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/360)*

### **WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

#### **AND LEVELS DESCRIPTORS**

502. The Committee approved the revised remit and composition for the Working Group on Qualifications Framework and Levels Descriptors. This remit had been updated to include a request that the Working Group also consider the comments which have been referred to the UCTL by the ASCs in regard to the *Grade Spectrum* and the CAS Scale. The Committee noted that it was anticipated that the Working Group would undertake this work over the summer 2002 with a view to bringing recommendations to the October meeting of the UCTL.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/361)*

### **RESITS ON POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES**

503.1 The Committee considered the proposed policy from the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) in regard to resits on postgraduate taught programmes. The Committee noted that the ASC(PG) had revisited this policy in the light of comments submitted to the Senate by Professor Hunter, Head of the Department of Computing Science. The Committee noted that in reconsidering the policy and the issues which had led to this policy being developed, the ASC(PG) had agreed that no further amendment was necessary.

503.2 Concern was raised about potential ambiguity in regard to the wording of the first sentence of subsection (ii) 'flexibility in resits be permitted such that candidates could resit a first half-session course or courses worth no

more than 20 credit points, a course or courses worth no more than 40 credit points over the first and second half-sessions of the programme taken together, and a course or courses worth no more than 60 credit points over the duration of the programme.' The Committee in approving this policy, agreed that the Convener of the ASC(PG) should review the wording of this sentence to remove any ambiguity.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/362)*

### **GRADE SPECTRUM**

504.1 The Committee received a revised proposal for a *Grade Spectrum* for Modularised Taught Postgraduate Programmes of Study. They noted that this has been revised by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) in the light of the comments made by the UCTL at their meeting on 22 March 2002 (minute 476 refers) and in the light of a meeting that the Academic Registrar attended at the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA). In approving this proposal, the Committee noted that there was a similar ambiguity in regard to the wording of the first sentence of paragraph 8.2 and agreed that the Convener of the ASC(PG) should also review the wording of this paragraph.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/363)*

504.2 The Committee further approved revisions to the *Grade Spectrum* for determining Honours classification. These revisions had been made in the light of comments made at the UCTL meeting on 22 March 2002 where the *Grade Spectrum* for Modularised Taught Postgraduate Programmes of Study was considered. At that meeting, the Committee noted concern about the Examiners having discretion to depart from an award in a downward direction (minute 476.3 refers). As this principle was also in the *Grade Spectrum* for determining Honours classification, it was agreed that this *Grade Spectrum* should also be revised.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/364)*

### **EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

505. The Committee noted that the Senior Vice-Principal, on behalf of the Staffing and Development Committee, had approved, for its part, the establishment of the Educational Development Committee as a sub-committee of the UCTL.

### **ADVISERS OF STUDIES FOR 2002/03 (minute 488 refers)**

506. The Committee noted that the Faculties are currently working towards identifying new Advisers of Studies for session 2002/03 and that it was hoped that these nominations would be made in the near future. The Committee further noted that the New Adviser Training Session planned for 16 May 2002

was cancelled due firstly to new Advisers not having been identified in time and secondly due to the decision taken at the meeting of the Senate on 1 May 2002 to refer the paper on 'Class Certificates and Monitoring Student Progress' (minute 492 refers) to the meeting on 12 June 2002. Once the arrangements for monitoring student progress are agreed and once new Advisers have been identified, a new date for the training session will be identified.

## **SHEFC CONSULTATION ON AN ENHANCEMENT-LED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE**

507. The Committee noted that the University's response to the SHEFC Consultation on an Enhancement-led approach to Quality Assurance had been forwarded to SHEFC with the response from the Students' Association.

## **REVALIDATION OF DEGREE PROGRAMMES**

508.1 At the meeting of the UCTL in December 2001, the Committee agreed that the Deans should ensure that those Departments/Schools which had not submitted documentation for revalidation by the deadline of 31 October 2001 (and who had not made a submission for an extension) should submit their outstanding documentation by 28 February 2002. The Committee received for information a paper providing an update on those degree programmes which had been revalidated to date and those which have been granted an extension.

508.2 Concern was noted that a number of departments who had been given an extension on the original deadline of 31 October 2001 had failed to meet the revised deadline. Furthermore, in a number of cases, no explanation for the delay in submission had been given. The Committee agreed that the Deans should ensure that those Departments/Schools who had not yet submitted their documentation should do so as soon as possible and by a final deadline of 31 October 2002 at the absolute latest.

*(copy filed as UCTL/240502/365)*

**Action: Deans**

## **STUDENT PORTALS**

509. The Committee noted that currently approximately 3500 had registered to use Student Portals. In view of the fact that not all students had yet registered to use this service, examination results for the May diet of examinations would be sent out by post to all students.

## **QUEST**

510. The Committee noted the minutes from the meeting of the Quality Enhancement Strategy Team (QUEST) held on 15 May 2002.

### **POSTGRADUATE OFFICERS IN ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

511. The Committee noted that Professor David Hewitt would not be continuing as a University Postgraduate Officer in 2002/03. In view of the volume of applications received from the Department of Management Studies to date this year, the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) had recommended that an additional Postgraduate Officer in Arts and Social Sciences be appointed.

### **MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION IN 2002/03**

512. The Committee noted the main issues which would be under consideration by the Committee during session 2002/03. These included: QAA Code of Practice on Placement Learning, QAA Code of Practice on Recruitment and Admissions, a review of Internal Teaching Review procedures, reports from the Working Group on Student Discipline and the Working Group on Qualifications Framework and Levels Descriptors.

### **DATES OF MEETINGS IN SESSION 2002/03**

513. The Committee noted the dates of meetings in session 2002/03 (all at 2.00 p.m.), as under:-

18 October 2002

13 December 2002

7 February 2003

28 March 2003

30 May 2003