

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2002**

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Dr A Clarke, Mr D Cockburn, Ms C Macaslan, Professor BD MacGregor, Professor M Player, Professor AA Rodger, Professor G Seymour, Professor IR Torrance and Professor DW Urwin with Professor S Bruce, Dr D Comber, Ms J Duncan, Mrs K Fowler, Mr DM Jones, Ms C MacIver, Mr JLA Madden, Ms D McDowall, Dr W Naphy, Dr N Spedding, Ms J Tizard and Dr T Webb in attendance and Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor PR Duff, Professor JH Farrington, Miss A Harper, Professor SD Logan, Dr WF Long, Ms C Lowe, Professor JG Simpson, Mrs L Stephen, Professor MA Cotter and Mr G Pryor

Mr Cockburn declared interests as a member of QAA Scotland, the Enhancement Steering Group and SHEFC Teaching and Learning Committee.

**MINUTES**

548. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2002, subject to the following revision to minute 516.3:-

It was noted that in order to ensure compliance with EU copyright law, JISC advised that those using this facility should seek signed permission from students that their work can be uploaded, stored and cross-referenced against other material input into the detection facility. It was noted that ~~seeking-obtaining~~ copyright permission had not ~~been an issue~~ **proven difficult** for those Departments piloting the service. It was further noted that this facility worked most efficiently where the student was responsible for uploading their own work. Students who fail or refuse to upload their work into the plagiarism detection facility would still have their work marked. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Committee supported the use of a cover sheet which the student would be required to sign to indicate that the work was their own and to give their permission for the inclusion of their work in the plagiarism detection facility. It was agreed that a form of words for use on such a cover sheet would be ~~circulated to Heads of School/Department as guidance~~ **provided to those who wished to use the detection facility**. It was further agreed that students should be responsible for uploading their documents into this facility rather than the upload being undertaken by Schools/Departments. It was, however, agreed that it would be for Heads of School/Department to decide ~~the exact approach they would wish to take in regard to the introduction of the new service~~ **whether or not they wished their School/Department to take advantage of the new service**.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/388)*

**STATISTICS ON PROGRESSION, RETENTION AND NON-COMPLETION**

549.1 The Committee received, for consideration, a paper setting out the current position in regard to statistics of progression, retention and non-completion, both internally and at sector level.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/389)*

549.2 The Committee, in approving the recommendations set out in the proposals noted the following points and agreed to forward the paper to the Retention and Progression Team for further consideration:

**Action: Clerk**

- In regard to summary point 9, it was suggested that care should be taken to ensure that the correct ethnic monitoring categories are used. It was further noted that Scotland uses a different set of ethnic definitions as compared to the rest of the UK.

### **RACE EQUALITY POLICY - ACTION PLAN**

550.1 The Committee received, for consideration, a copy of the Race Equality Action Plan which had been drafted to ensure the effective implementation of the objectives of the Race Equality Policy.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/390)*

550.2 The Committee gave consideration to the suggested future action under the heading of 'Achievement, Progress and Assessment' and noted the following points:-

- In regard to objectives 1 and 4, it was noted that the issues raised had been addressed under agenda item 2.
- In regard to objective 2, it was agreed that the current range of policies fulfils this objective.
- In regard to objective 3, it was noted that the revised Guidance Notes for Appeals and Complaints would be brought to the February UCTL and that, in drafting these, account had been taken of the Race Equality Policy. Furthermore, it was noted that the Registry would be implementing procedures to monitor appeals and these would include a review of appeals with respect to racial discrimination.

550.3 The Committee also gave consideration to the suggested future action under the hearing of 'Teaching and Learning/The Curriculum', and agreed that it was appropriate that these issues should be addressed by QUEST with recommendations being brought back to the UCTL in time for action to be taken by Schools/Departments through the 2003/04 Planning Cycle.

**Action: NS**

550.4 It was further agreed that the final objective under the heading of 'Teaching and Learning' in regard to Extra-Curricular Activities should be referred to the Student Affairs Committee.

**Action: Clerk**

### **CLASS CERTIFICATES AND ATTENDANCE**

(Minute 525 refers)

551.1 The Committee received a memorandum from the Head of the School of Social Science in regard to Class Certificates and Attendance (Minute 525 refers).

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/391)*

551.2 Concern was noted by Professor Bruce in regard to the underlying principle behind the decision to abolish Class Certificate refusal (except where ASC approval was given to retain this sanction) approved by Senate in June 2002.

551.3 Professors Urwin and Bruce reported that they had discussed the matter and that Professor Bruce would be bringing forward proposals for consideration by the Academic Standards Committee (Arts & Social Sciences, Education, Divinity and Law). It was agreed that Professors Urwin and Bruce would report back to the next meeting on progress made in regard to this issue.

**Action: DU/SB**

551.4 The Committee noted that certain courses offered by the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences and by the Faculty of Medicine & Medical Sciences had been given permission by the Academic Standards Committee (Science, Engineering and Medicine) to retain the sanction of Class Certificate refusal.

### **REVISIONS TO SENAS FORMS**

552.1 The Committee received a paper setting out a proposal from the Academic Standards Committee (Arts & Social Sciences, Education, Divinity and Law) that questions 25, 31 and 35 of the SENAS forms should be revised.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/392)*

552.2 In discussion, the following points were noted:-

- The forms need to be revised to encourage Schools/Departments to respond more fully. It is clear that currently some Schools/Departments have difficulty in categorising their responses, in particular in regard to questions 31 and 35. In many cases, course proposals from a School/Department have identical responses to those questions suggesting that little thought is being given to these answers.
- The four categories of outcomes in questions 25, 31 and 35 should be abandoned for only one (or at most two) categories.
- Many of the issues referred back to Schools/Departments by ASCs concern queries in regard to these questions.
- The form should encourage Schools/Departments to talk about what is different/novel about their course.
- The forms need to address the needs of Schools/Departments who are also required to conform with the requirements of external accreditation.
- The Guidance Notes are incompatible with the forms.
- It is often one person in a School/Department who takes responsibility for completing these forms. This may lead to some of the similarity in responses which has been observed.
- Question 25 regarding Learning Outcomes is important and should not be altered too much.

- Staff Development courses, in particular for new academic staff, need to address issues of completion of these forms.
- In regard to 'General transferable skills' in question 25, it may be useful to include a checklist as to what is meant by these.
- Guidance Notes could be developed as drop-down help boxes which could be accessed on-line.
- The questions asked on the SENAS form must stand up to external scrutiny.

552.3 Following this discussion, it was agreed that a Working Group composed of the UPC Conveners, Convener of ASC (PG), Dr D Comber, Registry representatives and SA representative be formed to come forward with recommendations in regard to revisions to the SENAS forms for consideration at the March UCTL. The Working Group to be convened by Professor Urwin.

**Action: Clerk**

### **DEGREE EXAMINATION PASS RATES**

553.1 The Committee received a paper setting out a number of issues raised by the Academic Standards Committee (Science, Engineering and Medicine) in regard to the procedures to be used for the monitoring of degree exam pass rates and the role of the ASC in this process. This paper brought forward a proposal for the introduction of a standard procedure for the monitoring of these pass rates.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/393)*

553.2 In discussion of the proposed procedure, the following points were noted:-

- It was agreed, in view of the recent establishment of the Academic Learning Support Unit, that KEY Learning Opportunities should be included in the circulation list of pass rate reports.
- It was proposed that it may be helpful to look at non-completion rates as this may give information about courses where there may be problems. It was, however, noted that the reasons for withdrawal can be varied and therefore this information may not be very useful.
- It was proposed that the data could be revised to include no papers (NP) by showing, of those eligible to sit the exam, the percentage who passed (excluding NPs) and the percentage who did not attend (including NPs). The ASC would then expect Schools/Departments to comment where the level of NP was significant.
- Some first years choose not to sit the first diet and to stake everything on passing at the resit diet. Therefore, it may be difficult to comment on the NP rate until the end of the session.
- It was queried whether courses with student numbers less than ten should be excluded from the exercise. However, it was agreed that failure rates are just as important in small courses.

553.3 Following this discussion, it was agreed to accept the proposals set out in paper 393, subject to the addition of the Director of the Wider Access Policy to the list those who should be sent the degree examination statistics. Heads of Schools/Departments would be free to request data on NPs/withdrawals where it was felt appropriate.

**Action: Clerk**

### **REVISIONS TO THE GENERAL REGULATIONS**

554. The Committee approved the proposed revisions to the General Regulations for First Degrees.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/394)*

### **REVISED REMIT AND COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENTS' PROGRESS COMMITTEE**

555. The Committee approved the proposed revisions to the remit and composition of the Students' Progress Committee subject to the following revisions:

- Revision of remit 1(b) to read:-

'students seeking to proceed from one programme year to the next notwithstanding the minimum credit requirements for progression (except for entry to an Honours programme which is a matter for the Head of School/Department (and UPC Convener)), and to make decisions on such cases on behalf of the Senate.'

- Revision of note (ii) to read:-

'There is no appeal against a SPC decision taken under 3 above. A complaint may be made in accordance with the procedures set out in the Guidance Notes on Complaints on Non-Academic Matters.'

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/395)*

### **REVISED REMIT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT & GRADUATE FEEDBACK**

556. The Committee approved the revised remit of the Working Group on Student & Graduate Feedback. These revisions were proposed in the light of information arising from the discussions at the Teaching Quality Forum of Universities Scotland at which it had been indicated that 'internal processes should take full account of student feedback and include procedures to obtain student views of the provision being reviewed'.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/396)*

### **REPORT FROM THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY TEAM**

557. The Committee noted the report from the Quality Enhancement Strategy Team in regard to issues arising from a recent meeting of the Teaching Quality Forum concerning Internal Review and Enhancement-led Institutional Review.

## **REVISED INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW PROCEDURES**

558. The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 20 November 2002, had approved the revised Internal Teaching Review Procedures (minute 520 refers).

## **ANNUAL UCTL REPORT TO THE SENATE**

559. The Committee noted that the Senate, at its meeting on 20 November 2002, had received the UCTL report to Senate for 2001/02. In discussion of the report, the following points were noted and agreed:-

- That the Registry should liaise with the relevant Head of School in regard to a question raised concerning the implementation of the proposed changes to the Class Certificate system in 2003/04.
- That some Faculties no longer had Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees but had moved to School-based Committees instead: in this case, it would be for the Dean to identify a representative from their Faculty to attend UCTL.
- That the reason why all appeals considered by the Senate Academic Appeals Committees were upheld in 2001/02 was because the appeals had been well grounded.

## **INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE USE OF C&IT IN TEACHING,**

### **LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

(Minute 522.3 refers)

560. The Committee noted that, following discussion of the recommendation from the Staffing and Development Committee that the UCTL give consideration to the development of an Institutional C&IT Strategy, a working party had been established to come forward with recommendations. These would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

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

### **AND LEVELS DESCRIPTORS**

561.1 The Committee noted that the Working Group on the Qualifications Framework and Levels Descriptors had held its first meeting on 13 November 2002. At that meeting, the Working Group had discussed issues in regard to compliance of existing awards with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The Working Group had noted that the SCQF required, with effect from 2003 entry, all University awards to comply with the Framework. In interpreting this statement, the Working Group had agreed that by the start of 2003/04, the non-Honours degrees offered by the University should be compliant with the SCQF. While there were also some issues that required to be addressed in regard to Honours programmes, it had been proposed that these should be dealt with

through the 2004/05 Planning Cycle. Any student who first registered in September 2003 would not commence their Honours programme until at earliest September 2005, by which time these programmes would be compliant.

561.2 The Committee agreed to recommend to the Undergraduate Programme Committees a number of revisions to the Supplementary Regulations for the non-Honours degrees which were currently non-compliant.

561.3 The Committee further agreed that the next issue to be addressed by the Working Group should be in regard to the compliance of Honours programmes in order to give Schools/Departments sufficient time to address these issues in time for the 2004/05 Planning Cycle.

### **REVIEW OF ADVISING & REGISTRATION AND MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS**

562. The Committee noted that a meeting of Deans, UPC Conveners and Directors of Studies (Advising) had been arranged for 20 December 2002. This meeting would review Advising & Registration for 2002/03 and come forward with recommendations as to how the problem of ensuring advising loads of 40 advisees per Adviser could be addressed. In addition, following a number of teething problems in regard to the new system for monitoring students' progress, it had been agreed that this new system would also be reviewed at this meeting with a view to determining whether any amendments were required to the operation of the system for the second half-session 2002/03. A report from this meeting would be considered by the Working Group on Advising & Students' Progress Review early in the New Year.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

563. The Committee noted the attached paper which highlighted the strategic aims in regard to teaching and learning in the Strategic Plan for 2002/03 and indicated the progress made to date in regard to the achievement of these aims.

*(copy filed as UCTL/131202/398)*

### **WORKING GROUP ON ACADEMIC APPEALS AND STUDENT**

#### **COMPLAINTS ON ACADEMIC MATTERS**

564.1 The Committee noted that a meeting of the Working Group on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic Matters would be held early in the New Year to discuss the revised Guidance Notes which had been prepared by the University Solicitors (minute 493 refers). The revisions were made in the light of the view of the Solicitors that the documents drafted by the Working Group may be too complex and not especially user-friendly. Recommendations would be brought from the Working Group to the February meeting of the UCTL.

564.2 The Committee further noted that all member institutions of Universities Scotland with the exception of the University of Glasgow, RSAMD and the Open University had confirmed their participation in the new arrangements for the independent review of student complaints. The scheme was now operational in respect of all student complaint cases from the start of the current academic year (2002/03). Earlier cases were covered only where the internal process had not been completed by the start of this academic year. The scheme would be available to students where all the institution's own internal procedures had been exhausted and at this stage students would be

provided details of the scheme. The form of words used in such communication with students would be consistent across institutions and had been provided by Universities Scotland.

### **COMPUTER CLASSROOMS**

565. The Committee noted that three new computer classrooms were now in service: F90 and F95 in Edward Wright Building (both seating 16) and LT5 in the Meston Building (seating 40).

### **REVALIDATION OF DEGREE PROGRAMMES**

(Minute 515 refers)

566.1 The Committee noted that, in regard to the revalidation of degree programmes, the following Schools/Departments had failed to submit documentation by the final deadline of 31 October 2002 (minute 515 refers).

Accountancy & Finance New programme proposal only (programme specifications & curriculum maps submitted as part of recent ITR)

Anthropology All documentation required

Management Studies (UG & PG provision) All documentation required

Law All documentation required (only MA Legal Studies, LLM in Criminal Justice and LLM in Criminal Justice and Human Rights awaited)

BSc in Marine Resource Management All documentation required

BSc in Tropical Environmental Science All documentation required

BSc in Ecology All documentation required

566.2 The Committee further noted that the documentation for the revalidation of the MA in Legal Studies had now been submitted. The Faculty Officer for the Faculty of Social Sciences & Law was addressing the outstanding programmes from that Faculty. In regard to the outstanding revalidations for the Faculty of Science & Engineering, it was agreed that an update would be brought to the next meeting of the UCTL.

***Action: Deans***

### **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS IN 2002/2003**

567. The Committee noted the dates of meetings for the remainder of session 2002/03 (all at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2), as under:-

7 February 2003

28 March 2003

30 May 2003

## RETIRING MEMBERS

568. The Convener concluded the meeting by informing members that Professor Duff's period as Convener of the Undergraduate Programme Committee in Law would come to an end at the end of the first half-session. The Committee agreed to record thanks to Professor Duff for the time and service he had given over the past few years.

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