

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING****Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2003**

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Dr A Clarke, Mr D Cockburn, Mr J Dunphy, Miss A Harper, Dr WF Long, Ms C Macaslan, Professor BD MacGregor, Professor M Player, Mrs L Stephen and Mrs H Jennings (*vice* Professor IR Torrance), with Professor S Bruce, Ms J Duncan, Mrs K Fowler, Mr JLA Madden, Dr W Naphy, Mr G Pryor, Professor C Secombes, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb and Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professor JH Farrington, Mrs D McKenzie-Skene, Professor PA Racey, Professor JG Simpson, Professor MA Cotter and Ms D McDowall

Professor CHW Gane was in attendance for the discussion of the final report from the Working Group on Student Discipline.

Mr Cockburn declared interests as a member of the QAA Scotland Board, the Enhancement-led Institution Review Steering Group, the SHEFC Teaching and Learning Committee, the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access and the SHEFC Enhancement Theme Planning Group for Assessment.

**MINUTES**

571. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2003.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/414)*

**FINAL REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

- 572.1 The Committee received the revised version of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline which had been drafted by the Working Group on Student Discipline.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/415)*

- 572.2 Professor Gane, Convener of the Working Group, outlined the main changes which had been proposed as detailed below:-

- A preamble to the Code has been added.
- The term 'Cheating' has been defined.
- The definition of Plagiarism has been revised. The revised definition removes any requirement to show intent to deceive the examiners and focuses on the content of the work submitted.
- Section 4 on Misconduct and the Criminal Law has been revised.
- The Policy has been clarified to emphasise that any allegations of criminal misconduct will be reported to the police.
- Significant changes have been made to the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Misconduct (Section 7).

572.3 The Convener thanked Professor Gane and the other members of the Working Group for their work. There followed discussion in regard to the revised Code of Practice, the main points of which are summarised below:-

- It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Code of Practice to also be referred to the Student Affairs Committee as certain aspects of the Code (e.g. Section 6) refer to aspects of that Committee's remit.

**Action: Clerk**

- Under Section 4.2 (Criminal Misconduct), the Code does not identify who is responsible for deciding when to report a case of criminal misconduct to the police. In discussion, it was agreed this should be the responsibility of the University Secretary.

- There was a lengthy discussion in regard to the amount of the fine which could be imposed by the Investigation Officer or the Disciplinary Committee:

- It was noted that no change to the level of fines was proposed.

- Concern was expressed that the level of fines could pose difficulties for students experiencing hardship.

- There is logic in charging such a fine when the reason for the fine has led to financial loss to the University.

- Both 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 set out a number of options for penalties. It is not clear who determines which penalty to impose.

- The non-financial penalties are not without other serious implications.

Following discussion, an amendment was proposed to Sections 5.7.1, 5.7.2 and 6.3 by the President of the Students' Association that sub-section (b) should be deleted from each Section. In a vote, the motion was not carried. A further motion was then brought that to each of the above sub-sections there should be added the clause '(bearing in mind a student's ability to pay)'. In a vote, the motion was not carried.

- In Note 3 at the start of the Guidance Note, the Manager of KEY Learning Opportunities should be included.

- All references to Head of School should be revised to Head of Department.

- In regard to Section 7.2.6, it is not clear what happens to the piece of work when the Head of Department determines that plagiarism has occurred. Professor Gane agreed to clarify this.

- Two alternative forms of Section 8.1.2 and 8.1.3 were provided for consideration by the Committee. In discussion, it was agreed that the original version should be adopted with the following revisions:

- The use of the word 'element' could be confused with the use of the term 'element of assessment' in the *Grade Spectrum* and should be replaced with 'component'.

- Revision of 8.1.3 to read 'Where a student is judged to have cheated in any component of assessment (e.g. in-course assessment or end-of-course examination) for more than one course in undergraduate programme years 3 or above no degree shall be awarded. However, the Investigating Officer may choose to impose a lesser penalty where, in their judgement, it is appropriate.'. To the end of Section 8.2.1 insert 'However, the Investigating Officer may choose to impose a lesser penalty where, in their judgement, it is appropriate'. It was felt that, for instance, in the case of direct entrants, it may be appropriate to award a lesser penalty where the circumstances merit it.

- In regard to Research Degrees, it was noted that the Staffing and Development Committee had asked the Working Group to consider incorporating the procedures on Research Misconduct for Staff into the Code of Practice. The Working Group had, however, decided that it should be omitted.

572.4 Following this wide-ranging discussion, it was agreed that the Code of Practice should be approved, subject to the amendments being made as outlined above, and forwarded to the Senate and Court for approval.

**Action: CG/Clerk**

572.5 It was further noted that the Working Group had also drafted a more student-friendly version of the document. It was agreed that this approach should be encouraged. As members of the Committee had not seen this version, Professor Gane agreed to e-mail it to members for comment.

**Action: CG**

### **THE PROVISION OF STUDENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SKILLS**

573.1 The Committee received a paper from the Director of Information Systems and Services setting out recommendations for a review of the effectiveness of the Senate Policy Statement on C&IT Skills approved in June 2001.

*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/416)*

573.2 It was noted that concern had been raised that such a review should be fully informed, and not destabilise the Study Skills course which was believed by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Divinity to be an effective way of embedding C&IT Skills in that Faculty.

573.3 The Convener proposed that such a review might best be carried out by the Working Group developing the Institutional C&IT Strategy for Teaching and Learning. It was agreed that this group should be asked to report to the UCTL by May 2004.

**Action: Clerk**

### **COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS**

574.1 The Committee received a paper from the Registry setting out proposals to move to greater electronic communication (via e-mail and Portals) with students.

*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/417)*

574.2 The Director of Information Systems and Services expressed some concern about the technical implications of the proposals. In particular, he expressed concern that students are not good at e-mail housekeeping, that delivery of e-mail cannot be guaranteed and that the current Portals system is fairly rudimentary.

574.3 In approving the proposals, it was agreed that Registry would liaise with DISS in regard to the technical aspects of the proposals.

**Action: Clerk**

### **APPOINTMENT OF ADVISERS FOR 2003/04**

575.1 The Committee received a paper setting out the outcome of discussions between the Faculties of Arts & Divinity, Social Sciences & Law, Science & Engineering and Medicine & Medical Sciences in regard to provision of Advisers of Studies for 2003/04.

*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/418)*

- 575.2 It was noted that both the Faculty of Arts & Divinity and Social Sciences & Law were giving consideration to all staff becoming Advisers of Studies. In the Faculty of Science & Engineering, further cross-Faculty discussion was required in regard to the allocation of Advisers. All Faculties were working towards identifying new Advisers by 21 April 2003.
- 575.3 The issue of training was discussed. It was noted that the training programme should address needs such as the acquisition of listening skills.
- 575.4 It was further noted that while the MA was moving to a system of departmental allocation of Advisers, there are certain special groups of students such as direct entrants from Aberdeen College who should continue to be allocated to special Advisers.

#### **ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CAREERS & APPOINTMENTS SERVICE 2002/03**

- 576.1 The Committee received the Annual Report from the Careers & Appointments Service for 2002/03.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/419)*
- 576.2 The Head of the Careers & Appointments Service drew members' attention to the First Destination Statistics (FDS) which showed significant changes. While unemployment levels had hardly changed, there had been a major increase in the number entering employment rather than embarking on further study.
- 576.3 576.3 In regard to the collection of FDS, it was noted that there was to be a change in the procedures for collection of this data. It was agreed that the proposal that the collection of this data be devolved to Schools would not be practicable. It was agreed that the implications of this change should be discussed with the Director of Student Affairs.  
**Action: LM/DMcD**
- 576.4 Following the SHEFC recommendation for greater student involvement, the President of the Students' Association sought clarification as to how the Careers & Appointments Service planned to address this matter. The Head of the Careers & Appointments Service proposed that this would be best done through direct contact with the SA rather than through student membership of the Careers Consultative Committee and agreed to discuss the matter with the SA.  
**Action: LM/DC**

#### **UCTL (AND ASC) ANNUAL REPORTS**

- 577.1 The Committee received a proposal from the Registry for revisions to the annual UCTL (and ASC) reports.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/420)*
- 577.2 It was noted that, in the main, these reports were essentially reflective and covered those issues referred to the Senate in the course of the year. It was proposed that their format should be revised to be more focused and forward-looking.
- 577.3 Following discussion, it was agreed that the current format should be retained at present but that Senate, in considering the report for 2002/03, should be asked to consider whether a revised format would be more relevant.  
**Action: Clerk**

#### **IMPROVED CONSULTATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY**

- 578.1 The Committee received proposals for ways to improve consultation with the University Community before changes to policies and procedures were considered by the UCTL.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/421)*

578.2 The President of the Students' Association proposed that the remit and composition of the UCTL should be revised to include the support and welfare aspects of Teaching and Learning with the Directors of Studies (Advising) being in attendance. The Convener proposed that he bring forward a paper to a future meeting of the Committee in regard to this proposal.

**Action: DC**

578.3 In regard to the role of the UCTL in overseeing the development and implementation of the AUPHET programme, clarification was sought in regard to the reporting mechanism. The Convener confirmed that the AUPHET programme was jointly overseen by the UCTL and the Staffing and Development Committee. He agreed to discuss the remit of the AUPHET Steering Group with Dr Long.

**Action: JGR**

578.4 The Committee approved the recommendations as set out in paper 415 and agreed to recommend the revisions to the remit and composition of the UCTL to the Senate.

**Action: Clerk**

### **REVISIONS TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY CALENDAR AND CATALOGUE OF COURSES**

579.1 The Committee received a paper setting out proposed revisions to the distribution of the University Calendar and the Catalogue of Courses.

*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/422)*

579.2 Concern was raised about the proposal to cease distribution of the Abridged Catalogue of Courses to new entrants as the proposals assumed (i) that all new entrants would be able to access the web and (ii) that the recommendation might place additional pressure on Advisers as students would be less prepared for Advising.

579.3 It was therefore agreed that the views of Advisers should be sought in regard to this recommendation and to an alternative proposal that the Abridged Catalogue be reduced to only include level 1 courses.

**Action: Clerk**

579.4 It was agreed that the proposal to cease distribution of the Regulatory booklet to students be approved.

579.5 In regard to Recommendation 2 concerning proposed reductions to the circulation of hard copies of the University Calendar and Catalogue of Courses, concern was expressed at the proposal to no longer send copies to Heads of Department. It was also proposed that a number of other departmental staff, such as Directors of Undergraduate Teaching, should also receive copies. It was therefore agreed that Heads of School should be contacted to ascertain the number of copies required.

**Action: Clerk**

### **DRAFT HANDBOOK FOR ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW: SCOTLAND – UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE**

580.1 The Committee noted the University's response to the consultation on the draft Handbook for Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) which had been signed off by the Convener and submitted to the QAA.

580.2 The QAA had informed us that they would be reflecting carefully on the points raised in the consultation and would be proposing changes to the Handbook to the meeting of the sector Steering Committee on 7 March 2003. In the light of these discussions, a revised version of the Handbook would be discussed by the QAA Scotland at its meeting on 18 March 2003. It

was hoped that a finalised version of the Handbook would be published by Easter. A paper on the responses to the consultation would be posted on the QAA website.

- 580.3 In addition, QAA were also producing an Operational Manual for ELIR, Guides for Students and Institutional Staff on ELIR and a sample ELIR Review Report.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/423)*

**[Note by Clerk:** Following the meeting, the University was informed by the QAA that its Institutional Review would take place in 2004/05.]

### **EXAMINATIONS ON SATURDAYS AND EVENINGS**

- 581.1 Following the meeting of the UCTL on 7 February 2003, the Registry had been asked to consider the feasibility of not holding examinations on the first Saturday of the examination diets and, wherever possible, to decrease the number of Saturday and evening examinations.
- 581.2 The examination period provides for examinations to take place from the first Saturday of the diet until the last Saturday excluding Sundays. Currently, no examinations are timetabled in the evening on Saturdays or on the last Saturday in the diet. If timetabling of examinations on the first Saturday in the diet was to be abolished, this would necessitate the use of Saturday evenings later in the diet and probably also the last Saturday in the diet for some examinations. It would be necessary for some examinations, which would have been held in the first week, to be moved into the second week of the examinations. There is great pressure by academic departments to hold many examinations at, or near the start of, the examination period to allow maximum time for marking of examination scripts.
- 581.3 Every effort is always made to minimise the number of examinations in evenings and Saturdays. The Registry is hoping to introduce new Examination Timetabling software next year which may be able to reduce further the use of Saturdays and evenings.

### **INVIGILATION OF EXAMINATIONS**

- 582.1 Following the meeting of the UCTL on 7 February 2003, the Registry had been asked to consider providing information to Heads of School/Department about the other examinations taking place alongside their examinations so that they could explore the possibility of co-operation in regard to invigilation.
- 582.2 The parent School/Department for each course that has the most registered students in each time slot and venue is required to provide a Senior Invigilator. A list notifying Departments of the times and venues they are required to provide Senior Invigilators is sent to Examination Officers soon after the publication of the final Examination Timetable, together with the abstract from the Academic Quality Handbook indicating the responsibilities of Senior Invigilators. At the request of Departments, a second version of this list was supplied for the first time at the January 2003 diet of examinations: this was sorted by date and time so that those Departments not nominated could identify which Department was providing the Senior Invigilator at their examination. Departments could use this list to co-operate in the provision of Invigilators for Saturday and evening examinations.

### **RESPONSE TO SHEFC CONSULTATION PAPER: CAREERS EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND (Minute 555 refers)**

583. The Committee noted that the response to the SHEFC Consultation Paper: Careers Education, Information and Guidance in Higher Education in Scotland had been signed off by the Convener and submitted to SHEFC. A copy of the report had been circulated to members, for information, by e-mail.

**DEGREE EXAMINATION STATISTICS  
(Minute 554 refers)**

- 584.1 The Committee noted that the Senate, on 5 March 2003, had given consideration to the decision of the UCTL to reaffirm its proposals of 13 December 2002 in regard to the monitoring of degree examination statistics. Following discussion, the Senate had agreed that the UCTL proposals should not be endorsed. It had been agreed that the UCTL should be asked to address the issue of monitoring degree examination statistics through the Course Review procedures, whereby Course Co-ordinators should be required to comment on student performance in their courses in their annual reports to their Head of School/Department.
- 584.2 As the Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback would be addressing course review as part of its remit, it had been agreed that the matter should be referred to the Working Group for consideration.

**REVALIDATION OF DEGREES – UPDATE ON PROGRESS  
(Minute 560 refers)**

- 585.1 The Committee noted the following reports from Deans in the Faculties of Social Sciences & Law and Science & Engineering in regard to the progress made in completing the revalidation of degrees:-

**Faculty of Social Sciences & Law**

The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences & Law had approved the following report on the revalidation of degrees within the Faculty:-

***Accountancy and Finance***

- All the material required had been received, having been seen by the Internal Teaching Review Panel.

***Anthropology***

All the revalidation papers had been submitted but had to go to the Undergraduate Programme Committee.

***Management Studies***

It had been agreed that the required documentation would be submitted by 30th June 2003.

***Law***

The Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) agreed that Law should not revalidate the LL.M in Criminal Justice and the LL.M in Criminal Justice and Human Rights because they were first validated in October 2000 with all the appropriate documentation.

**Faculty of Science & Engineering**

***BSc Ecology and BSc Tropical Environmental Science***

The revalidation documentation had been submitted.

***BSc Marine Resource Management***

The submission of a new programme proposal form was awaited and would be provided as soon as possible.

- 585.2 In regard to the proposals awaited from Anthropology, Management Studies and Marine Resource Management, the Convener of the Undergraduate Programme Committee sought clarification as to the urgency with which these proposals should be considered by the UPC. It was agreed that the UPC Convener should use his discretion in regard to this matter.

**CONSULTATION ON DEVELOPMENT OF THRESHOLD STANDARDS  
FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES  
(Minute 566 refers)**

586. The Committee noted that the Senate, on 5 March 2003, had given consideration to the University's draft response to the consultation document on the Development of Threshold Standards for Research Degree Programmes. This response had been drafted by the Vice-Principal (Research & Commercialisation) following wide consultation with the academic community, including the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) and the Committee for Research, Income Generation & Commercialisation. There had been broad support from Senate for the draft response and a final paper had been submitted to SHEFC incorporating comments made at Senate and UMG.

**MONITORING STUDENTS' PROGRESS**

587. The Committee noted that the letter sent to students in regard to the system for monitoring students' progress had been updated following consultation with UPC Conveners, Directors of Studies (Advising) and the Students' Association. The revisions made had taken account of comments made by Advisers of Studies that the letter should be sufficiently strongly worded to ensure that students take action but not so harshly worded as to cause unnecessary alarm. Guidance Notes on the revised operation of the system had been produced and can be accessed at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/monitoring.hti>

**WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND LEVELS DESCRIPTORS**

588. The Committee noted that it was planned to hold the next meeting of the Working Group on the Qualifications Framework and Levels Descriptors in April to consider (i) baseline degrees (minute 568 refers), (ii) compliance of Honours programmes with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and (iii) procedures for determining degree classification and the questionnaire responses from External Examiners (minute 565 refers).

**WORKING GROUP ON ACADEMIC APPEALS AND STUDENT  
COMPLAINTS ON ACADEMIC MATTERS  
(Minute 563 refers)**

589. The Working Group on Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic Matters met on 6 March 2003 to consider the revised Guidance Notes which had been prepared by the University Solicitors. Following much discussion, the Working Group had agreed that the revised documents were not student friendly. It had been agreed that it would be more helpful if a short 'constitutional' style document could be prepared for each of the Guidance Notes with a more detailed accompanying explanatory document. The Students' Association had also offered to come forward with a student-friendly guide to the process explaining, in particular, how to appeal or complain but not necessarily explaining in detail the further stages of the process as these could be made available to a student once an appeal or complaint had been made. A sub-group of the Working Group would come forward with recommendations to the Working Group with a view to proposals being brought to the May meeting of the UCTL.



**ASSURANCE OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF RESEARCH  
STUDENT TRAINING AND SUPERVISION AND AWARDS**

- 590.1 The Committee noted that the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate), on 14 March 2003, had reviewed the current arrangements for monitoring research student training and supervision in light of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council's requirements that such monitoring should form part of Internal Review and in light of the recent consultation on threshold standards for research degree programmes.
- 590.2 The ASC had agreed that there should be a Panel visit to Schools/Departments separate from, but in close proximity to, the visit of the Internal Teaching Review Panel. The Panel would meet, *inter alia*, with research students and supervisors, and would prepare a report to be incorporated as a section of the Internal Teaching Review Report. Prior to the visit, the School/Department would be required to submit a written report for consideration by the Panel.
- 590.3 The ASC had agreed in principle that the Panel should comprise internal academic staff who had experience of research student training and supervision, that one member of the Panel should be a current or recent member of the ASC, and that there should be a student representative on the Panel. It had been agreed that an External Subject Specialist on the Panel was unnecessary.
- 590.4 Procedures for such monitoring would be drafted and considered by the ASC on 9 May 2003.

**REPORT FROM QUEST MEETING OF 14 MARCH 2003**

591. The Committee noted the report from the meeting of QUEST held on 14 March 2003.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/424)*

**A FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND**

592. The Committee noted that the Scottish Executive had recently published a paper entitled 'A Framework for Higher Education in Scotland' which could be accessed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/herp2.pdf>

**HIGHER QUALITY – BULLETIN OF THE QAA**

593. The Committee noted the March 2003 edition of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/280303/425)*

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

594. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 23 May 2003 at 2pm in Committee Room 2.