

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2004

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Professor M Baker, Professor G Burgess, Dr A Clarke, Professor MA Cotter, Ms J Duncan, Mr J Dunphy, Miss A Harper, Dr WF Long, Dr D McCausland, Mrs D McKenzie Skene, Professor M Player, Professor T Salmon, Mrs L Stephen, Dr G Walkden and Dr M Young with Dr R Bernard, Dr D Comber, Mr JLA Madden, Mr C Mair, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb, Ms M Wylie and Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professor DW Urwin, Mrs J McAndrews, Ms D McDowall and Mr G Pryor

The Convener welcomed Ms Wylie and Mr Mair who will be taking over as Vice-President (Advice & Support) and Education Convener of the Students' Association, respectively, for the next academic year. The Convener also welcomed Dr Bernard from the Registry who will be assisting Dr Mackintosh by taking the Minutes of the meeting.

Professor Salmon informed the Committee that he had visited Professor Urwin the previous weekend and that Professor Urwin was making good progress towards a full return to health. The Committee agreed to forward their best wishes to Professor Urwin.

MINUTES

96. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2004.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/504)

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2004-2009

97. Dr Mackintosh informed the Committee that the University's draft Strategic Plan was not yet in an appropriate format for consideration by the Committee. The draft Plan was currently being considered by the University's Management Group and would be circulated electronically to members of the Committee for their comments in due course.

REVIEW OF THE GRADE SPECTRUM AND PROVISION OF RESITS AT HONOURS LEVEL

- 98.1 The Committee received a paper on a review of the *Grade Spectrum* and the provision of resits at Honours level.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/505)
- 98.2 Dr Mackintosh reminded the Committee that the review of the *Grade Spectrum* had been undertaken partly as a response to concerns raised by a small number of External Examiners about the fairness of the current *Grade Spectrum*, and partly to bring the requirements for the award of an Honours degree in line with the SCQF guidelines.
- 98.3 Dr Mackintosh drew the Committee's attention to one substantive change contained in the revised documentation for the *Grade Spectrum* (Annex A to paper UCTL/280504/505): the removal of the Pass degree. Mr Madden confirmed that the Pass degree was a major cause of confusion for prospective employers and students who are awarded Pass degrees require a substantial amount of support when preparing job applications. Mr Madden, therefore, supported the recommendation to remove the Pass degree from the *Grade Spectrum*. The Committee noted that the Pass degree is not compliant with the SCQF guidelines and that valid compliant alternatives exist and therefore approved this revision.

- 98.4 In approving the revised *Grade Spectrum*, the Committee noted that the proposed changes had been made following lengthy consideration of the current *Grade Spectrum*, which had been found to work well in the majority of areas. The Committee therefore agreed that for those areas where the *Grade Spectrum* is not working so effectively, it might be necessary to review the number of elements of assessment used.
- 98.5 The Committee approved the revised *Guidance Note for Students who either Fail, or Fail to Attend or Complete, an Element of Prescribed Degree Assessment*, subject to confirmation of the internal credit requirements for the award of the Graduate Diploma (PGDE).
- 98.6 The Committee approved the proposed revisions to the General Regulations and in so doing agreed that they should be forwarded to the next meeting of the Senate for final approval. In the regulatory context, Dr Long did, however, note that care must be taken when defining what is meant by an Honours programme. He reminded the Committee that for some Science degrees students are not formally admitted to Honours until their fourth and final year, but some elements of assessment undertaken during their third year are used for classification purposes.
- 98.7 The Committee further approved the revisions to paragraph 7.9.6 of the Academic Quality Handbook, regarding the requirement that marks of CAS 5 (in addition to those of CAS 6 – 8) at Level 4 should be referred to External Examiners. It was agreed that the rationale for these changes should be drawn to the attention of all External Examiners.

Action: Clerk

- 98.8 The Committee agreed, in light of the outcome of the review of the *Grade Spectrum*, to invite the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) to review its procedures for the determination of progression and award in modularised postgraduate taught programmes of study.

Action: GB

- 98.9 The Committee noted that on 5 May 2004 the Senate had approved the broad principles previously proposed by the UCTL regarding the *Grade Spectrum* and the proposed system of compensation. However, it was suggested by Senate that the proposed system of compensation, as outlined in 4(b) of Annex C to UCTL/280504/505, did not go far enough, and that consideration should be given to expanding this to allow for fails of below CAS 6 to be compensated for by high achievement in other courses. This proposal was considered and rejected by the Heads of School at their meeting of 13 May 2004. The Committee agreed to endorse the decision of Heads of School and refer the finalised proposal to Senate for approval.

Action: Clerk

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CAREERS AND APPOINTMENTS SERVICE

- 99.1 The Committee received the Annual Report from the Careers and Appointments Service.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/506)
- 99.2 The Head of the Careers and Appointments Service drew members' attention to the First Destination Statistics (FDS), which he noted were difficult to compare with previous years due to changes in the way the figures were compiled. However, the Committee noted that while there had been a slight rise in unemployment levels, there had been a drop in the number going onto postgraduate study, especially research, and the trend of under-employment, previously noted, continued.
- 99.3 The Committee inquired whether the FDS showed any increase in the numbers of students failing to gain a postgraduate Master's degree and therefore going on to graduate with a Postgraduate Diploma. As this information was not included as part of the FDS, the Committee agreed to refer the issue of postgraduate progression rates to the ASC (Pg).

Action: GB

- 99.4 Clarification was sought as to how the University compares with other Scottish institutions, in particular with The Robert Gordon University (RGU), with regard to the regionality of the FDS. Mr Madden stated that the current year's figures from HESA were not yet available, but confirmed that over 50% of the University's admissions come from the North-East of Scotland and approximately 50% of the University's graduates go on to work in the North-Eastern area. The Committee noted that a survey of students who graduated in 1998 would be undertaken jointly by the Careers and Appointments Service and Grampian Enterprise. This survey would give a more accurate view of the situation than the FDS.
- 99.5 The Committee noted that, further to the 2002 Working Party on Careers Education, Information and Guidance, a Working Party would require to be set up towards the end of the next academic year in order to complete an internal review in 2006.
Action: Clerk
- 99.6 The Committee agreed to refer the issues of whether Partnership Agreements should continue to be discipline-specific or should be undertaken at School level and how the Careers and Appointments Service should formally link into the new academic structures, to the College Teaching & Learning Committees.
Action: Directors of Teaching & Learning
- 99.7 The Committee noted that during the last year extremely positive links had been established between the Students' Association and the Careers and Appointments Service. Arising from this collaboration two initiatives would be reported on in the future. Ms Duncan confirmed that the Students' Association will be undertaking work as part of a new scheme aimed at improving the employability of the University's students and increasing students' awareness of skills they acquire outwith their academic studies. Ms Duncan requested that the Committee nominate a representative to attend their meetings. The Committee agreed that a member of the Registry should be asked to attend.
Action: Clerk

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT UPDATE

- 100.1 The Committee received a paper updating them on the situation regarding quality enhancement and agreed that similar updates should be provided routinely for future meetings.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/507)
- 100.2 With respect to the quality enhancement issues highlighted, the Committee noted the following:

Progress on Internal Teaching Reviews

- The Internal Teaching Review (ITR) of Chemistry, Molecular & Cell Biology and History have all been conducted with Chemistry now being in receipt of their report, with the other reports to follow.
- The new Quality website is now "live" at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/qe>. Professor Cotter commented on how useful the website was for providing a brief digest of the current issues. The Committee thanked Dr Comber and Dr Spedding for their hard work in preparing the website.

Progress in regard to preparation for ELIR (and outcome of Annual Visit)

- At a recent meeting of QUEST, thought had been given to identifying case studies which, as had been recently confirmed by the QAA's Assistant Director, should demonstrate the institution's QE strategy in action.

Progress on Student Representation

- The Committee noted the predominantly positive comments from Heads of School with regard to the Students' Association reports on the Class Representative system. The Committee further noted that Ms Duncan had agreed to take these comments back to the Students' Association for consideration, with a view to the Working Group on Student Representation being re-convened before the end of June 2004.

Action: Clerk

- The Deputy Academic Registrar (Teaching & Learning) had recently met with a representative from SPARQS who are undertaking a mapping-exercise to determine the current position in regard to student representation across the sector. The outcome of the survey conducted at all HEIs will be compiled into a sector-wide report which will include profiles of each institution's provision for student representation.

Progress on Quality Enhancement Engagements

- It was agreed that plans would be brought forward in October with regard to the University's engagements with the next round of the current QE Themes.
- The Convener informed the Committee that, in response to the recognition that it had, in the past, been difficult for institutions to engage with the broad national themes established by the QAA, it is proposed to establish a network of Institutional Co-ordinators to act as contacts for the QE Employability Theme. The intention behind this being to deliver focussed programmes which will meet the specific needs of either individual institutions or a regional group of institutions. The Convener asked that the College Directors of Teaching & Learning recommend members to serve as part of a small Steering Group to look at the University's needs with regard to the Employability Theme.

Action: Directors of Teaching & Learning

PROPOSAL TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO OBTAIN CAS MARKS AND/OR FEEDBACK FOR ASSESSED COURSEWORK AND END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENTS VIA THE STUDENT PORTAL

- 101.1 The Committee received a paper updating them on a recommendation made by Senate at its meeting on 5 May 2004 regarding the proposal to enable students to obtain CAS marks and/or feedback for assessed coursework and end-of-course assessments via the Student Portal.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/516)
- 101.2 The Committee approved the recommendation, made by Senate, that the release of an overall CAS mark for end-of-course assessments should not be a requirement but should be permitted where Schools wished to do so for a particular course.

USE OF COMPUTER CLASSROOMS (minute 80 of 26/3/04 refers)

102. The Committee approved the draft Code of Conduct for Computer Classrooms.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/508)

ROLE OF DIRECTORS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

- 103.1 In approving the job description for the Director of Undergraduate Programmes and the Convener of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate), the Committee sought assurance that an appropriate gender balance for appointments to these roles would be maintained. The Registry confirmed that when seeking nominations for these roles it would be done in accordance with the University's *Policy on Equal Opportunities*.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/509)
- 103.2 The Committee approved the proposed revisions to the composition of the Senate Undergraduate Academic Appeals Committee and the Quality Enhancement Strategy Team.

EXAMINATION TIMETABLES

104. The Committee approved the recommendation in regard to the August Examination Timetable.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/510)

**INTERIM REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP
ON STUDENT AND GRADUATE FEEDBACK**

105. The Committee noted the Interim Report from the Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback and, in particular, noted that the Working Group was currently carrying out an evaluation of current feedback mechanisms.

(copy filed as UCTL/280504/511)

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (PDP)

- 106.1 The Committee noted the position paper on PDP from the Educational & Staff Development Unit.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/512)
- 106.2 The Committee noted that it had emerged during a recent Internal Teaching Review (ITR) that there had been confusion regarding the use of PDPs from a discipline whose Professional or Statutory Body (PSB) maintained their own PDP. The discipline concerned had been unsure whether their students should be directed towards the PSB PDP or the University's own PDP.
- 106.3 Dr Comber confirmed, and the Committee agreed, that where a PSB PDP was already in existence, students should use the PSB PDP.

**SUPPLEMENTARY GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR
COMBINED DEGREES WITH EDUCATION**

107. The Committee noted that the Convener had approved the introduction of Supplementary General Regulations for Combined Degrees with Education. These Regulations had been introduced to enable the introduction of Combined Degrees with Education to enhance the recruitment of students to programmes in teaching.

**REVIEW OF THE USE OF GROUP WORK
(minute 24 of 24/10/03 refers)**

108. The Committee noted that, following the decision at the UCTL in October 2003 that a review of the use of Group Work should be undertaken, a questionnaire had been developed. The questionnaire had been discussed with Heads of School on 13 May 2004 and had been circulated to Schools for completion. The decision to undertake this survey followed concern raised by a student who raised an appeal centring on the assessment of group work. The outcome of the survey would be brought to the UCTL in October 2004.

DISS USER SURVEY 2004

109. The Committee noted the summary report from DISS on User Survey 2004.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/513)

FINAL REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP ON ADVISING & REGISTRATION

110. The Committee noted that the Final Report from the Working Group on Advising and Registration and its recommendations had been approved by the Senate on 5 May 2004 subject to clarification of the wording of Recommendation 4. The Registry would work with Schools in regard to the implementation of Recommendations 2 and 3 during the next two months and would liaise with Schools and Advisers in regard to the implementation of Recommendation 1 during the summer. Colleges would be asked to liaise with Schools in regard to the appointment of Senior Advisers for 2004/05. In regard to Recommendation 4, the Registry would work with Schools during 2004/05 to consider the feasibility of moving to a single advising system for the MA.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDENT PORTAL – REPORT FROM DISS

111. The Committee noted the summary report from DISS on the Student Portal and, in particular, the work being undertaken in regard to the Phase Two Developments.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/514)

HIGHER QUALITY: BULLETIN FROM THE QAA

112. The Committee noted the February 2004 edition of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.
(copy filed as UCTL/280504/515)

CLOSING COMMENTS

113. In closing the meeting, the Convener thanked Ms Duncan and Mr Dunphy for their contributions throughout the academic year, not just to the UCTL but within the wider context of the University community.

DATES OF MEETING IN 2004/2005

114. The Committee noted that all meetings would be held at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2, with the exception of the meeting on 10 December which would be held in the Court Room:-

Friday 22 October 2004, Friday 10 December 2004, Friday 4 February 2005, Friday 25 March 2005, and Friday 27 May 2005.

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