

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2005**

Present: Ms CA Macaslan (Convener), Ms M Annandale (*vice* Professor MA Cotter), Ms M Barraclough (*vice* Dr P Edwards), Miss A Harper, Ms F Keefe, Dr WF Long, Dr D McCausland, Professor E Metzger, Professor T Salmon, Dr P Schlicke and Dr M Young with Dr D Comber, Mr JLA Madden, Dr A Reid, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professor GJA Burgess, Professor MA Cotter, Dr P Edwards, Mr D Marr, Mrs L Stephen, Professor G Walkden, Professor FB Watson and Mrs J McAndrews

MINUTES

18. The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2005 were approved.
(*copy filed as UCTL/091205/09*)

UCTL ANNUAL REPORT TO SENATE

- 19.1 In approving the Draft UCTL Report to Senate for academic year 2004/2005, the Committee noted that, in general, there had been no significant change from previous years in regard to student progression, withdrawals, academic appeals and complaints. It was noted that there was a decline in the proportion of academic appeals which were required to be resolved by the Senate Undergraduate Academic Appeals Committee. This decline was attributed to the changed procedures for considering appeals introduced during 2003/2004 beginning to have a full effect. The Committee further noted that information relating to equal opportunities monitoring in appeals, complaints and discipline cases would be collated and included in the final version of the report. The Committee expressed concern regarding the rise in the number of instances of plagiarism detected and reported through the student discipline procedures and agreed that this situation should continue to be monitored closely.

(*copy filed as UCTL/091205/10*)

Action: Clerk

- 19.2 The Committee agreed that the Convener should approve the final version of the report for submission to the Senate on 25 January 2005.

**MONITORING STUDENTS' PROGRESS – REVIEW OF
TRIAL ABOLITION OF CLASS CERTIFICATE REFUSAL**

- 20.1 The Committee received a report on the operation of the trial system for monitoring students' progress together with the suspension of the sanction of class certificate refusal.

(*copy filed as UCTL/091205/11*)

- 20.2 The Committee agreed that the introduction of the system for monitoring students' progress had generally had a positive impact, but that there were still concerns in some schools over the loss of control which had previously been afforded by the ability to withdraw class certificates.

- 20.3 The Committee considered four options for the future operation of the system. Following discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend to College Teaching and Learning Committees that the University either (i) continue with no change to the current trial position or (ii) that the system for student monitoring should be amalgamated with the class certificate system. It was noted that this was also the recommendation from the Heads of School when they discussed the issue at their meeting on 24 November 2005.
- 20.4 Accordingly, College Teaching and Learning Committees will be asked to consider UCTL's recommendations in early 2006 with responses being taken to the meeting of UCTL in February. The UCTL's final recommendations will be forwarded to the Senate in March 2006.
Action: Clerk

ISSUES ARISING FROM ELIR

- 21.1 The Committee received a report detailing the responses received from Schools in relation to the four areas of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) action plan which were referred to them for comment.
(copy filed as UCTL/091205/12)
- 21.2 With regard to the issues related to programme review, outside the Internal Teaching Review process, the Committee noted that the responses from Schools seemed to indicate that this process was being undertaken although not necessarily being formally documented. It was stressed that in seeking to formalise the process in response to the comments received in the ELIR report from the QAA it was not the intention to add to the bureaucratic burden placed on schools. It was therefore agreed that the guidance provided on such programme reviews in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) should be increased.
Action: Clerk
- 21.3 The Committee agreed that the AQH should be updated to formally reflect the fact that feedback on programmes from External Examiners is in fact already routinely gathered by the majority of schools. It was agreed that it would be sufficient and appropriate for schools to include an item on their agendas for examination boards to discuss this matter.
Action: Clerk
- 21.4 In considering the responses relating to postgraduate student representation the Committee noted that the guidance on student representation contained in the AQH is more appropriate for undergraduate students. The Committee, therefore, agreed that the guidance should be redrafted in order to take better account of postgraduate student representation.
Action: Clerk

RELIGION AND BELIEF POLICY: DRAFT SECTION ON ACADEMIC TIMETABLING

- 22.1 The Committee received a paper outlining the draft wording for the section of the University's Policy on Religion and Belief relating to Academic Timetabling.
(copy filed as UCTL/091205/13)
- 22.2 The Committee noted that the wording of the draft section on academic timetabling had already been amended to take account of minor changes to the wording requested by the Heads of School, and that there would also be a amendment to paragraph 4.2 indicating that alternative arrangements would be made 'at the discretion of Heads of School'

WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT AND GRADUATE FEEDBACK

- 23.1 The Committee received an update from the Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback.
(copy filed as UCTL/091205/014)
- 23.2 The Committee noted the draft of Section A of the SCEF which had been redesigned to have fewer questions with fewer tick boxes and more space for student comments. The Committee generally agreed that the new version of the form was better than that currently in use.
- 23.3 The Committee agreed that consideration should be given to the mechanisms to be used for distributing forms and collecting completed returns. Current procedures allow course co-ordinators to undertake the distribution and collection processes which, it was agreed, was not good practice. The Committee noted that the School of Biological Sciences had tried to use student class representatives to undertake the collection and collation processes, but unfortunately the School reported that this method of collection was not as efficient as that previously employed.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE NOTE ON STUDENT COMPLAINTS

- 24.1 The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 includes provision to extend the remit of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to include further and higher education establishments. This replaces the Universities Scotland Scheme for Independent Consideration of Student Complaints in Scotland. The SPSO, unlike the Universities Scotland Scheme, extends the provision for investigation of complaints to those from staff and members of the public, not just students and, as such, includes both applicants and former students.
- 24.2 At present the Admissions policy provides details of the procedures to be followed by applicants wishing to complain but no formal procedures currently exist for complaints by former students. In order to address this and to align the complaints procedures for applicants, students and former students, it is proposed to extend the current Policy on Student Complaints to cover all three categories.
- 24.3 The UCTL approved the extension of the current Policy (as attached) and Guidance Notes on Student Complaints to cover applicants, students and former students. Revisions to the Guidance Note would simply reflect the changes made to the Policy.
(copy filed as UCTL/091205/15)

UPDATE ON CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

25. The UCTL noted that training for class representatives was held by the Students' Association on 8 November. The training session was run in consultation with SPARQS. Approximately 50 students attended and positive feedback was received from those attending. It was hoped to run further sessions in the second half-session.

RESPONSE TO UUK CONSULTATION ON DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

- 26.1 The UCTL noted the University's response to the UUK Consultation on Degree Classification as approved by the Senate on 16 November 2005.
(copy filed as UCTL/091205/16)

- 26.2 The Committee further noted that the Students' Association had favoured the initial draft response prepared by the University and as such were less in agreement with the actual response submitted to Universities UK.

POSTGRADUATE CATALOGUE OF COURSES

27. The UCTL noted that the database for the on-line Postgraduate Catalogue of Courses was now available on the web for Schools to input course details. This was being taken forward through College Offices and Graduate Schools.

ENHANCEMENT THEMES

- 28.1 The UCTL noted that the annual Enhancement Themes National Conference would be held on Friday 27 January 2006 at the Westpark Centre in Dundee. The main theme of the Conference would be the institutional management of enhancement. Additional topics and themes to be covered would include sharing approaches on taking forward the outcomes of Assessment and Student Needs, hearing about the work of Employability and Flexible Delivery and helping to shape the work on the first year and Integrative Assessment. Further details of the Conference are available at:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/uploads/documents/conference_info_2006.pdf

- 28.2 The Committee received an update on the first meeting of the steering group for the First Year Experience enhancement theme from Dr McCausland. It was noted that the theme was to be taken forward under three themes: engagement, empowerment and curriculum design. The Committee agreed to provide feedback to Dr McCausland on the Scoping Paper which had been produced for the theme and which would be circulated to members.

Action: DMcC

- 28.3 The Committee noted that as part of the Assessment enhancement theme, the topic of integrative assessment was being considered. Part of the intended outcome from this section of the theme is to produce a series of examples of good practice. The Committee agreed that the University should seek to ensure that it has representation amongst the examples included. It was therefore agreed that such examples will be sought via the Directors of Teaching and Learning in due course.

Action: DPMC