

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2006

Present: Ms CA Macaslan (Convener), Professor GJA Burgess, Professor MA Cotter, Mr J Hardey, Miss A Harper, Professor WF Long, Dr W Naphy, Mr D High (vice Professor T Salmon), Mrs L Stephen and Dr M Young with Mr P Fantom, Dr G Mackintosh, Mrs J McAndrews, Ms P Spence, Dr T Webb and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Dr P Edwards, Mr R Miller, Mrs M Pearson, Mr M Radford, Dr P Schlicke, Professor GM Walkden, Professor FB Watson, Mr P Haley and Ms L MacDonald

The Convener welcomed Dr Naphy and Ms Spence to their first meeting of the Committee, and Mr Fantom attending for item 2 on the agenda.

The Committee noted that the University had been visited by representatives of the European Universities Association who were undertaking a survey of a small number of institutions across Europe to inform the production of the Trends V Report. The Report will inform the next stage of the Bologna Process at the EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions in March/April 2007 and the Summit of Ministers of Education in London in May 2007. The visiting team had reported that their discussions at the University had been very positive.

The Convener reported that the University had received confirmation from the QAA that they would not be making any requests for action as a result of the one-year follow up report submitted by the University as part of the ELIR process.

The Committee congratulated Professor Long on his recent promotion in recognition of his excellence in learning and teaching.

MINUTES

55.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2006.
(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/46)

55.2 The Committee noted that further guidance on the operation of the monitoring and class certificate system was currently in preparation, and that this would be circulated to Schools as soon as possible.

Action: Registry

EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY

56.1 The Committee received a short-term plan to encourage the development of employability at the University of Aberdeen.

(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/47)

- 56.2 In considering the plan the Committee noted the following key points in particular:
- The Careers Service would be working with employers to create a Regional Employer Forum, convened by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching). The Forum would provide a further link between the University and local employers.
 - The Careers Service hope to be involved in the pilot stages of the undergraduate Personal Development Plan project as the service is aware that undergraduates are seeking careers advice, particularly in relation to curriculum vitae, earlier in their time at university.
 - It is hoped that funds will be made available in the near future by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to enable the University to take forward the employability agenda. It is proposed that funds made available through this channel are used to embed employability into the work of the existing Careers Advisers.
- 56.3 The Committee supported the proposal to use any funds made available by the SFC to extend the role of the existing Careers Advisers to include employability. It was agreed that this would be the most sustainable method of utilising short-term funds.
- 56.4 The Committee also agreed that there would be value in employability becoming more widely embedded within the University: there is a real opportunity for the existing close links between the Institution and local employers to be further exploited.
- 56.5 The Committee were particularly interested in exploring the links between employability and degree programmes which contain an element of placement learning. The Committee were aware that there is at least a perception amongst employers that graduates who have completed a placement as part of their degree may be better placed in terms of employability, although it was recognised that this was not a uniform position in all employer sectors. It was agreed that a further breakdown of the statistics on sandwich degree programmes contained in paragraph 8 of the Plan would be useful, as it was not clear which programmes were included in the summary data.

Action: PF

DOUBLE MARKING OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS AT HONOURS AND POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT LEVELS

- 57.1 The Committee received a paper outlining a proposal to relax the requirement for full double marking of all summative assessments that are taken as part of an Honours or Postgraduate Taught Programme.
- (copy filed as UCTL/08122006/48)*
- 57.2 In general, the Committee were supportive of the proposal to relax the current requirements relating to double marking provided a suitably robust system for moderation is put in place. The Committee further supported the proposal that any criteria to be introduced should be as a minimum standard, so as not to preclude a Head of School continuing to require full double marking if this were desired.
- 57.3 Concern was expressed regarding the motivation for making the change and it was noted that the driving force was not purely academic. However, the Committee agreed that there is sufficient confidence in the quality of marking within the institution that these concerns should not prevent consideration being given to the introduction of a moderated system.
- 57.4 It was agreed that any moderated system introduced would have to be closely monitored: the Committee will need to satisfy themselves that the system is not used by markers to ensure that some scripts are double marked simply because awarding certain CAS marks

will guarantee a second marker is asked to look at the paper, or that CAS marks are awarded in order to avoid the need for guaranteed double marking.

- 57.5 Notwithstanding the concerns raised, the Committee agreed that further work on a system for moderation should be undertaken and that a more detailed proposal should be brought to the next meeting. This would allow the proposal to receive further consideration prior to being forwarded to the Senate.

Action: Clerk

INVIGILATION

- 58.1 The Committee received a paper proposing that the policy regarding who is permitted to act as examination invigilators be widened to include individuals who are not members of academic staff.
(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/49)
- 58.2 The Committee supported the proposal to extend the categories of staff who would be permitted to act as invigilators.
- 58.3 The Committee agreed that there would be a need to ensure that the Senior Invigilator appointed for each venue was sufficiently experienced in invigilation to be able to address any issues which might arise, particularly where large venues are being utilised.
- 58.4 The Committee further agreed that, where members of non-academic staff are appointed as invigilators, there would be a need for appropriate academic staff to be available throughout the duration of an examination in case the invigilator needed specific academic input.

UPDATE OF GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS

59. The Committee approved amendments to the *Guidance Notes for Students in Relation to:- (a) Non-Progression on Academic Grounds (b) Discontinuation of Attendance on Courses on Academic Grounds (c) Termination of Studies or Candidature for an Award on Academic Grounds, Guidance Notes for Students whose studies as a candidate for the Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) are being considered for suspension or termination on the grounds that they are not "Fit to Practise", Guidance Notes for Students whose studies as a candidate for the Degrees of Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Bachelor of Music (BMus) with Honours (Education), or the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) are being considered for suspension or termination on the grounds that they are not "Fit to Practise", and the Guidance Notes for Students Concerning Academic Appeals* to incorporate guidance on defamatory or derogatory comments.

(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/50)

UPDATE OF GUIDANCE NOTES ON STUDENT COMPLAINTS

60. The Committee approved amendments to the *Guidance Notes on Student Complaints* to ensure that the grounds for appeal were consistent and clear throughout the document.

(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/51)

**AMENDMENT OF GUIDANCE NOTES FOR EDUCATION STUDENTS
WHO HAVE BEEN JUDGED NOT “FIT TO PRACTISE”**

61. The Committee approved amendments to the composition of the Fitness to Practise (Education) Committee, contained in the Guidance Notes.
(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/52)

**CENTRE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING ACTIVITY REPORT
1 AUGUST – 10 NOVEMBER 2006**

62. The Committee noted the report from the Centre for Learning & Teaching which detailed the activities undertaken by the Centre between August and November 2006.
(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/53)

UPDATE TO OPERATIONAL PLAN

63. The Committee noted updates to the Quality Learning section of the Operational Plan for 2006/07.
(copy filed as UCTL/08122006/54)

FIRST YEAR ENHANCEMENT THEME

64. The Committee noted that as part of the first year experience enhancement theme, institutions were to be allocated funds to take forward discussions on the nature and purpose of the first year in higher education. In particular the Steering Committee was hoping to stimulate debate focussing on the questions: ‘How can we make best use of the first year to engage and empower learners?’, ‘What do we want students to get from their first year?’ and ‘How can we align student and institutional perspectives and expectations for the first year?’. The University’s part in this initiative would be taken forward by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching)

RESEARCH-TEACHING LINKAGES ENHANCEMENT THEME

- 65.1 The Committee noted that work had begun on the Research-Teaching Linkages enhancement theme. The Steering Committee had invited interested colleagues to submit expressions of interest to undertake a number of projects related to the Research-Teaching Linkages theme.
- 65.2 There were two strands of work: a general strand comprising an ongoing sector-wide discussion, reflecting on, and exploring Research-Teaching Linkages and how they could be maximised to enhance the achievement of graduate attributes will be undertaken; and a discipline level strand which would focus on, the sharing of and developing on, current and emerging practice at the discipline level. For these purposes, subjects had been grouped into 8 broad areas of generally cognate subjects. Further details relating to these projects are available from the Registry.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

66. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 2 February 2007 at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2.