

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2007**

*Present:* Ms CA Macaslan (Convener), Professor G Burgess, Professor MA Cotter, Dr P Edwards, Mr J Hardey, Professor WF Long, Dr W Naphy, Mrs M Pearson, Professor T Salmon, Dr P Schlicke, Mrs L Stephen and Dr M Young, with Ms K Christie, Ms S Ross, Ms P Spence and Dr R Bernard (Clerk) in attendance.

*Apologies:* Professor G Walkden, Professor FB Watson, Dr G Mackintosh and Ms L Macdonald.

**MINUTES**

90. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2007.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/180507/73)*

**DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2007 – 2010**

- 91.1 The Committee noted that the version of the Draft Strategic Plan it had received for consideration included revisions made since the last meeting of Senate. The Convener informed the Committee that in the proposed new format for the plan there were two main stands of strategy: Learning and Teaching, and Research and Commercialisation.
- 91.2 The Committee noted that the Draft Plan would be revised up until the meeting of Court on 26 June 2007.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/180507/74)*
- 91.3 From the Committee's discussion of the document, the following key themes emerged:
- The Committee generally agreed that the document did not make enough reference to the learning experience as distinct from teaching.
  - The Committee agreed that the first two bullet points on page one should be transposed in order to give greater emphasis to teaching and learning.
  - The Committee had reservations regarding the list of professions included on page 2 of the document.
  - Concerns were expressed that there was insufficient reference to postgraduate students in the Learning and Research sections of the document. The Committee agreed that Postgraduate Taught and Research recruitment figures should be included in the Targets section.
  - The Committee were of the view that each section of the document should have targets attached to it. This would enable the performance standards to be measured.
  - The Committee agreed that there was significant overlap between different sections of the document and perhaps a cross-referencing system would be useful.
  - It was agreed that reference to 'social space' should be included in the Infrastructure and Environment section of the document.
- 91.4 The Convener assured the Committee that their comments would be taken into consideration in future discussions of the document.

**Action: Convner**

## **DRAFT LEARNING & TEACHING FRAMEWORK**

- 92.1 The Committee received the draft Learning and Teaching Framework. The Convener stated that the document was in its early draft stages.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/180507/75)*
- 92.2 From the Committee's discussion of the document, the following points were made:
- The Committee noted that Section A, points ii and v are the same.
  - The Committee agreed that Section A, point ii should be amended to remove reference to beliefs. The Committee had strong reservations about encouraging students to question, confront and challenge beliefs. The Convener stated that an amended point ii would be drafted.
  - The Committee agreed that the Model of Learner should be amended to include post-Level 4 students. The current Model of Learner stops at Level 4 although it also applies to Level 5 students.
  - The Committee agreed that "Targets" should be replaced by "Actions" in Annex 2 as the list constituted a list of strategic actions rather than targets.
- 92.3 The Convener confirmed that she would meet with the appropriate people in order to clarify timescales for the production of the Strategic Plan and the Learning and Teaching Framework.

## **UPDATE ON RETENTION**

- 93.1 The Committee received an oral report on the retention activities and strategies ongoing within the University. The Convener informed the Committee that retention issues were to receive high attention from all.
- 93.2 The Convener informed the Committee that a Working Group on Induction had been established to look at the induction process for the forthcoming academic session. The Working Group is chaired by the College Director of Teaching and Learning (Arts and Social Sciences).

## **MONITORING STUDENTS' PROGRESS**

- 94.1 The Committee received the Report on Monitoring Students' Progress and Class Certificate Refusal. The Clerk provided a brief oral report of monitoring trends during the first half-session of 2006/2007 and highlighted the proposals to improve the system.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/180507/76)*
- 94.2 In approving the proposed changes to the system for session 2007/08, the Committee expressed concerns regarding the potential for confusion to be created where course co-ordinators become involved in responding to monitoring reports. It was agreed that the guidance issued by Registry to course co-ordinators should stress that monitoring reports can only be resolved by contact being made with the Registry. It would be anticipated that this would avoid the situation arising of students being deemed withdrawn as they had failed to take any action, when they had in fact contacted the course co-ordinator.
- 94.2 The Committee noted that, although there had been a substantial rise in the number of monitoring reports issued since the last comparable review in 2004/05, there had also been a rise in the proportions of students going on to achieve passes in the courses concerned. The Committee were, therefore, satisfied that the process continued to offer support to those students who had been identified as being 'at risk'.

## **CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (PGDE)**

95. The Committee approved changes to the supplementary regulations for the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) required as a result of restructuring of the programme. The changes required were a consequence of combining the PGDE (Primary) and PGDE (Secondary) programmes under a new common framework.

(copy filed as UCTL/180507/77)

## **AMENDMENTS TO REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY**

96. The Committee approved, for its part, amendments to:

**(i) Regulations for the Preparation & Submission of Postgraduate Theses**

These changes would enable subject specific keywords to be included in the thesis abstract.

**(ii) Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Science (DSc)**

These changes had been requested to further clarify the circumstances in which an additional external examiner would be appointed.

**(iii) General Regulations for Research Degrees**

These amendments would limit the time allowed for the resubmission of sustained thesis subject to minor correction and to rationalise the regulations governing the submission of theses leading to the award of conjoined but separate degrees.

(copy filed as UCTL/180507/78)

## **SURVEY OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE ENTRANTS TO PROGRAMME YEAR ONE IN 2006**

97. At its meeting on 17 April 2007, the Advisory Board for Learning & Teaching considered the results from a survey of new undergraduate entrants to programme year one in 2006. The Committee noted that the Advisory Board would be taking forward several issues identified through the survey.

## **INDUCTION CO-ORDINATION GROUP**

98. The Committee noted that an Induction Co-ordination Group had been formed to look at the issues relating to University induction. In its initial work the Group would be focussing on induction for session 2007/08. The Group is convened by Professor Trevor Salmon and met for the first time on 23 April 2007.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER**

- 99.1 The Committee noted that the Advisory Board for Learning & Teaching, at its meeting on 17 April 2007, had considered results of 'The International Student Barometer'.

99.2 The International Student Barometer is a survey conducted by I-Graudate across 40 institutions in the UK, which allows institutions to benchmark themselves against their competitors. The Autumn Wave focuses on post-arrival and orientation, through looking at decision-making, expectations, initial perceptions plus experience of the enquiry to arrival process. A response rate of 30% was received from University of Aberdeen Students. Results indicate:

- i. For criteria specific to Arrival and Orientation, the UoA is in the bottom quartile for 50% of criteria (8/16) and bottom half of institutions for 81% of criteria. Overall 30<sup>th</sup> of institutions surveyed.
- ii. The results indicate that the University is performing below the benchmark group in terms of the orientation offered to students relating to ***the academic advising and registration, university orientation, formal welcome, first night and local orientation.***

#### **CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITY REPORT (10 NOVEMBER 2006 – 9 MAY 2007)**

100. The Committee noted the Activity Report from the Centre for Learning & Teaching which detailed activities undertaken by the Centre since November 2006.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/180507/79)*

#### **INVIGILATOR TRAINING**

- 101.1 The Committee noted that the Centre for Learning and Teaching, in conjunction with the Registry, would be running a training session for staff who would be acting as examination invigilators for the first time. The session would be aimed primarily at new academic staff, administrative, technical and clerical staff invigilating for the first time, however any staff wishing to attend would be welcome. The session would be held on Wednesday 16 May at 11am.
- 101.2 For further information, and to book, staff should go to:  
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/coursebooking/system/>.
- 101.3 Staff should login to the system using their University username and password; once logged in, Centre for Learning & Teaching should be selected. Alternatively, email clt@abdn.ac.uk or telephone (27)3030 to book a place.

#### **HIGHER QUALITY: BULLETIN FROM THE QAA**

102. The Committee noted the March 2007 edition of "Higher Quality", the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, available at:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/hq23/hq23.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/hq23/hq23.pdf)

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

103. The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 31 October 2007 – venue to be confirmed.