

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2010

Present: Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Ms J Batty, Dr B Connolly, Professor M Cotter, Mr P Fantom, Mr B Lockhart, Professor W Long, Ms M McHaney, Professor W Naphy, Mr R Parker, Ms P Spence, Professor G Walkden, Dr M Young, Dr R Bernard (Clerk) Mrs S Vigers (Minute Secretary)

Apologies: Professor P Edwards, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Morrison, Dr PJ Murray

Ms J Sewel was in attendance for item 333.

MINUTES

331. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2010.
(UCTL/031110/001)

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY

- 332.1 The Committee considered a paper outlining the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) and the comments from the Colleges and the Students' Association.
(UCTL/031110/002)
- 332.2 The Committee noted that the University is less strong on the issue of feedback. The Undergraduate Committee had some discussion on this and suggested a meeting with the Students' Association, the College Directors of Teaching and Learning and the VP Teaching and Learning with a view to establishing a working group. The working group could look at expectations and what qualifies as feedback from the student and the staff perspective.
- 332.3 The Committee agreed that this working group should be set up as a matter of urgency and report back to the Undergraduate Committee and then to UCTL.
- 332.4 The Committee further noted that the NSS should not be viewed for 2010 in isolation as there are a number of anomalies that can come up year by year. The Committee also noted that there are some pages missing from the comments received by the College of Physical Science and that on some programmes more students have reported than graduated. Notwithstanding this issue the Committee noted that there are many issues that can be addressed, particularly feedback.

Clerk: Liaise with PPG about the missing pages

REVISED PROCESS FOR COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 333.1 The Committee were invited to consider the revised process for complaints and appeals which was presented orally. The Committee noted that a Kaizen blitz review had been undertaken over 4 days in July involving 13 people.
- 333.2 The Committee were informed that the new process would be shorter with initial emphasis on informal resolution. If after 10 days no resolution is reached a form would be completed and at this stage no new evidence could be submitted. The appeal or complaint would be checked for competency and could go to a hearing. There would no longer be the option of an additional appeal to Court; rather the student would be invited to go to external review with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

333.3 The Committee were informed that training would be provided to staff handling appeals and that the new process would be reviewed after one year. The intention is to have the new process up and running in early 2011.

333.4 The Committee noted that its endorsement was being sought prior to putting the process to Senate. However, the Committee decided that as it had not seen the process and had not therefore been able to discuss it in detail, it could not offer endorsement at this stage. The Committee requested that a paper on the new process be put to it when it was available.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT RECORD (HEAR)

334.1 The Committee received a paper on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).
(UCTL/031110/003)

334.2 The Committee noted that Aberdeen is in the second phase of the national trial of the HEAR which aligns with the recommendations in the Curriculum Reform Report. The University is seeking to develop a HEAR in time for the graduation of the 2010 intake, and is currently seeking to record relevant information.

334.3 The Committee was asked to consider section 4.3 specifically whether fails and / or number of attempts should be recorded. The Committee considered that recording the number of attempts was probably sufficient without recording fails.

334.4 The Committee was also asked to consider section 6.1 specifically whether to only record co-curricular activities that the University can make a qualitative judgment about. The Committee discussed the benefits of including a wide range of activities on the HEAR but recognised that it would be difficult for the University to endorse each activity. It was suggested that the STAR award could be a mechanism through which activities could be endorsed however, it was recognised that STAR is a tool for self-reflection and not a means through which to judge the quality of performance.

334.5 The Committee agreed that it would be useful to maintain a list of activities eligible to be recorded on section 6.1. It was suggested that a small group might be established to devise a mechanism through which activities could be validated in order to appear on this list.

Clerk: Establishment of a small group

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)

335.1 The Committee received an oral report on issues arising from the 2010 Enhancement-Led Institutional Review. Two particular issues were raised: the Postgraduate Research Student experience, which will be picked up in the Strategic Plan and by the Postgraduate Committee; and evaluation of Curriculum Reform, particularly students' achievement of the Graduate Attributes.

REPORTS FROM THE CONVENORS OF UCTL SUB-COMMITTEES

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

336.1 The Committee was informed that the Postgraduate Committee decided to include in attendance College ACRs and a representative from Admissions.

336.2 The Postgraduate Committee discussed the reduction in the number of international students and received a report from SRAS regarding the UKBA regulations. It was suggested that the deposits required by Postgraduates might have quite a positive impact on the ability to get

visas. The Heads of Graduate Schools and SRAS would be discussing this further and reporting back to the Postgraduate Committee.

- 336.3 The Postgraduate Committee also discussed Graduate Attributes for PGT and PGR students and agreed to form a working group on this issue.
- 336.4 The Postgraduate Committee also discussed student experience and agreed not to participate in PTES and PRES but to create an Aberdeen survey which could be more flexible and address needs in the institution. The Committee endorsed this view.

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

- 337.1 The Committee was informed that the Quality Assurance Committee had looked at the School of Medicine and Dentistry's response to the ITR report and approved this with some comments for clarification.
- 337.2 The Quality Assurance Committee approved amendments to the External Examiners Report which came from the Postgraduate Committee. The Quality Assurance Committee also considered several items for routine approval.
- 337.3 The Quality Assurance Committee discussed its remit and thought about its role in quality enhancement as well as quality assurance.
- 337.4 The Quality Assurance Committee was keen to ensure that information was able to be passed on to appropriate committees. The Committee agreed that thought needs to be given to the timings of meetings to improve the flow of information.

Clerk: Review timings of Committee meetings

UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE

- 338.1 The Committee was informed that the Undergraduate Committee discussed the National Student Survey and decided to progress some of the issues raised through a small group.
- 338.2 The Undergraduate Committee also discussed student monitoring and felt that it was important to encourage engagement with academics. It agreed to establish a very short term working group to look at the process.

DISSEMINATION OF ANNUAL REPORTS

- 339.1 The Committee noted that a lot of Reports are produced indicating good and bad practice and that it is important to disseminate these beyond groups and committees. The Committee agreed that a useful avenue for dissemination would be through School Directors of Teaching and Learning.
- 339.2 The Committee agreed that a School Directors of Teaching and Learning meeting would be a useful addition to the committee structure.

Clerk: Establish a School Directors of Teaching and Learning meeting

LEARNING AND TEACHING OBJECTIVES FROM THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 340.1 The Committee received the Draft Learning and Teaching Extract from the Strategic Plan.
(copy filed as UCTL/031110/005)
- 340.2 The Committee noted that many of the issues raised in this paper had already been discussed such as the National Student Survey and a group to encourage dissemination of good practice.

LATEST DATE FOR THE RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2010-11

- 341.1 The Committee noted and approved the latest dates for the return of examination results for session 2010-2011.

(UCTL/031110/006)

AMENDMENTS TO THE FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK

- 342.1 The Committee noted and approved the amendments to the Feedback Framework

(UCTL/031110/007)

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES EVALUATION STRATEGY

- 343.1 The Committee noted and approved the proposed evaluation strategy to evaluate the impact of the changes to curriculum design arising from the Curriculum Reform process on students' experiences.

(UCTL/031110/008)

AMENDMENTS TO THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT FORM

- 344.1 The Committee noted and approved proposed amendments to the External Examiner Report form. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will facilitate more effective collection of information highlighting examples of effective teaching practice

(UCTL/031110/009)

AMENDMENTS TO POSTGRADUATE GRADE SPECTRUM

- 345.1 The Committee noted and approved proposed amendments to the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum.

(UCTL/031110/010)

CENTRE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF AY2010-11

- 346.1 The Committee is noted and approved the Centre for Learning and Teaching's professional development event programme for 2010-11.

(UCTL/031110/011)

REMIT AND COMPOSITION 2010/11

- 347.1 The Committee noted the Remit and Composition of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning which has been amended in light of the amendments to the teaching and learning committee structure which received final approval from the University Court on 29 September 2010.

(UCTL/031110/012)

GRADUATION DATES

348.1 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below, approved by the Convener of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning during the summer:

Thursday 25 November at 11.00 am Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Medical Sciences and Medicine.

Thursday 25 November at 3.00 pm Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering, Geosciences and Natural & Computing Sciences.

Thursday 25 November at 6.30 pm Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Education, Language & Literature and Social Science.

Friday 26 November at 11.00 am Higher and First Degrees in the Business School.

Friday 26 November at 3.00 pm Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Divinity, History & Philosophy, Law and Psychology.

CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING ANNUAL REPORT

349.1 The Committee noted the Centre for Learning and Teaching's Annual Report.
(UCTL/031110/013)

ANNUAL REPORT ON DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE

350.1 The Committee noted the first Annual Report on the Identification and Dissemination of Good Practice in Learning and Teaching for academic year 2009-2010.
(UCTL/031110/014)

CAREERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

351.1 The Committee noted the Careers Service Annual Report
(UCTL/031110/015)

TEACHING PROGRAMME FOR POSTGRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STAFF

352.1 The Committee noted that the Teaching Programme for Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Staff has been accredited by the Higher Education Academy from September 2010 until August 2015.

ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENT ON INTERNAL REVIEW ACTIVITY 2009-2010

353.1 The Committee noted the Annual Institutional Statement on Internal Review Activity 2009-2010, submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in September 2010.
(UCTL/031110/016)

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM FOR STUDENT MONITORING

- 354.1 The Committee noted that following discussion with the Heads of School, a small group will be formed to look at possible changes to the system for student monitoring. Any recommendations for change arising from these discussions will be brought to a future meeting of the UCTL.

HIGHER QUALITY BULLETIN FROM THE QAA

- 355.1 The Committee noted the most recent edition (July 2010) of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which is available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality/default.asp

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 356.1 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held as follows:
Wednesday 26 January 2011 at 2 p.m.