

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2011

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

*Apologies:* Professor M Cotter, Mr B Lockhart, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Morrison, Dr PJ Murray, Professor W Naphy

**MINUTES**

- 370.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2011.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/001)*
- 370.2 The Convenor noted that the Foundation Programme in Engineering would be taken forward and that the School of Engineering is putting together a proposal incorporating issues relating to SCQF.  
*(item 359 refers)*
- 370.3 The Convenor informed the Committee that an email had gone out to all Schools with the text regarding progression to honours and Schools have been asked to respond if any programmes wish to opt out.  
*(item 360 refers)*
- 370.4 The Clerk informed the Committee that the new policy on appeals and complaints was working well, the first case having been concluded within 7 days.  
*(item 358 refers)*

**RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS**

- 371.1 The Convenor noted that the suggestions in the bullet points at the end of the paper were being explored. He explained that releasing provisional results raises issues such as what students understand by the term 'provisional' and the fact that provisional results cannot be appealed. He noted that a further meeting would probably be needed to discuss this issue.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/002)*
- 371.2 The Committee was in favour of removing the requirement for External Examiners to sign-off marks. The Committee recognised that the signing off of marks was the role of the Examiners' Meeting and that marks could be signed off by any two members of this Meeting, probably the Head of School and one other. It was agreed that any changes that would need to be made to the AQH could be done by circulation and that External Examiners should be informed of the change of rules.  
*Action: Clerk to amend the AQH and contact External Examiners*
- 371.3 The Convenor noted that the Undergraduate Committee had discussed the release of component marks. Current regulations only allow the release of the course mark and there is a suggestion that this is at odds with the University's policy on feedback. It was also noted that the HEAR may require more detailed information.
- 371.4 The Committee agreed that it is important to be able to provide appropriate feedback and to operate a transparent system. However, concern was expressed about the potential for decreasing the ability of the marker to find in favour of a student where each component mark

is made available. It was agreed that a form of wording would be drafted and circulated, noting that the intention is to improve feedback and highlighting that the final decision on marks lies with the Examiners' Meeting.

*Action: Clerk to formulate wording for circulation*

- 371.5 The Committee noted that there is also a regulation which states that the student is not entitled to feedback on final exams which causes difficulties especially for PGTs. It was noted that it may be time to amend this wording also.

*Action: Clerk to look into this issue*

### **PEER MENTORING**

- 372.1 The Convenor informed the Committee that there have been discussions between the University and AUSA regarding a mentoring scheme for Level 1 students by students in Levels 2/3. The emphasis would be on pastoral/social issues rather than academic issues. It was noted that other institutions have similar schemes.
- 372.2 A pilot scheme will be introduced in the School of Medical Sciences and students are currently being recruited. Training will be developed. The Committee noted that it is unclear how legislation on protection of vulnerable adults would interact with the scheme.
- 372.3 It was noted that there are some similar schemes already taking place within the University. These include maths support where PG students in the College of Physical Sciences support Level 1 students. In this scheme HR and Student Support had agreed that the legislation on protection of vulnerable adults did not apply. There is also a small pilot project taking place within the Careers Service using alumni. About 10 students have so far been matched.
- 373.3 It was noted that thought needs to be given to how a scheme can support direct entrants and students coming in to University via articulation agreements.

### **INDIVIDUAL TEACHIING ENHANCEDMENT UPDATE**

- 374.1 The Committee were informed that discussions are taking place regarding formative mechanisms individuals can make use of to enhance their teaching delivery. The Committee were invited to consider whether it is beneficial to take these discussions forward.
- 374.2 The Committee were in favour of discussions continuing. It was noted that this could feed into the appraisal process.

### **JOINT DEGREES**

- 375.1 The Committee were invited to consider the paper on Joint Degrees which suggests taking a risk-based approach at the institutional level to proposals for joint degrees. It was noted that there are an increasing number of requests for joint degrees and joint supervision arrangements. The Committee were reminded that the University has powers to award joint and dual degrees however a strategic decision had been taken not to award dual degrees as these effectively provide two degrees for the same piece of work.  
*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/003)*
- 375.2 The Committee welcome the paper and agreed that the distinction should remain between joint and dual degrees.

### **UCTL ANNUAL REPORT TO SENATE**

376.1 The Committee were informed that the UCTL annual report will be received by circulation.

## **REPORTS FROM THE CONVENORS OF THE UCTL SUB-GROUPS**

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

377.1 The Convenor of the Quality Assurance Committee noted that the interaction between the sub-groups and UCTL is very important and needs to be considered further. He noted that the Quality Assurance Committee primarily looks at issues related to quality assurance, but also quality enhancement. He noted that there are two advisory strands, for undergraduate and for postgraduate matters.

377.2 The Convenor of the Quality Assurance Committee noted that an issue had been raised at the most recent meeting of the Committee regarding a movement towards larger tutorial classes and consideration of student-led teaching as a reaction to budgetary constraints.

377.3 The Committee noted that it is important to ensure that teaching quality does not decrease but agreed that larger classes and student-led teaching can enhance teaching. It was agreed that teaching should not be changed following approval of senas forms and that this issue could be brought up at a meeting of Heads of School.

*Action: Clerk to put on agenda of Heads of School*

### **POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

378.1 The Convenor of the Postgraduate Committee noted that postgraduate applications and admissions were going down due to UKBA requirements and the removal of the post-study visa. The Convenor also noted a proposal from the College of Physical Sciences to add the award of 'merit' in addition to commendation and distinctions. Finally the Convenor noted that the University intended to launch the PRES survey.

### **UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

379.1 The Convenor of the Undergraduate Committee noted that the Committee endorsed the view that Heads of School should encourage more staff to become Advisers of Study.

## **UPDATE ON STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORMS**

380.1 The Convenor noted that online SCEFs were being piloted on the six-week courses in the School of Biological Sciences. If the pilot is successful they will be rolled out to the rest of the community.

## **ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION CLASS REPRESENTATIVE AUTUMN REPORT**

381.1 The Committee were invited to note the recommendation in the report to move towards programme/year reps rather than course reps. It was noted that the one-size-fits-all approach had not worked and that further interaction with the Schools was needed. The Students' Association noted that class reps are a partnership with the University and that there was not as much support from staff as they would like. The Committee also noted the increase in the number of class reps and that they were increasingly proactive.

*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/009)*

## **FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE**

382.1 The Committee noted the final report.

*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/005)*

### **ELEARNING STRATEGY UPDATE**

383.1 The Committee noted the eLearning Strategy Update.

*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/006)*

### **2011 TEACHING TIMETABLE**

384.1 The Committee noted the information regarding the 2011 Teaching Timetable.

### **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN RESPONSE TO THE QAA CONSULTATION ON THE ACADEMIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

385.1 The Committee noted the University's response to the QAA Consultation on the Academic Infrastructure.

*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/007)*

### **AMENDMENT TO THE DEADLINE FOR CLASS CERTIFICATE REFUSAL**

386.1 The Committee noted and approved the amendment to the deadline for class certificate refusal as a result of the Royal Wedding Holiday. The new deadline is 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May.

### **AMENDMENT TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY TO POSTGRADUATE STUDY ON PROGRAMMES IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

387.1 The Committee noted and approved the amendment to the English Language requirements for entry to postgraduate study on programmes in CASS

*(copy filed as UCTL/160311/008)*

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

388.1 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held as follows:  
Wednesday 18 May 2011 at 2 p.m.