

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING & LEARNING****DRAFT Minute of the meeting held on 31 October 2012**

*Present:* Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr B Connolly, Dr S Davies, Mr C Duncan, Mr P Fantom, Professor A Lumsden, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Masthoff, Professor W Naphy, Dr K Shennan, Ms P Spence, Dr R Wells, Dr R Bernard (Clerk), Ms E Hay (Minute Secretary)

*Apologies:* Ms J Bjorkqvist, Ms A Deseilligny, Mr D Paterson

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2012**

(UCTL/311012/001)

- 62.1 The Committee approved the minutes of 16 May 2012. The Committee agreed that the minutes were representative of discussions held.

**COMBINED REPORTS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS ON THE COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE (CAS) AND THE GRADE SPECTRUM (GS)**

(UCTL/311012/002)

- 63.1 The Committee noted the combined reports from the working groups on the Common Assessment Scale (CAS) and the Grade Spectrum (GS). The Committee agreed that the proposed changes had been to all the Committees for consideration, including the consideration of the final report on the Common Assessment Scale previously at UCTL.
- 63.2 The Committee noted the feedback from the Postgraduate Committee, who, overall, liked the proposals. The Committee did, however, acknowledge concerns that descriptors would be preferable on a level basis rather than on a course by course basis. Similarly, the Committee noted concerns over the mapping of the grades A1-F3 to associated numbers. The Committee noted that while some members would prefer to see the same standard of mapping across the University, this would be impossible as a consequence of the different pass rates used across Schools and Colleges. The Committee agreed the importance of descriptors and their publication to students to explain the mapping to associated numbers. The Committee agreed that the reference to 'essays' in Appendix C should be removed as it is not applicable.
- 63.3 The Committee acknowledged concerns over using a system of averaging rather than that of a median. The Committee agreed that a system of averaging would allow for a bad mark to be compensated by a good mark and vice versa. The Committee agreed, however, that there must continue to be flexibility in classifying a student and the use of examiners discretion.
- 63.4 The Committee noted concerns raised by members of the Committee in classifying students where some courses are double weighted. The Committee acknowledged a lack of transparency in the use of this system. In addition, the Committee agreed that a better system of identifying 'borderline' cases, such as the numeric system used at the University of Edinburgh would be more transparent.
- 63.5 The Committee responded favourably to the proposal of a grade point average (GPA) like system, providing a numerical scoring to be published alongside a degree classification. The Committee suggested that this score should be provided for each year of attendance in addition to that of a final grading. The Committee noted the importance of making clear to employers what the number was intended to mean.

**Action: CLERK**

## **REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR**

*(UCTL/311012/003)*

- 64.1 The Committee acknowledged the paper on proposed changes to the structure of the Academic Year. The Committee noted the reasoning behind the proposals and acknowledged that the University was now out of step with other Scottish Universities and that the proposals had originally been student driven. The Committee noted the pedagogic reasoning for the proposals and acknowledged that a working group with undergraduate, postgraduate and student representation had been established to review the Academic Year.
- 64.2 The Committee noted Annex B of the paper and two proposed models both with examinations scheduled before Christmas. The Committee noted that Model 1 had been the favoured model to date. Proposed changes included a move in the dates of the summer graduation ceremonies and of re-sit examinations. The Committee were informed that the proposed model allowed for more research time for staff and a better system for re-sits, if required by students.
- 64.3 The Committee acknowledged the consultation phase of the working group's work and noted that that the proposals had been considered by the Colleges, Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Student Affairs Committees. The Committee acknowledged that concerns raised had included a change from 12 to 11 teaching weeks and the issues of teaching 6 week courses. In responding to these issues, the Committee noted that that revision week would now be timetabled and was intended to be structured. In addition, there was expected to be no significant difference to contact hours. With regards to 6 week courses, while being identified as an issue, the Committee noted that there are approximately 91 of these, compared to 1200+ standard courses.
- 64.3 The Committee noted that the Students' Association were holding a referendum of students on the issue. The results of which would be returned by School. The Committee agreed that Model 1 Should be put forward for consideration by Senate.

**Action: CLERK**

## **DISCLOSURE OF MARKS FOR INDIVIDUAL EXAMINATION QUESTIONS**

*(UCTL/311012/004)*

- 65.1 The Committee received the paper on the Disclosure of Marks for Individual Examination Questions. The Committee noted that current policy is for the non disclosure of component marks (i.e. marks associated with exams questions) and that this is in direct contravention with Data Protection law. The Committee agreed with the proposal to remove this policy and indicated that this reflected practice already being followed. The Committee noted that the change in policy should be appropriately disseminated.

**Action: CLERK**

## **REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL CERTIFICATION**

*(UCTL/311012/005)*

- 66.1 The Committee noted the paper on the review of Institutional policy of requirements for Medical Certification and acknowledged current University policy, which requires students to provide medical certificates to cover absence during an examination or period of assessed work. Committee members noted that local GPs have expressed their concern at the volume they are required to provide and one practice has expressed that going forward they will no longer do so. The Committee were informed that Heads of School considered the possibility of students providing self certification for absence. Whilst noting concern at this proposal it was acknowledged by the Committee that there may be no alternative should GPs refuse to provide a medical certificate.
- 66.2 The Committee noted that steps must be taken not to encourage strategic exam taking. The Committee noted concern that such a policy would be introduced at higher levels if the assessment undertaken would affect classification. The Committee agreed to the pilot of a new

policy of allow self certification for absence at levels one and two. The Committee agreed that the pilot should be closely monitored.

**Action: CLERK**

### **RE-SITS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

*(UCTL/311012/006)*

- 67.1 The Committee noted the paper on re-sits for Postgraduate Students, proposed by the Postgraduate Committee. Members noted that the issues had been discussed by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). QAC noted concern over the use of the phrase 'non-conversion' and noted that it does not have a standard meaning across the University. The QAC considered the proposal of the Postgraduate Committee and suggested the proposals go further, to allow for blanket re-sits.
- 67.2 Members of the UCTL noted concern over allowing unlimited re-sits and the effect this would have on the credibility of a programme. Furthermore, members noted concern at allowing a student who had failed potentially all their courses to continue at the University. The Committee agreed that there was no problem with not differentiating between conversion and non-conversion courses, as suggested by the QAC but proposed that no more than 30 credits be permitted to be re-sat or provided by way of compensation.

### **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE IN LEARNING & TEACHING REPORT**

*(UCTL/311012/007)*

- 68.1 The Committee noted the annual report on the Identification and Dissemination of Good Practice in Teaching and Learning. The Committee acknowledged that the report was produced as a consequence of a CREF strategy to measure good practice. The Committee noted that in previous years a report from the Centre for Learning and Teaching had been provided, however, following feedback, these reports have now been incorporated into one.
- 68.2 The Committee acknowledge the themes of the report and the bringing together of the highlights of good practice throughout the Institution. The Committee were reminded that the report is not intended to be comprehensive and feedback on the approach taken would be welcomed. The Committee acknowledged that the report must be appropriately disseminated and agreed that it should be considered by both College and School Teaching and Learning Committees.
- 68.3 The Committee acknowledged the importance of feedback on and contribution to the report. The Committee noted that involvement in such activities would be made easier if training and continuing professional development was an annual requirement of staff. Members of the Committee were asked to provide any further feedback on the report to Patricia Spence.

### **CAREERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

*(UCTL/311012/008)*

- 69.1 The Committee noted the Annual Report provided by the Careers Service. The Committee acknowledged that the Careers Service will undergo external review in February 2013 and, as such, the report has been written in that vein and is of a marketing style. The Committee noted that the report links the work of the Careers service to the Operational Plan and Strategic Plan. The report prioritises key areas including the Co-curriculum, Employer Engagement and Destination of Leavers.
- 69.2 The Committee agreed that, annual report on the Identification and Dissemination of Good Practice in Teaching and Learning, the Careers Service Report should be appropriately disseminated. The Committee agreed that the School Teaching and Learning Committees should consider the report.

## **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 70.1 The Convener invited the Convener of the UCTL Sub-Committees to report to the Committee. The Convenors of the Committees noted they had considered, in addition to the Academic Year and the CAS and GS proposals, results of the NSS and ISS surveys, PGR surveys and concerns over examination conditions.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

- 71.1 The Committee acknowledged the tabled paper on Annual Course Review and noted the proposed amendments to the processes for reporting the outcome of course review. Members of the Committee acknowledged that further proposals on Annual Programme Review would follow in due course.
- 71.2 The Committee acknowledged the intention to gather more data on courses, including course trends. The Committee agreed that currently Student Course Evaluation Forms can be frustrating as there are few changes from year to year.
- 71.3 The Committee noted the proposal to have class representatives or School conveners sign course review forms and for School Teaching and Learning Committees to review these, rather than the QAC. The Committee acknowledged that the QAC would be required to consider these on a one off basis, however, in subsequent years only programme monitoring would be reported to the QAC.
- 71.4 Members of the Committee noted concern over how statistical data would be provided to Schools. The Committee were assured that this could be done through the Student Record System. The Committee agreed that they were content with the proposals being forwarded to Senate.

**Action: CLERK**

### **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED ON THE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES WHO ARE BEING CONSIDERED ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY ARE NOT 'FIT TO PRACTISE'**

*(UCTL/311012/009)*

- 72.1 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the guidance notes for students enrolled on the postgraduate diploma in physician assistant studies who are being considered on the grounds that they are not 'fit to practise'.

### **CLASS CERTIFICATE REFUSAL/FAILS ON TRANSCRIPTS**

- 73.1 Further to the previous decision (February 2007) to include failed marks on transcripts, The Committee were informed that Registry are working with DIT to ensure that this information can be included on transcripts from July 2013 for marks achieved from 2011/12 onwards. As agreed previously, 'medical certificates' and 'good cause' will not be shown. When the principle was agreed previously, there was no consideration of whether class certificate refusals should be shown. The Committee approved the proposal that transcripts should include an indication of class certificate refusal. 'Class Certificate Refused' is an 'outcome' from a course in the same way as a CAS mark, hence it is appropriate that it is included.

### **LATEST DATE FOR RETURN OF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2012-13**

*(UCTL/311012/010)*

- 74.1 The Committee approved the proposed latest date for return of examination results for 2012-13.

## **REVISIONS TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

*(UCTL/311012/011a)*

*(UCTL/311012/011b)*

- 75.1 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline.

## **LEARNING AND TEACHING OPERATIONAL PLAN**

*(UCTL/311012/012)*

- 76.1 The Committee noted and approved the Learning and Teaching Operational plan and agreed to forward any comments on the document to Gillian Mackintosh.

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

*(UCTL/311012/013)*

- 77.1 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the University's Partnership Agreement.

## **AMENDMENT TO ANNEX A OF THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

- 78.1 Further to the approval of the revised Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals and Complaints, the Committee approved the addition of the following statement to Annex A: Outline of Procedures: Meeting with a Head of School or Service. 'The Head of School/Service should address all points raised by a student within their appeal or complaint within Part B.' The change was approved following feedback from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

## **REMIT & COMPOSITION**

*(UCTL/311012/014)*

- 79.1 The Committee noted the remit and composition for academic year 2012-13.

## **PERSONAL TUTORS UPDATE**

- 80.1 An implementation plan for introduction of Personal Tutors from September 2013 was considered and approved by Senate in June 2012. Work is ongoing to develop online training materials which it is planned will be rolled out in January 2013. In advance of that, meetings with all Schools are planned to inform staff about the new Personal Tutor system. These meetings will be led by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) and will involve a representative from the Students' Association. UMG approved the establishment of a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the Personal Tutor system. The group will hold its first meeting on 10 October and includes representatives from the Colleges and the Students' Association.

## **GRADUATION DATES**

- 81.1 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 29 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School.

**Thursday 29 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Language & Literature, Education, Social Science, Law and Divinity, History & Philosophy.

**Friday 30 November at 11.00 a.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Engineering and Geosciences.

**Friday 30 November at 3.00 p.m.**

Higher and First Degrees in the Schools of Psychology, Medical Sciences, Medicine & Dentistry, Biological Sciences and Natural & Computing Sciences.

**ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

*(UCTL/311012/015)*

- 82.1 The Committee noted that, in line with the Quality Assurance Agency's timetable for review, the University will undertake ELIR during 2013/14. The Part One visit by the Review Panel will take place on 9 & 10 October 2013, with the Part Two visit being during the week commencing 18 November 2013. The Part Two visit is usually between three and five days in duration.

**GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES EVALUATION**

*(UCTL/311012/016)*

- 83.1 The Committee noted the undergraduate longitudinal study year 2 update report undertaken as part of the evaluation of student awareness of the Graduate Attributes.

**REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES RUN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**

*(UCTL/311012/017)*

- 84.1 The Committee noted the report on the Higher Education Accredited Programmes run at the University of Aberdeen.

**REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY TEACHING DEVELOPMENT GRANT  
(COLLABORATIVE GRANT SCHEME)**

*(UCTL/311012/018)*

- 85.1 The Committee noted the report on the Higher Education Academy Teaching Development Grant.