

UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE  
(10 December 2010)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2010**

*Present:* Dr J Morrison, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr D McCausland, Professor P McGeorge, Ms M McHaney, Professor W Long, Ms J Paton, Dr R Wells, with Ms Katja Christie, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr J Perkins, Ms R Sandison, Ms P Spence with Ms Alyson Hogg (Clerk) in attendance.

*Apologies:* Professor M Cotter and Professor G Walkden.

**MINUTES**

- 9.0 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2010; subject to two minor typographical amendments to the attendance list.

*(copy filed as UGC/101210/007)*

**CENTRAL INDUCTION ACTIVITIES 2010-2011**

- 10.0 The Committee noted the various central Induction activities offered during Induction and Freshers' Week. These activities were as a result of the ideas put forward by the Induction Strategy Group (ISG) which comprised of representatives from Colleges, Registry, SRAS, the Careers Service, the Centre for Learning and Teaching, Student Support, the Language Centre, Campus Services and the Students' Association (SA).

*(copy filed as UGC/101210/008)*

- 10.1 The Committee noted that although all the activities offered were well received and positive feedback had been given from students, the numbers attending such events were very low.
- 10.2 The Committee were informed that feedback had been sought from students on specific events and that feedback was also sought from questions asked within the Freshers' Group survey.
- 10.3 Following general discussion, the Committee agreed that School/Discipline specific events were key to the whole Induction process, particularly when trying to give students a sense of belonging. However, the Committee acknowledged that this was often made more difficult by programmes which span across more than one School.
- 10.4 In discussing the various activities organised as part of Induction and Freshers' Week, the Committee agreed that, at present, the University appears to be providing students with too much choice, over a very tight time-scale. It was agreed that there were so many events laid on that students would find it difficult to fit them all in during Freshers' Week. In relation to this, some members of the Committee were of the opinion that activities should be spread out over one month as opposed to one week.
- 10.5 Following lengthy discussion regarding the current Induction activities, the Committee agreed that often there was a lack of consistency of approach across areas. The Committee acknowledged that several of the large scale events, such as the MA and BSc Welcome, may not have the most appropriate format. However, the Committee agreed that induction based activities held on the Friday following advising were extremely important as they help address

students' immediate concerns, such as reading their timetable and understanding how to register for tutorials.

- 10.6 Finally, the Committee agreed that the University should begin to think holistically about Induction. In order to do this, it was agreed that a small meeting, including the Students' Association and other representatives/nominees from this Committee, should be set up to discuss the current Induction activities and how best to proceed. It was also agreed that following this meeting, feedback would be brought to the March meeting of the Undergraduate Committee.

**Action: Clerk**

### **WORKING GROUP ON COMMON ASSESSMENT SCALE (CAS) – FINAL REPORT**

- 11.0 The Committee received a final report for consideration from the Working Group on Common Assessment Scale (CAS).  
*(copy filed as UGC/101210/009)*
- 11.1 The Committee noted that the main recommendations from the Working Group were to instigate a move from the current numeric CAS system to an alphanumeric system.
- 11.2 Following lengthy discussion regarding the proposed scale, it was evident that the Committee were divided about moving to an alphanumeric grading scale, as presented in the report. Some members of the Committee were concerned, particularly for students, that the University were changing from one grading scale, which was difficult for students to understand, to one which may be equally confusing/non transparent.
- 11.3 Some members of the Committee commented that they found the new alphanumeric scale hard to comprehend. Members were therefore concerned that the proposed grading scale would be just as confusing for students and would fail to provide clarity or transparency.
- 11.4 Further discussion centred round the background mechanics of the proposed new scale, particularly the proposed system for combining CAS marks and how results would map on to the new scale. The Committee also discussed the possibility of using a percentage scale as opposed to an alphanumeric scale, however once again opinion amongst the Committee was divided.
- 11.5 Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it would be very difficult to satisfy everyone as opinion differed across the University, particularly between Schools. The Convener of the Working Group agreed to feedback comments to fellow members of the Working Group before putting the paper forward to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning for discussion.

### **INTERNATIONAL PRE-ENGINEERING FOUNDATION PROGRAMME**

- 12.0 The Committee noted the proposal for the new International Pre-Engineering Foundation Programme, particularly aimed at students from the Middle East.  
*(copy filed as UGC/101210/010)*
- 12.1 The Committee noted that the proposal was a collaboration between the School of Engineering, Centre for Lifelong Learning and School of Language and Literature. The Committee further noted that the programme's aim was to bridge a gap between the syllabi of Middle East students' high school qualifications and those of Scottish Highers.

- 12.2 The Committee noted that the programme was designed to combine already existing University courses to offer an entry path to students from the Middle East to Level 1 of Engineering degree programmes.
- 12.3 The Committee noted that although the University already runs a Foundation programme for Medicine, it does not currently run a similar programme for Engineering students. The Committee further noted that it was anticipated that this type of programme would help to increase international student numbers and that there may be the possibility of rolling out this type of programme to the Degree of Bachelor of Science and Degree of Master of Arts.
- 12.4 In relation to this, the Committee understood that the Principal was keen to pursue this avenue and further noted that the University of Edinburgh were looking to implement similar programmes next academic year.
- 12.5 Finally, concern was raised by the Students' Association regarding accommodation for these students, however the Committee noted that the numbers of students being admitted to this programme would be minimal and the Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions confirmed that there should be no concern with regards accommodation.

### **INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE – ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010**

- 13.0 The Committee received a paper outlining the Annual Report for the International Christian College for academic year 2009-2010.  
*(copy filed as UGC/101210/011)*
- 13.1 The Committee noted that ICC would shortly be revalidated by a small group representing the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). In relation to this, the Committee noted that student numbers were falling and the representative of QAC agreed to follow up on this at the meeting.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 14.0 The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held as follows:  
Friday 11 March 2011 at 2.00pm in the Court Room, University Office