

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

DRAFT Minute of the Meeting held on 8 November 2017

Present: Professor P McGeorge (Convener), Dr M Barker, Mr C Duncan, Professor H Hutchison, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor J Masthoff, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Professor M Pinard and Dr S Tucker, with Dr R Bernard, Ms K Christie, Mr P Fantom, Ms N Kitchin-Williams, Ms P Spence and Ms E Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Ms D Connolly, Dr B Scharlau and Professor K Shennan

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/001)

- 1.2 The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 13 September 2017. The Committee agreed that the minute was representative of discussions held.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 2.1 The Committee identified no specific issues arising relating to Health and Safety.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE PAPER

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/002)

- 3.1 The Convener presented the paper on the Student Experience to the Committee, noting it as a good news story, reflecting improvements made, and exemplifying excellent work ongoing, across the Institution. The Convener specifically noted the improvements made with regards retention at level 1. Members of the Committee were in agreement that staff should be congratulated for their efforts in improving the student experience.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that potential applicants may find data, such as the number of first and upper second degrees class awarded, useful. The Committee noted that such data was available by way of league tables. The Committee further noted that the University is broadly in line with other comparable Institutions, such as the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, with regards the number of first and upper second class degrees awarded.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that potential applicants may also be interested in trends and associated data surrounding 'value added'. The Committee acknowledged the increasing importance of the recognition of trends across the sector (noting the inclusion of trends as an area in the most recent iteration of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)). The Committee did, however, note the danger of perception associated with advertising 'added value' by the University and primarily the risk of alleged grade inflation.
- 3.4 Members of the Committee noted the constraints of some of the data gathered and noted that as some sample sizes were so small, the paper provides an aggregation of two years data.
- 3.5 The Committee agreed the positive nature of the paper, however, also agreed that there remained areas on which the University could improve and discussion in this regard ensued. The main tenets of this discussion were as follows:

- The Committee discussed the suggested disparity in attaining higher level of Honours degrees relative to comparison groups in relation to Widening Participation, BME, and Disabled students. The Committee acknowledged the importance of Schools looking carefully to ensure their teaching is appropriate to the learning styles of all students.
- The Committee also discussed the importance of Assessment and Feedback to students and, whilst noting some improvement in this regard, acknowledged the need for the Institution to carefully address this issue on two levels: (i) in managing the expectations of students in relation to being provided feedback following assessment and to ensure the closure of the feedback loop and (ii) in communicating with students by way of 'you said we did' to publicise the changes made in response to their feedback.
- The Committee noted the importance of gauging exactly what students understand by feedback particularly in recognition of the fact over 96% of assessed work is returned within the University's published timescales. The Committee acknowledged the importance of working with the Students' Association (SA) in this regard.
- The Committee further noted the introduction of a new section of the National Student Survey (NSS), Student Voice, on which the University would be judged on the SA. The Committee agreed that this further emphasised the need for the University to support the SA in its work.
- The Committee were informed that steps were being taken to improve the Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF). Noting ongoing concerns regarding the appropriate timing of SCEFs, the Committee acknowledged that a 'mini' SCEF issued to students mid-year and allowing for instant changes on the basis of feedback received, may prove beneficial.
- The Committee noted the need for improved communication with students, to allow for a greater understanding of feedback.
- The Committee noted that the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) had recently undertaken its annual review of Annual Programme Review (APR) forms. The Committee agreed that a document or presentations to School Teaching and Learning Committees comprising the findings of the QAC could prove beneficial.
- The Committee noted that changes to the Class Representative election processes were ongoing, with a view to ensuring those undertaking the role are as effective as possible.

3.6 In concluding, the Convener reiterated the positive nature of the paper. While noting that in some areas, the University was not quite where it wanted to be, significant improvements and improvements relative to the Sector, had been made.

Action: Convener/Clerk to the Senate

LEARNING ANALYTICS POLICY

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/003)

- 4.1 The Committee considered the draft Learning Analytics Policy. Members of the Committee noted that the document was not yet complete and would not be considered by the Senate during this Committee round, to allow for feedback from each of the Teaching Committees.
- 4.2 Members of the Committee acknowledged that the University was out of step with other Institutions in that it does not currently have a Learning Analytics Policy. Members of the Committee were asked to discuss the draft and establish what would and would not be useful within the proposed policy.

- 4.3 Members of the Committee expressed concern that the introduction of a Learning Analytics policy raised ethical issues and that there is no such Teaching and Learning Ethics Committee. The Committee briefly considered reasons as to why such a Committee might be necessary and agreed that should this be progressed, a proposal for the establishment of such a group should be drafted and submitted to the relevant Committees.
- 4.4 The Convener informed the Committee of a project undertaken at the University of Edinburgh, providing research of the experiences of Institutions across the European Union (EU) in the development of Learning Analytics policies. The Convener proposed that the researcher engaged in this project be invited to deliver a presentation at Aberdeen on his findings and the experiences of others.
- 4.5 The Committee acknowledged that the issue may tie in with the new Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement Theme, Evidence Based Enhancement and, as such, could be placed on hold for the time being. The Committee noted that THE Enhancement Theme would not inform a Learning Analytics policy and, furthermore, it would be inappropriate to place the matter on hold, given that the Institution was already behind other Institutions in the development of a policy.
- 4.6 With regards to the draft policy itself, members of the Committee discussed proposed amendments. The main tenets of this discussion were as follows:
- The Committee noted an overall lack of detail in the policy.
 - The Committee expressed concern with regards principle 3 that it was not documented as to which of the analytics a student could opt out of.
 - Members noted there was no specific definition of 'staff' within the paper.
 - The Committee expressed their desire to see a list of all the learning analytics included within the paper. The Committee acknowledged that such a listing would be subject to amendment.
 - The Committee expressed concern as to the potentially contradictory nature of principle 2, noting that learning analytics were already used by way of the monitoring system to identify when a student could no longer meet the learning outcomes of a course and/or programme.
 - The Committee acknowledged that it may be useful to distinguish between two specific uses for Learning Analytics, (i) student support and therefore data gathered by individual student and (ii) data gathered at course level.

Action: Convener/Clerk

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the forthcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR), scheduled for October and November 2018. Members of the Committee were reminded of the importance of ELIR and the requirement of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the University undergo review. The Committee acknowledged the opportunity ELIR provides to the University to reflect on its Teaching and Learning practices.
- 5.2 The Committee noted the requirements of the University's submission to the ELIR panel and were reminded of the importance of School engagement and of providing examples/evidence of their good practice for inclusion in the review documentation. The Committee noted the introduction of a central SharePoint site, on which further information would be provided, to which Planning, the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Schools would upload

documentation such as Committee minutes, Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR) forms and Internal Teaching Review (ITR) documentation.

- 5.3 Members of the Committee proposed the development of a Teaching and Learning digest, ensuring Schools were kept updated of policies and procedures approved or matters discussed by the University's Teaching Committees.

Action: Convener/Clerk

THE REVISED UK QUALITY CODE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- 6.1 The Committee acknowledged the QAA consultation of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education available [here](#).
- 6.2 The Committee expressed concern as to the lack of detail provided in the consultation. Members of the Committee agreed that it may be helpful to receive a synopsis of the existing code to aide review. The Committee were reminded of the importance of staff awareness of the code.

Action: Convener/Clerk

UPDATE ON THE ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/004)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the Enhanced Transcript, including the proposal that two further roles, Careers Service Student Representative role and the QAA Enhancement Theme Student Representative included within the Enhanced Transcript as 'recognised activities' from the academic year 2017-18.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee acknowledged the importance of the inclusion of roles on the Enhanced Transcript and the progression of it since its launch in 2013. Members of the Committee requested further information from the Careers Service regarding (i) a completed list of all approved activities and (ii) what is an appropriate role for inclusion and how to propose it.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee agreed to approve the addition of the roles as requested.

Action: Clerk/Careers Service

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020: RECOGNISING OVERSEAS AND ALTERNATIVE PROFESSIONAL TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/006)

- 8.1 The Committee received the paper on the Strategic Plan 2015-2020: Recognising Overseas and Alternative Professional Teaching Qualifications. Members of the Committee acknowledged the importance of recognising roles amongst academics which may be comparable to the Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Higher Education Learning and Teaching delivered by the University or Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that it would be desirable in the future for HR to gather this information at the point of employment. They expressed some concern regarding the potential workload such an initiative may incur, however, agreed to approve the proposal, subject to the workload implications of it.

Action: Clerk

THE ONLINE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/012)

- 9.1 The Committee received the paper on the Online Admissions Process. The Committee noted steps to recruit to online learning at a course rather than programme level and the consequential impact on current admissions processes. Members of the Committee acknowledged that as admission is normally granted at programme level, such procedures would be inappropriate for these students.
- 9.2 Members of the Committee considered the proposal at course level to not require formal admissions scrutiny but rather to allow for self-evaluation of eligibility based on information provided in the course details. The Committee acknowledged that students registering in this way would confirm on admission that they were doing so at their own risk.
- 9.3 Members of the Committee noted the risks associated with having a self-assessed person on a course and, in particular, the effects students of this type requiring extra support may have on a cohort. Members of the Committee asked whether there was information regarding experiences at other Institutions which might inform a decision.
- Action: Clerk/Dr Mackintosh**
- 9.4 Overall, the Committee agreed to approve the proposal, subject to research regarding the experience of other Institutions in this regard and:
- Clear, detailed guidance for self-assessment;
 - A self-assessed student undertaking no more than 60 credit points across an academic year;
 - Careful design of a course to ensure clear points of progression throughout, allowing for a student who is not meeting the requirements of the course to be identified.
- 9.5 Members of the Committee agreed that a revised version of the process should be circulated to the UCTL on completion.
- Action: Clerk/Dr Mackintosh**

DATES OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meet of the UCTL will be held on Wednesday 24 January 2018 at 2pm, in Committee Room 2, University Office.

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS FORMS

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/006)

- 11.1 Members of the Committee approved revised Parts A, B and C of the Appeals and Complaints Form. Members of the Committee approved the removal of Part D (the recording of the outcome of a panel hearing) and noted its replacement with a letter tailored to each individual case received.

Action: Clerk

REGULATORY CHANGES

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/007)

- 11.2 The Committee, for its part, approved changes to the Degree Regulations governing the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) and Bachelor of Medicine (MBChB). The changes approved included (i) the approval of the BDS by the General Dental Council (GDC) and (ii) changes to the Fitness to Practise guidance as issued by the General Medical Council.

ONLINE LEARNING CERTIFICATE

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/008)

- 11.3 Members of the Committee approved the draft certificate for students completing online learning where this does not lead to the award of a diploma or degree.

READMISSION TO STUDY POLICY

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/009)

- 11.4 Members of the Committee approved changes to the Readmission to Study Policy.

FOCUS ON INSTITUTION LED REVIEW: INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION PUBLICATION

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/010)

- 12.1 The Committee noted the attached document, compiled by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in collaboration with the University, detailing the University's Institution Led Review (ILR) processes. This document has been approved by the Conveners of the UCTL and the QAC by way of circulation for publication.

SECTOR UPDATES

- 12.2 The Committee noted and agreed to disseminate as appropriate, the following recent sector updates:

- (i) [Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education: How to Address Contract Cheating, the Use of Third-Party Services and Essay Mills.](#)

This guidance, published by the Quality Assurance Agency, sets out best practice around promoting academic integrity in higher education, through tackling students' use of third-party services in order to cheat. It covers the use of essay mills and other forms of contract cheating, and sets out the steps providers can take to deal with these.

QAA ENHANCEMENT THEME: STUDENT TRANSITIONS 2014 – 2017, END OF THEME REPORT

(copy filed as UCTL/081117/011)

- 12.3 Members of the Committee agreed that this item should be postponed to the next meeting of the UCTL, at which it would be discussed in further detail.

Action: Clerk