

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 22 JANUARY 2019

Present: Prof E Pavlovskaja (Convenor), Dr A Cleland, Dr P Hicks, Dr SJ Kim, Dr D MacCallum, Dr D Muirhead, Dr A Sim, Dr S Woodin, Prof P Ziegler, with Dr C Calder, Mr R Findlay (Clerk), and Ms S McCourt in attendance
Apologies: Dr M Bodig, Dr J Kedra, Mrs N Kinchin-Williams, Dr A McKinnon.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 14 NOVEMBER 2018

Copy filed as PGC/220119/001

1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018.

CONVENOR REMARKS

- 2.1 The Convenor informed the Committee that the tuition fee setting exercise for 2020/21 had started and Schools had been asked to provide details of any UK institutions that they saw as comparators in their discipline(s). Schools had also been asked to make any comments they wanted on issues/markets/positioning of specific programmes.
- 2.2 The Convenor encouraged Committee members to discuss the issue within their Schools and asked that initial email from SRAS to Schools, providing the timeline for the setting of fees for 2020/21, be circulated amongst Committee members.

ACTION: CLERK

- 2.3 The Convenor updated the Committee on the review of the University's PGT programme portfolio that was conducted by Planning. The review would look at the numbers of students on each programme, the income derived, the delivery methods, and demographics. The intention was to identify opportunities for development of new programmes that would fulfil gaps in the market. Consultation with Schools would take place and the outcome of the review would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTORS

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- 3.1 The Committee discussed the draft role descriptors for Committee members. It was noted that the descriptors were mainly about ensuring communication between the Committee and the Schools.
- 3.2 The Convenor stated that the intention was to include items approved at recent Senate meetings under for information on future Committee agendas. This would ensure Committee members saw the final papers that were approved and could then keep their respective Schools were appropriately informed.
- 3.3 The Committee approved the draft role descriptors.

BORDERLINE ZONE AND CRITERIA/ABOLISHING ROUNDING UP OF GRADES

Copy filed as PGC/220119/003 and PGC/220119/004

- 4.1 The Committee discussed the draft proposals relating to the borderline zone and the abolishing of rounding up of grades.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed that the current borderline zone was too wide. The Committee felt that there was less need for a borderline zone in a GPA system. It was also noted that extenuating circumstances had often already taken account of at an individual course level. The Committee supported a reduction of the borderline zone to 0.5 but also felt that there was a case for no borderline zone at all.
- 4.3 In regard to viva examination for borderline students, the Committee was not in favour. The Committee noted that vivas could put unfair pressure on students, particularly those whose first language was not English.

- 4.4 The Committee discussed the issue of using a grade profile but felt that considering students who achieve 50% of their credits in a higher classification for upgrade was too similar to the Grade Spectrum.
- 4.5 The Committee discussed the issue of using two systems for classification – Grade Point Average and Grade Spectrum. The Committee agreed that there was a need to remove the use of Grade Spectrum and to classify on GPA only.
- 4.6 The Committee noted that, in PGT programme classification, PGT students normally had to achieve the project/dissertation at a certain level, in addition to the meeting the GPA requirements. It was felt that this should be reflected in the paper.
- 4.7 The Committee agreed that the rounding up of grades should be abolished.
- 4.8 The Committee discussed releasing numerical marks as well as the final alpha-numeric grade. It was noted that some Schools had started to release the numerical marks because that was what students wanted to see. It was felt that releasing numerical marks made alpha numeric grades less necessary.
- 4.9 The Convenor asked members to discuss the draft papers within their respective School and bring back the views to the next meeting.

ACTION: CLERK

PUBLICATION OF EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' REPORTS

- 5.1 The Committee noted that the ELIR review panel were likely to recommend that the University publish External Examiner reports to staff and students.
- 5.2 The Committee discussed how best to meet the ELIR requirement and felt that MyAberdeen was the best place to host them. The Committee recommended that External Examiner reports be split into two parts: one part that was standard Quality Assurance questions, and a second part that was longer form feedback and comments. It was agreed that the first part only should be published.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Convenor asked the Committee if it was preferable to schedule meetings on Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons, as some members had noted that Wednesday afternoon was often used for School level meetings. Members noted that there was more teaching and it was agreed to keep meetings to Wednesday afternoon but to monitor levels of attendance.
- 6.2 Dr Maccallum raised the issue of students who had been through the Language School in order to meet the requirements for admission but whose level understanding of spoken English was still problematic. The question was asked what support the University provided to these students. Some Schools noted how the level of conversational English had impacted on participation in group work. It was agreed that this was a common issue faced by most Schools, and would become more so if PGT number expanded, and that it should be raised with the Vice Principal of Teaching and Learning and Head of Student Recruitment.