

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 3 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Prof C Kee (Convenor), Prof E Pavlovskaia (Co-Convenor), Dr A Bryzgel, Dr M Bodig, Dr A Cleland, Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Dr D MacCallum, Dr A McKinnon, with Dr C Calder, Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Mrs N Kinchin-Williams, Ms J MacKay, Dr H Sveinsdottir in attendance.

Apologies: Dr D Muirhead, Dr A Sim.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 2 AUGUST 2018

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1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2018.

MATTERS ARISING

2. It was noted that the issue concerning end dates of Postgraduate programmes would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION: CLERK

CONVENOR'S REMARKS

- 3.1 The Convenor updated the Committee on the audit undertaken by UKVI.
- 3.2 The Convenor thanked the Committee and their Schools for all the work they had undertaken which had helped the University of Aberdeen achieve the Scottish University of the Year in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

4. The Convenor confirmed that the ELIR panel would visit the University during the week of 8 October 2018 for preliminary discussions. This would be followed by the main visit in November.

ADMISSION NUMBERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

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- 5.1 The Committee noted the PGT recruitment and registration figures for the September 2018 intake, and the changes from the previous year.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that the numbers were below budgetary targets but, on the whole, had increased.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that there had been challenges in international student recruitment presented by the late processing of visa applications. The Convenor asked the Committee whether the University should look at starting taught Postgraduate programmes later, and whether a trimester approach should be adopted in place of the current semester one. The Committee noted that this may present challenges in terms of workload. The Committee noted that the recording of lectures would help accommodate late starts in some cases but that more thought needed to be given as to how the first two weeks of terms were structured in order to account for late starts.
- 5.4 The Committee noted an issue with a student who had been on the English language training courses but who had not been able to commence his studies due to not having secured ATAS for his programme. The Committee asked the Clerk to investigate the procedure for English language students securing ATAS to determine whether this was a larger problem.

ACTION: CLERK

[CLERK'S NOTE: Admissions confirmed that applicants are advised in their offer letter whether their programme requires ATAS or not. Applicants are advised to apply for ATAS 6 months in advance of their programme start

date, regardless of whether their offer is conditional or unconditional. Any applicant requiring to do English Language training will receive this. Applicants do not have to be cleared in order to apply for ATAS]

PGT REVIEW

- 6.1 The Committee received an update from the Director of Planning on the review of taught Postgraduate programmes.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that a project board had been set up. The project intended to liaise with School in order to evaluate the effectiveness of taught Postgraduate programmes and make recommendations on how to amend the current portfolio with the goal of increasing student numbers. The project would seek to understand the market and any gaps that might present opportunities for recruitment.
- 6.3 The project would look at several aspects: the size and distribution of PGT programmes; the trends for student numbers; the student profile of the programmes; the fee income brought in by programmes.
- 6.4 The project also aimed to evaluate the new programmes that had come in through the business case process since 2017 in order to ascertain the effectiveness of that process.
- 6.5 It was noted that the project would seek to understand course sharing between PGT programmes.
- 6.6 It was noted that the review sought to be finished by the end of the calendar year with a full report to be circulated. It was anticipated that there would be more regular, light-touch reviews in the future.
- 6.7 The Committee noted concern from the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy where a review of programmes had recommended specialised routes being replaced a single, general route. It was noted that PGT numbers in this area had declined for 2018.

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

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- 7.1 The Committee noted the results of the local 2018 PGT Experience Survey.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the survey ran over the summer and received 579 responses out of 2448. It was noted that, in comparison with the National Student Survey, overall satisfaction was lower for PGT students than Undergraduates.
- 7.3 It was note that a report on PGT student experience was to be presented to Senate and that the survey results would form a significant part.
- 7.4 The Convenor asked School representatives to discuss the results within their School and provide a response for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee. Schools should consider the results and how they align with results of feedback they gather from other means.
ACTION: SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES
- 7.5 Mrs Kinchin-Williams asked that Schools report any IT related issues that are noted in their own feedback exercises directly to IT so that they can be investigated.

PERSONAL TUTORS FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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- 8.1 The Committee discussed the paper on the possibility and appropriateness of introducing personal tutors for PGT students. The Committee noted feedback from the School of Psychology where this had been trialled.
- 8.2 The Committee noted feedback from Psychology that indicated that there was a higher engagement from the scheme at PGT level than Undergraduate. It was also noted that internationals, or individuals coming back to Higher Education after a break, made the most use of Personal Tutors.
- 8.3 Concerns were noted over the resource to implement such a scheme. Some members of the Committee felt that there should be flexibility and that it would be best left to Schools to decide how best to implement

it. It was noted that parity of student experience should be ensured but that there could be flexibility as to how Personal Tutors were appointed.

- 8.2 It was noted that the School of Psychology would evaluate the programme at the end of the 2018/19 academic year. The Committee asked that an initial review be provided after the first semester to inform whether proposals could be prepared for the introduction of personal tutors for September 2019. The final review would then confirm whether the proposals should go ahead or not.

ACTION: SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

AUTOMATED ATTENDANCE MONITORING PILOT

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- 9.1 The Committee discussed the piloting of QR codes to monitor attendance at lectures.
- 9.2 The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition confirmed that they had rolled the procedure out to all PGT programmes. The School used the system once per week and reported that it had operated well.
- 9.3 Some members of the Committee feedback reports of students 'cheating' the system and providing classmates who were not in attendance at the lecture with the QR code so that they could sign in without being present. Other members of the Committee felt that the signature based system was also open to abuse.
- 9.4 Some members felt that the procedure was not straightforward for large class sizes.
- 9.5 The Committee recommended that each School assess whether it would be appropriate for their area and take a decision on whether to implement.

LEARNING ANALYTICS POLICY

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- 10.1 The Committee discussed the draft policy concerning the use of Learning Analytics.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that issues around GDPR had been fully considered. It was felt that the greatest use of analytics would be at Undergraduate level where, with programmes being for 3 or more years, retention was a greater issue.
- 10.3 The Committee noted that some students could object strongly to the collection of data. It was also noted that data currently collected but was not always used efficiently.

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE AUSA REPRESENTATION

11. The Committee noted that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12. The School of Biological Sciences raised the issue of students who have achieved a Diploma or Certificate being able to graduate in person. It was confirmed that 2018 was the first year in which students on the PGDE and Diploma in Professional Legal Practice had graduated in person and that this had been opened up to them due them being a distinct cohort, rather than an exit qualification. It was agreed that the issue would be raised with the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning.

ACTION: CONVENOR