

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING 30 AUGUST 2017

- Present: Prof C Kee (Convenor), Dr M Bodig, Ms Donna Connelly, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr D MacCallum, Prof J Masthoff, Prof J Nelson, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Ms S Paterson, Dr D Sutherland, Dr S Woodin, with Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr C Calder and Prof K Shennan in attendance.
- Apologies: Dr M Ehrenschtendner, Dr A Kindness, Dr A McKinnon, Dr D Muirhead, Prof J Nelson, Mr R Williams.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 27 APRIL 2017

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1. The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2017 were approved.

MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 *Minute 4.1*
It was confirmed that the web team were amending the University web pages to remove the mention of Colleges. It was also confirmed that there would be a new Research Graduate School web page launching soon.
- 2.2 *Minute 4.2*
It was confirmed that data from the 2017 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey had been received recently and would be analysed soon, at which point Prof Kee and Dr Calder would discuss the dissemination of results.
ACTION: PROF KEE AND DR CALDER
- 2.3 *Minute 5.3*
It was noted that student population numbers would be received by the Committee at the next meeting.
ACTION: CLERK

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

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3. The Committee approved the remit and composition of the Committee for 2017/18, noting that the reference to the Committee providing an 'inter-college forum' should be changed to 'inter-School form'.
ACTION: CLERK

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESSION

(i) Resits: Capping Grades to D3 and Use in Final Degree Classification

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- 4.1 The Committee noted the proposal to cap Undergraduate resits grades at D3 and to count the resit grade towards classification. It was noted that External Examiners had expressed concern that it seemed unfair to count fail grades towards classification. It was noted that Postgraduate resits are currently capped at 'Resit Pass', but that the first attempt also counts towards classification.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed that there should be consistency between Postgraduate and Undergraduate policy.
- 4.3. It was noted that a mark of 'Resit Pass' could continue to be used and that this could equate to a D3 for classification purposes.

- 4.6 Some members noted that it might be confusing to record both the original fail and a pass mark of D3 or higher for the resit on a transcript. It was felt that 'Resit Pass' most the most transparent and appropriate way to record how the pass was obtained.
- 4.5 Some members felt that capping resits disadvantaged students. They felt that, when a resit paper had been fully graded, it could be possible to provide an actual mark. Other members noted that not all resits were fully graded, and that the format of them had meant that it was only possible to determine whether or not the student had met the learning outcomes. It was noted that to record anything other than Pass or Fail for these resits would necessitate a revision in the resit format.
- 4.6 Some members felt that it could be left to disciplines to decide whether it would be appropriate for them to award a mark for resits or to record only either a pass or fail. Other members felt that this would lead to inconsistency and dissatisfaction amongst students.
- 4.7 The Committee agreed that a mark of 'Resit Pass' could be used and could equate to a D3 for degree classification purposes. However, the Committee had differences of opinion over whether Schools should be given the choice to record a mark or not. The Committee agreed it would need further guidance on the technical feasibility of allowing flexibility for Schools and whether this flexibility would lead to issues over inconsistency.

(ii) Resit Format and Extension of Use of Compensatory Credits

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- 4.8 The Committee noted the paper requesting a discussion on alternative resit formats and extending the use of compensatory credits. The Committee felt that there were already instances at PGT level of resits being held in a different format than the original exam or continuous assessment. The Committee also agreed that there should be no change to the rules regarding compensatory credits at PGT level.

(iii) Progression Through a Taught Postgraduate Programme

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- 4.9 The Committee discussed concerns from the School of Engineering about January start students not being permitted to progress to Stage 3 of the programme. The concerns outlined that non-progression for January starts was based on failure in the project, which was undertaken at a much earlier stage than students who started in September.
- 4.10 The Committee noted that the introduction of resits and the expansion of flexible online programmes meant that the current expectation that student pass each defined stage before progression to the next was not necessarily applicable.
- 4.10 The Committee noted that Schools had discretion over whether to allow a student to proceed or not. However, it was agreed that it was necessary to review the wording of the regulations regarding progression. It was felt that the wording needed to be flexible enough to account for the different student cohorts, but also needed to allow students who were not progressing satisfactorily to be discontinued.

ACTION: CLERK

EXAMINATION

(i) Duties and Responsibilities of School/Discipline Examination Officers

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- 5.1 The Committee discussed the proposal to formalise the duties and responsibilities for School/Discipline Examination Officers. The Committee noted that Examination Officers must academics, but felt that some of the duties proposed would be tasks that were undertaken by administrative staff.
- 5.2 The Committee recommended that the word 'duties' should be removed and that it should be made clear that Examination Officers were expected to oversee the tasks listed and ensure that they are completed, but that the actual completion of the tasks could be delegated to others.

(ii) Criteria for Exam Invigilators

- 5.3 The Committee discussed issues over invigilators, including training and the need to develop criteria, particularly for invigilators of examinations for students who sat their exams off campus.

- 5.4 The Committee agreed that criteria should be established. It was agreed that a meeting with the Centre for Academic Development should be sought in order to discuss the possibility of online training for invigilators.

ACTION: CLERK

(iii) Staffing at Exam Venues

- 5.5 The Committee noted a paper had not yet been prepared for discussion.
- 5.6 The Convenor outlined that the proposal was to adopt an approach that would not require each subject for which the students were sitting an exam to have an invigilator present. Instead the approach would look at the number of students and the number of invigilators required for the size of exam. It was noted that this would introduce some logistical issues, but it was hoped that these could be resolved. It was noted that a paper would be forthcoming.

PROOF READING GUIDANCE

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- 6.1 The Committee discussed the proposal to introduce guidance for what students could seek a proof reader to undertake. It was noted that the guidance was primarily aimed at addressing the use of external proof readers. It was also noted that the proposal had asked the Committee to discuss whether students should sign a declaration to confirm whether or not a third party proof reader had been used.
- 6.2 The Committee agreed that a declaration would not be required. The Committee noted the intention of the paper was not prevent an external proof reader being used but to clarify what that proof reader could do. However, the Committee felt there were issues regarding students with disabilities that needed further consideration and recommended that the issue be discussed with the Centre for Academic Development to ascertain what guidance they had in place.

ACTION: PROF K. SHENNAN

LECTURE CAPTURE POLICY

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- 7.1 It was noted that the paper proposing a policy on recording lectures had been circulated shortly before the meeting and that not all members had a chance to review it.
- 7.2 The Committee expressed some concern over the technology that was available to record visual-based lectures. Some Committee members had noted previous issues with equipment not recording the lecture properly. It was felt that introducing a policy where course coordinators would have to opt out would be difficult if the technology was not sufficient.
- 7.3 The Committee requested further information from the Centre of Academic Development on whether future lectures would be recorded automatically.

ACTION: CLERK

- 7.4 It was requested that Committee members review the proposal and send comments to the Clerk by Wednesday 6 September.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

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8. The Committee noted the Student Engagement Framework Scotland.

ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

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- 9.1 The Committee noted the updated on the Enhancement Led Institutional Review. The Committee noted that an ELIR group would be set up for each School. It was anticipated that the group would include the school representatives from the Undergraduate Committee, the Postgraduate Committee (Taught), the

Quality Assurance Committee and the Postgraduate Research Student committee, and others as determined by the Heads of Schools. The groups would initially focus on ensuring that all the paperwork required for ELIR was complete.

- 9.2 It was noted that ELIR would become a standing item on the Committee agenda.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

10. It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Committee would be changed from 23 October 2017 to 1 November 2017.