

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 24 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Ekaterina Pavlovskaja (Chair), Amy Bryzgel, Hannah Burrows, Sandie Cleland, Peter Hicks, Sandra Paterson, Michelle Pinard, Allan Sim, Anne-Michelle Slater, Prof P Ziegler, with Colin Calder, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Janet Mackay and Robert Findlay (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies were received from: Donna MacCallum, David Muirhead, Graeme Nixon and Robert Wishart.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 1 MAY 2019

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1. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

2. The Committee noted that recruitment for University Deans was ongoing.

NEW ENTRANTS

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- 3.1 The Committee discussed the numbers of new admissions for September 2019 and noted that, whilst international PGT numbers had increased, there would need to be strong conversions for January 2020 in order to meet the 2019/20 targets.
- 3.2 The Committee requested the numbers of actual FTEs for September 2019 in order to compare against 2018. The Committee also requested that the numbers for online applicants and FTES be broken down by programme level and School.

ACTION: CLERK

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2019

- 4.1 The Committee received a presentation from Dr Calder outlining the process and headline results for the 2019 PGT Experience Survey.
- 4.2 The Committee raised concern that the population figures for students who were asked to complete the survey were too high, which could affect the response rate. It was agreed that these should be reviewed to confirm their accuracy.
- 4.3 The Committee noted that assessment and feedback remained an area where satisfaction recorded was noticeably less than other areas.
- 4.4 The Chair stated that the experience survey should be viewed in consideration with other mechanisms of feedback that Schools use.
- 4.5 The Chair stated that a paper would be prepared for Senate in 2020 discussing PGT student experience in the same way as had been done during 2018/19. In preparation for this, the Chair asked that the results of the 2019 PGT survey be circulated and that Schools be asked to provide a response. The Chair also asked that Schools consider the action plans they submitted for the previous PGT student experience paper and provide comment on their progress.

ACTION: CLERK

PROGRESSION IN FLEXIBLE PGT PROGRAMMES

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- 5.1 The Committee discussed a paper that outlined a need to amend progression rules in order to better suit flexible PGT programmes. It was noted that current rules do not allow students to take alternative courses in order to make up for failed credits, and that, where a programme had a significant proportion of credits earned from elective courses, this might not be justified.
- 5.2 The Committee agreed that alternative courses should not be used to make up credit for failed compulsory courses.
- 5.3 The Committee agreed that students should be allowed take alternative elective courses in order to make up credit from failed elective courses, but with a limit imposed.
- 5.4 The Committee noted that there were practical difficulties in imposing a limit based on the number of alternative courses that a student could take, namely in identifying what was an alternative course. It was discussed that a limit based on credit points, perhaps per stage of a programme, could be more suitable. It was requested that this be given more consideration with a proposal on how it could work submitted to the next meeting.

ACTION: CLERK

- 5.5 The Committee agreed that students should be required to take the resit for the failed course before being permitted to take an alternative course to make up credits.
- 5.6 The Committee agreed that both failed courses and alternative courses should be counted towards degree classification.
- 5.7 The Committee agreed that alternative courses could not be taken to make up credit for a failed dissertation/project.
- 5.8 The Committee discussed whether the result for an alternative course should be capped, but it was agreed that this could mean students had little motive to perform to their best in the course.
- 5.9 The Committee asked whether programme coordinators could offer a course as an alternative that was not on the list of electives for a programme. It was agreed that the Quality Assurance Committee should be asked for their view.

ACTION: CLERK

LATE SUBMISSION OF WORK POLICY

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- 6.1 The Committee discussed a proposal to introduce a University-wide policy regarding the penalties for late submission of work. The Committee agreed that such a policy was a positive step forward to bring consistency across the institution.
- 6.2 The Committee agreed that a 5-day maximum deadline would be difficult to implement as some disciplines required a physical submission that could not be done at weekends. It was agreed to recommend that the deadline be amended to 7 days, inclusive of weekends.
- 6.3 The Committee felt that the penalty of 2 CGS points per day was too harsh and agreed to recommend that this be changed to 1 CGS point.
- 6.4 The Committee raised concerns over point c) in Appendix 2. The Committee felt that this could be confusing for students and difficult to explain. The Committee was unclear of the rationale for enabling a pass for an assignment when the imposition of penalties would record it as a fail. The Committee requested more guidance on how this approach would be implemented.

ACTION: CLERK

- 6.5 The Committee agreed that a list of what might constitute exceptional circumstances for late submission could not be exhaustive and should be guidance to help support a School's decision.

- 6.6 The Committee agreed that short-term illness could be considered an exceptional circumstance since, if the assignment required a physical submission, we would not necessarily wish to encourage the student to come in to University.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

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7. The Committee approved the remit and composition for 2019/20.

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