UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 23 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Kirsty Kiezebrink (Chair), Gloria Alvarez, Yvonne Bain, Amy Bryzgel, Hannah Burrows, Edward Chadwick, Sandie Cleland, David Green, Jarosław Kędra, Donna MacCallum, David McCausland, Laura Ong, Dean Robson, Robert Wishart, Sarah Woodin, Phil Ziegler with Abbe Brown, Colin Calder, Tracey Innes, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Janet Mackay, Kerry Harrison (Minute Secretary) and Robert Findlay (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Ondrej Kucerak and Graeme Nixon.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 15 JUNE 2020
Copy filed as PGC/2301020/001

1.1   The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020.

1.2   With regard to minute 3.2, the Committee consensus was that a PGT Experience survey was not required for the 2019-2020 academic year due to the impact of COVID.

1.3   Peter Hicks asked if the provision for resits for the project/dissertation had been approved by Senate for use in 2019/20 under the no detriment policy. It was agree that this should be clarified.
                                                                                                ACTION: CLERK

MINUTES OF JOINT UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE TAGUHT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 3 AUGUST 2020
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2   The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2020. It was noted that the proposals for the second half-session had been approved.

MINUTES OF JOINT UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE TAGUHT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 13 OCTOBER 2020
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3   The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

4   The Committee noted that Senate had approved a delay to the start of the second semester. It was also noted that the return of exam results for the first semester could be delayed provided there was good reason and it did not affect students' course choices for the second semester.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION
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4   The Committee approved the remit and composition for 2020/2021

DRAFT POLICY ON INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
Copy filed as PGC/2301020/005

5.1   Abbe Brown presented the paper to the Committee.

5.2   The Committee expressed concern about the additional workload and time commitments from academic staff in order to implement the policy. Abbe Brown confirmed that the university was mindful of these concerns.

5.3   The Committee raised concerns about the current system that was used for captioning and noted that it often proved time consuming and did not function correctly.

5.4   The Committee noted that additional support, awareness and resources were required for part-time and distance learning students and that explicit recognition of this would be welcome.

5.5   The Committee requested that student data was evaluated as part of the policy, for example the completion rates for students from widening access backgrounds.

5.6   The Committee discussed points 5.6 – 5.8 and raised concerns about disadvantaging individuals who do not hold direct responsibility for the implementation of the policy. Abbe Brown reassured the Committee that this is not the intention, however it should apply to all staff members.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

6.1   The Committee discussed concerns about the support available post-registration for students whose first language is not English, particularly in relation to large pieces of work. It was suggested that this could be rolled into a larger piece of work around academic literacy, particularly at the PGT level.

6.2   The Chair noted that the University was developing mechanisms for students to practice their communication in English in collaboration with the Students Association.

6.3   The Committee noted that the Language Centre was able to work with programme coordinators to create subject specific writing tasks for students undertaking the training programme. However, concerns were expressed regarding the Language centre's capacity for providing ongoing support.

6.4   The Committee agreed that language support should be embedded in students' academic programme as this could ensure better engagement. However, it was recognised that additional support would need ot be given to Schools to enable this.

6.5   The Chair agreed to raise this matter with the Vice Principal of Education.

ACTION: CHAIR

PGT APPLICATION DEADLINES

7   The Committee raised concerns about the number of students registering late and noted that this was primarily due to Visa issues. It was suggested that greater use of flexible delivery, particularly at the start of term, would allow students to engage with the programme prior to arriving on campus, could mitigate the impact of late arrivals.

AOCB

8.1   Donna MacCallum provided the Committee with screenshots of the professional development course asked the Committee to consider whether it would be appropriate to make the course mandatory in the future. It was noted that around 150 PGT students had completed the course this year. Clarity was sought on the meaning of mandatory, whether non-completion would prevent students from graduating and who held responsibility for monitoring this.

ACTION: CLERK

8.2   Concern was raised as to whether PGAP met the University's commitment towards inclusivity with regard to gender, in particular the questions asked of applicants. It was noted that this may be related to HESA reporting and will be explore further.

ACTION: CLERK