

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING 6 MAY 2020

Present: Kirsty Kiezebrink (Chair), Amy Bryzgel, Hannah Burrows, Sandie Cleland, Karin Friedrich, Peter Hicks, Jarosław Kędra Donna MacCallum, David McCausland, Sandra Paterson, Robert Wishart, Sarah Woodin, with Hazel Hutchison, Janet Mackay, Kerry Harrison (Minute Secretary) and Robert Findlay (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies were received from: Colin Calder, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Daria Koleva, David Muirhead and Graeme Nixon, Anne-Michelle Slater.

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 6 FEBRUARY 2020

Copy filed as PGC/060520/001

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2020.
- 1.2 In regard to minute 2.4, the Committee was advised that, following feedback from the Committee, minor changes had been made to the wording of the paper on Resits for PGT Dissertations and Projects. The Committee requested the updated wording to be circulated. The changes to resit policy would be put to the next meeting of Senate for approval.

ACTION: CLERK

REVISED ASSESSMENT AND GRADUATION DATES

Copy filed as PGC/060520/002

- 2.1 The Committee noted the changes to term dates, assessment dates and graduation dates. The committee noted that the first term of 2020/21 would take place over 12 weeks and that it was expected that all assessment would be completed by 18 December 2020. It was acknowledged that Schools would need to carefully consider the timing of assessments and the structure of teaching, taking care not to host too much assessment at the end of their courses.
- 2.2 The Committee noted that it would be for Schools to determine whether it was appropriate to provide their students with an extension to their dissertations/projects.
- 2.3 The Committee requested further clarity on the impact on the dates for November graduation and associated deadlines for returning dissertation/project results. Clarification was also requested regarding how the changes to the Summer 2020 resit application deadlines applied to PGT programmes where Schools set resits outside of the standard exam diets, i.e. would there be a timeframe in which Schools were expected to host these resits.
- 2.4 The Committee acknowledged that, given the September to December term would be shorter, Schools would need to carefully consider the timing of assessments and the structure of teaching.

ACTION: CLERK

JANUARAY START PROGRAMMES

Copy filed as PGC/060520/003

- 3.1 Hazel Hutchison provided an overview of the work undertaken to develop January start versions of programmes in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. It was noted that approximately 70 programmes had been submitted for approval to have a January start.
- 3.2 The Committee was informed that the Quality Assurance Committee had considered whether dissertations/projects for January start programmes could be extended over the final semester to allow submission in December. It was confirmed that QAC was not supportive of this as it would mean students undertaking dissertation/project work whilst completing taught courses, thereby potentially negatively impacting on the quality of their work.

SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO BLENDED LEARNING

- 4.1 The Chair provided an overview of the blended learning guidelines expected to be released in May which included examples and additional resources provided by the University to support programmes being delivered through blended learning for 2020/21.
- 4.2 Hazel Hutchison emphasised the importance of clear and consistent communication to applicants regarding the University's provision for 2020/21 and requested that Schools ensure that communication is made through central channels. It was acknowledged that the Schools would need to communicate directly with their applicants regarding how their programmes would be delivered, but that, given the changing nature of the situation, it should not be done too early in the process.
- 4.3 It was asked whether a blended learning approach to delivery would impact upon tuition fees. It was stated that there were no plans to change the level of tuition fees charged to students and that the focus was on providing a strong product.
- 4.4 The Committee sought advice about what they should communicate to students at the virtual open day regarding how teaching was being delivered. Hazel Hutchison informed members that the message presently being given to applicants was that the University campus would be open in September, unless Government advice was to the contrary, but that the University would also deliver the content of its programmes online so that students who could not travel would be able to start their studies and come to campus when ready.
- 4.5 The Committee noted that Scoping Sessions would be held with Schools in order to determine what changes to the existing curriculum would need to take place in order to support blended learning. It was anticipated that these would replace the normal process for submitting changes for Quality Assurance approval.
- 4.5 The Committee was informed that each School will have a Task and Finish Group who will be responsible for considering how programmes should be adapted in order to be delivered via blended learning. Schools will also be allocated a representative from the Centre of Academic Development who will provide bespoke training and support.

PGT PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT GROUP UPDATE

Copy filed as PGC/060520/004

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from Hazel Hutchison for the PGT Programme Development Group and informed members that work was ongoing for a new programme approvals process.

AOCB

- 6.1 The Committee noted the introduction of the University's No Detriment policy and that work was underway to provide Schools with a mechanism for taking the impact of COVID-19 into account when calculating degree classifications. It was noted that Schools had been asked for confirmation as to what courses should not be included as having been affected by COVID-19. The Committee requested further clarification on the impact of degree classifications for PGT students who started in January 2020, given that most of their study could be affected by COVID-19.
- 6.2 The Committee sought clarification on the applicability of the No Detriment policy to the summer term and the impact on project and dissertation grades.
- ACTION: CLERK**
- 6.3 The Committee noted that Diploma Supplements will contain additional transcript information on the University's response to COVID, specifically the calculation of classifications.