

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE (TAUGHT)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING 1 MAY 2019**

Present: Prof E Pavlovskaia (Convenor), Dr A Cleland, Dr P Hicks, Dr SJ Kim, Mr B Kirectepe, Dr D MacCallum, Dr A McKinnon, Ms S Paterson, Dr A Sim, Dr S Woodin, Prof P Ziegler, with Dr C Calder, Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Mrs N Kinchin-Williams, and Ms J Mackay in attendance.

Apologies: Dr M Bodig, Prof G Nixon.

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 27 FEBRUARY 2019**

*Copy filed as PGC/010519/001*

- 1.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2019.
- 1.2 In regard to minute 8, the Committee noted that only non-compulsory courses were the intention of point 2 of the paper regarding Resits:
- If a student fails an honours or PGT course and opts to take an additional course (and credits) rather than a resit the GPA is classified on the basis of all honours/pgt courses (i.e. including the initial fail and additional passing grade).

**CONVENOR'S REMARKS**

- 2.1 The Convenor informed the Committee about a QAA conference held in Glasgow on Exploring Student Surveys on 30 April 2019. The Convenor noted that the presentation of Dr Colin Calder on PGT experience survey run in 2018 was well received by the participants and that University of Aberdeen practices were largely in line with that of the rest of the Scottish sector.
- 2.2 The Convenor noted that proposals to revise the current Dean structure would be submitted for approval to the meeting of Senate on 15 May 2019.

**PGT STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

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- 3.1 Dr Calder delivered a presentation on the results and operation of the local 2018 PGT Student Experience Survey.
- 3.2 The Committee felt that a shorter survey with less questions would be more beneficial. It was felt that some of the questions asked did not produce meaningful data.
- 3.3 The potential for Schools to be more involved in the administration of surveys was raised. It was felt that this could help provide extra resource to increase the effectiveness of the surveys and help engage Schools in the outcomes.
- 3.4 The paper regarding PGT student experience showed high completion and low dropout rates for PGT students.
- 3.5 A number of typos were noted in the PGT experience paper. The data regarding the number of MRes students completing with distinction was also queried.

**ACTION: CLERK**

**PERSONAL TUTORS FOR PGT STUDENTS**

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- 4.1 Dr Cleland introduced a paper providing feedback from the School of Psychology on its pilot of Personal Tutors for PGT students. The Committee noted that certain groups of students engaged with it more – students on conversion programmes – but that there were significant workload implications for staff.

- 4.2 The Committee noted that the programme coordinator often performs the function of Personal Tutors for the students on their programme, and that, in some cases, this work was not recognised. It was agreed that on smaller programmes it might be appropriate for the programme coordinator to act as a Personal Tutor, but that larger programmes might benefit from other individuals in the School fulfilling this role.
- 4.3 The PGT Committee agreed to recommend that a system of Personal Tutors be implemented for PGT students. However, the Committee expressed concern over the workload implications and agreed that resource would need to be developed. For example, if an individual acted as a Personal tutor for PGT students, this would need to be recognised when allocating UG Tutees. The Committee also agreed that each School should allocate its own Personal Tutors for PGT students as felt appropriate to their programmes, which may include the programme coordinator acting the Personal Tutor for the students on their programme, particularly in the case of smaller cohorts. The Committee felt that centrally administered allocation in line with current practice for UG students will not work for PGT students.

#### **CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT**

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- 5.1 The Committee discussed the revised Code of Practice on Assessment that would be implemented if changes to borderline marking criteria were approved by Senate on 8 May.
- 5.2 The Committee noted errors in Appendix 1, page 22, regarding the margin for the borderline and in Appendix 2, page 12, regarding whether the borderline should be stated to two decimal points or rounded up to one. The Committee also noted that Appendix 1, page 22 and Appendix 2, page 21 suggested that a student with a GPA of 14.5 to 15 could be considered for a borderline Distinction if their project was graded at A5. The Committee agreed that this was incorrect and should be removed.
- 5.3 The Committee approved the revised Code of Practice on the proviso that the above changes be made.  
**ACTION: CLERK**

#### **REVIEW OF STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION PROCESS**

*Copy filed as PGC/010519/004*

- 6.1 Dr Calder introduced a paper regarding the outcome of the SCEF working group. The Committee noted that individual SCEFs are not currently reviewed centrally and there no mechanism in place to allow this to happen.
- 6.2 Dr Calder outlined that the working group had recommended that the policy be clarified to make it clear that SCEF questions can be edited by Schools. It was also recommended that the policy be updated to make it clear that it was the course coordinator who was responsible for Course Feedback Form, mandated questions, and timing.
- 6.3 The Committee agreed with the recommendations of the working group, but noted that this should be a first step towards a continued and fuller revision of the SCEF process.

#### **CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)**

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- 7.1 The Committee discussed the revisions to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic). The Committee noted that collusion would be treated according to the same procedures as plagiarism, meaning that Schools would be able to decide the penalty for a first offence. The Committee also noted that Contract Cheating had been given its own category and definition.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the heading for 6.4 still referred to the Grade Spectrum.
- 7.3 The Committee felt that Research Misconduct should be applied to all students who were undertaking a project including UG and PGT students.
- 7.4 The Committee noted that 3.5 (a) concerned the use of electronic devices but that it also stated that international students were permitted to use a dictionary if English was not their first language. The rules regarding examinations only permitted a paper dictionary, so it was felt that the placement of this statement next to rules regarding electronic devices could cause confusion.

7.5 The Committee approved the revised Code of Practice on the proviso that the above changes be made.

**DISABILITY PROVISION: EXAM SCHEDULING AND LOCATION**

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8.1 The Committee did not have time to discuss the paper on disability provision for exams.

**FORWARD PLANNING FOR 2019/20**

9.1 The Convenor asked the Committee if there were any issues that it would wish discussed during next year's Committee cycle. It was requested that the issue of penalties for late submission of coursework be discussed with a view to establishing guidance for Schools and consistency across the University.

9.2 Members were asked to feedback any further issues they wished to be discussed to the Clerk.

**ACTION: COMMITTEE MEMBERS**