

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN
POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING 23 MARCH 2015

Present: Prof J Masthoff (Convenor), Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Dr P Fernandes, Prof P Hannaford, Dr H Hutchison, Prof M Jaspers, Dr C Kee, Dr A Mckinnon, Dr D Marais, Dr J Oliver, Ms S Paterson, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Prof Sahraie with Ms C Croydon, Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr L Leiper, Prof K Shennan, Mrs K Slesser in attendance.

Apologies: Dr H Battu, Dr C Bestwick, Prof B Connolly, Prof R Evans-Jones, Mr R Henthorn, Dr D Maccallum, Prof P McGeorge, Prof Sahraie

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 23 JANUARY 2015

Minute 16.2

23.1 The Committee requested that 'tend to be aged 30-40' be changed to older.

ACTION: CLERK

23.2 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2015, subject to the above amendment.

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MATTERS ARISING

24.1 The Committee noted that the timing of exam result returns was being reviewed and requested that an update be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: CLERK

24.2 The Convenor informed the Committee that Registry had confirmed that it would handle the scheduling of postgraduate resits when they fell within standard resit diets.

UPDATE FROM RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT UNIT – ORAL UPDATE

25.1 The Committee was updated on current developments within the RDU.

25.2 The Committee discussed the requirements for ethics training and agreed that students would need to pass an ethics training module, but that they also be allowed multiple attempts to do so.

25.3 The Committee noted that it was intended for a demo of the ethics training module to be ready for July 2015, and for the module to go live for the 2015/16 academic year.

25.4 The Committee noted that all supervisor training sessions had been run and that dates were being looked at for when to hold the last session.

25.5 The Committee noted that a student led group had been looking at developing an online resource for logging research student training.

25.6 Dr Leiper requested that members of the Committee contact her directly if they wished for something particular to be developed for the 2015/16 programme.

MODERATION AND MARKING

26.1 The Committee discussed the proposed changes to moderation and marking. Dr Shennan provided an oral report on the discussions at the Quality Assurance Committee.

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- 26.2 The Committee noted the lack of consistency between departments in their current approach to moderation and marking.
- 26.3 Some concern was expressed about the perceived increased level of work involved with the proposals, though it was also noted that the proposal would reduce work load related to double blind marking that are in the current regulations.
- 26.4 The Committee noted that second marking may not be required in the cases where the assessment is entirely objective, i.e. had a set answer with clear marking scheme that was not open to any level of subjective interpretation. The Committee requested that the difference between subjective and objective marking be captured in the proposals.
- 26.5 The Committee noted that External Examiners were not permitted to change the individual mark given to an assessment. The Committee requested that the paper clarify the remit for External Examiners.
- 26.6 The Committee requested that the paper include the provision to look at all borderline cases for CGS E1 and F1, because these had an implication for Undergraduate Level 4 and 5 where compensatory credits could be awarded.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT SUPERVISION: FRAMEWORK OF EXPECTATIONS

- 27.1 The Committee discussed the issue of developing a framework of expectations for postgraduate research students.
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- 27.2 The Committee noted that the issue had arisen out of a recent Strategy group chaired by the Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange. As part of a discussion concerning how to maximise research student numbers the group had recommended that a clear set of expectations of both research students and supervisors be established in order to promote the experience that a student can expect to have at the University of Aberdeen.
- 27.3 The Committee noted the responsibilities of students and supervisors outlined in the Code of Practice and agreed that a Framework would provide an additional, more concise version, which the Code of Practice could then provide more detail on.
- 27.4 Dr Kee confirmed that the Royal Society had drafted a document concerning research student expectation that the Committee should consult for guidance. Dr Kee agreed to circulate the document.
- 27.5 The Committee discussed the following expectations of a supervisor:
- Regular meetings with students.
 - Monitoring progression and providing feedback on performance, work produced and on research themes.
 - Encouraging personal development and identifying gaps in training.
 - Being aware of future career aspirations of students – being supportive and aiding skills for future career.
 - Making students aware of timelines for submission.
 - Identify opportunities for participation in the wider academic community.
 - Make student aware of ethical considerations.
- 27.6 The Committee requested that a paper be drafted for circulation, with a proposed set of expectations, based on the discussions and the information from the Royal Society.
ACTION: CLERK
- 27.7 The Committee requested that the term assistant supervisor be changed to co-supervisor in the Code of Practice.

ACTION: CLERK

COLLEGE UPDATES ON TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE CREF/GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

- 28.1 The Committee noted updates from the Colleges on the development of Graduate Attributes for each programme. The Committee noted that Colleges were reviewing them to make sure that they aligned with expectations.
- 28.2 The Committee noted concerns regarding the increase workload of a postgraduate programme coordinator. The Committee agreed to explore drafting a list of expectations for a taught postgraduate programme coordinator. The Committee noted that both the College of Arts and Social Sciences and that the College of Life Sciences of Medicine had been looking into the issue and requested that the College discussions be fed back to the Committee for consideration.

ACTION: CLERK

ONLINE TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE COURSE UPDATE

29. The Committee noted correspondence from the Vice Principal of Learning and Teaching which stated that a call would be made to Colleges for the development of potential distance learning programmes. Programmes would be ranked in relation to online delivery criteria by the project group tasked with oversight of the development of MOOCs for the FutureLearn platform. This group would take over responsibility for oversight of online delivery projects. The ranked list would then be submitted to SRAC for final agreement on the initial 3 programmes to take forward.

POSTGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEYS: DISCUSSION OF INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS AND PROMOTION

- 30.1 The Committee noted the institutional questions asked in the 2014 PTES Survey and the 2013 PRES Survey.
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- 30.2 The Committee agreed for the same questions to be used, but with the following amendments:
- The following question to be deleted from PTES 2014: 'As well as your programme coordinator do you have a University appointed advisor who you can approach for advice and support?'
 - That the option of Class Representation in the list of services offered under Non-Academic Support be amended to Programme Representation.
 - The following question be deleted: 'Are you aware of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching that is run by the Centre of Learning and Teaching?'

ACTION: CLERK

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT FEEDBACK: MONITORING AND IMPROVING TIMELINESS

31. It was agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting.

TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROJECTS: DISCUSSION ON HOW TO MAKE PROJECTS EASIER TO SUPERVISE

32. It was agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting.

LECTURE RECORDING POLICY

- 33.1 The Committee noted the proposed policy on recording of lectures.

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- 33.2 The Committee felt that guidance should be given on recording other situations. In particular one-to-one situations were not covered and the Committee noted situations where the students were looking to record meetings with supervisors or programme coordinators.
- 33.3 The Committee recommended that footnotes should be in the main text in order to be clear.
- 33.4 The Committee recommended that small group teaching be defined.

DEROGATORY COMMENTS MADE THROUGH SCEF

- 34.1 The Committee noted the requirement to remove the identity of staff members who are the subjects of personal comments prior to circulation of the SCEF.

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- 34.2 The Committee agreed with the policy but felt that there should be more protection for staff. For instance, instances were noted when potentially sexist comments had been made, and it was felt that it needed to be clearer as to how those situations are dealt with.

NEW ATAS RULES AND TB TESTING

35. The Committee noted recent changes to the ATAS rules and rules for TB Testing with reference to Tier 4 visa applications.