

UNIVERSITY OF ABEREEN

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING 5 OCTOBER 2015

Present: Prof J Masthoff (Convenor), Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Mr L Fuller, Dr C Kee, Dr D Maccallum, Dr A Mckinnon, Dr J Oliver, Ms S Paterson, Prof E Pavlovskaja, Prof L Phillips, Prof Sahraie with Ms C Croydon, Mr M Roberts. Mr R Findlay (Clerk), Dr L Leiper in attendance.

Apologies: Dr H Battu, Dr C Bestwick, Prof B Connolly, Prof R Evans-Jones, Dr P Fernandes, Dr H Hutchison, Prof M Jaspers, Prof B MacGregor, Dr D Marais Prof C Montagna, Prof P McGeorge, and Mrs K Slesser.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING ON 23 MARCH 2015

1. The Committee approved the minutes of 23 March 2015.

Copy attached as PGC/051015/001

MATTERS ARISING

Minute 24.1

2. The Committee felt that enabling exam results to be provisional for January exams did not address the concerns over the timing of results. Although this might help in some areas, it was noted that, where a programme had a January start, and programme results were being confirmed, it would be necessary to convene a formal exam board and seek external examiner involvement. The Committee also felt that the issue of students requiring results in order to inform their second half session course choices was not as relevant for taught Postgraduates as it was for Undergraduates. The Committee requested that UCTL be asked for an exception to be made for programmes where there is a real need for the external examiner to be involved, i.e. for programmes with January starts. The Committee requested that these programmes be permitted more time to return results to the Registry for December exams.

ACTION: CLERK

CONVENOR'S REMARKS

3. The Committee noted discussions concerning the centralisation of taught Postgraduate admissions. The Committee agreed that the current arrangement had worked well and expressed concern that the direct dialogue between admissions and the academic units would be lost in centralisation.

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT UNIT UPDATE

- 4.1 The Committee noted that the online research student ethics training module would be live within the next few weeks and that the staff module would follow.
- 4.2 The Committee noted that research students would be required to use Research Fish if they were RCUK funded. The Committee requested that Dr Leiper discuss with Policy Planning and Governance as to how to facilitate this an roll out training to PGRS.

ACTION: DR LEIPER

- 4.3 The Committee noted that a writing diagnostic module had been piloted with CLSM and that the plan would be to roll out to all Colleges. It was noted that the module would provide students with a recommendation of any required action in order to improve their writing skills, such as attending a Student Learning Experience workshop.

- 4.4 The Committee noted that RDU had been working with IT and others in order to coordinate an advertise workshops 6 months in advance.
- 4.5 The Committee agreed that it would be useful to see the annual Centre for Academic Development report and requested that a copy be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: DR LEIPER

UPDATE FROM SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE REPRESENTATIVES ON 2015 PGT REGISTRATION – ORAL UPDATE

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from Schools and Colleges about the numbers of new PGTs registering in September 2015.
- 5.2 The Committee recorded their thanks to the Onesource team for the work that had gone into building MyCurriculum.
- 5.3 The Committee noted that there had been substantial student queues at registration. It was noted that this would be addressed for future registrations.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT WRITING UP PERIOD

- 6.1 The Committee discussed the recent changes to Tier 4 visa applications and whether this should necessitate a revision in the current policy not to permit an automatic 12 month writing up period for research students. The Committee noted that the cost for applying for an extension to a visa would rise considerably from November 2015 onwards.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that Research Councils had increasingly expected a clear link between submission and the end of supervised study. Concerns were raised that permitting an automatic 12 month writing up period would affect submission rates.
- 6.3 Some Committee members felt that a PhD project should be clearly matched to the length of supervised study in order to encourage the submission of the thesis at the end of supervised study. Others recognised that this was desirable but difficult to achieve given how PhD projects could evolve over time.
- 6.4 The Committee was split over whether students should be charged in their fourth year or not. Some felt that, if a fourth year was desired, then a four year supervised study offer should be made with full fees charged for that year. Others felt that the cost of a PhD was already too high for students.
- 6.5 The Committee requested that the issue be taken back to College Postgraduate Committees for discussion, and that the issue of differentiation of fees at research level be explored.

ACTION: HEADS OF GRADUATE SCHOOL/CLERK

SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

- 7.1 The Committee noted the updated guidance from the RCUK in regard to Shared Parental Leave.
- Copy filed as PGC/051015/002
- 7.2 The Committee queried whether this should apply to all students or just RCUK funded students. It was noted that Glasgow had expressed the view that it should apply to all and that a central policy should be developed.

PROPOSED CHANGE TO OFF CAMPUS FORM

- 8.1 The Committee discussed the proposal to amend the off campus form so that the default position was that full fees would be charged.

Copy filed as PGC/051015/003

- 8.2 The Committee noted that the current form did not require any justification for either a reduction in fees or the charging of full fees.
- 8.3 The Committee agreed with the proposal to change the default presumption and agreed that, given their responsibility for budgets, Heads of Schools should be required to sign off on any fee reductions.

PGR FRAMEWORK OF EXPECTATIONS/ EXPECTATIONS OF TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME COORDINATORS

9. The Committee requested that working parties be set up to look at establishing a framework of expectations for both PGR students and taught postgraduate programme coordinators.
ACTION: CLERK

POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE REMIT

10. The Committee noted the remit and that there would need to be an amendment made following the change in structure of CLSM.
ACTION: CLERK