

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

**STUDENT PROGRESS COMMITTEE (SPC)**

**MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 202**

**Present:** Steve Tucker (**Chair**), Gillian Mackintosh, Alexey Sevastyanov, Thanga Thevar, Isa Ehrenschwendtner, Rona Patey, Ilona Cairns, Michelle Pinard, Alyson Whyte, Liam Dyker and Kyra Lamont (**Clerk**) in attendance.

**Apologies:** Katarina Trimmings

**AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION**

**Approval of the Minute of the Student Progress Committee (SPC) held on 30 May 2023**

*(Copy filed as SPC/081123/A)*

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members were invited to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. There were no matters raised and the minutes were approved .

**Matters Arising**

*(Copy filed as SPC/081123/B)*

- 2.1 The Chair briefly addressed the points on the action log; noting that item 2 of the action log will be addressed by item 6 on the agenda.

**Students' Progress Committee Remit and Composition**

*(Copy filed as SPC/081123/C)*

- 3.1 Members of the Committee were invited to review the remit and composition document – noting that membership had been revised and a statement had been added with regard to academic discounting. Members noted that due to regulatory requirements academic discounting operates differently for students enrolled on regulated healthcare programmes. In terms of all other programmes, it was recognised that whilst there is not a limit on the number of applications for academic discounting, multiple applications would only be granted under exceptional circumstances. The Committee thereafter accepted the amendments.

**Reflections on Summer Progress 2023 (Debrief), including Progression Data by School**

*(Copy filed as SPC/081123/D)*

- 4.1 The Director of Academic Services and Online Education led the discussion on the reflections of the Summer Progress 2023 exercise; members were asked to consider the data, broken down by School, and consider what elements of the approach worked well and what elements might benefit from improvement. Discussions took place regarding the efficiency of the process and there was a general consensus that this approach had worked well.
- 4.2 It was noted that this approach allowed cases to be handled in a timely, consistent, and transparent manner. Members commented that it was beneficial to discuss the various cases with colleagues and noted that the very small number of successful appeals evidenced the strength of the decision-making process. It was discussed that it may be beneficial to monitor

the progress of some of the more exceptional cases to determine the long-term efficacy of the decision-making.

**4.3** In terms of areas of development, it was noted that some meetings involved large numbers of cases which can be quite demanding. It was agreed that caseloads should be considered when arranging meetings. It was noted that the absence of missing prescribed and pre-requisite courses complicates matters and, in some cases, regulations may not be specific enough. Members were advised that Registry uses specific codes to flag any students who are missing compulsory courses but will not be considered as part of the SPC process – these cases are then discussed with the School with a view to either changing degree pathway or granting pre-requisite waivers. There was a short discussion surrounding the feasibility of harvesting this data to determine if this is a wider concern and the implications for regulations. It was noted that this may be an area for further consideration by the Committee in conjunction with item 6 on the agenda.

**4.4** Members noted that only four cases were affected by the Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) – suggesting that the recent MAB action had a very minimal effect on this year's cases. In addition, it was noted that there were a higher proportion of students applying for SPC consideration from the Business School and SCNU. It was further clarified that it is a condition of progress for students in SCNU to reverse their ILETs shortfall prior to entering fourth year – it is understood that efforts are underway with the Language Centre to ensure this is not a recurring problem. It was noted that there were a very small proportion of Qatar students who are predominantly from the Business School and as such it was agreed that the Convener and Director of Academic Services & Online Education would meet with the Director of Studies in Qatar to discuss what may be leading to there being fewer cases in Qatar

**Action: GM/ST**

#### **Timelines for Summer SPC, including Proposal for a Hard Deadline**

**5.1** Members were asked for their views in terms of whether a hard deadline should be imposed with regards to the consideration of SPC cases. It was noted that, late cases can lead to appeals against SPC decisions extending well into term leading to students not having timely confirmation of their academic position for the coming academic year. It was agreed that unless there was a really strong reason/exceptional circumstances, a hard deadline at the end of welcome week would be reasonable. It was noted that this may not be suitable for those undertaking Medicine and Dentistry.

#### **Consideration Thresholds and Regulations**

**6.1** The Chair advised that their is proposed that data is collected to inform whether or not any changes to the regulations governing progression are required – particularly in terms of the 30 credit deficit agreement. It was noted that the data does not include those who have chosen to repeat the year automatically and there may be scope to include data on those who carried credits into their honours year. It was noted that progress codes may help inform this process.

**6.2** Members were informed that an increasingly wide variety of stakeholders and policy makers are seeking information on the University's attainment gaps – particularly within the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition. As a result, it was discussed that it may be beneficial to include data on protected characteristics and/or widen access students (subject to GDPR) in order to identify the areas which would benefit from enhancement.

**6.3** It was agreed that work would be undertaken to assimilate relevant data and that this would be brought to the next meeting along with any proposals for regulatory changes

**Action: GM/ST/AW**

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

**6.1** The Committee agreed that the date of the next meeting would be confirmed.