

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 22 June 2020

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Tim Baker, Abbe Brown, Colin Duncan, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dariya Koleva, Ondrej Kucerak, Kath Shennan and Steve Tucker with Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard, Tracey Innes, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Gillian Mackintosh, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Graeme Nixon and Richard Wells

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2020

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/001)

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to an extraordinary meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL).
- 1.2 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 21 May 2020 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/002)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the action log following the meeting of the Committee held on 21 May 2020. The Committee acknowledged that the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) was continuing to work, with input from a student intern, on a blended learning toolkit for students, pulling together existing resources and identifying (and addressing) any gaps. Members noted that all other actions arising from the meeting had been concluded and the meeting proceeded.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted that the priorities and principles for the return of both staff and students to campus had now been published. The Committee were informed that the Campus Planning Group (CPG) meets on a weekly basis to discuss issues related to a return to campus, such as tracking and tracing, temperature checking, and the wearing of face masks. Members of the Committee noted that Estates were currently working with the University's timetabling team regarding the creation of a timetable for on-campus teaching activity. The Chair informed the Committee the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of students would be emphasised in future communications to students regarding the 2020/21 academic year and a return to campus.

UPDATED RISK REGISTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/003)

- 4.1 Members of the Committee received an updated version of an excerpt of the University's Risk Register, listing risks specific to Learning and Teaching. Members of the Committee noted that versions of the Register previously considered by the Committee reflected the extraordinary circumstances associated with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the closure of the University's campuses. Members noted that this update version reflected a move to the implementation

of Blended Learning and the 2020/21 academic year. Members of the Committee were invited to raise any comments or proposed edits, in terms of the risks listed or the mitigations associated with them. No comments were raised.

- 4.2 Members of the Committee noted that, following the meeting, the document would be finalised and forwarded to Court for their information. The Committee agreed that the Register should continue as a standing item on future agendas, to facilitate regular discussion and, if appropriate, updates to be made.

UPDATE ON THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/004)

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received a paper, as circulated to the Senate, providing an update on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). The Committee acknowledged the ongoing work being undertaken by the group and its associated workstreams. Members of the Committee noted the publication of the principles and guidance for blended learning (minute point 16.1 below refers). Committee members were informed that the guidance would be updated and expanded upon, as appropriate and in response to feedback from colleagues across the University. The Chair expressed her thanks to all those engaged in the preparation and publication of the guidance.

POLICY REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF BLENDED LEARNING

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/005)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received an initial draft of a list of all the University's Teaching and Learning policies, derived from the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH). The Committee were informed that, prior to the impact of Covid-19, work had been underway to (i) identify and list each of the University's teaching policies, (ii) review each policy and ensure each remained fit for purpose, (iii) consider the layout of the AQH (in which the majority of these policies are listed) and (iv) ensure there was a timetable in place for policy review going forward (i.e. review each policy every 2-years). With the impact of Covid-19, however, while it was noted that this project would continue, immediate priority would be given to those policies which require review ahead of 2020/21 and in the context of Blended Learning.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee noted that work was underway to update and/or amending those policies and/or procedures which do not reflect a blended approach to learning in advance of the beginning of the 2020/21 year. It was noted that those documents requiring approval would follow to the next meeting of the UCTL for consideration.

Action: Clerk/Kath Shennan

REINSTATING THE C6/C7 PROCESS FOR SUMMER 2020 TEACHING

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/006)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper proposing the reinstatement of the C6/C7 student monitoring process for summer 2020 teaching. It was noted that the paper provided also contained proposed communications for Schools and those students who incur a C6 or a C7.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee noted the flexible and supportive approach being taken over the summer months and in the context of an off-campus teaching model. Members of the group commended the style of the proposed communications and the language used, which sought

engagement with students who might be experiencing difficulties. The Committee agreed the importance of emphasising to students the urgency of dealing with the situation and seeking the removal of C6s and/or C7s to allow them to continue with their studies. Members of the Committee noted that the webpages providing information on C6s could be usefully reviewed, including the forms provided by some Schools for students to return when they incur a C6.

- 7.3 Members of the Committee discussed the use of terms such as ‘monitoring’, ‘C6/C7’ and ‘class certificate’ and proposed that these be reconsidered as they lacked meaning for students. The Committee noted that these terms were embedded in degree regulations and while steps could be taken to change them, this could not be considered immediately.
- 7.4 Members of the Committee acknowledged a lack of consistency regarding the requirements of student engagement across the University. It was noted that such variety could reflect the nature of different disciplines and different types of assessment, however, that steps could be taken to introduce overarching principles for Schools/discipline to align themselves with.
- 7.5 Overall, the Committee was content to approve the reinstatement of the monitoring processes for the summer of 2020.

Action: Clerk

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES POST-COVID-19

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/007)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on assessment procedures post-Covid-19 and noted the four recommendations contained within it. Members of the Committee discussed each recommendation in turn. A short summary of each discussion is provided below.

- 8.2 **Recommendation 1:** Extra time adjustments in 48-hour exams are not required

Overall, members of the Committee were content with this proposal, noting that if students were provided a 48-hour window for the completion of an exam, this would be inclusive for all students. Members of the Committee noted that where timeframes are less, i.e. a more familiar 2-3-hour exam model, individuals would be permitted extra time. It was noted that the wording included in the paper could be refined to refer to reasonable adjustments. It was further noted that all documentation should be appropriately aligned to reflect the decision agreed for implementation in 2020/21.

- 8.3 **Recommendation 2:** Timed exams within a 48-hour window are allowable

Members of the Committee agreed with this recommendation, subject to reasonable adjustments being made, where appropriate.

- 8.4 **Recommendation 3:** For classification decisions, the no detriment procedures continue to apply to students who started honours (or equivalent) courses in 2019–20

Members of the Committee agreed that clarification should be undertaken to determine exactly which aspects of the no detriment procedures would be maintained for students who entered honours in 2019/20. Members of the Committee agreed that commitments to these students had already been made (such as the use of the Grade Point Average system *and* Grade Spectrum in calculating degree outcome) and these should be maintained and communicated to students.

- 8.5 **Recommendation 4:** Discontinue rounding up of course grades from AY2020-21 onwards for all students

Members of the Committee agreed with this recommendation, subject to its communication and explanation for this approach to all students in line with the decision that had been taken in February 2020 when the concerns around communications to students and staff on this issue had been identified.

Action: Clerk/Abbe Brown/Kath Shennan

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/008)

- 9.1 Members of the Committee received the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (EDIA) for the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG) and a summary of the feedback received from the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). Members noted that this information was now available online [here](#).

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND BLENDED LEARNING

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/009)

- 10.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on Student Engagement and Blended Learning. The Committee noted that a group had been established to look in detail at student engagement in 2020/21 and beyond and had begun to consider issues pertaining to engagement in an online environment, C7 status and the loss of student access to MyAberdeen, IT system and existing University regulations. It was noted that further updates on work in this regard would follow to the next meeting of the UCTL.

Action: Clerk/Abbe Brown/Kath Shennan

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/010)

- 11.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper on inclusivity and accessibility and the regulations with which the University must comply. Members of the UCTL were encouraged to share with colleagues' details of the information and support which is available to meet the legal obligations in a pragmatic manner, to deliver an enhanced student experience and to reflect the inclusion goal in the University 2040 strategy.

TIMETABLING PRINCIPLES

- 12.1 Members of the Committee noted the consultation (available [here](#)) being undertaken on behalf of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group, to obtain feedback from staff and students in developing principles for timetabling. Members of the Committee noted that the agreed principles would be used to guide the development of the teaching timetable for academic year 2020/21 in the context of blended learning due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT RECOGNITION REVIEW

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/015)

- 13.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on the proposed Enhancement Transcript recognition review. Members of the UCTL agreed to the proposals contained within the paper and the undertaking of a review of the process, which had been in place without review since 2014. Members of the Committee noted that required IT or Student Record changes may not be possible in the short term.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 5 August at 2.30pm in Microsoft Teams.

DEADLINE FOR THE RETURN OF EXAM RESULTS

- 15.1 In order to take account of the later term start date in September, the Committee approved an amendment to the deadline for return of exam results as below:

September Start Postgraduate Taught programmes by Friday 6 November 2020 (changed from 23 October)

With the ongoing Covid-19 situation, it is anticipated currently, that in-person graduation ceremonies will not take place as planned during the week commencing Monday 23 November 2020 and instead these will take place in-absentia.

MYCURRICULUM OPENING TIMES

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/012)

- 15.2 Members of the Committee approved the proposed dates for the opening of MyCurriculum to various cohorts of students.

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDANCE FOR BLENDED LEARNING

- 16.1 Members of the Committee noted the principles and guidance for Blended Learning for the delivery of teaching in academic year 2020/21 available [here](#).

PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES FOR STUDENT RETURN TO CAMPUS

(copy filed as UCTL/220620/013)

- 16.2 Members of the Committee noted the principles and priorities which apply to the return of students to campus.

MINUTES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

- 16.3 Members of the Committee noted the minutes from the sub-committees of the UCTL, as follows:

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|-------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (i) | Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) | <i>(UCTL/220620/014a)</i> |
| (ii) | Postgraduate Taught Committee (PGTC) | <i>(UCTL/220620/014b)</i> |
| (iii) | Undergraduate Committee (UGC) | <i>(UCTL/220620/014c)</i> |

BLENDED LEARNING TASK AND FINISH GROUP (BLITFG)

16.4 Members of the Committee noted the agendas and minutes of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG), available on the UCTL webpages [here](#).