

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 7 October 2020

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), John Barrow, Abbe Brown, Hazel Hutchison, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, Graeme Nixon, Kath Shennan, Steve Tucker and Richard Wells with Rachael Bernard, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Gillian Mackintosh, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Tim Baker, Cecilia Wallback, and Simon Bains

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2020

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/001a)

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) of the 2020/21 academic year.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 7 August 2020 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/001b)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the action log following the meeting of the Committee held on 7 August 2020. All actions were noted as complete or in-progress.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings. No specific concerns were raised with regards Health, Safety and Wellbeing and the meeting proceeded.

UPDATED RISK REGISTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/002)

- 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. The Committee considered each risk in turn. Members of the Committee acknowledged that both the Student Experience and the Staff Experience were categories covered elsewhere in the Register, relevant to Learning and Teaching. Members of the Committee agreed that these categories should be cross-referenced. The Committee further agreed the addition of self-isolating students as a risk to the Learning and Teaching section of the Register.

Action: Chair/Clerk

UPDATE ON THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/003)

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received a paper providing an update on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). Members noted that the paper would be

forwarded to the Senate, as part of the update from the UCTL, for discussion. Members of the Committee agreed to remove 'i.e. Blended Learning' from section 4.2.5.

Action: Clerk

SECOND HALF SESSION UPDATE

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/004)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received the paper and an associated short presentation on the delivery of teaching in the Second half session of 2020/21, in light of the impact of Covid-19. Members agreed the importance of approving a teaching model for both the second half session and summer teaching and of ensuring flexibility in approaches to teaching, whether future developments allowed for increased on campus provision, or the need to move entirely online should circumstances require.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed blended learning versus teaching entirely online. The Committee agreed blended learning was the appropriate course of action, in recognition of the fact that September start students had already begun their studies in that way and January starts were expecting this model. The Committee further noted that blended learning was consistent with Scottish Government guidance and expectations. Members of the Committee agreed that its design allowed for the ability to flex teaching to circumstances, as the impact of Covid-19 might further require. The wellbeing of students was identified as a key area that is, in part, addressed through a blended approach that enables some on campus delivery.
- 6.3 Members of the Committee noted that the evaluation of the blended learning model was ongoing. It was noted that support for developing courses for blended learning would be as it had been for the first half session, via online resources and by the Centre for Academic Development (CAD).
- 6.4 Members of the Committee were content to approve the paper and its recommendations, making clear that the proposal should apply to the remainder of the academic year in full and not the second half session alone. It was agreed that the paper would be forwarded to the Senate for further discussion and approval with the comments and feedback as part of that discussion.

Action: Chair/Clerk

- 6.5 The Committee discussed the possibility of amending second half session term dates, to reflect the move to a blended learning approach and the work staff would be required to undertake, in terms of preparation. The Committee considered initial points including the fact that start dates had been published to students and that that this would need to be taken into consideration. Members of the Committee agreed to further explore possibilities in this regard.

Action: Chair/Gillian Mackintosh

MONITORING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/005)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on Monitoring Student Engagement in the context of the blended environment. Members noted that, further discussions had remained ongoing as to whether, on receipt of C7, students should have their access to MyAberdeen maintained. Members noted that, currently, a link between the Student Record System (SRS) and MyAberdeen ensures access is automatically disabled and reinstated only at the point of

an appeal against the C7 being lodged and/or a C7 being removed. Members of the UCTL considered whether during the 2020/21 academic year, it would be appropriate for all students to retain access to MyAberdeen on receipt of a C7. Members noted that there were strongly held arguments on both sides: in essence, that the removal of access to MyAberdeen is what can trigger student re-engagement with the counter view that the removal of access can increase student isolation.

- 7.2 Members of the Committee considered the impact on policy, students and staff resource in making significant amendments to existing processes, particularly in recognition of conflicting opinions amongst School staff. Members of the Committee noted that while it was important to ensure students maintained the ability to contact staff with ease, allowing students to maintain access would require intervention to ensure they did not continue with the course, including the submission of assessment, without ensuring they were aware of their position.
- 7.3 The Committee agreed with recommendation 2 as outlined in the paper, allowing reinstatement to MyAberdeen at the point at which a student engages by any means with the School. Members of the Committee agreed to investigate fuller policy changes in respect of monitoring over the course of the academic year.

Action: Kath Shennan/Clerk

EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACTIVITY FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21 AND BEYOND

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/006)

- 8.1 Members of the UCTL received the paper on employability and entrepreneurship activity for 2020/21, noting the identified action areas as (a) development of an employability and entrepreneurship vision and framework aligned to the Aberdeen 2040 strategic plan, (b) a targeted approach to planning employability and careers provision (a) a work placement and work-based learning strategy and (d) Careers and Employability Service development for blended 2020 delivery and beyond.
- 8.2 Members of the Committee expressed support for the paper and the work ongoing in respect of employability and entrepreneurship. Members of the Committee discussed the possibility of including existing work-related learning courses and apprenticeship programmes in the work being undertaken in relation to work placement and work-based learning provision. It was noted that while the paper made specific reference to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, postgraduate research students could also be engaged. It was agreed that discussions would be held with the Graduate School in this regard.

Action: Tracey Innes/John Barrow/Graeme Nixon

UPDATE ON THE ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/007)

- 9.1 Members of the Committee considered the paper on the Enhanced Transcript and the request that AUSA awards, including Kings awards, Colours Awards and Blues awards, be recorded as 'recognised activities' on the Enhanced Transcript from 2020-21. Members of the Committee agreed the appropriateness of this course of action.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 12 October 2020 at 2pm by way of Microsoft Teams.

BLENDED LEARNING TASK AND FINISH GROUP (BLITFG)

- 11.1 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](#).

TERM DATES 2021/22

- 11.2 Members of the Committee noted that term dates for 2021/22 would follow for consideration and approval, by way of circulation.

SUSTAINED STUDY PROPOSAL

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/008)

- 11.3 Members of the Committee noted a new Sustained Study route in Counselling Skills, approved for introduction in 2020/21 by way of Chair's action.

ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW OF QUALITY, 2019/2020

(copy filed as UCTL/071020/009)

- 11.4 Members of the Committee noted the Annual Report on Institution-led Review of Quality for 2019/20, approved for submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) by way of Chair's action.