

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**  
**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Minute of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 14 October 2020

*Present:* Gillian Mackintosh (Chair), Abbe Brown, Hazel Hutchison, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, Kath Shennan, and Richard Wells with Rachael Bernard, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Mary Pryor and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

*Apologies:* Tim Baker, John Barrow, Graeme Nixon, Ruth Taylor, Steve Tucker, Simon Bains and Patricia Spence

**START DATE AND STRUCTURE:**  
**SECOND HALF SESSION 2020/21 AND FIRST HALF-SESSION 2021/22**

*(copy filed as UCTL/141020/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting, thanking members of the UCTL for their attendance at an extraordinary meeting of the Committee. Members of the Committee noted that the meeting had been scheduled to discuss only one item, the start date and structure of the second half session of 2020/21 and the first half session of 2021/22.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee received the paper for discussion, noting that it had been considered at a meeting of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and a joint meeting of the Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Committees prior to UCTL. The Committee noted that, if approved by the UCTL, the paper would follow to the Senate for final approval.
- 1.3 The Committee noted the key proposals set out in the paper as follows:
  - The change of the start date of the Second half session, from Monday 18 To Monday 25 January 2021;
  - A flexible 13-week teaching/assessment period during the second half session;
  - The move of the marking deadline for the second half-session by one week, to Friday 11 June;
  - The move of Graduation week by one week, to commence on Monday 21 June 2021;
  - A three-week resit period commencing on Monday 12 July, using alternative assessment, with results returned by Friday 20 August 2021;
  - A two-week delay to the start of the first half session of 2021/22 and continued use of alternative assessment in place of a formal exam diet in the first half-session of 2021/22.
- 1.4 Members of the Committee noted that discussions amongst members of the UG and PGT Committees had been positive, with the following amendments to the paper being proposed:
  - That dates for late registration be clarified, as being one sixth of teaching on a course and not a blanket period of two weeks, to take account of six-week courses;
  - That the additional week identified within the second half session be defined as 'non-teaching' and therefore allowing it to be used for any other purpose, such as assessment;
  - Recognition of teaching models, particularly across PGT programmes, which include teaching over the Easter break, not currently reflected in published University term dates.

- 1.5 Members also noted feedback from the UG and PGT Committees regarding:
- Ensuring support is available to students, particularly international students, who will be forced to stay in Aberdeen over the Christmas break. It was acknowledged that work was ongoing with regard how students staying in Hillhead could be supported during this time;
  - Aligning the University's Easter holidays with those of the Aberdeen City and Shire Schools.
- 1.6 Members of the UCTL noted, during the last review of the academic year structure, work had been undertaken to try to align University and School holidays. Members noted that this was achieved where possible, but as Easter moves annually, it had been impossible to achieve a model to guarantee it.
- 1.7 With regard late-registration, members of the Committee noted that students could be in a better position to join courses late, as course materials to allow them to catch up, were available online. Members of the Committee urged caution, however, at permitting varying start dates for programmes. It was noted that the blended approach to learning could enable students to join online prior to their arrival in Aberdeen, preventing late registration.
- 1.8 Regarding students staying in Aberdeen or halls of residence over Christmas, members of the UCTL noted that this was not a new circumstance but that it may prove more challenging this year.
- 1.9 Members of the Committee noted that A-level result dates had now been published, further requiring the later start date for the 2021/22 academic year.
- 1.10 Overall, the Committee was content to approval the proposals contained within the paper and to forward to the Senate for further consideration and final approval.

**Action: Clerk**