

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

Minute of the Meeting held on 28 April 2020

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

*Apologies:* Dariya Koleva, Graeme Nixon, Richard Wells and Gillian Mackintosh

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2020**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The Chair extended her thanks to all members of the Committee for their efforts in a range of activities ongoing to ensure students can continue with their Education at this extraordinary time.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee recommended the approval of the minute of the meeting held on 28 February 2020 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

**MATTERS ARISING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/002)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the action log following the meeting of the Committee held on 28 February 2020. The Committee discussed the following points with regards to the actions which remain open:

**Minute point 2.1/3.6:** Members of the Committee noted that discussions regarding the remit and composition of the UCTL would be resumed in the new academic year. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of stability at the current time and that the existing composition should be maintained for the time being. Members of the Committee, however, welcomed Hazel Hutchison and Alison Jenkinson as additional members of the Committee.

**Minute point 5.5:** Members of the Committee noted that the paper on the Late Submission of Assessment was currently on hold, as a consequence of other priorities. Members of the Committee discussed that work on this policy would restart at an appropriate time, most likely in the new academic year.

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

- 3.1 No issues relating to Health, Safety and Wellbeing were raised and the meeting proceeded.

## **DEVOLVED APPROVAL POWERS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/003)*

- 4.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper on Devolved Approval Powers during the impact of COVID-19 and the actions to approve changes to assessment taken by the Chair, under these Senate agreed procedures. The Chair thanked all those who engaged in discussion of the changes to the procedures associated with the assessment of students at all levels. It was noted that the decisions would be reported to the Senate.

**Action: Clerk to Senate**

## **RISK ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/004)*

- 5.1 The Committee received the Risk Assessment for Learning and Teaching, during the impact of COVID-19. The chair noted that the register provide was an extract of a much larger risk register.

- 5.2 Members of the Committee agreed to move the information regarding Reading Lists to a more suitable section (section 2.7).

**Action: Clerk/Chair**

- 5.3 Members of the Committee sought clarification of how students required to undertake a number of resits as a consequence of ill health or other mitigating circumstances would receive support. The Committee were reassured that the Students' Progress Committee (SPC) would be considering all students who fail to achieve the requirements for progression and doing so on a case by case and flexible basis.

- 5.4 Members of the Committee sought clarification regarding the University engaging in lobbying for the cessation of the NSS for a year. Members of the Committee were informed that the NSS would be going ahead but that lobbying was focused on whether outcomes should inform League Tables.

- 5.5 The Committee discussed the work of the Retention Task Force with regards to retention of students. The Committee noted that the Retention Task Force was meeting regularly and trying to identify and share good practices for online learning transition and for engaging students between now and the start of the academic year. Members of the Committee agreed that the Task Force will work closely with the Dean for Student Support and others so as to ensure a coherent approach to communications and activities.

- 5.6 Members of the Committee discussed work being undertaken in the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy (DHP) to proactively engage with students to ensure they can continue to work and to transition well to the next programme year. The Committee noted that there was already some evidence available to suggest that some students are already concerned about the length of time away from study and their possible revision needs.

- 5.7 The Committee discussed the programme of events for May/June in terms of what current students can engage in over the summer and noted the importance of this being circulated widely. Members of the Committee suggested the use of the Retention Task Force and Personal Tutors as means of supporting the communication of this information.

- 5.8 A sub-group of the Committee agreed to meet to discuss in further detail how best to capture and communicate some of the activity ongoing to support students at this time.

**Action: Abbe Brown/Hazel Hutchison**

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/005)*

- 6.1 Members of the Committee discussed the paper, providing a summary of the steps taken to bring about inclusion in the altered assessment regimes introduced in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Members of the Committee noted the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in all aspects of the work being undertaken by the University and in the preparations for the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year.

### **'WHAT NEXT?' COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/006)*

- 7.1 The UCTL received the proposed strategy of communications to undergraduate students over the final weeks of the academic year and beyond, reminding them of the various ways in which the University can continue to support them after graduation or over the summer break.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee asked whether the strategy would include targeting Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students. The Committee were informed that while the document was primarily focussed on undergraduate students, it could be expanded. Members of the Committee offered their support in doing so.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee agreed the importance of a group considering the action plan as provided in the document and the communications to be sent to a variety of audiences. The Committee noted that the Student Recruitment Committee (SRC) and Alumni would also be engaged in this process.

### **GUIDANCE FOR EXAMS OFFICERS AND EXTERNAL EXAMINERS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/007)*

- 8.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing guidance for Exams Officers and External Examiners during the impact of COVID-19. Members of the Committee discussed the work being undertaken to communicate with External Examiners and internal Exams Officers in respect of the agreed procedures for assessment during the impact of COVID-19. In particular, the Committee welcomed the flowchart provided as a useful tool.
- 8.2 Members of the Committee also noted the work being undertaken by Ian Robotham and his team to provide systems support to Schools when calculating degree outcomes. The Committee noted thanks to Ian and his team for the very positive solutions which had been demonstrated to staff.

### **ON-DEMAND LEARNING MARKETING STRATEGY UPDATE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/008)*

- 9.1 Members of the Committee discussed the updated 2020 marketing strategy for on-demand learning. The Committee discussed the strategy as an important and extensive piece of work.

- 9.2 Members of the Committee suggested the alignment of the work in the paper with the ‘What Next?’ communication strategy (*section 7 above refers*). The importance of liaising with alumni in this regard was also noted. Members of the Committee discussed that the paper would also be considered by the SRC at its forthcoming meeting.

**Action: Tracey Innes/Gillian Mackintosh**

#### **ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/21 PLANNING**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/009)*

- 10.1 Members of the Committee received the papers on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG), including its terms of reference (which remain subject to change), composition and an introductory paper. Members of the Committee noted that the BLITFG was meeting weekly.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that the BLITFG would be governed by the UCTL and would report to it regularly. Members noted that extraordinary meetings of the UCTL had been scheduled and that others may be required at short notice. Members of the Committee discussed that a paper providing further information of the governance of the BLITFG would follow by way of circulation.

**Action: Clerk**

- 10.3 Members of the Committee received an update on the initial work of the BLITFG and the establishment of workstreams to take forward planning for academic year 2020/21. The Committee were informed that Mike Whyment would project manage the work of the group and that Gillian Mackintosh and Patricia Spence were central to the initial work taking place in relation to determining the scope and scale of the task in each School. Members of the UCTL noted that updates would follow regularly.
- 10.4 Members of the Committee noted that the BLITFG formed part of a group of Task and Finish Groups seeking to address the University’s response to COVID-19 in relation to the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year. The Committee noted the importance of discussions between the groups as planning continues.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 11.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 21 May 2020 at 2pm, in Microsoft Teams.

#### **CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/010)*

- 12.1 The Committee approved, for its part, the draft Resolution Changes in ‘Regulations for Various Degrees’. The Resolution enacts changes in degree regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

## **RESITS FOR PG PROJECTS AND DISSERTATIONS**

*(copy filed UCTL/280420/011)*

- 12.2 Members of Committee approved the proposal and amendments to the regulations and the Code of Practice on Assessment. The Committee also approved the proposal that students be informed of a failed dissertation/project prior to confirmation at the exam board, in order for them to begin revising their work as soon as possible.

## **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) CODE OF PRACTICE**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/012)*

- 12.3 The Committee approved the proposed changes to the PGR Code of Practice.

## **REMOVAL OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) INITIAL SKILLS AUDIT**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/013)*

- 12.4 The Committee approved recommendation from the PGR and Quality Assurance committees to remove the requirement for new PGR students to complete an ISA (except those in receipt of UKRI funding) from Academic Year 2020/21 and to approve wording of a required regulation change.

## **POSTGRADUATE DEGREE REGULATION CHANGES (COVID-19)**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/014)*

- 12.5 The Committee approved, for its part, the proposed regulatory changes, as approved by the QAC, that are required to manage Research Degree Awards in light of changed working practices and disruption as a direct result of Covid-19.

## **ASSESSMENT AT ALL LEVELS**

*(copy filed as UCTL/280420/015)*

- 13.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper, comprising information on the agreed approach to assessment across all levels of study as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19. The paper includes information categorised as follows:

- (i) Approaches to Assessment at Levels 1 and 2
- (ii) Assessment at Levels 3, 4 and 5: No Detriment Procedures
- (iii) Assessment and Graduation Dates in 2020 and early 2021
- (iv) School of Medicine Approach

## **ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) ONE YEAR FOLLOW-UP REPORT**

- 13.2 Members of the Committee noted the publication of the University's ELIR one year follow up report, on the QAA website [here](#).

## **AOCB**

- 14.1 Colin Duncan, on behalf of the University Court, thanked all members of the Committee for the ongoing work for the student body at this time.