

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

Minute of the Meeting held on 21 May 2020

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Tim Baker, Abbe Brown, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dariya Koleva, Ondrej Kucerak, Graeme Nixon, 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: Colin Duncan and Richard Wells

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2020

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/001)

- 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 28 April 2020 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/002)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the action log following the meeting of the Committee held on 28 April 2020. The Committee received an update on the progress of action point 9.2, noting that discussions between colleagues in the Careers Service and the Online Team were ongoing regarding the inclusion of online as part of the 'What Next?' communication strategy. Members of the Committee agreed that this action point could therefore be marked as complete.
- 2.2 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 agreed that, as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19, never before had there been such a focus on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff and students and such a large amount of work being undertaken to ensure it. Members noted the inclusion of principles and priorities for the return of students to campus as part of the paper on the Implications of a Blended Learning approach (*section 5 below further refers*) and the work of the [Campus Planning Group](#) in the development of principles and priorities for staff. No further issues relating to Health, Safety and Wellbeing were raised and the meeting proceeded.

UPDATE ON THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/003)

- 4.1 Members of the Committee received a paper providing an update on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). Members noted that the Group's Terms of Reference and Membership had now been finalised, following the addition of Union and HR

representation. The Committee noted that the Group's action plan was now available on the BLITFG webpage and that, associated with the action plan, a number of workstreams had been put in place.

- 4.2 Members of the Committee received an update on the work of the Scope and Scale workstream, noting that it's work was almost complete following meetings with each School. Members were informed that each School had been asked to prepare a project scope, scale and timeline with support from project managers and that these were now being finalised with the expectation that the BLITFG would receive an update on the completed versions at their next meeting.
- 4.3 Members of the Committee noted that the BLITFG's communication strategy (collaborate, consult, disseminate) was being discussed by a small group, with the intention that it be completed by Friday 29 May. Members further noted that the Chair had led a successful open session providing an update on Blended Learning, with over 500 attendees, on Monday 11 May. The UCTL noted that the questions and comments received at the initial session had been very helpful to the BLITFG. A second session, at which the Chair would be joined by Dariya Koleva, AUSA Education Officer, would be held on Tuesday 26 May.
- 4.4 Members of the Committee noted the papers listed within the update for their consideration at this meeting (*sections 5 to 9 below refer*), at future meetings and/or by way of circulation. Members of the Committee agreed that papers could be considered by circulation in order to support the consideration and approval of papers as required, in as swift a manner as possible.

IMPLICATIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING FOR THE DELIVERY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/21

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/004)

- 5.1 The Chair introduced the paper on the Implications of Blended Learning for the Delivery of Teaching and Learning in 2020/21. Members of the Committee noted the purpose of the paper and the key issues contained within it as follows:
 - The definition of Blended Learning;
 - The principles and priorities for the return of students to campus;
 - The implications of Blended Learning for students and, in particular, the purpose of on campus experiences should these become possible.

Members of the Committee were informed that the paper had, to date, been considered by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and BLITFG. The Chair emphasised to the Committee that the draft communication for students (appendix 4 to the paper refers) remained in very draft form, pending its discussion and development with the University's communications team. It was noted that it was envisaged communications with returning students would be undertaken first and in advance of communications to new students.

- 5.2 Members of the Committee discussed a proposal from the SMT that the University articulate a minimum number of hours during which students can expect to be on campus. The Committee agreed that this approach was not advisable, particularly as the University had not previously published guidance in this regard. Members of the Committee noted that feedback received from a small number of students suggested students may not wish to return to live in Aberdeen if an on-campus experience is not necessary or teaching can be delivered, in its entirety, online. The Chair confirmed that the planned approach to communications would

focus on the on-campus experience, if it can be offered. Members of the Committee noted the importance of being mindful of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) legislation in ensuring the University is delivering on what it advertises to students.

- 5.3 Members of the Committee considered the draft Principles and Priorities for the Return of Students to Campus (*appendix 1 to the paper refers*). Members agreed that the draft was reasonable and appropriate, subject to:
- the differentiation between Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students;
 - an amendment to the wording to reflect that library access can refer to (i) access to the collection of materials and/or (ii) access to study space. The Committee agreed the importance of ensuring the paper articulates the differences between these.

GUIDANCE FOR BLENDED LEARNING

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/005)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update in regard to the development of Guidance for Blended Learning. The Committee noted the intention of the paper and its associated principles and toolkit, to support colleagues in making the transition from the delivery of teaching in an on-campus environment to a Blended approach to delivery.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee noted the huge amount of work undertaken to prepare the guidance and it was welcomed by those present. In particular, members of the Committee stated the importance of the development of the dedicated website for resources (*section 3.5 of the paper refers*) and the value this would have for staff. The development of 'tools for teaching' was also noted as hugely beneficial for staff.
- 6.3 Members of the Committee suggested that it may also be both helpful and appropriate to develop similar resources for students, to support them in understanding the tools available to support their learning. The Committee noted that there were some documents in place already, but that an exercise would be undertaken to identify where there may be gaps in the information available. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of Induction and Course and/or Programme Handbooks in also providing information of this nature.
- Action: Patricia Spence**
- 6.4 The Committee reiterated their thanks to the team engaged in the development of the guidance document. Members noted that, subject to the creation of the web content associated with the proposal, publication was expected by Friday 29 May.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

- 7.1 Members of the Committee noted the update on the communications strategy for the implementation of Blended Learning (*section 4.3 above further refers*).

ITEMS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE UCTL AT THE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 22 JUNE 2020

- 8.1 Members of the Committee noted the following items which will be considered in greater detail at the next meeting of the Committee:
- (i) Framework for the Delivery of Blended Learning at the University of Aberdeen

- (ii) Policies and Procedures: Proposed Changes for Blended Learning
- (iii) No Detriment Procedures 2020/21

UPDATED RISK REGISTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/006)

- 9.1 The Committee received the updated Risk Register for Learning and Teaching, during the impact of COVID-19. It was noted that this had been circulated to the Committee late and any comments on it were invited by way of email by Thursday 28 May. The Committee noted that the register would return to each meeting of the UCTL and that any updates to the section for which the Committee has oversight, should be returned to the Chair.

Action: Clerk/Committee

READING LIST PROJECT

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/007)

- 10.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on the Reading List Service, designed to support the delivery of Blended Learning and the wider online environment. Members of the Committee noted that the University was unusual in that it did not have a Reading List service and that such a service is, increasingly, an expectation of students. The Committee were updated that the adoption of the new Library Management System (LMS) had provided the opportunity for the University to provide this service.
- 10.2 Members of the Committee noted that, following approval by the Senior Management Team (SMT, work was underway to develop a centralised reading list to provide students with easy access to information, available within MyAberdeen and integrated with course materials. The Committee noted that, if possible, content would also be made available to offer holders.
- 10.3 The Committee noted that the project sought to request reading lists for all courses expected to run in the first half session of 2020/21 and that, where possible, the core/essential reading materials would be made available in digital form. The Committee were informed that this may be complicated by the availability of materials in digital form but that the project would investigate, cost, and where possible, procure additional digital content where material would be otherwise unavailable or only be available in print. The Committee noted that the project would work closely with academics in this regard.
- 10.4 Members of the Committee noted that library colleagues were working very hard to procure and scan texts and that the next stage would be to engage with the academic colleagues and obtain reading lists. The Committee noted that as a consequence of the scale of the project, it might be appropriate to ask academics to identify 2 or 3 key texts as essential in the first instance, with more being added as time and resource permits. Members of the Committee confirmed they were happy with the approach proposed in the paper and the progression of the project. The integration of the service as resource in the Blended Learning Guidance was proposed.

Action: Chair/Simon Bains

Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink/Simon Bains

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW (ITR) DURING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/008)

11.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on Internal Teaching Review (ITR) during the impact of COVID-19. Members of the Committee were specifically asked to approve the following actions:

- (i) That the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) be informed that the University will exceed the maximum 6 years between reviews for the Schools of Law, Natural and Computing Science and the discipline of Medical Sciences as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19;
- (ii) That a small group be established, comprised of members of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to consider the options open to the University in adapting the processes for ITR to enable an online or blended approach to review to enable reviews to recommence.

The Committee were content to approve the proposals.

Action: Clerk/Kath Shennan

QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) ACTIONS TAKEN AND IN PROGRESS AS A RESULT OF COVID-19

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/009)

12.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the Quality Assurance (QA) actions taken and in progress as a result of the impact of COVID-19. Overall, the Committee was content with the summary as provided within the paper.

12.2 It was noted, however, that amongst those actions to be taken was the External Examiner and Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) consideration of amendments to courses as a consequence of move to a Blended Learning approach to delivery. Members of the Committee sought clarity on the extent to which the QAC would need to consider changes to courses. It was noted that consideration would primarily concern changes to assessment. Clarity was also sought with regard to the proposal that External Examiners be asked to consider and approve all continuous assessment and not only exam papers and whether this would be extended beyond the impact of COVID-19. It was confirmed that this change would be permanent. Members of the Committee agreed that a flowchart, listing how, when and by who changes would be considered should be prepared.

Action: Clerk/Kath Shennan

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday 22 June 2020 at 2pm, in Microsoft Teams.

ANNUAL COURSE AND ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

(copy filed as UCTL/210520/010)

14.1 Members of the Committee approved the attached paper on proposed revisions to the Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR) processes.

BLENDED LEARNING TASK AND FINISH GROUP (BLITFG)

- 15.1 Members of the Committee noted the agendas and minutes of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG), were now available on the UCTL webpages.

UPDATE ON THE CURRENT QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA) ENHANCEMENT THEME

- 15.2 Members of the Committee are noted the recent decision by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) with regards to the current Enhancement Theme, Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience. The QAA are offering an extension to the institutional reporting deadlines for the Theme and will now be seeking end of Theme/end of year 3 institutional reports by the 30 October 2020. Members of the Committee also noted that an Update on the University's engagement with the Enhancement Theme will follow to a future meeting.