

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP/UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE
ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minute of the Meeting held on 9 March 2021

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Alfred Akisanya, John Barrow, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Julie Bray, Liz Curtis, Javier Gonzaleez Cuervos, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Hazel Hutchison, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, David McCausland, Tim Mighall, Colin North, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Kath Shennan and Susan Stokeld with Rachael Bernard, Sarah Duncan, Gillian Mackintosh, Fiona Ritchie, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Malcolm Harvey, Gerry Hough, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, David Muirhead, Graeme Nixon, Rona Patey, Steve Tucker, Richard Wells and Russell Williams

BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

UPDATE ON THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UCTL/030321/001a)

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and representatives of the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG). Members noted that they were content to approve the minutes of the BLITFG held on 21 January 2021. Members of the Committee note that all actions associated with the BLITFG were now complete. The Chair informed the Committee that the work of BLITFG would now be absorbed into UCTL minutes and actions.

BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

(copy filed as UCTL/030321/001b)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the updated Blended Implementation Action Plan and acknowledged that further actions had been closed since last consideration. Members of the Committee were informed that actions 4.1 and 4.2, regarding Academic Feedback and Integrity, remained in-progress with updates expected shortly.

Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink/Kath Shennan

- 2.2 Members of the Committee received an update on Captioning (actions 9.1 and 9.2 refer). The Committee noted that, at a recent meeting of the Captioning review group, it had been noted that to date in the second half session, over 13 000 videos had been created and over 60% of these had captions. The committee noted the significant improvement on captioning in the second half session in comparison to a lower level of compliance during the first half session. Members of the Committee noted ongoing developments with regard captioning, including the publication of JISC guidance in this regard. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of Captioning and that a paper on the University's progress with compliance in this regard should follow to the next meeting of the UCTL, on 14 April 2021.

Action: Pam Mclean

UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020/21

- 3.1 Members of the Committee received an update on Teaching and Assessment for the remainder of 2020/21. The Committee noted that there were some students on campus (e.g. students registered on healthcare programmes) including those whose attendance had been approved to ensure their studies could be completed ahead of their expected graduation date. Members of the Committee noted that the list of those permitted to be on campus as exceptions had recently been extended following a recent meeting of the Campus Planning Group (CPG). It was noted that Schools impacted by these recent approvals would be contacted directly.
- 3.2 Members of the Committee noted that discussions regarding the opportunities for PGT students to return over the summer months, would take place at an appropriate point and when further guidance is available from Scottish Government.
- 3.3 Members of the Committee were informed that, overall, teaching continued to go well and that students had raised few concerns. Where concerns had been raised by students (e.g. clarity on extensions) these had been resolved quickly through discussions with the BLITFG School leads.

PREPARATION FOR RETURN TO UNIVERSITY FOR THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR, INCLUDING TRANSITION FOR NEW STARTS

(copy filed as UCTL/030321/002)

- 4.1 Members of the Committee received an update on work ongoing with regards to scenario planning for the 2021/22 academic year. The Committee noted that a number of scenarios in relation to the external context had been considered by the Senior Management Team (SMT). The Committee noted that the Chair and Director of Online Education and Academic Services were currently undertaking visits to each School, to begin initial conversations as to what the 2021/22 academic year might look like. It was impressed upon the Committee that these conversations were intended to only begin conversations in this regard.
- 4.2 Members of the Committee received the paper providing a summary of current activity and developments planned for enhancing student transition to academic year 2021/22. The Committee noted that ongoing activities included the development of communication strategies, a Widening Access Online Summer School/Bridging Programme, online orientation and student transition focussed webpages. Suggestions for additional activities were welcomed from the Committee.
- 4.3 Members of the Committee were also informed of work being led by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to draw on experience and expertise across the sector in supporting transitions into higher education. The Committee noted that the QAA had prepared a mural to which each University was asked to contribute. Members were informed that further information on the mural would be circulated by email.

Action: Clerk
- 4.4 The Committee discussed the development of the Widening Access Online Summer School and Bridging programme as a means of identifying and addressing gaps in all incoming student's knowledge/skill base. It was noted that this could include maths skills. Action: Alison Jenkinson?

- 4.5 Members of the Committee note the importance of supporting the transition of current students to their next programme year. Members of the Committee discussed that some students (e.g. those currently in their first year) may have only experienced Covid-19 impacted study. The Committee agreed the importance of identifying activities to support current students in addition to new students. It was agreed that further discussion of this area would take place at the meeting scheduled for 14 April 2021.

Action: Abbe Brown

UPDATE ON THE EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

(copy filed as UCTL/030321/003)

- 5.1 Members of the Committee noted that work to evaluate blended learning remained ongoing, with focus groups with students being held to gauge the impact of blended learning on the student experience. The Committee noted the volume of work being undertaken. They were further informed that a staff survey would be issued following the conclusion of the second half session.
- 5.2 Members of the committee noted the action plan arising from staff focus groups and student feedback and, in particular, the updates provided as at 1 March 2021.

UPDATE ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/004)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received the update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2021

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/005a)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/005b)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2021. All actions were noted as complete.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 9.1 Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings, available [here](#). Members of the Committee noted that with regard to the return of students to campus (where return has been categorised as essential) specific health and safety guidance, impacting on the timings of teaching sessions etc. would be discussed with Schools.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE STRUCTURE UPDATE

- 10.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the creation of the University Education Committee (UEC) and other associated Committee structure changes. The Committee noted that the structure changes were currently pending final approval from the University Court.

Members of the Committee were informed that, should the revised structure be approved, implementation of the UEC and its sub-committees would follow as soon as possible.

Action: Chair/Clerk

UPDATED RISK REGISTER FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/006)

- 11.1 The Committee received the updated Risk Register for Learning and Teaching, during the ongoing impact of Covid-19. Members of the Committee were invited to return any comments on the register to the Chair.

PROTECTION FROM DISADVANTAGE: COMPREHENSIVE MEASURES FOR FAIR AND CONSISTENT ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/007)

- 12.1 The Committee received the updated paper on Comprehensive Measures for Fair and Consistent assessment in the Context of Covid-19. Members of the Committee noted that following consideration of the paper for the purposes of providing an academic view at a meeting of the UCTL (held on 22 February 2021) and at meetings of the Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Quality Assurance Committees and the Senate, the paper had been edited.
- 12.2 Members of the Committee noted key changes to the paper including the addition or edit of sections related to:
- Strengthened rationale associated with the 'general Covid-19 impact' focusing on students' wellbeing;
 - No detriment practices elsewhere and specifically at the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews;
 - Grade inflation and the inclusion of data on the number of 1st class and 2:1 degrees awarded over the past 5 years;
 - Clarification as to which cohorts of students the measures in regard to degree award apply;
 - Information for vulnerable students who may not fall within the borderline;
 - The criteria for Examiners meetings to consider (which remains unchanged).

Members of the Committee also noted that the paper would be further enhanced to specify any further professionally accredited programmes which may need to be exempted from some of the measures.

- 12.3 In considering the proposals, members of the Committee noted that students in the lower half of the borderline would need to inform their School(s) had they experienced mitigating circumstances to enable their consideration. Members of the Committee sought clarity as to whether students currently in programme year 3 and registered on 5-year degree programmes would benefit from the measures at the point of their graduation. Members of the Committee noted that this was the intention of the paper, acknowledging that the impact of Covid was likely to be far reaching and that it was felt appropriate to apply the same measures to all students in programme years 3 and above.
- 12.4 Members of the Committee expressed concern that the section on appeals did not go far enough to stipulate that academic judgement cannot be challenged. It was agreed that this section would be revised.

- 12.5 Overall, the Committee was content to approve the Comprehensive Measures and to forward them to the Senate for final consideration and approval.

Action: Clerk

PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/008)

- 13.1 Members of the Committee received a paper outlining the new Programme Approval Process, approved to support the development and approval of programmes. The Committee noted that the new process had been designed to better align the different stages of the process including the work of Planning, Marketing and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). It was noted that the new process sought to better encourage Schools to be more systematic in the design and management of programmes and stand-alone courses. The Committee were informed that a Programme Management Committee (PMC), would manage the approval process as part of a wider programme of portfolio management. The Committee was in agreement with the process outlined and noted that a paper, outlining the strategy for portfolio development and management, would follow to a future meeting of the Committee.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE (CHP) UPDATE

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/009)

- 14.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on changes to the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), as prescribed to all Higher Education Institutions by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Members noted the cover paper as provided with the paper, outlining why the Institution must adhere to the CHP. The Committee was content, for its part, to approve the CHP and to forward it to the Senate for final approval.

Action: Clerk

ABERDEEN STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/010)

- 15.1 Members of the Committee agreed to the deferral of this agenda item to the meeting of the Committee to be held on 14 April 2021.

AOCB

- 16.1 Members of the Committee noted that an issue had arisen with regards to the circumstances in which students, who as a consequence of a disability have a provision for extra time to complete their assessment, should be awarded this in circumstances where time periods have already been extended for a class as a whole. Members agreed that this issue should be taken away for further investigation and discussion.

Action: Abbe Brown/Kath Shennan

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 17.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 14 April 2021, at 2pm, by Microsoft Teams.

CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/011)

- 18.1 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).

Action: Clerk

ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT UPDATE

- 18.2 The Committee approved a change to the process for the consideration of initiatives for inclusion on the Enhanced Transcript as follows:

The stipulation that in order for an initiative to be eligible for inclusion on the Enhanced Transcript (ET) the role must be an established University co-curricular role/activity has been running for at least 1 year, has been removed. It is felt that the decision to include an initiative on the ET would be better based on the suitability of the scheme rather than the length of time it has been running, particularly as, in response to Covid-19, new schemes have been established which would be a good addition to the ET.

Action: Clerk

GRADUATE APPRENTICESHIPS

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/012)

- 19.1 The Committee noted the paper providing an update on progress in regard to the Civil Engineering Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) programme.

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT (DENTISTRY)

- 19.2 The Committee noted the following update from the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC):

The QAC received a report from the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (Feb 2021) relating to an investigation that was carried out into concerns raised by one of the Dentistry External Examiners. The External Examiner had expressed some serious concerns regarding a lack of communication with her resulting in her having insufficient time to review assessments and grading prior to the examiners' meeting, a false indication in a report to the examiners' meeting that she *had* given approval of the assessments and standards and there were also concerns over the accuracy of the data provided at the examiners' meeting with results spreadsheets needing to be changed post-examiners' meeting when inconsistencies were identified. The investigation carried out by the School used a root cause analysis method to identify failures, or weaknesses, in process that could have led to the deficiencies identified by the External Examiner without apportioning blame to any particular person. The School report contained several recommendations for changes to process that could be implemented to address the issues raised by the EE. The QAC endorsed these recommendations and made them **requirements** of the Institute of Dentistry. These requirements have been amalgamated into an action plan that the Institute of Dentistry have been asked to complete by end Feb 2021 to indicate what actions are planned to address the requirements, who is responsible for each action and a timeframe for completion. The major themes in the action plan are around improved staff training in assessment practices, development of standard operating procedures for assessments to ensure sufficient time to check and review results, the appointment of a Deputy Assessment Lead to prevent a single point of failure and a timeline

for improved communications with the External Examiners. An updated action plan, showing progress against these requirements, will be requested prior to, or shortly after, the May/June exam diet.

FIELDWORK GUIDANCE PAPER

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/013)

- 19.3 The Committee noted the paper providing clarification and guidance on teaching fieldwork provision given the current restrictions in place by the Scottish Government.

LATE SUBMISSION OF WORK POLICY

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/014)

- 19.4 The Committee noted the update on the next steps for the Senate approved policy on the Unauthorised Late Submission of Work.

UPDATE ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, MONITORING AND PASTORAL MEETINGS

(copy filed as UCTL/090321/015)

- 19.5 The Committee noted the update on recent changes in the communications relating to the student monitoring and engagement/C6 and C7 processes and details of further invitations to pastoral meetings.