

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the Meeting Held on 17 September 2018

Present: Professor A Jenkinson (Convener), Dr T Baker, Dr E Bain, Dr J Bohan, Dr J Borg-Bartlett, Ms D Connelly, Dr A Graham, Dr J Perkins, Professor K Shennan, Dr W Harrison, Professor W D McCausland, Dr T Mighall, Professor M Pinard, Dr A Widfeldt with Mrs P Rowand (Clerk).

Apologies: Professor A Denison, Mr E Grant, Mrs T Innes, Dr G Hough, Professor G McEwan and Professor P McGeorge.

The Convener opened proceedings by welcoming Dr Bain, Dr Bohan and Mrs Rowand to their first meeting of the Committee.

Minute of the Meeting Held on 6 August 2018

(copy filed as UG/170918/001)

1.1 The minute of the meeting held on 6 August 2018 was approved as an accurate record subject to the amendment of minute 3.3 as follows:-

In the fifth line replace “BP Tutor Monitoring Programme” with “BP Student Tutoring Programme”.

Matters Arising

1.2.1 **Minute 3.2** The Convener highlighted the announcement, made earlier in the day, that the University had signed up to the Big White Wall, a digital mental health and wellbeing service offering free online support for staff and students. Clarification on the operation of the University’s Mental Health Working Group, in light of the changes being made to the University’s Senior Management structure, was still awaited. Meantime the Working Group’s activities were still ongoing.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

1.2.2 **Minute 3.3** With Professor McGeorge having submitted apologies for the meeting there was nothing to report in regard to the possibility of establishing a teaching and learning fund to be dispersed to Schools as part of their budget. The Convener undertook to obtain an update from Professor McGeorge.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

1.2.3 **Minute 3.7** The Convener undertook to establish from Professor McGeorge whether there were any Capital Programme Management Committee reports regarding the best use of physical space.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

1.2.4 **Minute 3.9** The Convener was not aware of the ELIR dates having been circulated and undertook to get the information circulated as soon as possible. She reported that the ELIR Panel would visit the University on 10 October 2018 and would return for a week in November (week commencing 19 November 2018).

Action: Professor Jenkinson

1.2.5 **Minute 4.5** Information on how Schools promoted their positive NSS survey outcomes via their own social/media webpages still had to be brought to the Committee.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

2 Honours Weighting in Degree Classification

(copy filed as UG/170918/002)

- 2.1 Professor Shennan introduced the paper she had prepared for Senate on the weighting of years 3 and 4 in Honours classification.
- 2.2 There was extensive discussion of School views on this paper. Whilst there were diverging views amongst Committee members on the points raised in the paper, the consensus of opinion was that:
- (i) whilst there were areas where consistency of approach would be desirable, ie, joint honours degrees which crossed disciplines/Schools, there were other areas where consistency was not required, applicable or achievable. There were, for example, clearly defined instances where UK-wide standard/professional accreditation requirements had to be adhered to. It was accepted that there were good reasons for these exceptions to occur but, where possible, consistency of approach within BSc or MA would be preferred.
 - (ii) If weighting is across levels 3 and 4, classification should be on year of study, irrespective of whether a level 4 course was taken in programme year 3 or a level 3 course was taken in programme year 4.
 - (iii) narrowing the borderline range and putting in defined rules around these would result in greater clarity and be helpful to both students and Schools.
- 2.3 The Committee was of the view that there would be merit in separating out the two issues discussed in the paper – degree classification and borderlines – to create two separate papers. Professor Shennan took this on board and undertook to bring the revised papers back to the Committee for further discussion.

Action: *Professor Shennan*

3 Automated Attendance Monitoring Pilot

(copy filed as UG/170918/003)

- 3.1 Members considered the paper summarising the findings of the pilot study conducted in academic year 2017-18 across the institution into the use of QR codes to monitor student attendance across a variety of classes. The pilot aimed to determine whether automated attendance monitoring resulted in (i) any saving of administrative time and (ii) improved student performance.
- 3.2 Whilst noting that feedback had been obtained from staff during and after the pilot, and any technical issues encountered addressed during the course of the pilot, some Committee members were of the view that the paper did not reflect the full range of experience. Some staff had found the experience of using the automated attendance monitoring system a positive one, allowing them to more rapidly identify problems/intervene earlier than previously had been possible. Others, however, had differing views or encountered problems which they felt were not adequately represented in the paper.
- 3.3 Given the points raised above, Committee members were asked to provide their feedback to the author of the paper, Dr Tucker, who would be asked to take these comments into account when revising the paper.

Action: *Committee members/Dr Tucker*

4 Feedback on Draft Learning Analytics Policy

(copy filed as UG/170918/004)

The Committee noted the current draft version of the institution's Learning Analytics Policy, comments on which were being actively sought. Open sessions, giving staff the opportunity to discuss the draft policy were to be offered, with a view to a further update of the draft policy being provided to the next meeting of the Committee. Thereafter the draft policy would be submitted to the January 2019 meeting of Senate for review.

5 Good Practice: "Friendly Friday" Policy

5.1 Professor McCausland shared with the Committee the approach adopted by his School whereby students were not given potentially bad news on a Friday. Holding off from issuing examination results until Monday morning ensured that sources of support were available for vulnerable students. The School has extended this approach beyond the release of examination results and intended to no longer issue C6s or C7s on a Friday. Other communications to both staff and/or students are being considered prior to circulation and delayed until the next week where appropriate.

5.2 Whilst a number of Committee members expressed their support for this approach, concerns were voiced over the potential for increased anxiety caused by a delay in releasing examination results. This, it was suggested, could be countered by managing students' expectations. The Committee felt that there was merit in considering this approach within schools and also obtaining the student body's view on this approach. All schools were asked to consider whether there were elements of this approach that might be adopted and Ms Connelly agreed to get student feedback on the practice before the next meeting of the Committee.

Action: All

6 AOCB - Curriculum Management System

With the planning cycle in mind, members voiced their concerns about the institution's Curriculum Management System (CMS) and the fact that there had been no update on what changes, if any, had been made to the system in light of feedback received from Schools. Members were concerned that the difficulties associated with entering course and programme proposals/amendments on the CMS would stifle innovation and change and thus hamper, rather than facilitate, progress. Professor Jenkinson undertook to obtain an update on the progress being made with the CMS enhancements and to report back to the Committee on this.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

For Information

7 Dates of the Next Meetings

It was noted that meetings of the Committee would take place as follows:-

Monday, 12 November 2018 at 2.00 pm, Committee Room 2, University Office

Monday, 14 January 2019 at 2.00 pm, Committee Room 2, University Office

Monday, 25 February 2019 at 2.00 pm, Committee Room 2, University Office

Friday, 26 April 2019 at 2.00 pm, Committee Room 2, University Office