

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

**Minute of Meeting Held on 5 November 2019**

**Present:** Alison Jenkinson (Chair), Jason Bohan, Justin Borg-Barthet, Gerry Hough, Gordon McEwan, Tim Mighall, Sandi Thomson, Clare Trinder with Pat Rowand (Clerk) and Craig Stewart in attendance.

**Apologies:** Euan Bain, Ewan Grant, Stuart Durkin, Archie Graham, Bill Harrison, Tracey Innes, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Joy Perkins, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, David McCausland and Peter McGeorge.

[Clerk's Note: Given the number of apologies lodged it was noted that the Committee was not quorate.]

**1 Minute of Meeting Held on 26 April 2019**

**1.1** The minute of the meeting held on 26 April 2019 was confirmed as an accurate record subject to the amendment of paragraph 6.5 to read:-

**1.2** Members were reminded of the [proof-reading feedback](#) services provided by both Student Learning Service (SLS) and Careers Service staff and the help available to students via the Achieve and Achieve+ pages on Toolkit. SLS staff could work with a student on improving their academic writing skills by reviewing a piece of work which had been already been marked and returned to the student and providing feedback to improve future performance. The Careers Service also offered a [proof-reading feedback](#) service for draft applications.

**2 Matters Arising**

**2.1 Minute 2.1** A link to the slides on the King's College Campus development works had been provided in the Senate digest with a further update provided in a Communications Ezine. The Chair advised members that plans were being drawn up for submission to the next meeting of Court.

**2.2 Minute 5.5** The Chair confirmed that she would discuss the possibility of CAD providing training on designing surveys and the associated ethics .

**Action:** Alison Jenkinson

**2.3 Minute 8.1(i)** Members were advised that a working group, with Kath Shennan in the chair, had been established to review the institution's joint degree provision.

**2.4 Minute 8.1(ii)** A number of Committees had been established to look at planning and space utilisation. Details of these, including membership and remits, could be found in the latest Senate digest.

**3 Committee Role Descriptor**

**3.1** Members were advised that a standing item of business for the first meeting of the academic session was a review of the remit and composition of the Committee.

**3.2** The remit and composition of the Committee was confirmed, subject to the correction of minor typographical errors and the following updates to its composition:

- the replacement “Dean of Undergraduate Students” with “Dean”
- the replacement of “Head of the Careers Service” with “Head of Careers and Employability Service”

**3.3** Members queried whether the stipulation for a quorum of 50% refers to core Committee members only or also included those listed as in attendance.

[Clerk’s note: Individuals listed as in attendance do not count towards a Committee’s quorum.]

**3.4** It was accepted that challenges existed with securing a quorum when meetings were held whilst undergraduate teaching was taking place. In an effort to maximise attendance at the Undergraduate Committee, the schedule of meetings had been arranged to ensure that the day of the week on which the Committee met changed from meeting to meeting. Members were reminded that in instances where they were unable to attend a Committee meeting it was acceptable to nominate a colleague to attend in their place. The Chair undertook discuss the challenges of ensuring as full attendance as possible at Committee meetings with the incoming Vice-Principal of Education.

**Action:** *Alison Jenkinson*

**3.5** It was also suggested that there would be merit in consideration being given to changing the requirements for a quorate committee. It was noted that this change would be a decision of Senate.

#### **4 Late Submission of Work Policy**

**4.1** The Committee were invited to give feedback on the proposed Late Submission of Work Policy. It was noted that this was being developed in response to feedback raised as part of the ELIR. It was explained that the purpose of the policy was to provide standardisation, clarity and consistency in cases of unauthorised late submission. The Committee’s discussion centred around themes identified within the draft policy:

**4.2** The draft policy stated a maximum five-day maximum deadline for late submissions. The consensus amongst Committee members was the imposition of a seven-day deadline. This would include weekends and account for situations where paper submissions could not be accessed by staff.

**4.3** Members were asked to consider the imposition of a 2 CGS point per day penalty for late submission. The Committee’s preference was a penalty of 1 CGS point per day. The consensus view was that consistent application of the penalty was the most important factor. Concerns were raised regarding instances where a student submitting after the proposed deadline would receive an award of G3 that prevented them from being unable to complete the course successfully. It was suggested that feedback should be provided as standard to aid the student in future submissions.

**4.4** Concerns were raised regarding the impact of such a penalty as the loss of CGS points in an Honours dissertation, for example, could be more impactful than the same penalty applied to a short essay in an earlier year.

- 4.5** Clarification was sought on the published list of what did and did not constitute exceptional circumstances and it was queried if Student Support had been consulted regarding these. The Committee was of the view that the list of what did constitute an exceptional circumstance was potentially more controversial than the list of what did not. It was suggested that care be taken regarding the use of the term ‘anxiety’ which could cover a number of wide-ranging conditions.
- 4.6** It was agreed that the list should reflect the content of existing University policies on ill-health and exceptional circumstances. The Committee was of the view that there be a degree of flexibility beyond the boundaries of the list and clarity that the list was not exhaustive was important. It was suggested that the list was too prescriptive in its current form and that it should be made clear that it was being provided for the purposes of guidance.
- 4.7** The Committee expressed the view that the ambiguity regarding students with chronic conditions would prove challenging as this required Course Coordinators to make “a judgement call”. Guidance from Student Support would, it was suggested, be helpful. In addition, the provision of clear and consistent guidance would, it was stressed, help students understand procedures fully and engage with University policies.
- 4.8** It was suggested that Schools should have flexibility regarding the members of staff within a School with responsibility for applying late penalties as it was practice in some Schools to have a nominated person responsible for extensions and late submissions, whilst in others responsibility lay with individual Course Coordinators.
- 4.9** In summary, the Undergraduate Committee was generally in support of the implementation of a University-wide policy for the penalties applied for late submission of work, with provisos regarding what may be considered exceptional circumstances.

## **5 AOCB**

- 5.1** Committee members raised concerns regarding seemingly random timetable changes. Some Schools had experienced the times and venues of classes being changed without any prior notification or explanation being given. In some instances staff were only aware of the timetable changes when informed of these by students. This had proved to be especially problematic in instances where teaching required consistency of venue and time.
- 5.2** The Chair undertook to raise the Committees concerns over this situation with the incoming Vice Principal.
- Action:** *Alison Jenkinson*
- 5.3** The Chair advised members that Natalie Kinchin-Williams provided an update on the ongoing issues being experienced with PowerPoint.
- 5.4** The issue with PowerPoint freezing one to two slides into a presentation, appeared to be related to where the PowerPoint Presentation was played from. IT were therefore recommending that staff load their file onto a local PC as opposed to using the H:/Drive or a pen drive. Investigations would continue into the root cause of the problem.
- 5.5** The second issue is related to the in-operation of the clicker used to progress the slides when it was moved out-with the range of the PC. This issue was currently under investigation, but

meantime it was recommended that staff do not roam too far away from the PC whilst teaching.

- 5.6** Natalie reported that despite these issues being wide reaching, the service desk had only received a small number of notifications regarding these. Members were reminded of the importance of reporting problems to the service desk so the scope of issues could be identified, thus allowing them to be prioritised.

[Clerk's Note: Since the meeting it has been established that the issues experienced with PowerPoint were sector-wide and related to an automatic update in a different software package. The problems have now been resolved.]

#### **For Information**

**6 Senate Digest**

The contents of the Senate Digest for the 15 May 2019 and 9 October 2019 meeting of Senate were noted.

**7 University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL)**

The agendas for the 12 June 2019 and the 18 September 2019 meetings of the UCTL were noted.

**8 Dates of Next Meetings**

It was noted that meetings of the Committee for the 2019/2020 academic year were scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, 10 December 2019  
Thursday, 6 February 2020  
Monday, 23 March 2020

F61 Edward Wright Building  
Committee Room 2, University Office  
Committee Room 2, University Office