UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 28 August 2017

Present: Professor H Hutchison (Convenor), Professor A Jenkinson (Convenor), Dr P Bishop, Dr J Borg-Barthet, Dr J Cai, Donna Connelly, Professor A Denison, Dr A Graham, Dr W Harrison, Dr G Hough, Dr M Macleod, Professor G McEwan, Dr J Perkins, Professor M Pinard, Professor K Shennan, Dr A Widfeldt, Ms J Adamson (Clerk).

Apologies: Mrs J Bruce, Dr P Davidson, Dr T Mighall, Mr P Fantom, Dr G Mackintosh.

MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 APRIL 2017
(copy filed as UG/280817/001)

1.1.   The Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 25 April 2017 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

1.2.   Regarding item 2, the new ITR process – the Committee queried whether it will be given the opportunity to review the process after hearing feedback from the trial. It was confirmed that two Schools (LLMVC and Engineering) will follow the new ITR process in 2018, and that feedback will be provided to the Committee.

1.3.   Action point on item 8.1, Accessible and Inclusive Learning, will be covered in the October Undergraduate Committee meeting.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION
(copy filed as UG/280817/002)

2.1.   The Convenor noted the Committee's thanks to outgoing members and welcomed the new members.

2.2.   Committee members were encouraged to contact the Convenors if they have any business to raise in line with the remit of the Committee.

2.3.   Regarding the penultimate bullet point in the remit, it was queried as to who is responsible for curating retention data and would the Committee be permitted to view such data. It was confirmed that the Retention Taskforce, reporting to the Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching, would collate such data. A request could be made to the Taskforce to share data with the Committee for discussion.

POLICY ON RECORDING EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (LECTURE CAPTURE)
(copy filed as UG/280817/010)

3.1.   The Convenor provided an overview of the paper, in which it is proposed that all lectures will be automatically recorded and posted online within two working days. It was clarified that staff would be able to edit their lectures and that there are criteria for opting out if recording is not seen as appropriate.

3.2.   The Committee discussed some practicalities of the implementation of the new policy and associated software. Some questions included:

How does the software distinguish between a lecture or another class type?
How is the automatic recording triggered?
How will staff know if their class is to be automatically recorded?
When will it be implemented?

ACTION: Convenor to check with IT.

3.3. The Committee would like clarification on point 12, which relates to permission to manually stop and start a recording. Can it be stopped (e.g. if something unexpected was to happen during class), or does the member of staff need to have opt-out permission?

3.4. The opt-out criteria were discussed. Under point 10, the following inclusion was suggested; "if information is made available in a comparable way". An example was cited in which one member of staff prefers to record a voice-over to their PowerPoint slides in their office and posts this online rather than a live recording.

3.5. In terms of point 11, what reasons would be considered valid? For example, it is known that some members of staff within Schools disagree with the principles of recording lectures and don't think that it is a suitable educational method. If someone just disagrees with it, would the policy allow opt-out?

3.6. The Committee noted the importance of acknowledging that not all lectures and VLEs will lend themselves to recording.

3.7. There was concern about Medicine programmes in terms of clinically sensitive material, patient data, and the type of VLE. It was also noted that many lectures are delivered by external people (e.g. a doctor employed by the NHS). There was concern about the expectations placed on these individuals in terms of having their class automatically recorded and subsequently edited within two days. It was noted that point 28 mentions an opt-in form for visitors – will this be a standardised form used by all?

ACTION: Convenor to clarify if the form exists and where it can be downloaded.

3.8. The Committee discussed whether there would still be a need to allow students to make their own recordings of lectures if it was being automatically captured. It was noted that there may be specific disabilities requirements, therefore some individuals may still need to record. Staff would like to be informed when this is the case.

3.9. The legal obligations regarding the publishing, editing, and taking down, of automatically recorded lectures were discussed.

3.10. Some clarification is required on points 30 and 31 in terms of which academic teaching methods are to be recorded. Concerns were raised regarding educational placements. Recorded teaching should be limited to on campus teaching delivered by staff.

PROPOSAL TO CAP RESIT MARK AT D3 AND INCLUDE IN DEGREE CLASSIFICATION
(copy filed as UG/280817/004)

4.1. The Convenor stated that in the previous meeting this policy was discussed and the Committee were largely in agreement that it would be positive.

4.2. Professor Shennan outlined the reasons behind the policy – many External Examiners have commented that it is too harsh to make students do resit exams but count the original failed grade within their

classification. The introduction of the proposed policy would keep the University in line with other Higher Education Institutions.

4.3. The Committee considered whether resit marks should be capped at D3 for all levels of study. It was agreed that capping at all levels would set expectations from the beginning of students' studies and would ensure consistency of approach.

4.4. The Committee discussed whether the policy should be backdated so that students about to begin their final year could have any resit marks from 2016/17 changed to D3 and included in their classification. The Committee support backdating the capping of resit marks for students already in Honours.

4.5. Some clarification was sought on how the policy will be implemented in terms of the Student Record. Will D3 be displayed on the record or will their actual resit mark appear? The Committee felt it would be important for students to see their actual mark to ensure they get suitable feedback on their performance in the resit.

4.6. The Committee considered whether the course mark should be recorded as D3 or if just the resit component alone should be a D3. Differences in practice between disciplines were discussed in terms of whether a resit needs to count as 100% exam, coursework marks being carried forward, and coursework components being resubmitted. It was concluded that the overall course mark should be capped at D3.

PROOF READING GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS
(copy filed as UG/280817/005)

5.1. Professor Shennan provided some background to the paper. The University does not currently have a policy on proof reading but we know that some students arrange their own proof readers, sometimes in the form of a private company. Guidance is required for students as well as any companies which may be providing this service to students.

5.2. The Committee considered whether proof reading should be permitted at all (unless it is a specific disability provision which has been assessed by the Student Advice and Support Service). It would be extremely difficult to police students' private use of proof readers and could disadvantage non-native speakers if the institution tried to prohibit the use of proof readers.

5.3. Section 3.2. - there were reservations about including a tick box on assignment cover sheets because the University should be careful about inadvertently encouraging more students to use a proof reader.

5.4. The Committee was supportive of this guidance document and think it is helpful in setting out clear guidelines on what is and is not permitted in terms of proof reading.

STAFFING OF EXAM VENUES

6.1. At present exam venues are staffed according to discipline – there must be someone present in the room from each discipline which has an exam taking place in the venue. This can often result in more invigilators being present than required for the number of students in the venue, particularly during resit exams.

6.2. If venues were to be staffed according to number of students rather than by discipline, there was concern that should issues arise with a paper there may not be a member of staff from that School available in

the venue to remedy the problem. Staff would feel more comfortable being responsible for their own discipline's exam papers and would be wary of supervising other papers without support from discipline-specific staff. Regardless of the number of students, if a problem arises it will still need to be dealt with in the same way by someone with discipline-specific knowledge.

6.3. Some Committee members were more in favour of staffing the venue by number of students as long as it could be ensured that there was a contact person available by telephone who could quickly address issues relating to any paper being sat in that venue.

6.4. The Committee don't think there needs to be changes to the way the main exam diets are staffed. There was no clear consensus regarding the resit exam diet.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL / DISCIPLINE EXAMINATION OFFICERS
(copy filed as UG/280817/007)

7.1. Professor Shennan introduced this paper, which aims to clarify the role of Exams Officers by providing a list of duties which are already believed to take place within Schools. A training session was offered for Exams Officers in May 2017, but was better attended by SAOs than the Exams Officers themselves. Having a guidance document would help to ensure consistency of approach. The timing of training sessions could also be looked into.

7.2. The Committee queried whether the full list of duties in the paper was expected to be carried out by the Exams Officers themselves. It was clarified that it would be the responsibility of the Exams Officer to oversee all of these duties, but that some could be delegated to Academic and Administrative staff as appropriate.

7.3. Suggested amendments to wording:
Section 4.i. – Substitute "should" with "must" or "shall"
Section 4.iii.- Clarify if staff are required to attend training sessions.

7.4. Many members of the Committee support this paper going forward, while some would find it helpful to consult with staff in their discipline to check that the list of duties is accurate.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: DRAFT BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE
(copy filed as UG/280817/008)

8.1. Professor Jenkinson clarified that this document is a working document and has been written following the previous UG Committee meeting where some members requested some guidelines to help Schools apply the early stages of the plagiarism process in line with the Code of Practice on Student Discipline. There have not been any changes to the Code of Practice on this matter.

8.2. There was a brief discussion regarding the usefulness of the draft guidance document. Views were mixed. Clarification is needed regarding how much scope Schools have within the Code of Practice. The following questions arose:
Can Schools tell a student that their referencing is poor and allow them to resubmit without penalty?
Can students resubmit the work and be given a capped grade?
How do you justify telling a level 1 student it is poor practice but then treating the same thing as plagiarism in a later year?

ACTION: The Committee members were encouraged to provide their comments and feedback to the Convenors or to the members of staff within Registry who deal with academic discipline.

ELIR UPDATE

(copy filed as UG/280817/009)

9.1.   The Convenor provided a brief overview of the ELIR process and confirmed that the review by Quality Assurance Agency Scotland is expected to take place towards the end of 2018. Staff were encouraged to remind their Schools and to start preparations early.

LECTURE ATTENDANCE PILOT

10.1.   Professor Jenkinson provided an update on the lecture attendance pilot, in which some courses will trial signing into classes using QR codes. Staff were reminded that courses which are participating in the pilot should return the requested form to Steve Tucker by email.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON TEACHING

11.1.   The Convenor encouraged Committee members to read the policy on Wednesday afternoon teaching and ensure that their Schools are timetabling their teaching in accordance with this policy.

AOCB

12.1.   If members would like to raise any other business they should contact the Convenors or Clerk directly.

FOR INFORMATION

DATES OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Friday 27 October 2017 at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room 2, University Office)
Friday 12 January 2018 at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room 2, University Office)
Monday 12 March 2018 at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room 2, University Office)

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

14.1.   The Framework is available here: http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SEFScotland.pdf

ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK

15.1.   The AQH has been updated and can be viewed on the website:
https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/academic-quality-handbook-838.php