

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the Meeting Held on 25 February 2019

Present: Professor A Jenkinson (Convener), Dr T Baker, Dr E Bain, Dr J Bohan, Professor A Dennison, Ms I Dradakova (Student member), Dr A Graham, Mr E Grant, Dr W T A Harrison, Dr G Hough, Ms N Kinchin-Williams, Dr T Mighall, Dr G Norton, Ms J Paneva (Student member), Dr J Perkins, Dr D Shewan and Dr A Widfeldt with Mrs P Rowand (Clerk).

Professor K Shennan was in attendance throughout the meeting.

Apologies: Mrs T Innes, Professor W D McCausland, Professor G McEwan, Professor M Pinard, and Dr R Taylor.

1 Minute of the Meeting Held on 23 January 2019 *(copy filed as UG/250219/001)*

- 1.1 The minute of the meeting held on 23 January 2019 was confirmed as an accurate record subject to the amendment of paragraph
- 1.2 Members stressed that a borderline result should not be viewed as a means of automatic promotion to a higher degree classification, but should be seen as a means to identify ~~those~~ students ~~whose classification warranted further consideration by~~ for referral to the Examination Board.

2 Matters Arising

2.1 Minute 2.2 - Establishment of a Teaching and Learning Fund

The Convener reported that central money had put towards teaching prizes and the current round of the Principal's Prize for Excellence had been funded. In addition, matched funds had been put towards the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme.

2.2 Minute 2.2 – Capital Programme Management

Members were advised that a plan was in place to secure funding to be utilised for the modernisation of teaching spaces in King's and New King's through a bond. The works planned were major pieces of capital expenditure separate to the works currently under completion on the south side of King's, where four lecture spaces were being combined into one digital learning space. Members impressed upon the Convener the importance of ensuring that the academics who teach in the rooms which were earmarked for upgrade were consulted. The Convener accepted the point raised and undertook to establish if there was any information on the proposals which could be circulated.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

2.3 Minute 2.3.1 to 2.3.3 – Working Group on Policies and Practices for Accessible and Inclusive Learning

The Convener advised that an update from Student Support was awaited.

2.4 Minute 7.3 - UCTL

Following on from the last meeting of the Committee where the benefit of providing the Committee with feedback/updates from the UCTL had been discussed, the Convener highlighted the fact that a link to the agenda for the last meeting of the UCTL had been added to the agenda for today's Undergraduate Committee. A link to the most recent Senate Digest had also been included. The Committee indicated that it was content with this approach for use going forward.

Action: Mrs Rowand

3 Honours Weighting in Degree Classification

(copy filed as UG/250219/002)

- 3.1 Professor Shennan introduced the honours weighting paper by explaining that the paper now before the Committee had been rewritten after the last Senate meeting but did not incorporate any of the points raised by the Undergraduate Committee when it last considered the paper. The paper would be rewritten before being sent back to Senate, taking into account the points raised during discussions.
- 3.2 Whilst at Senate there had been no call for consistency across the institution, both the UCTL and Quality Assurance Committee had felt quite strongly that there ought to be consistency. There were external drivers which were also adding to the argument for consistency. There was, for example, currently a push from Universities UK for every institution to publish their degree classification outcomes.
- 3.3 Whilst a number of Schools were keen to maintain equal weighting across junior and senior honours years, others argued for an exit velocity model to be adopted, with a higher weighting to be given to level 4. Adopting an exit velocity model would allow for the transition from level 2 to 3 to be taken into account. It was acknowledged however that the exit velocity model would not suit all scenarios such as integrated masters.

4 Borderline Zone and Criteria

(copy filed as UG/250219/003)

- 4.1 Bringing to the discussion the views of their Schools, Committee members considered the points raised in the discussion paper on (i) the extent of the zone of discretion/borderline zone in degree classification and (ii) the criteria Examiners' meetings should consider when determining the final classification of students in the discretionary zone.
- 4.2 In feeding back to the Committee the views of their Schools, it was apparent that the majority of Schools were in favour of reducing the borderline from its current size of between 0.01 and 0.99 to 0.5 below the border and above. The one exception was the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy which favoured a borderline of zero.
- 4.3 The Committee was generally in favour of retaining:
 - the power of the Examination Board to revise a classification should there be mitigating circumstances which had not been taken into account at course level, and
 - the ability for Schools to use *via voce* exams should they feel these were appropriate.
- 4.4 It was noted that the paper would now go on to be considered by Senate at its next meeting.

5 Abolishment of Rounding Up of Course Grades

(copy filed as UG/250219/004)

- 5.1 The paper recommending the abolition of the practice of rounding up course grades was considered, members of the Committee having consulted within their own Schools prior to the meeting.
- 5.2 There was unanimous agreement that the current practice of rounding up grades lacked transparency and was misleading for students. For example, in the case of a student achieving a grade of 17.60 for a course:
- the unrounded up numeric grade of 17.60 would be used for the overall GPA calculation, and
 - the course grade was calculated by rounding the mark up to 18, resulting in an overall grade of A5.

This in turn could cause a discrepancy between the alphanumeric course grade shown on the student's transcript and their final degree classification.

- 5.3 Members were supportive of the proposal that course grades should no longer be rounded up so that the alphanumeric grade for the course would be determined by the unrounded up numeric grade.
- 5.4 The importance of ensuring that numeric grades were shown on students' transcripts to 2 decimal places was stressed.
- 5.5 It was noted that the paper would now go on to be considered by Senate at its next meeting.

6 AOCB

- 6.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the difficulties which the School of Geoscience had encountered when trying to make arrangements for a student who, as a wheelchair user, required the use of an adjustable height desk for a computer lab. When the Course Coordinator had enquired about a room with suitable provision, s/he had been advised that (i) there were no computer rooms with suitable facilities and (ii) that there were only 3 rooms in total with adjustable height desks. The Convener reported that Estates had been made aware of this issue, but would follow up to check progress.

Action: Professor Jenkinson

FOR INFORMATION

7 Assessment and Feedback: Resits

(copy filed as UG/250219/005)

- 7.1 Committee members noted the contents of the paper clarifying the rules for resits, following on from Senate's decision that resit results should be capped at D3 for GPA calculation and the classification of degrees at UG and PGT. The paper, which had previously been considered by the Quality Assurance Committee and UCTL and was presented for information, recommended that if a student:
- (i) failed the end of course assessment and continued to fail at subsequent resit opportunities, the highest grade achieved for all attempts (first and any subsequent resit attempts) would be used for GPA and degree classification purposes, and

- (ii) failed an Honours or PGT course and chose to take an different course rather than resit the non-compulsory course originally failed, the GPA would be classified on all Honours/PGT courses (including the original fail grade and the uncapped grade for the new course).

8 Enhancement Led Institution Review (ELIR) Report *(copy filed as UG/250219/006)*

- 8.1 Members noted the contents of the draft ELIR Outcome Report, which the Convener advised had not yet been formally published. The Panel’s recommendations with regard to the publication of External Examiners’ reports had been discussed at the last meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). QAC’s views were similar to those which the Undergraduate Committee had made at its last meeting, with the preference being for the inclusion of a tick box on the report pro-forma to allow the Examiner to indicate which comments s/he were content could be made public.

9 Senate Digest

- 9.1 Members noted the contents of the [Senate Digest](#) for the 30 January 2019 meeting of Senate.

10 University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL)

- 10.1 The agenda for 19 February 2019 meeting of the [UCTL](#) was noted.

11 Date of Next Meeting

- 11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Friday, 26 April 2019 at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 2, University Office.