

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 13 April 2022 (draft – not approved)

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Stuart Durkin, Ondrej Kucerak, David Mercieca, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Susan Stokeld, and Anne-Michelle Slater with Julie Bray, Nick Edwards, Rhona Gibson, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Gillian Mackintosh, Kate Smith, Louisa Stratton and Emma Tough (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Euan Bain, Harminder Battu, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Bill Harrison, Gerry Hough, Richard Hepworth, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, David McCausland, Graeme Nixon, Steve Tucker, Russell Williams, Joshua Wright, Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard, Scott Carle, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Fiona Ritchie, and Patricia Spence

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2022

(copy filed as UEC/130422/001)

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UEC/130422/002)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 24 February 2022. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress. The Committee noted the following:
- With regard to *minute point 8.3* of the meeting held on 18 January, regarding the circulation of information in regard to feedback to students, members of the Committee received an update that a communication in this regard would be issued to students following the Spring break. **Action: Clerk**
 - With regard to *minute point 8.3* of the meeting held on 24 February, regarding the paper on the 2023/23 Academic Year, members of the Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would follow to the first meeting of the UEC in academic year 2022/23. **Action: AMS**
 - With regard to *minute point 11.1* of the meeting held on 24 February, regarding Generic Degrees, the Committee noted work on handling regulations in this regard was underway and that an update would follow to the UEC in due course. The Committee agreed that the action should be marked as complete.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings, available [here](#). Members of the Committee noted that it was not yet known for how long the CPG would continue to meet but that 'Health, Safety and Wellbeing' would remain as a standing item on the UEC agenda, for Committee members to raise any issues arising in the regard.

RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/130422/003)

- 4.1 Members of the Committee received the updated Risk Register for Education, available as *UEC/130422/003*. The Committee noted no further comments. **Action: Clerk**

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORT OF THE PASTORAL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/004)

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received an update from Abbe Brown on the work of the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG). The Committee noted the vision of the TFG and were supportive of it. The Committee noted that the draft report and associated recommendations would be further consulted upon and would return to a future meeting of the Committee for approval, prior to onward consideration and approval at Senate.
- 5.2 Overall, the Committee were supportive of the recommendations of the TFG. Some queries were raised, however, specifically regarding:
- Resource, workload, and the logistics of ensuring each Postgraduate Taught (PGT) student could be assigned a personal tutor. The Committee were informed that discussions in this regard were ongoing.
 - Ensuring personal tutors are able to make contact with incoming first year students, to ensure support in regard to academic decision making can be provided prior to a student undertaking their course choices in MyAberdeen.
 - Whether there is a conflict in members of staff such as Heads of School or Directors of Education acting as personal tutors.
 - The importance of ensuring both the defined identities of personal tutors and course coordinators can be maintained.
- 5.3 Members of the Committee agreed the importance of providing resources for personal tutors (such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)) and of ensuring Professional Services teams are also engaged in supporting students where appropriate.
- 5.4 Members of the Committee were thanked for their contribution to discussion and asked to send any further comments on the TFG report and associated recommendations directly to Abbe Brown. The Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would return to a future meeting of the UEC.

Action: Clerk/Committee

DRAFT PRINCIPLES OF THE MONITORING, ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/005)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received an update from Abbe Brown on the work of the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG. Members of the Committee were, overall, supportive of the draft principles presented. The Committee agreed with the proposed changes to the monitoring procedures and, in particular, the change in name to reflect a more supportive approach to managing non-engagement. Members of the Committee did note, however, that while supporting students as far as possible, they must also be made aware of their position (for example where their non-engagement may have implications for their visa) at as early a juncture as possible to ensure they are both supported and informed.
- 6.2 Members of the Committee were thanked for their contribution to discussion and asked to send any further comments on the TFG report draft principles directly to Abbe Brown. The

Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would return to a future meeting of the UEC and prior to further consideration at Senate.

Action: Clerk/Committee

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REMITS

(copy filed as UEC/130422/006)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on changes to the Education Committee remits, proposed following the outcome of the Senate Effectiveness Review and agreed changes to the Education Committee structure. Members of the Committee noted the key change arising as the redesignation of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) as a sub-committee of the Senate.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee noted proposed membership changes to the QAC, reflecting a distinction between the membership of the QAC and that of the UEC. The Committee further acknowledged proposed changes to the QAC remit to reflect its quality assurance focus and an increased role in the development and review of policy. In this regard, the Committee were informed of the proposed creation of a sub-group of the QAC, the Academic Regulations and Policy Group (ARPG). Members of the Committee were informed that in order to reduce the workload burden on QAC members, the Academic Services team would increase the level of support provided including in the consideration of quality assurance documentation, such as External Examiners reports and Annual Programme Review (APR) forms.
- 7.3 Members noted changes to the UEC remit, reflecting its strategic role in the oversight of education provision and Aberdeen2040 in respect of education matters. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of maintaining a close working relationship between the Committees, particularly as some issues, such as policy matters, would remain a focus of both.
- 7.4 The Committee noted the change in the Student Support Committee (SSC) to reflect the student experience and therefore the proposed creation of a new Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC). The Committee further noted that the remit and composition of the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) would remain as published.
- 7.5 Overall, the Committee were supportive of the changes outlined in the paper. Members noted, however, the importance of ensuring the recognition of the workload associated with committee membership and the wider delivery of education. The Committee noted that the paper would now proceed to the Senate for consideration and approval.

Action: Clerk

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23

(copy filed as UEC/130422/007a and UEC/130422/007b)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee received paper *UEC/130422/007a* setting out proposals for the delivery of education in academic year 2022/23. The Committee specifically noted the principles outlined, drafted to support the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in 2022/23. Members of the Committee were supportive of the paper and content to approve its progression to the Senate for consideration and approval.
- 8.2 In approving the paper, members of the Committee raised queries as follows:
- In regard to recorded lectures, whether these could be used as a means of delivering teaching going forward. Responding, the Chair noted that a range of different approaches to teaching were in place across Schools. It was noted that while contact hours must remain, the use of recorded material may be appropriate in

supplementing this and as part of an overall approach to nurturing active learning (e.g., flipped classroom approach).

- In regard captioning and the workload associated with this task, members of the Committee sought clarity as to whether a budget remained for Schools to access to ensure resource could be allocated to it. Responding, the Chair confirmed that she would provide further guidance on this following consultation with colleagues.

Action: Chair

8.2 Members of the Committee received paper *UEC/130422/007b* setting out a proposed adjustment to the structure of the thirteen-week half-session model in 2022/23 to provide for a dedicated two-week assessment period following an eleven-week teaching and assessment period for most undergraduate programmes.

8.3 Members of the Committee discussed the paper. The main tenets of discussion were as follows:

- Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal as outlined in the paper. Support for the change was specifically noted from representatives of Schools seeking to deliver examinations.
- A member of the Committee expressed concern around the deadlines associated with the return of exam results (*minute point 15.4 further refers*). Responding, the Chair committed to look again at this issue and report back to the UEC.
- A member of the Committee noted concern regarding the lack of a defined revision week prior to the weeks designated as being for assessment. Concern was noted in regard to the potential for a scenario to occur where teaching delivered in the final week assigned to teaching is then assessed in the week which follows. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of Schools considering the appropriateness of how they deliver teaching and subsequently assess.

8.4 Members of the Committee agreed to approve the paper and to forward it to the Senate. The Committee noted that papers *UEC/130422/007a* and *UEC/130422/007b* would be combined, to present an overall position in regard to academic year 2022/23, prior to consideration at Senate.

Action: Chair/GM

QATAR: CHANGES TO DELIVERY OF EDUCATION DUE TO THE WORLD CUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/008)

9.1 The Committee received the paper on changes to the delivery of Education in Qatar during the first half session of the 2022/23 academic year, as a consequence of the football World Cup. Members of the Committee noted that the paper had been considered and approved by the QAC in respect of the delivery of Education, with UEC approval required for the proposed changes to term dates.

9.2 Members of the Committee were content to approve the revised term dates as outlined in the paper.

Action: Clerk/GM

DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS

(copy filed as UEC/130422/009)

10.1 The Committee received a paper providing an analysis of degree classifications for first degree UG qualifiers at the University who have graduated with a 'good honours' degree (i.e., a First

Class or Upper Second-Class honours classification). The Committee noted that the analysis was derived from data for academic year 2020/21 published by HESA (the Higher Education Statistical Agency) in March 2022.

- 10.2 Overall, the Committee noted an increase in the award of good honours degree outcomes and, in particular, the award of first-class classifications. In noting this increase, however, the Committee were informed that while the sector average of firsts awarded is lower than that of the University, comparisons can be made to degrees awarded by Russell Group Universities. In addition, the Committee agreed the correlation between entry tariff and degree outcome, noting the University's entry tariff as being the eighth highest in the UK and degree classification is 12th.
- 10.3 Members of the Committee noted that an analysis of degree outcomes by ethnicity, sex, domicile, age, disability and SIMD20 had also been undertaken. The Committee were informed that awarding gaps had been identified in these areas although in the majority of cases these gaps had decreased in recent years. The Committee noted, however, that significant gaps, above the sector average, remained between White graduates and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME), and SIMD20 graduates and all other students. Members of the Committee were informed that the Race Equality Strategy group were aware of the gap identified for BAME and were considering how improvement in this area could be enabled. The Student Support Committee would be asked to review the data and consider actions to address all awarding gaps for consideration by UEC.
- 10.4 Members of the Committee noted that staff, such as Directors of Education, were currently unable to access Power BI. It was noted that while this may be as a direct result of the number of software licences that the University has access to, that the Chair would further investigate the issue. **Action: Chair**
- 10.5 A member of the Committee noted the importance of recognising the introduction of the University's Common Grading Scale (CGS) as a factor in the award of higher degree outcomes, noting that the previous revisions to the grading scheme had aimed to support staff to utilise the entire scale.
- 10.6 While understanding that the impact of Covid mitigation measures would continue for at least a further academic year, a member of the Committee noted that some External Examiners were seeking feedback on the University's response to grade inflation.
- 10.7 Members of the Committee noted that the paper would now proceed to meetings of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Senate for discussion. It was further noted that the following key actions were underway:
- The report and associated Power BI dashboard would be shared with all Schools for review through their School Education Committees.
 - Further analysis would be carried out on historical trends with regard to awarding gaps for First Class and Second-Class degrees.
 - An annual review of degree classifications data will be carried out in March every year to identify future trends. Future analysis will enable comparisons between the University's previous approach to degree classification (use of Grade Spectrum) and the current Grade Point Average (GPA) which is implemented in this academic year (2021/22).

Action: Chair

(copy filed as UEC/130422/010)

- 11.1 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) and its Institutional visits to the University.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) 2018 UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/130422/011)

- 12.1 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the outcome of Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2018 and the actions arising from it. Members of the Committee were asked to return any feedback on the update to the Clerk.

Action: Committee

UPDATE ON TRANSFORMING THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS THROUGH ASSESSMENT (TESTA)

(copy filed as UEC/130422/012)

- 13.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on the TESTA pilot. The Committee noted the work ongoing in this regard, including the engagement of the Schools of Social Science and Natural and Computing Science (NCS) in the pilot exercise. Members noted the setup of a steering group and that further updates would follow to future meetings of the UEC.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC, to focus on Aberdeen 2040, would take place on Tuesday 10 May 2022 at 10.05pm. Members of the Committee noted that the dates on which UEC would take place in 2022/23 would follow in due course.

CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

(copy filed as UEC/130422/013)

- 15.1 The Committee, for its part, approved the draft Resolution Changes in 'Regulations for Various Degrees'. The Resolution enacts changes in degree regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

FITNESS TO PRACTISE (EDUCATION)

(copy filed as UEC/130422/014)

- 15.2 The Committee, for its part, approved changes to the Policy on Fitness to Practise and the associated Guidance Notes applicable to students' undertaking degrees in Education or Counselling.

REVISIONS TO ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(copy filed as UEC/130422/015)

- 15.3 The Committee approved, for its part, changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) and the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Plagiarism against Graduates of the University.

DEADLINES FOR THE RETURN OF RESULTS 2022/23

- 15.4 The Committee noted the proposed deadlines for the return of results for academic year 2022/23 as follows. A member of the Committee raised a concern with regard to the deadlines outlined in (a) below. The Chair agreed to look at the proposed deadlines again, prior to a further communication to the Committee in this regard.

Action: Chair/Clerk

- (a) January 2023 Assessments
- (i) All undergraduate courses by Friday 20 January 2023
 - (ii) Postgraduate taught courses by Friday 27 January 2023
 - (iii) January Start Postgraduate Taught programmes, for candidates commencing January 2022, by Friday 27 January 2023
- (b) May 2023 Assessments
- (i) All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 courses and undergraduate programmes by Friday 9 June 2023
 - (ii) Postgraduate taught course and programme results, for those candidates eligible to graduate in June 2023, by Friday 9 June 2023
 - (iii) All other postgraduate taught courses by Friday 30 June 2023
- (c) Resit Assessments
- All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 resit assessments by Friday 11 August 2023
- (d) Postgraduate Taught programmes eligible to graduate in November 2023
- Postgraduate Taught summer courses and programme results Friday 3 November 2023.

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

- 16.1 Members of the Committee noted update reports from the UEC sub-committees as follows:
- (i) Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017a)*
 - (ii) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017b)*
 - (iii) Student Support Committee (SSC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017c)*

ADVANCEHE ACCREDITATION

(copy filed as UEC/240222/018)

- 16.2 Members of the Committee noted the outcome of the University's recent application for AdvanceHE Accreditation.

FIELDWORK OR RELATED ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING

(copy filed as UEC/240222/019)

- 16.3 Members of the Committee noted the update on fieldwork and related activities.