UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 10 November 2021

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Euan Bain, John Barrow, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Gerry Hough, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, David McCausland, David Mercieca, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Lindsay Tibbetts, Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, Russell Williams and Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Rachael Bernard, Scott Carle, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Fiona Ritchie, Patricia Spence and Emma Hay (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Richard Hepworth, Graeme Nixon, Nick Edwards, Graeme Kirkpatrick, and Brian Henderson

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2021

(copy filed as UEC/101121/001)

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 6 October 2021 by way of circulation[1]. Members approved the minute as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UEC/061021/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee noted, by way of circulation, the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 6 October 2021. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

3.1   Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings, available here.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATES

(copy filed as UEC/101121/003 and UEC/101121/004)

4.1   Members of the Committee received an update on the Education Committee structure, in regard to **Communication between the UEC, its sub-committees and School Education Committees (SECs)** *(copy filed as UEC/101121/003).* The Committee noted the intention of the paper, to bring together the measures that aim to ensure good communication flows and transparency between the UEC, its sub-committees (Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Student Support Committee (SSC), Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (SSC)), the School Education Committees, and with Senate.

4.2   Members of the Committee agreed that the proposed UEC digest for School Education Leads would be particularly useful in informing staff of key issues arising. The Committee noted that

---

[1] Members of the Committee considered the minute of 6 October 2021 by way of circulation, as the correct version was not made available in time for consideration at the meeting.

staff were not always able to review papers or minutes in detail and that a digest would allow staff to understand the outcomes of Committee discussions and provide direct links to papers.

4.3   The Committee noted the importance of ensuring staff access to UEC papers following meetings as a means of ensuring openness and transparency.

Action: Chair

4.4   Members of the Committee also received an updated **Education Committee Paper Template** *(copy filed as UEC/101121/004).* Members of the Committee were content to approve the template*,* for immediate use. It was noted that, with regard to whether papers should be marked as 'open or closed', that the default position should be that papers are open, unless compelling reasons for ensuring their confidentiality exist. The Committee agreed the circulation of the template to members of the QAC, SSC and EEC and it's posting on the UEC webpages.

Action: Clerk

RISK REGISTER
(copy filed as UEC/101121/005)

5.1   Members of the Committee received the updated Risk Register for Education, available as *UEC/101121/005* on the UEC SharePoint*.* The Committee noted the changed format of the Register and that in contrast to the Register referenced throughout the impact of Covid-19, a significant reduction in the number of risks listed. The Committee acknowledged that while the previous iteration has included several operational level risks, the revised version focussed on high level risks.

5.2   Members of the Committee noted that the importance to the institution of adherence to the regulatory requirements of accrediting bodies (such as the General Medical Council (GMC)) may not be appropriately reflected in the Register. The Chair noted that the wording would be looked at to better reflect the risk associated this issue, however, noted that as the University had the appropriate processes and procedures in place to ensure compliance, the risk associated with this issue was very low.

5.3   The Committee noted that the Register may require revision in instances where the likelihood of occurrence had been lowered by the mitigations in place. While acknowledging that mitigations could reduce the score associated with impact, it was noted that they could not reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring.

Action: Chair

SECOND HALF SESSION UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/101121/006a and UEC/101121/006b)

6.1   Members of the Committee received the papers on the second half-session delivery of teaching *(UEC/101121/006a)* and the approval process which will be used to manage requests from students seeking to study online in the second half-session *(UEC/101121/006b)*. Members of the Committee also noted the communication issued to students in this regard, available on the University's webpages.

6.2   The Committee discussed the paper on second half-session delivery, noting changes made to it since its last consideration at the UEC, at the meeting held on 6 October 2021. Most notably, members of the Committee acknowledged the agreed increased capacity in some rooms

(teaching and laboratory) on campus previously capped at a capacity of 50. Members noted that these increases were, for the most part, modest in nature with the biggest change reflected in the capacity of the Arts Lecture Theatre. The Committee were advised that the changes would inform timetabling for the coming half-session with immediate effect

6.3   Following feedback from the UEC and the Senate, members of the Committee noted changes to the paper to reflect the role of Heads of School and academic line managers in addressing any workload implications of the approach to the second half-session. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of ensuring students have adequate on campus time. The Committee noted, however, in some circumstances, for important reason, it is not possible for a member of staff to teach on campus. The Committee agreed the importance of communicating to students in such instances, to ensure they understand such exceptional circumstances and the reasoning (without divulging confidential information) for online teaching.

6.4   Members of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the capacity of campus and the feasibility of providing increased in person opportunities for students. The Committee were assured that campus would be utilised as far as possible but that there may be a need to alternate on-campus and online provision. A member of the committee expressed their concern that any further reduction in on campus delivery was likely to be disruptive for students

6.5   Members of the Committee sought clarity on contingency planning, should a change to the planned approach be required by the Scottish Government. With regard to distancing, members of the Committee agreed that should a change from 1 to 2-metres be required, that this would require a reversion to online teaching. While the Committee noted that such a change was not expected, as far as possible, Schools should be in a position to deliver online as a contingency measure. It is likely that this contingency would entail the use of approaches used in AY2020/21 in many instances.

6.6   Members of the Committee noted the approval process in place to manage requests from students seeking to study online in the second half-session. Members noted that the wording had been amended in the communications to students to ensure a more supportive approach. Committee members were informed that 31 applications had been received to date. Members of the Committee queried the appeal process in place for students where applications are unsuccessful.   *Action: GM*

6.7   The Committee acknowledged some concerns raised in regard to final year undergraduate students, undertaking dissertations during the second half-session, and whether there should be a requirement for their return to campus. The Chair noted that discussions would be held with the Directors of Education to understand the position for final year undergraduate students, by School.

6.8   Members of the Committee voiced support for the application process in place, however, expressed concerns as to the practicalities of it. The Committee agreed that for a variety of reasons applications from students may not be received until much closer to the beginning of term, and that providing online provision at very short notice would be difficult to for Schools and the timetabling team to manage. The Chair stated that the revised approach to 2HS (from that used in 1HS) aimed to reduce staff workload but that the implications are (as previously discussed) that smaller groups of students may require online delivery to support them in

their circumstances. In regard to how dual delivery could be delivered, the Committee noted guidance in this regard was being prepared and would follow in due course.

Action: Chair, KK

POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/101121/007)

7.1   Members of the Committee received the paper on the Policy Review Project. Overall, members of the Committee were supportive of the content of the plan and the work to be undertaken over the course of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years to review all Education policy. Members of the Committee noted the consultation exercises to be associated with each review and that further information would follow to future meetings of the UEC.

7.2   Members of the Committee raised the importance of the urgent review of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Degree Regulations and, specifically, PGT progression regulations, noting that this work was not referred to on the Policy Review schedule. Members of the Committee were assured that this would be considered and update on work in this regard (and associated timescales) provided to the UEC in due course.

Action: Clerk

TIMING OF THE 2022/23 ACADEMIC YEAR

(copy filed as UEC/101121/008)

8.1   Members of the UEC received the updated paper on the timing of the 2022/23 academic year. Members of the Committee noted the proposed commencement of teaching on 19 September 2022 and two semesters of thirteen weeks for teaching and assessment followed by three marking weeks. The UEC acknowledged the change in the proposal to a 13-week rather than 12-week half-session arrangement, following feedback in this regard received at Senate. A discussion of the paper ensued, the main tenets of which were as follows:

- Members of the Committee expressed concern at the exam result deadlines detailed in the paper, noting that the 3 weeks designated for marking would also be required to include the processing of examination results and consideration of overall outcomes at Examiners' Meetings;
- In addition, members of the Committee sought clarity on whether there would be designated examination diets for each half-session;
- The Committee noted concerns regarding the student experience being compressed within the first half-session and broken up by Spring break in the second half session, with students asked to return for only one week of teaching;
- The Committee acknowledged the importance of the revised model in respect of recruitment, however, noted that benefits in this regard should not be at the expense of the student experience;
- The Committee expressed concern that the paper was very undergraduate focussed and did not appropriately represent the postgraduate student teaching and assessment model.

8.2   Subject to clarification of the issues raised by the Committee, members were content to approve the paper and forward it to the Senate for further consideration and approval.

Action: AMS/GM

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/101121/009)

9.1   Members of the Committee **discussed** the paper, providing detailed data on appeal and complaint submissions *(appendices A and B refer)* received prior to and during the 2020/21 academic year, in addition to an analysis of emerging trends and next steps, seeking to improve the services provided by the University in this regard. Members of the Committee noted the forthcoming focus of the academic services team on reviewing the appeals policy and associated process and providing training to staff on the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

Action: Clerk

INSTITUTIONAL NSS ACTION PLAN

10.1   Members of the Committee received an oral update from the Deans of Educational Innovation and Student Support on the institutional NSS action plan.

10.2   With regard to Assessment and Feedback, members of the Committee noted work was underway in this regard, to 'Focus on Feedback' and highlight its importance and provide support to staff and students. Members of the Committee acknowledged work undertaken to date to improve existing web resources and to schedule panel sessions on feedback for staff. Members noted that this work was in its early stages and sought to ensure feedback requirements were being met (e.g., adherence to timelines for return of feedback). The Committee noted that further updates would follow to meetings of the UEC and that discussions would also be held with the School Directors of Education.

Action: KK

10.3   With regard to Student Voice, members of the Committee received an update on initial work being undertaken in this area. Members noted work underway in relation to non-academic feedback structures, such as the Class Representative structure. The engagement of the Student Experience team was also noted. Again, the Committee noted that further updates would follow to meetings of the UEC.

Action: AB

EVALUATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

(copy filed as UEC/101121/010)

11.1   Members of the Committee received the final blended learning evaluation report, noting the amendments included within it since its last consideration at the UEC. In particular, members noted the inclusion of Higher Education sector level evidence in regard to Blended Learning and the identification of 6 key areas for further discussion and focus. The Committee noted the importance of the report in evaluating the University's response to the impact of Covid-19 in addition to informing work on educational innovation going forward. Members were invited to send any feedback on the evaluation to the Dean for Educational Innovation.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

(copy filed as UEC/101121/011a and UEC/101121/011b)

12.1   Members of the Committee received the paper (and associated presentation) providing an update on the Accessibility and Inclusion in Education Framework. Members were invited to send any feedback on the framework to the Dean for Student Support.

CONTENT ADVICE GUIDANCE

(copy filed as UEC/101121/012)

13.1   Members of the Committee noted the paper providing guidance on Content Advice, particularly in relation to the health and wellbeing of students in their education. The Committee was reminded that the advice was guidance and not University policy. Members were invited to send any feedback on the guidance to the Dean for Student Support.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1   Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would be held at 2pm on Wednesday 19 January 2022. In addition, members of the Committee noted that additional meetings of the UEC, to focus on Aberdeen 2040, had been scheduled as follows:

Monday 6 December 2021 at 2pm
Tuesday 1 February 2022 at 2pm
Thursday 17 March 2022 at 2pm

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

15.1   Members of the Committee noted update reports from each of the UEC's sub-committees as follows:

(i)   Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)   *(copy filed as UEC101121/013a)*
(ii)   Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
                                                     (copy filed as UEC/101121/013b)
(iii)   Student Support Committee (SSC)   *(copy filed as UEC/101121/013c)*

COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/101121/014)

15.2   Members of the Committee noted the register on the collaborations and partnerships for the University.

ENHANCEMENT THEME UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/101121/015)

15.3   Members of the Committee noted the update on the Enhancement Theme.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CAMPAIGN

(copy filed as UEC/101121/016)

15.4   Members of the Committee noted the project plan for the forthcoming Academic Integrity Campaign. The attention of members was drawn to the proposed visuals for the campaign, along with the [website](#) that will support it.