

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)**

Minute of the Meeting held on 16 January 2023

*Present:* Ruth Taylor (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Akua Agyeman, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Jason Bohan, Colin Christie (*vice* Leigh Bjorkvoll), Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Ken Jeffrey, Alison Jenkinson, Helen Knight, David McCausland, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, Sarah Woodin (*vice* Michelle Pinard), Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Gillian Mackintosh, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Liam Dyker (Clerk) and Megan Smith (Minutes) in attendance

*Apologies:* Lyn Batchelor, Harminder Battu, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Nick Edwards, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Graeme Nixon, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, and Fiona Ritchie.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2022**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee approved the minute.

**MATTERS ARISING**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/002)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 10 October 2022. It was noted that actions in relation to the UEC Remit and Composition and the Policy Review Plan Update would be progressed by the end of January by the Clerk.

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the agenda item on Health, Safety and Wellbeing and raised no matters for further discussion.

**INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE**

- 4.1 Members of the UEC heard an update from the Chair regarding industrial action and institutional planning in this regard. The Committee noted the planned marking and assessment boycott, which could have impacted on the January PGT marking, would not occur but may at a future date. It was noted that a paper addressing industrial action contingencies will follow to a future meeting.

**RISK REGISTER**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/003)*

- 5.1 Members of the Committee heard an update from the Chair regarding the Risk Register. Members raised the need for the inclusion of industrial action specifically within the Register and suitable contingencies put in place. It was agreed that this would be included.

**Action: Chair**

## **ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/004)*

- 6.1 Members of the UEC received an update regarding the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation plan, noting that updates regarding progression of the action is required by 30<sup>th</sup> January and relevant members will be contacted for input.

**Action: Chair**

- 6.2 Members of the Committee suggested cross-referencing to be included within the documentation to highlight oversight of actions that fall within the Education Portfolio and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework to be included as the replacement to ELIR. The Committee was content with the implementation plan actions.

## **NATIONAL STUDENTS SURVEY (NSS)**

- 7.1 Members of the UEC discussed the National Student Survey (NSS) in respect of:

(i) **Institutional NSS Action Plan Update** *(copy filed as UEC/160123/005)*

- 7.2 Members of the Committee received a paper providing an update on the work of the Institutional Action plan. It was noted that the action plan provides a summary of actions proposed with nine priorities identified with the focus on the Assessment and Feedback themes.

- 7.3 Members of the UEC were updated on the ongoing actions including timeliness and quality of feedback and, communication. Members asked that an update be provided on the outcomes after the first half session. The work that had already been undertaken was noted, particularly regarding the positive impact on the league table with a rise of 32 places.

**Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink/Jason Bohan**

(ii) **Overview of NSS 2023** *(copy filed as UEC/160123/006)*

- 7.4 Members of the Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting the plans for the NSS in 2023. Schools were asked to share 'push' dates and plans to encourage student engagement.

- 7.5 Members of the UEC noted changes made to the NSS question set as recorded in paper *UEC/160123/006*. It was highlighted that changes may influence year on year reflection and potentially league tables. Clarity was sought on the role of professional services in the NSS preparations, and it was noted that the NSS steering group has relevant Professional Services colleagues on its membership and they are appropriately engaged in the work of supporting the NSS. Further, clarity was sought on the mid-point of the scale in regard to the bank of questions that can be used institutionally. Responding, it was advised that there remains a mid-point despite a reduction in scale.

## **DEAN FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION UPDATE**

- 8.1 Members of the Committee noted that a written update would follow for comment by way of circulation.

**Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink/Clerk**

## **DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM: TIMELINES AND APPROVAL PROCESSES**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/008)*

- 9.1 Members of the Committee received an update on the meeting of Senate regarding Decolonising the Curriculum. It was noted that the Senate commended the proposed principles and timelines. It was noted that there remains flexibility within the extended timelines such that Schools can take forward the work at an appropriate pace for their circumstances.
- 9.2 The Committee was content to **approve** the paper. It was noted that this would progress at the next meeting of Senate for approval.

## **RESULTS OF THE RACE EQUALITY CHARTER STUDENT SURVEY**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/009)*

- 10.1 The Committee heard a summary of the results of the Race Equality Charter Student Survey following finalised results issued prior to Winter break. The ongoing work was highlighted in respect of the race webpages, race literacy training and antiracism strategy plan.
- 10.2 Members of the Committee noted several areas for improvement including the inclusion of all perspectives within the curriculum and ensuring issues of race can be discussed appropriately within classes. It was noted it would be beneficial to breakdown results to School level. It was agreed that it would be reviewed as to whether this was possible.

**Action: Chair**

- 10.3 The Chair informed the Committee that the survey would be carried in 2 years in line with the Race Equality Charter requirements, and that this timeline would allow outcomes for actions to be reviewed. It was noted that information provided within the paper can be taken to School Education Committees for further discussions.

## **UPDATES FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT AND EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)**

- 11.1 Members of the UEC discussed the updates from the Student Support and Experience Committee in respect of:

(i) **Degree Awarding and Non-Continuation Gaps Action Plan**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/010)*

- 11.2 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on the work regarding student non-continuation. Specifically, the Committee was asked to comment on (i) the comprehensiveness of the action plan; (ii) whether any information was missing; and (iii) the development of School plans.
- 11.3 Members of the Committee noted challenges with some aims due to a lack of required data on some groups of students, particularly for widening access students. It was suggested it may be helpful to expand focus to look at students who withdraw and return to study. Further, discussion ensued regarding opportunities for peer-assisted learning, noting the Students4Students scheme available institutionally. It was agreed that the action plans in place would be consolidated and streamlined.

**Action: Clerk**

## **APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE 2021/22**

- 12.1 Members of the UEC discussed updates for appeals, complaints, and academic discipline in respect of:
- (i) **Academic Appeals and Complaints 2021/22** *(copy filed as UEC/160123/012a)*
- 12.2 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the summary data of Academic Appeals and Complaints. It was noted that academic appeals have seen an increase in numbers following a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 12.3 It was highlighted that monitoring appeals have risen, which are largely upheld, and it was queried whether this is the best process for handling them. The Committee noted ongoing work on the approach to student monitoring and engagement which should address the volume of C7 appeals going forward.
- 12.4 The Committee noted complaints had not seen an increase, however, it was noted that Schools may be managing informal complaints and that these are not identified within the data. The Committee noted that training will follow in this regard to frontline complaints handlers.
- (ii) **Academic Discipline 2021/22** *(copy filed as UEC/160123/012b)*
- 12.5 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the Summary Data of Academic Discipline. A significant increase in plagiarism cases was noted by Committee members. All demographics reported an increase but was most prominent amongst international students.
- 12.6 Members of the Committee raised concern regarding ChatGPT. It was noted by the Chair that further discussion was needed to find suitable approaches to address this. The Dean for Educational Innovation is leading work on this area and would report to the next UEC. Members noted that assistance from Student Learning Service can help with skills support to avoid this.
- Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink/Clerk**
- 12.7 Members discussed the appropriateness of the current Discipline process for first offences. It was suggested that this could be looked into, and that any changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) would require approval from Senate.

## **ABERDEEN 2040 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/013)*

- 13.1 Members of the Committee received a paper and presentation regarding Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills.
- 13.2 In discussion, the Committee noted the benefit of tying in graduate attributes at course level. Members discussed the potential of incorporating resilience and wellbeing explicitly within the paper.
- 13.3 The Committee was supportive of the Graduate Attributes and Skills, with the amendments noted in 13.2 progressing to Senate for an academic view.

## **BLOCK TEACHING ACTION PLAN**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/014)*

- 14.1 The Committee received a paper regarding the Block Teaching Action Plan, noting the intention to move away from short blocks where appropriate. The issues posed by block teaching were summarised in the paper.
- 14.2 The Committee noted that it is a School decision to move away from this method of delivery. While challenges were noted in doing so, it was suggested that the streamlined curriculum approvals processes be available in subsequent years to allow for effective implementation.

## **LONGITUDINAL EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES (LEO) DATA**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/015)*

- 15.1 Members of the Committee received a paper regarding the Longitudinal Education Outcomes Data. It was noted this will be utilised to feed into graduate outcomes data.

**Action: John Barrow**

## **PTES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/016)*

- 16.1 The Committee received a paper regarding the reinstatement of external student surveys, for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students. It was noted that the options included the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, and the International Student Barometer.
- 16.2 The Committee approved PTES as the most suitable option for the institutional need, which allows for the inclusion of PGT and PGR students. This would be actioned through the SSEC.

**Action: Jason Bohan**

## **POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT ATTAINMENT REPORT 2022**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/017)*

- 17.1 The Committee received a paper regarding Postgraduate Taught attainment. The Chair noted a reduction in attainment and highlighted differences across Schools.
- 17.2 Members of the Committee noted the potential benefit in looking at differences across modes of study. While not currently recorded the potential for doing so in future was noted.
- 17.3 Directors of Education were asked to take the report to their School Education Committees for discussion of School-level data, and any required action.

**Action: Directors of Education**

## **EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE REMIT AND COMPOSITION**

*(copy filed as UEC/160123/018)*

- 18.1 The Committee received a paper regarding a remit update to the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee for approval. The Committee was content to approve the revised remit and composition.

## **DATES OF NEXT MEETING**

- 19.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Thursday 23 March 2023 at 1.05pm.

**UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 20.1 Members of the Committee noted updates from the UEC Sub-Committees as follows:

- (i) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(copy filed as UEC/160123/019a)*
- (ii) Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) *(copy filed as UEC/160123/019b)*

**PROMOTIONS GUIDANCE: FRAMEWORK FOR CRITERIA AND ASSOCIATED GUIDANCE**

- 21.1 The Committee noted that the Framework for Criteria and Associated Guidance pertinent to the review of Promotions will be circulated among the Committee once finalised. It was noted that work continues in this regard.