UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 18 January 2022

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Euan Bain, John Barrow, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Richard Hepworth, Gerry Hough, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Ondrej Kucerak, David McCausland, Graeme Nixon, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard Shona Potts, , Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, Russell Williams and Josh Wright with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Nick Edwards, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Fiona Ritchie, Patricia Spence and Morag MacRae (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Lindsay Tibbetts, Rachael Bernard, Emma Hay, Brian Henderson, Graeme Kirkpatrick

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE UEC HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2021
(copy filed as UEC/180122/001)

1.1   The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to a meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2021 as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING
(copy filed as UEC/180122/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 10 December 2021. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress. In particular, members of the Committee noted:

- With regard to *minute point 5.3*, that an updated Risk Register was included on the agenda and would be considered at item 5;

- With regard to *minute point 6.6*, that a robust appeal process was now in place for students who were unsuccessful in their application to study online;

- With regard to *minute point 6.8,* that three guidance documents had been produced by the Centre for Academic Development, and could be accessed via links provided to the Committee as follows:
  Using Blackboard Collaborate in Digitally Enhanced Spaces
  Using Digitally Enhanced Spaces to Deliver Teaching on Teams
  Digitally Enhanced Spaces: Technology Overview

- With regard to *minute point 8.2*, that the paper on the 2022/23 Academic Year had been approved by Senate. The approved term dates had subsequently been communicated to Schools via the Senate digest.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

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

3.2 It was noted that healthcare students in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition were being asked to perform daily lateral flow tests at present.

PRESENTATION ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

4.1 The Committee heard a presentation which outlined the complexities of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) experience, and the ways in which the PGR student journey aligned with the UEC. The Committee agreed that the PGR voice should be incorporated into all strands of education-focused work, and it was noted that Schools are keen to ensure that they address PGR student needs and to deliver effective communications to their PGR students. It was specifically raised that PGR students should be more explicitly represented in terms of the Aberdeen2040 Work Placements Task and Finish Group, and Tracey Innes will communicate with Graeme Nixon to this end. **Action: Tracey Innes**

RISK REGISTER
(copy filed as UEC/180122/003)

5.1 Members of the Committee were invited to raise any matters of note regarding the "Education (UG and PG)" section of the Risk Register. The Chair drew attention to the following:-

(i) Risk 4 (*Non-continuation of students with some student groups being more at risk of non-continuation*): Papers will be available in due course addressing withdrawal rates and non-continuation data for initial discussion at the Student Support Committee. Planning are aiming to support the availability of monthly data for Schools on withdrawals through PowerBI so that Schools are able to identify issues and trends in real-time.;

(ii) Risk 6 (*Quality assurance arrangements are not in place or not adhered to in our TNE (transnational education) partnerships in Qatar and for the Joint Institute with South China Normal University*): The Committee was reminded that this risk pertained to larger TNE partnerships and that the risks would continue to be reviewed and reduced if appropriate.

SECOND HALF-SESSION UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/180122/012)

6.1 Members of the Committee considered a paper provided to disseminate information on the format of the second half-session of academic year 2021/22. The Chair noted that the information is a reminder of the previously agreed approach and aimed to ensure that all colleagues are aware of the planning requirements in Schools in particular. School Leads were asked to ensure that all colleagues are aware of, and supported in, the planning for second half-session.

Action: School Leads

6.2 It was confirmed that, at the time of the meeting, 478 students had been granted approval to study online and that the majority of applications submitted had been approved. The majority of rejections had been given due to visa restrictions. Late arrival students were considered separately within a different process, and School Administration Managers have direct access to that information. It was noted that late registration was being handled institutionally this half-session so as to provide institutional oversight so as to inform future processes. Schools

will provide a recommendation as part of the decision-making process, and the final decision made by the Vice-Principal Education. It was noted that where there is a difference in view, Schools would be consulted prior to a final decision. The early monitoring of student engagement is required to ensure that Schools are able to identify disengaged students at the earliest opportunity and School Leads on the Committee are asked to disseminate the relevant information and ensure that colleagues are aware of what is required.

Action: School Leads

6.3   Members of the Committee queried the latest date for submitting applications to study online, and it was confirmed that this would align with the last date for late registration (i.e. the end of the second week of teaching). It was also suggested that Schools could provide feedback on the process of late registration. Schools were asked to send any such feedback to Gillian Mackintosh.

ABERDEEN 2040 UPDATE

7.1   It was confirmed that the next meeting of the UEC: Aberdeen2040 was scheduled for 1 February, where further discussion would take place regarding a number of matters but particularly surrounding work placements. The first outcomes of the pastoral review are soon to be considered by Senate for their academic view.

INSTITUTIONAL NSS ACTION PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/180122/005)

8.1   Members of the Committee heard an overview of the paper which outlined progress made on the NSS Action Plan, split into two institutional priorities: Assessment and Feedback, and Student Voice.

8.2   Discussion ensued following the presentations, with the main tenets as follows:

(i) One of the main student concerns regarding feedback was differing approaches to the provision of feedback between Schools, or between programmes or courses. It was agreed that effective communication was key to ensure that students knew what to expect, and when to expect it. As previously discussed, a process had been put in place to support Schools to ensure that this information is in place consistently, and so that School leadership could support any situation where timelines are not adhered to;

(ii) The coordination of deadlines within any School was noted as being problematic, and hence attempts to do so between Schools would be even more difficult. Again, communication was agreed to be vital, particularly ensuring the communication of what timeliness was and the related expectations of what 'timely feedback' meant to students (comments in i) above is relevant here too).

8.3   The Chair agreed it would be prudent to check the information provided to students regarding feedback, and to consider whether it should be recirculated to staff and students as a reminder.

Action: Chair/Clerk

9.1 Members of the Committee considered the update paper on academic misconduct cases, which detailed the last five academic years of misconduct cases grouped using various criteria. An overall increase in cases was noted, particularly in UK and Overseas students. It was agreed that the global pandemic is likely to have had an impact on these figures but that other issues may account for the increases. It was noted that Schools should, and do, ensure that all students are provided with the relevant information and support in relation to academic integrity. It was confirmed that the information within the paper could be shared with School Education Committees as appropriate. ACTION: SCHOOL LEADS to ensure that all students are provided with the information and support

9.2 It was suggested that an annual opportunity to discuss academic misconduct should be provided for those who were involved in hearings, in order to identify key trends and institution-wide issues which could be addressed. This was widely supported and will be taken forward by the Chair. **Action Chair/Clerk**

9.3 Members of the Committee discussed the matter of academic misconduct further, with key points noted as follows:

(i) It was queried whether Senate was involved in definitions of academic misconduct, and this was confirmed with the Codes of Practice being embedded within resolutions which are ultimately approved by University Court

(ii) Members queried whether "on-demand" students were provided with the same induction information regarding academic misconduct as programme registered students. This was confirmed to be a School decision, but that any student could be enrolled on the zero-credit weighted induction course which addressed academic misconduct. It was also noted that the majority of students choose not to complete this course until the deadline for doing so approached. As the deadline is currently the end of first half-session teaching, this may mean that a number of academic misconduct offences had been committed prior to students having completed the training which explained misconduct. It was suggested that this deadline be amended, or that incremental deadlines be introduced to mitigate this factor.

Action: Tracey Innes

(iii) Members of the Committee highlighted that the students who committed academic misconduct offences may be late starts, especially international students, who struggled to catch up and handled a number of other stresses - cultural, linguistic, homesickness etc. Students may not understand the severity of such misconduct offences in terms of their future study options. It was suggested that it would be useful for the institution to undertake work to investigate this further in an attempt to support these vulnerable students and, alongside this, decrease instances of misconduct. This was widely supported by the Committee, and it was agreed that the assessment / academic integrity project, which aims to compile useful tools and resources, would be reviewed to ascertain whether this aspect could be included.

Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink

DEGREE REGULATIONS

(copy filed as UEC/180122/007)

10.1   Members of the Committee noted that the annual process of reviewing degree regulations was underway. The amended regulations would be reported to Senate in March and subsequently to University Court. A key aspect of this was the proposal to change the terminology from "half-session" to "trimester". However, it was noted that, if agreed, this would be a gradual process, as the terminology is embedded in all documentation utilised throughout the institution. This amendment was met with widespread support, along with the comment that "term" might also be an appropriate word to use. It was also noted that using "semester" would be more familiar to incoming exchange students and other international students. Further work would be taken forward to return to UEC with a proposal for approval.

Action: Gillian Mackintosh

STUDENT MOBILITY UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/180122/008)

11.1   Members of the Committee heard an update from Louisa Stratton which outlined activity within the Go Abroad team. This was welcomed by the Committee, who appreciated the information provided.

AOCB

12.1   It was noted by the Chair that Lindsay Tibbetts has stood down as a member of the Committee. The Chair wished to thank her for her work throughout her tenure.

12.2   Ondrej Kucerak highlighted the forthcoming deadline for the nomination of staff and students for the AUSA University Excellence Awards. He wished to encourage staff to nominate students who have gone above and beyond and deserve recognition for their work. Information will be circulated along with the note of the meeting.

Action: Clerk

12.3   Nick Edwards noted that his team had received communication from key GP practices regarding guidance put in place surrounding self-certification for employees during the recent surge in Covid-19 cases. Until 22 January, no certificates would be provided for illnesses of a period of less than twenty-eight days. Long term, it is intended that GP surgeries will move to a direct request system via an online form. This will be explored with School Administration Managers in order to embed efficient processes, as evidence is likely to be provided directly to Schools by GPs. The Committee will be kept informed of any updates.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1   The next meeting of the UEC will be held at 2pm on Thursday 24 February 2022. In addition, an additional meeting of the UEC, to focus on Aberdeen 2040, will take place on Tuesday 1 February 2022 at 2pm.

13.   FOR INFORMATION

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

13.1   Members of the Committee noted updates from the sub-committees of the UEC as follows:

(i)   Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)   *(copy filed as UEC/180122/009a)*

(ii)   Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
                                                            (copy filed as UEC/180122/009b)

(iii)   Student Support Committee (SSC)   *(copy filed as UEC/180122/009c)*

POLICY MAPPING TO THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY (QAA) QUALITY CODE

13.2   Members of the Committee noted that a finalised mapping of University Education Policy to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code will be discussed at the meeting of the QAC scheduled for 26 January 2022. Members of the Committee were advised that following QAC discussion, the mapping will be circulated to members of the UEC, for information.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (BLENDED LEARNING)

13.3   Members of the Committee noted the Blended Learning Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments of August 2021 (copy filed as *UEC/180122/010a)* and January 2022 (copy filed as *UEC/180122/010b).*

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

13.4   Members of the Committee noted the University's Inclusivity and Accessibility Framework and may disseminate to colleagues, as appropriate.

UPDATE ON BLACKBOARD ULTRA
                                                            (copy filed as UEC/180122/011)

13.5   Members of the Committee noted the update provided by the Centre for Academic Development on Blackboard Ultra.

QAA SCOTLAND'S INTERIM QUALITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2021/22
                                                            (copy filed as UEC/180122/013)

13.6   Members of the Committee noted the information paper which provided an outline of the Quality Assurance Agency's interim quality arrangements.

13.7   **Items for Discussion at the next (or future meetings) of the UEC:**

- Marking deadlines
- Non-continuation rates
- Degree classification data