

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)**

Minute of the Meeting held on 23 June 2022

*Present:* Ruth Taylor (Chair), John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, 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, Steve Tucker, with Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Nick Edwards, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Fiona Ritchie, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Emma Tough (Clerk) and Liam Dyker (Minute Secretary) in attendance.

*Apologies:* Harminder Battu, David Mercieca, Russell Williams, Joshua Wright, Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard, Brian Henderson, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Susan Stokeld, and Anne-Michelle Slater

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2022***(copy filed as UEC/230622/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the final meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC) in 2021/22. Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 13 April 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 13 April 2022. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress. The Committee noted the following:
- With regard to *minute point 2.1* of the meeting held on 13 April, regarding the paper on the 2023/24 Academic Year, members of the Committee noted this was on the agenda for consideration.
  - With regard to *minute point 8.2* of the meeting held on 13 April, regarding the available resource for captioning, the Committee was advised that Schools have not used all allocated budget for this, and a plea was made to utilise this funding. In relation to Panopto, it was noted that CAD were reviewing other software which may be helpful, ensuring adherence to the legal requirements.
  - The Committee received an update on late registration and managing the arrival of new students to campus. Members were advised that the proposal is for a hard late registration deadline, after which students will not be able to study in that cohort. In relation to appeals, it was suggested that this period be considered as to whether students might be able to submit academic appeals.

**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 CPG was no longer meeting as frequently, only as required.

## **UPDATE ON THE UEC AND THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (QAC)**

- 4.1 Members of the Committee noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the chairing of UEC and QAC, following recent discussions at Senate. It was advised that a proposal would be submitted to the Senate in the new academic year and that a holding position was currently in place for the first meeting of the year.

### **ABERDEEN 2040: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR EDUCATION**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/003a and UEC/230622/003b)*

- 5.1 Members of the Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting a Steering Group was proposed to be established to provide an overarching approach to achieving the strategic goals listed. After discussion regarding the reporting of this Steering Group, it was confirmed that the Group, once established, would report to the UEC. The Committee were content with this approach.
- 5.2 In terms of the Implementation Plan, it was advised that the leads in key areas had been contacted, to ensure the update of the plan for Senior Management Team (SMT) consideration.

### **ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/004)*

- 6.1 Members of the Committee heard an overview of the proposals for the structure of the Academic Year 2023/24. The proposals included further interim arrangements while ongoing discussions continued regarding the structure of the academic year in the future. The importance of (i) student recruitment and (ii) aligning with requirements of the University's overseas ventures were highlighted.
- 6.2 Overall, the Committee expressed support for another interim arrangement while discussions were ongoing regarding a future structure. There was general support for the start date in September. However, mixed views were expressed regarding the lone teaching week after spring break. Concerns/points were noted as follows:
- Some members noted that a lone teaching week does not work, but nine-week teaching blocks would not work either;
  - In some courses, ten-week teaching blocks are required for block teaching;
  - The lone teaching week disrupts the teaching and learning experience, and often students will not return for one week. There is wide recognition that students will not return from Spring break in the mindset to learn new material;
  - A practical, roving reading week could be adopted in cases where the lone teaching week will not be practical;
  - The Spring break could be reduced to two-weeks, to allow for two-weeks teaching afterwards.
- 6.3 Some members expressed concern with regard to the deadline for the return of marks, particularly concerning the tight timescales to be able to achieve the required monitoring, analysis and review of results. Similarly, concerns were expressed that exam periods were too compressed, and consideration should be given to extending these so as not to undermine the student experience.
- 6.4 In summarising the discussion, it was noted that the paper proposed an interim position with scope to make minor changes. It was agreed that widescale overhaul would not be possible

at this time. In relation to the lone teaching week, it was suggested that there be a 'floating' week which Schools could utilise as appropriate.

- 6.5 In advising of next steps, it was noted that discussions regarding the future academic year structure would be taking place in the coming months. In the meantime, the feedback received at Committee would be considered and further proposals returned to the Committee in the new academic year, before final approval at Senate.

#### **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS: DISSEMINATION AND NEXT STEPS**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/005)*

- 7.1 Members of the Committee noted the paper on the National Student Survey (NSS) Results for 2022. It was noted that analytical report templates had been received from the Planning team. It was further advised that the NSS Steering Group and Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) would progress discussions in regard to action points and next steps. It was suggested that Assessment & Feedback will be a rolling theme going forward.

**Action: SSEC**

#### **FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE NON-CONTINUATION DATA**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/006a and UEC/230622/006b)*

- 8.1 The Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting ongoing work with regard to the PowerBI dashboard which would be made available to Schools to review their data. It was highlighted that non-continuation refers to students for whom the University knows what happened once they had left. The intersection with other work, including widening access, was noted.
- 8.2 Some members urged caution in the interpretation of the statistics, noting that proportions may skew these numbers. Further, it was suggested that a qualitative analysis of this data, particularly concerning the reasons for non-continuation, as well as separation between the on-campus and online students' data would be important.
- 8.3 The Committee highlighted reviewing other institutions' best practice in this area. In response, it was advised that this work is currently underway. Caution was urged that initiatives that work in other institutions cannot be expected to work instantly at the University.
- 8.4 In concluding the discussion, the Committee were asked to feedback any further comments or suggestions to the Dean for Student Support.

**Action: Committee**

#### **DELIVERY OF EDUCATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) FINAL REPORT**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/007)*

- 9.1 Members of the Committee heard a brief summary of the report and reflections on the Delivery of Education work. It was noted that the TFG has been formally concluded and that this work will be subsumed into the new Education Strategic Steering Group.
- 9.2 Some members queried the cultural shift towards authentic assessment, noting that this is accepted differently in different areas. It was suggested that authenticity be incorporated into examinations, in order for students to be able to demonstrate key knowledge and skills in future employment. It was highlighted that authentic assessment does not exclude exams; it only enhances exams. The employability of students was discussed, particularly in relation to high-stakes, invigilated exams which was further required in some professions.

9.3 The Committee were asked to feedback any comments by the end of August.

**Action: Committee**

**UPDATE FROM THE GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS TFG AND ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT  
WORKING GROUP**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/008)*

- 10.1 The Committee heard an overview of the Task and Finish Groups' (TFGs) work. It was noted that the two TFGs had initially operated separately but would be brought together in the next phase of development.
- 10.2 Members of the Committee were supportive of the proposed approach and the revised list of Graduate Attributes. Some queries were raised specifically regarding:
- The use of Blackboard Ultra; this could be considered as an option;
  - The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their role in these attributes; it was noted that the SDGs will feed into the work in a later phase;
  - The input from employers; it was advised that there was input from some and alumni, however, there would be greater engagement in the next phase;
- 10.3 It was suggested that this piece of work is important in articulating the skills and attributes the students have gained across their time at University, which would be particularly important from an employer's perspective. Further, the Committee were asked to share with colleagues and gather feedback for the further phases of development.

**ENHANCEMENT THEME ANNUAL REPORT**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/009)*

- 11.1 Members of the Committee heard a summary of the report, noting the Enhancement Theme is currently about to embark on its third year. It was highlighted that a call for projects for the next year would be released soon. Staff and students were thanked for their efforts, noting the collaborative approach to the themes and the projects.

**CONTRACT CHEATING**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/010)*

- 12.1 Members of the Committee heard an overview of the paper and of the proposed approach to take forward the work for contract cheating, noting a Task and Finish Group would be established to tackle this issue. It was further noted that there was concern for academic standards, but also for the student wellbeing.
- 12.2 Some members highlighted the support and wellbeing of the students as critical. The links with 'traditional' plagiarism were also highlighted. It was suggested that the process for dealing with plagiarism be streamlined to allow colleagues to spend more time analysing students' work for more complex cases. On a similar note, the type and volume of evidence required for contract cheating cases was queried.
- 12.3 The diverse range of backgrounds of students was discussed, noting many students arriving from overseas have different academic standards and a different culture. It was suggested that an approach which seeks to understand how this happens at the University and what support students would require and when was sought.

- 12.4 The Committee was informed that the definition for the penalty has changed in line with the second offences for plagiarism. It was also noted that Investigating Officers in any discipline case will look at all available evidence and make a reasoned judgement on the appropriate penalty.
- 12.5 Members of the Committee were advised that the next steps would include prioritisation and reviewing the other factors in the discipline processes, such as appeals.

#### **ABERDEEN 2040 COMMITMENTS IN THE CATALOGUE OF COURSES**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/011)*

- 13.1 Members of the Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting this will be progressed across the Summer months. Members were supportive of the proposals. However, some members raised queries specifically regarding:
- Whether there was capability to ascertain further information and what the 'badge' meant if hovered over, for example.
  - Whether there was scope to include the Sustainable Development Goals in this piece of work; it was proposed that this be considered but will feed into the larger piece of work on the curriculum which is due to be underway in the future.

#### **DEADLINES FOR THE RETURN OF RESULTS 2022/23**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/012)*

- 14.1 Members of the Committee heard an overview of the paper and the proposed deadlines for the return of results. Discussion ensued regarding the timeliness of the deadlines, the tenets of which were:
- The January deadline is tight, particularly when compiling course grades; the Committee was advised that there was a strong view that students should know their course results before going into term, as agreed at a previous meeting of this Committee; it was also highlighted that this deadline is really challenging to move;
  - The June deadline is a week shorter than in previous years; it was suggested that the three-week turnaround for feedback was not designed for final results; it was further noted that the results feed into graduations, which cannot be turned around in anything less than 2 weeks.
- 14.2 Members of the Committee queried the associated processes with the return of results and sought clarity on whether there may be possibility to shorten the time for marking, moderation and student records, for example. It was highlighted that the type and load of assessment for students plays a role in this. It was suggested that the feedback framework could be reviewed.
- 14.3 It was highlighted that students ought to have the right to decide as to whether they seek continuation of their studies before they commence the second half-session. It was agreed that this feedback would be taken away and the paper recirculated following these discussions.

**Action: Clerk**

#### **JERUSALEM DECLARATION ON ANTISEMITISM**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/013)*

- 15.1 Members of the Committee heard an overview of the proposal to adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, noting the extensive consultation that had been undertaken.

Some members queried the extent to which this covered all University campuses. In response, it was highlighted that the University is anti-racist, and this would apply to all students and staff on all campuses.

#### **FINAL AND CLOSING REMARKS**

- 16.1 The Committee expressed its heartfelt thanks to the outgoing Vice-President for Education from AUSA for all of his hard work and contribution to the Education agenda across his tenure in post.

#### **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 17.1 Members of the UEC will take place in 2022/23 as follows:

Monday 10 October 2022 at 1.05pm

Monday 16 January 2023 at 1.05pm

Thursday 23 March 2023 at 1.05pm

Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 1.05pm

Thursday 15 June 2023 at 1.05pm

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

- 18.1 Members of the Committee noted update reports from the UEC sub-committees as follows:

(i) Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/014a)*

(ii) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/014b)*

(iii) Student Support Committee (SSC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/014c)*

#### **EDUCATION COMMITTEES IN 2022/23**

*(copy filed as UEC/130422/015a and UEC/230622/015b)*

- 19.1 Members of the Committee noted, for its part, the paper containing the dates of the Education Committees in 2022/23 and the proposed timings of associated agenda items.

#### **RISK REGISTER**

*(copy filed as UEC/230622/016)*

- 20.1 Members of the Committee noted, for its part, the updated Risk Register, with regards to the specific risks associated with Education.

#### **LEARNING AND TEACHING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

*(copy filed as UEC/130422/017)*

- 19.1 Members of the Committee noted, for its part, the updated Learning and Teaching Equality Impact Assessment.