UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2023

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Akua Agyeman, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Jason Bohan, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Stuart Durkin, Nick Edwards, Bill Harrison, Ken Jeffrey, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Helen Knight, David McCausland, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, and Joshua Wright, with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Rhona Moore, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Darren Comber, Isabella Fausti, Liam Dyker (Clerk) and Kyra Lamont (Minutes) in attendance.

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Graeme Nixon, and Graeme Kirkpatrick.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2023
(copy filed as UEC/230323/001)

1.1   The Chair welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee approved the minute of 16 January 2023.

MATTERS ARISING
(copy filed as UEC/230323/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the previous meeting of UEC held on 16 January 2023. The Committee was advised that the action plans would be reviewed, and a decision taken on how they will be reported.

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.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION
(copy filed as UEC/230323/003)

4.1   Members of the Committee discussed the paper addressing the remit and composition of the University Education Committee (UEC) in line with the recent Senate Effectiveness Review.

4.2   The need for clarity in terms of what the University Education Committee (UEC) approves and what the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) approves was noted. The Committee thereafter approved the remit and composition.

RISK REGISTER
(copy filed as UEC/230323/004)

5.1   The Chair addressed members of the Committee with regards to the Risk Register; highlighting the risks associated with any marking boycott should that occur, and the steps taken to mitigate the risks associated with Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). There were no matters raised for further discussion.

ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/230323/005)

6.1   The Chair advised members that progress was being made in terms of the Aberdeen 2040 implementation plan. The Chair acknowledged the involvement of the relevant Task and Finish Groups in the process and noted the workload implications which may need further consideration outside of today's meeting.

FUTURE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE

(copy filed as UEC/230323/006)

7.1   The Committee heard a summary of the paper and noted its purpose to propose a structure for Academic Year 2024/2025 and beyond. The Chair explained the four options available for consideration by the Committee and discussed the principles against which each of the options had been assessed as described in the paper.

7.2   In discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- The resource implications of maintaining the library opening hours across the Winter break was noted in relation to Options 3 and 4.
- Welcome the equal three terms and transparent recognition of teaching that already takes place.
- Option 4 overlays teaching and marking which was not seen as favourable.
- The importance of avoiding a structure which may result in poor attendance and retention after the vacation periods, in relation to the Winter and Spring breaks, was noted.
- The importance of the inclusion of consideration of our TNE partnerships in the discussions was noted. Further, it was highlighted that arrangements were recently made to delay the start of term in AFG College to allow for greater time for student recruitment.
- The flexibility within the structure for adequate reading and revision weeks was noted.
- The implications for studying and childcare during vacation periods, particularly where assessments fall after the Winter break, were noted (options 3 and 4).
- The impact of field courses for students on joint degree programmes was noted, particularly in relation to the reduced Spring vacation. Further, it was suggested that some Schools may need to adapt as the schedule for fieldwork differs significantly between departments and that adaptations should be possible.
- The importance of ensuring adequate time for research, particularly in the summer period, was noted, with options 3 and 4 pushing content into later in the academic year being problematic.
- Consideration should be given to Study Abroad opportunities and the impacts therein, as well as the work placement opportunities for students.
- The importance of clarity for January start students was noted, particularly in relation to the nomenclature of the Term structure.

7.3   Generally, members were supportive of Options 1 and 2. Some members favoured Option 3, with no preference for Option 4. Option 1 was highlighted as more favourable in relation to recruitment and alignment with University competitors. Options 3 and 4 may negatively impact research activities and create a disjointed first term.

7.4   It was noted that these options had been developed in line with the Aberdeen 2040 strategy and that several Committees had been given the opportunity to comment on the options outlined in the paper. It was noted that any feedback obtained would be included in the paper that will be presented to Senate. In summarising, the Committee noted that option one

appeared to be the most favourable. The Committee was advised on the approval route and noted a revised proposal will return for approval following Senate consideration.

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM: PRINCIPLES AND TIMELINES
(copy filed as UEC/230323/007)

8.1   The Committee noted the principles and timelines outlined in the Paper had been considered and approved by Senate. The Committee noted the action plan and associated actions.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS): INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLAN UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/230323/008)

9.1   The Committee heard an update on the progress of the Institutional action plan which had been developed in response to the results of the recent NSS survey; namely, the development of further training and the TESTA pilot.

9.2   The Committee noted the work being undertaken in response to the NSS survey.

[Clerk's Note: Morag Beedie joined the meeting at this point.]

ABERDEEN STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY
(copy filed as UEC/230323/009)

10.1   The Committee heard a summary of the paper, which had been developed in response to the results of the 2022 Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES). It was noted that there was a summary of the results which were particularly positive with regards to teaching and learning. It was further noted, however, that there was a low response rate. Members were advised that the intention is to close the feedback loop by April this year and this will change to January as of next year. It was noted that Directorates had been asked to produce an action plan to address relevant areas. Schools will use the existing NSS action template to update actions as appropriate.   **Action: Directors of Education**

10.2   Clarity was sought whether the raw data would be made available to Schools, so that Schools could undertake further analysis if they wish. After discussion, it was advised that the raw data can be issued to Schools.   **Action: Morag Beedie**

10.3   It was suggested that specific course codes should be removed from the ASES. The committee was advised that it will be possible to redact this information in future. It was suggested that it may be more appropriate to raise any concerns with respect to particular courses with the relevant Directors of Education and requested that this was taken away for further consideration.   **Action: Jason Bohan/Morag Beedie**

10.4   It was noted that there were some areas that may benefit from further reflection, particularly with regards to the provision of mental health support.

[Clerk's Note: Morag Beedie left the meeting at this point.]

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

11.1   The Committee discussed matters of academic integrity in respect of:

(i)   CONTRACT CHEATING UPDATE   *(copy filed as UEC/230323/010)*

11.2 The Committee heard a summary of the paper. Members were advised that a new communication had been issued to students advising of the additional training and support available with regards to Contract Cheating. Members were advised that research is underway into the barriers and facilitators of academic misconduct and explained that these findings will be presented at HETL; it was noted that some students initially engage with these external services seeking a check for plagiarism as some Schools do not currently allow their students to perform a plagiarism check prior to submission of assessment. It was further suggested that the original TESTA protocol be amended to include academic integrity, particularly in relation to redesigning assessments, where possible, to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct.

(ii)   ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (CHATGPT) UPDATE   *(copy filed as UEC/230323/011)*

11.3 The Committee heard a summary of the paper, which provides an update on the University's approach to the use of Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT). Members were advised that the proposed approach is in line with the sector and focuses on the acknowledgement of these sources, as detection is difficult. It was clarified that the unacknowledged and unattributed use of AI technology will be dealt with under the plagiarism definition. Members were advised that the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) will be amended accordingly. Members were advised that further guidance will be provided to staff, and communication will be provided to students at the level of the course.

11.4 Members expressed support for the approach, noting that some colleagues viewed this as an opportunity to modify assessments to minimise any negative impact of ChatGPT. It was advised that this may be an opportunity to share examples of good practice with the Directors of Education. Further, it was noted that the sharing of good practice would allow for consistency in approach. It was agreed that this information would be disseminated in due course.   **Action: Kirsty Kiezebrink**

11.5 It was noted that disciplinary procedures should be as streamlined a possible from both the staff and student perspective, ensuring that the information presented is standardised. The importance of ensuring that lessons learned as part of discipline and appeal processes are effectively put into practice was noted.

UPDATE ON TESTA

(copy filed as UEC/230323/012)

12.1 The Committee heard an update on the progress of the TESTA pilot. It was explained that the pilot had received positive feedback, particularly with regards to the adaption made in terms of data collection. The Committee was advised that the findings of this pilot should become available in the next six weeks, though there were some delays in some areas due to unforeseen circumstances, and explained that these findings will be used to inform the subsequent TESTA protocol that could be used more widely in the University.

12.2 The Committee noted that during the recent Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) visit, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland were impressed that the University had undertaken an evaluation of Blended Learning, and that the TESTA pilot's use of evaluation continues to demonstrate a positive approach to evaluation of our Education.

REVISIONS TO THE ADVANCEHE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

(copy filed as UEC/230323/013)

13.1   The Committee heard a summary of the paper detailing the revisions to the AdvanceHE Professional Standards Framework for Learning and Teaching. It was advised that AdvanceHE oversee the UK professional standards framework for the Sector. It was noted that the framework is updated roughly every 5 years.

ADVANCED TEACHING DEVELOPMENT SCHEME PROPOSAL

(copy filed as UEC/230323/014)

14.1   The Committee heard a summary of the proposals, noting that whilst the University places emphasis on the professional development of new staff, the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) has been looking at the development of resources for more experienced Academic Staff. Members were reminded of the importance of considering Scholarship opportunities and utilising the revised promotion criteria, in addition to examples of effective teaching. Members were advised that the current proposal may also provide a method of succession planning and incorporate mentoring.

14.2   Some concerns were raised regarding the exclusivity of the Scheme, noting that there may be equally deserving people that could miss out. Members were advised that a two-tier approach has been incorporated in an attempt to mitigate these concerns. Members attention was drawn to the bespoke nature of the scheme and highlighted the benefit for both the School and the individual.

14.3   The bespoke nature of the scheme was highlighted as a strength, but clarity was sought regarding whether the scheme was designed to be bespoke for the individual or the School. In response, it was advised that it has been written primarily for the professional development of individuals at this level.

14.4   The broader approach in terms of enhancing Education leadership was highlighted; however, concerns were expressed regarding the link to promotion. It was noted that there may be a suggestion that participation in the scheme may be seen as a requirement for promotion. The Committee was informed that participation in the scheme would not be a requirement for promotion. The importance of maintaining equity of opportunity by ensuring diversity within the scheme was noted.

14.5   Members of Committee were content to approve the paper.

TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES GROUP (TERMS OF REFERENCE)

(copy filed as UEC/230323/015)

15.1   The Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting that this group was being formalised to provide a formal means of reporting to the Space Management Committee. It was advised that the Group enables the University to ensure the issues of pedagogy, space and digital requirements are considered as a whole. It was noted that the Group provides an opportunity for the staff who are using these spaces to feedback their needs and concerns.

15.2   It was suggested that the issue of accessibility was more explicitly detailed in the Terms of Reference, especially with a view to booking arrangements. Members were reminded of the importance of ensuring accessibility for students and staff entering and exiting the University's teaching facilities, including the consideration of EVAC requirements.

15.3   Due to time constraints, the Committee was asked to approve by circulation, and feed any comments to the Dean for Educational Innovation.   **Action: Clerk**

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

16.1   The Committee noted the update reports from the UEC Sub-Committees in respect of:
(i)   Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
(copy filed as UEC/230323/016a)
(ii)   Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC)
(copy filed as UEC/230323/016b)

APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS UPDATE 2021/22
(copy filed as UEC/230323/017)

17.1   Members of the UEC noted the paper on Appeals and Complaints data, noting a previous error which provided the incorrect total student population. This has now been rectified and is presented to the Committee for information.

PROMOTIONS REVIEW: FRAMEWORK FOR CRITERIA AND ASSOCIATED GUIDANCE

18.1   Members of the Committee noted the communication from the Senior Vice-Principal on the launch of the new Academic Promotion Policy/Procedure and Framework of Criteria. These are available as part of the [Academic Promotion Toolkit](#).

DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE MODEL AND ACCOMPANYING PRINCIPLES
(copy filed as UEC/230323/018)

19.1   Members of the Committee noted the paper on Development of Student Learning Experience Model and Accompanying Principles.

ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL ANNUAL STATEMENTS ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR (2021/22)
(copy filed as UEC/230323/019)

20.1   Members of the Committee noted the paper from the Scottish Funding Council and Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland) on Analysis of Institutional Annual Statements for Institution-Led Review for the HE sector for 2021/22.

POLICY REVIEW UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/230323/020)

21.1   Members of the Committee noted the paper providing an update on policy review, which details the approving committee for each policy review.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW: FINDINGS
(copy filed as UEC/230323/021)

22.1   Members of the Committee noted the findings from the recent Quality Enhancement and Standards Review.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23.1   Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on **Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 1.05pm**.