

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 29 August 2023

Present: Ruth Taylor (**Chair**), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Ken Jeffrey, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Rona Patey, Stuart Piertney (vice Graeme Nixon), Shona Potts, Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Sai Shraddha S. Viswanathan (vice Rhiannon Ledwell), Joshua Wright, with Scott Carle, Liam Dyker, Nick Edwards, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Rhona Moore, Patricia Spence and Isabella Fausti (**Clerk**) in attendance.

Apologies: Simon Bains, Harminder Battu, Julie Bray, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Helen Knight, Rhiannon Ledwell, David McCausland, Graeme Nixon, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Louisa Stratton, Steve Tucker.

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the University Education Committee (UEC) meeting and asked those in attendance to introduce themselves to new members.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Graeme Nixon for his contribution to the Committee and welcomed Stuart Piertney who has taken over the role as Dean.
- 1.3 The Chair informed the Committee that there would be a move to the committee management software Decision Time for future meetings.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2023

(copy filed as UEC/290823/001)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 16 May 2023.

MATTERS ARISING (ACTION LOG)

(copy filed as UEC/290823/002)

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 16 May 2023. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress.
- 3.2 Clarification on timelines for reviewing assessment within Schools in relation to the Decolonising the Curriculum agenda (minute 16.2 refers): It was noted that there would be a standing agenda item for the UEC twice a year for updates from Schools on the progress of Decolonising the Curriculum.
- 3.3 Circulation of the final version of the Teaching and Learning Spaces Group Terms of Reference to the Committee (minute 2.8 refers): It was noted that the final version was complete and would be circulated after the meeting.

- 3.4 Circulation of the finalised version of remit and membership of an Advisory Group on academic integrity and practice (minute 11.4 refers): It was noted that the finalised version would be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as UEC/290823/003)

- 4.1 Members of the UEC approved the remit and composition of the UEC for 2023/24 subject to some minor changes to the composition discussed at the meeting:
- i. Stuart Piertney to replace Graeme Nixon.
 - ii. Appointment of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) representative

[Clerk's note: Following the meeting, the following additional changes to the composition were made: Louisa Stratton's name added as the Student Mobility Representative; Anne Michelle Slater's Dean title changed to Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development; Brian Henderson name replaced Susan Halfpenny as the Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee); Waheed Afzal's name corrected; AUSA contacted regarding a second student representative]

- 4.2 It was discussed that members of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) would be asked for representation at the UEC. If not, a current member of the UEC who also sits in EDIC would take on the role.

Action: Chair/Clerk

RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/290823/004)

- 5.1 Members of the UEC discussed the risk register, specifically in relation to Education. It was noted that some minor amendments are outlined in the cover paper. The Committee discussed the possible impact of RAAC on the student experience, the delivery of teaching, and the ability to expand the number of medical students. It was noted that this issue may be included on the Estates Risk Register, but it would be reviewed to check the specific risks discussed are captured in it.

Action: Chair/Clerk/RP

ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/290823/005)

- 6.1 The UEC discussed the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan. The Committee was content that the actions identified for 2023-24 are appropriate, subject to one minor correction to the wording of action 5.2, to change the name of the International Partnerships Committee to University Partnerships Committee, as it will also include UK partnerships.

Action: Chair/Clerk

FUTURE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE

(copy filed as UEC/290823/006)

- 7.1 The UEC approved, for its part, the proposals for the Future Academic Year Structure. The Committee noted that this paper had twice been presented for academic view at UEC and QAC with amendments made based on feedback received. It was noted that Section 4.2 provided a summary of the discussion at Senate in June 2023 with all amendments

articulated. The Chair thanked all those who have been involved in this extensive piece of work.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT ABSENCE

(copy filed as UEC/290823/007)

- 8.1 The UEC discussed amendments to the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence. The Committee heard that the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence was reviewed to expand the definition of acceptable supplementary evidence in light of changes to the provision of medical certificates for students. The changes also provide more clarity on the connection with other related policies.
- 8.2 This review was also presented at SSEC, APRG and QAC and has been approved at QAC, for its part, subject to some minor amendments. The Committee noted that this paper would also be presented for approval at Senate as part of the QAC report.
- 8.3 It was highlighted that the provision of absence certificates to students, other than for employment purposes, was never part of the contract that GPs have with the NHS and that the pressures in delivering what they are contracted to do are such that this decision had to be made.
- 8.4 The committee discussed some amendments to Section 2.2 relating to the procedure on how to report an absence for students in the healthcare programmes and on overseas campuses.
- 8.5 Other than these minor comments, the UEC agreed that the proposed changes were very helpful and provided clarity to the policy.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW (QESR) ACTION PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/290823/008)

- 9.1 Members of the UEC discussed and approved the QESR Action Plan. The Committee heard that the Action Plan had been produced as a requirement for the QESR process and feedback had been received, which is listed in section 6.3. It was noted the importance of demonstrating that the University has acted on the recommendations ahead of the institutional visit, taking place on 23 January 2024.

ABERDEEN 2040 EDUCATION UPDATES

(i) DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM LAUNCH OF RESOURCES

(copy filed as UEC/290823/009)

- 10.1 The UEC received an update on Decolonising the Curriculum (DtC) work, in particular with respect to the launch of the website and toolkit, which includes case studies and a feedback form. The Committee heard that the resources will be launched via the staff ezine and that a schedule for training will be circulated in the near future. The Chair thanked the DtC steering group for all the work carried out. It was noted that the DtC steering group wish to continue meeting in order to share practices and evaluate the implementation of resources. Directors of Education should ensure that the paper is taken to the School Education Committees.

Action: Directors of Education

(ii) PASTORAL REVIEW TFG UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/290823/010)

- 10.2 Members of the UEC received an update on the work of the Pastoral Review TFG, which was driven by the recommendations made by the QESR review. The Committee heard a summary of the recommendations for Schools on providing pastoral support for PGT students, with the aim of making this consistent across all Schools. The Committee discussed the review of the available online resources. The Committee were complimentary of the website resources. Links to this website will be circulated to students during Freshers' Week and Staff will be alerted via the ezine. It was noted that an in-person training session for Personal Tutors and Pastoral Leads was being developed, with the first being delivered in November. The UEC noted that the plan is for the TFG to be retired. In its place, the current Personal Tutors and Pastoral Leads group, which meets once a term, would be formalised and would report to SSEC. This group would have oversight of future developments related to pastoral support provided.

DEAN FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/290823/011)

- 11.1 Members of the UEC discussed the update on the work of the Dean for Educational Innovation.
- 11.2 In relation to the tools for the delivery of education, the Committee heard that, of the three pilots that were presented at the last UEC meeting, the IPAC tool has been prioritised to support peer evaluation in group work. Further training on using this tool will be developed by the Centre for Academic Development. It was noted that there was no funding for the Respondus lockdown browser or for the Turnitin AI detection tool.
- 11.3 The Committee noted that resources on academic integrity are now available online on the Toolkit, but work is being done to find ways to better promote these. Some of the resources include case studies on how staff have engaged with generative AI tools, and members were encouraged to submit case studies if they had any. Furthermore, the Committee heard that a Student Intern has been working closely with the Dean for Educational Innovation and has been involved in two research projects, one on contract cheating and the other on generative AI. The study looked at factors that contribute to and prevent students from engaging with these.
- 11.4 The UEC heard that the Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment (TESTA) pilot went well and included two schools and seven programmes, all undergraduate. The pilot will be extended to other schools this coming year and one school will pilot it in a postgraduate programme. A Northeast Scotland group was established with Dundee and St Andrews Universities to work closely on TESTA and benchmark against each other.
- 11.5 The UEC noted that the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) teaching room will be in place before the start of second half-session. This will be available as a normal teaching room but with the equipment and training available for staff who would like to develop a COIL project and use the room for this.

- 11.6 The Chair asked that the School Leads take the paper to their School Education Committees subject to some minor amendments.

Action: KK/DoEs

EDUCATION DATA

(i) GRADUATE OUTCOMES REPORT 2023

(copy filed as UEC/290823/012)

- 12.1.1 The UEC discussed the Graduate Outcomes (GO) report. The Committee heard that for first-degree leavers there is generally a downward trend compared to last year whilst the results for postgraduate leavers are showing a slight upward trend. The Committee noted that School-level data will be circulated at a later date.

Action: JBa

- 12.1.2 The Chair stated that improving graduate outcomes and employability is a strategic area for the university and the project on work placements/work-based learning will play a role in this.

- 12.1.3 A discussion was had on factors that impact graduate employability, both external and internal, and the support that can be developed for schools to ensure that students are prepared for the job market. The discussion also touched on which metrics would have a large shift in ranking with a small percentage change and how the University can strategically target certain demographics of alumni (highly skilled graduates) when sending out communication in relation to the survey.

(ii) FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE NON-CONTINUATION INTERNAL DATA 2021/22

(copy filed as UEC/290823/013)

- 12.2.1 The UEC discussed the report on non-continuation for 2021/22, which provides an analysis of non-continuation rates. The Committee heard that non-continuation has increased and that there are different patterns of non-continuation in some Schools in later years.

- 12.2.2 A discussion was had on the context and external factors that contribute to these higher rates of non-continuation. The discussion also touched on what can and should be done to support students more proactively and it was noted that there are significant differences in non-continuation rates within different areas of the University.

- 12.2.3 It was noted that the Support for Study Policy is being re-drafted to provide a better framework of support.

(iii) NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2023 REPORT

(copy filed as UEC/290823/014)

- 12.3.1 The UEC discussed the positive results of the NSS, including the University's 10th position in UK for overall positive responses and 2nd in terms of overall satisfaction within the devolved nations.

- 12.3.2 The Committee noted that there were some very positive subject-level outcomes notably with the following five subjects ranking top in the UK: Anatomy, Physiology & Pathology; Business Studies; History of Art, Architecture & Design; Linguistics; and Philosophy. The improvement of the Initial Teacher Training was also noted.
- 12.3.3 It was noted that changes to NSS for 2023 make direct comparison with previous years difficult due to changes in the questions asked.
- 12.3.4 An in-depth analytical report will be produced before the next meeting and it will be circulated to the UEC.

Action: JBo

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

(i) UPDATE REPORT FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT AND EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)
(copy filed as UEC/290823/015)

- 13.1 The UEC noted the updated report from the Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC).

(ii) INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW: SCHEDULE TO 2028
(copy filed as UEC/290823/016)

- 13.2 Members of the UEC noted the Schedule of Forthcoming Reviews to 2028 for Internal Teaching Review.

(iii) STUDENT MONITORING, ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT TFG UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/290823/017)

- 13.3 Members of the UEC noted the progress made by the Student Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG.

(iv) RELIGION AND BELIEF POLICY

- 13.4 Members of the UEC noted the new [Religion and Belief Policy](#), available on Policy Zone.

(v) ENHANCEMENT THEMES YEAR 3 REPORT
(copy filed as UEC/290823/018)

- 13.5 Members of the UEC noted the Year 3 Report submitted in relation to the Enhancement Themes.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 10 October 2023 at 13:05, by way of Microsoft Teams.