College of Science and Engineering

College Learning and Teaching Committee
Minutes of meeting held on 20 September 2016

PRESENT
Prof G Reid Convener, Dean of Learning and Teaching
Dr P Bailey School of Chemistry
Dr T Bailey School of Mathematics
Dr M Gallagher School of Biological Sciences
Prof J Hardy School of Physics & Astronomy
Dr B Franke School of Informatics
Ms A Laidlaw Head of Academic Affairs
Dr A Maciocia Dean of Students
Mr S Warrington School of Engineering
Mr J Vercruysse Student Representative (School of Engineering)

IN ATTENDANCE
Ms L Henderson Secretary
Mrs L Archibald Notes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Gordon McDougall, Dean of Quality Assurance.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

a) MSc in Computational Applied Mathematics
This had been discussed in detail and approved by the Concessions Sub-committee during the Summer.

b) MSc Exchange Semester
The logistics of a possible exchange semester were currently being discussed and an update on this issue would be given as soon as possible.

c) Flowcharts
A draft flowchart of the process of progression decisions was being produced. Consultation with Academic Services was to take place to ensure the document was not replicating existing guidance. If felt to be a valuable addition to existing documentation, the document would be circulated to Committee members.

ACTION : LH/AL

d) Students under 18
The College occasionally has a small number of students matriculated who are under the age of 18. The University has a policy governing measures to support such students, which was developed in collaboration between UHRS and Academic Services: http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Protection_of_Children_and_Protected_Adults_Policy.pdf. In particular, this policy outlines required Risk Management Plans for students under the age of 16.

Schools are consulted by Admissions regarding applicants under 18, in relation to logistical implications and feasibility. However, it would be beneficial if processes and responsibilities across Schools and the College Office (including Admissions and Academic Affairs) could be clarified.

The Head of Academic Affairs agreed to take this matter forward with the Head of Recruitment and Admissions.

**ACTION:** AL

4. **Convener’s Report**

   a) **College Learning and Teaching Strategy**

   The Convener notified the Committee that the College Learning and Teaching Strategy was currently due for renewal. However, he reported that during the process of developing a draft University Learning and Teaching Strategy, Senate Learning and Teaching Committee had concluded that there was no longer additional value in having supplementary College-level Strategies. This new direction of travel would see Schools outlining in their annual plans measures taken to meet the strategic objectives of the University L&T Strategy.

   A draft version of the University Learning and Teaching and Strategy would be presented to a future meeting, and a representative from Academic Services would be invited to attend in order to facilitate discussion around the impact for School plans.

   b) **Lecture capture**

   A business case had been put forward for significant investment in lecture capture to be introduced in all teaching spaces in the University. This should lead to a system being introduced in the next academic year, although it was envisaged that this would begin with larger theatres, before being rolled out to medium theatres in the following year. It was hoped that a new system would be automated and require minimal training for lecturers.

   The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee would consider options around policy development, including opt-out routes and whether these would be permitted. The Convener agreed to update the Committee on developments in due course.

   c) **Online assessment & feedback**

   The Convener reported that Senate had indicated a desire to continue the expansion of the use of online assessment and feedback. This was driven by strong representation from students for a move to online submission, partly due to the difficulties reported by students when attempting to read handwritten feedback. It would also facilitate monitoring of turnaround times for marking and feedback.

   The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences had introduced a policy of compulsory online submission of assessment and return of feedback for academic year 2016/2017. The submission of assessed coursework and return of feedback would be done online in CAHSS, but the actual marking of work could continue to be done offline (as long as feedback was scanned/uploaded or provided online via other means). Exceptions were only allowable as approved opt-outs for strong pedagogical reasons. Turnitin was a particularly popular
In discussion, the Committee noted the following:
- It was felt important that any system introduced should be researched beforehand and fit for purpose. Work on this was being carried out centrally and the Committee would be kept appraised of developments. In disciplines where use of mathematical symbols and chemical structures was common, it was felt that online submission may not be feasible until such time as the standard and scope of available software packages further advances.
- It was recognised that text based feedback would be clearer and easier to read for students; although in the case of annotations, it may be more challenging. It was noted that software does also exist which allows handwritten annotations to be included.
- Particularly in the School of Mathematics and Physics & Astronomy, students would typically use pen and paper to complete work. In these cases, the student would be required to scan in their coursework, which would add another layer to the process.
- It should be noted that in the event that a marker was required to assess a large amount of coursework, working on a screen for long periods can cause a great deal of strain.
- The Head of Academic Affairs suggested that if there was further action at Senate level to endorse online submission across the institution, the Committee may benefit from inviting relevant speakers to present on available software and experience elsewhere in the University.

d) EUCLID Assessment and Progression Tools
A recent of the APT Steering Group had discussed various issues around the importance of ensuring Degree Programme Tables are up-to-date and logically structured to ensure accurate functionality of tools relating to progression and degree classification. The Convener asked Schools to review their DPTs as a matter of urgency, to ensure they were fit for purpose.

**ACTION: DoTs to ensure appropriate reviews of DPTs undertaken by Schools.**

5. **Timetabling and Teaching Space Allocation**

A Teaching Spaces Oversight Group had been established, to avoid a recurrence of problems experienced in the previous year. Graeme Reid and Duncan Herd were representing the College on this Group.

Members were asked to provide an overview of how things had operated this year and whether the Room bookings and Timetabling systems had been satisfactory.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- Problems were experienced with some core courses clashing in the School of GeoSciences.
- The School of Informatics had experienced difficulties with the availability of large lecture theatres: those allocated were not big enough and lectures were running beyond the capacity of venues. Double teaching would require additional lecture theatres, which were also unavailable.
- Rooms had been booked on predicted number of students expected. As some classes were very popular with ‘outside’ students, these were over capacity.

- The situation regarding tutorial room allocation was unclear at this early stage in the semester. An update would be given at the next meeting.

- In a related estates matter, it was noted that on three separate occasions, areas of the campus have been affected by construction work on Open Days. This situation led to some buildings being inaccessible due to safety issues. It was important that works such as these are communicated to the relevant people within Schools. The Room Booking system could also be used to highlight these.

- Students had been informed more proactively about personal timetables this year. Unless a room is booked, classes and tutorials are not visible to students. This led to some students being confused or unaware of classes taking place. This could perhaps be avoided by adding a ‘dummy room’ system to allow the class to be incorporated into their timetable.

- As Schools and students also have a different view of timetables, it can be very difficult to help them through the system.

Schools were asked to send a summary of their experiences and outstanding issues to Lynda Henderson who would co-ordinate these and request feedback from Timetabling Services on behalf of the Committee.

**ACTION : LH/DOTs**

6. **NSS RESULTS**

Discussions around most recent NSS scores were ongoing and Schools were asked to give thought to any actions they might take in light of the results. Common themes across the College were likely to be identifiable, and coordinated action was recommended where appropriate – potentially in partnership with College QA Committee.

Although various initiatives had been introduced to improve NSS scores in recent years, there was currently little evidence to suggest that this had resulted in improved outcomes.

The Committee noted that whilst accessing NSS data for Edinburgh was straightforward, clearer comparative data from other universities would be very useful. Concerns were expressed regarding the understanding of the student population regarding the way in which survey responses translated into scores, for example mid-range answers (“satisfactory” or “okay”) being recorded as negative.

As Schools develop action plans, it would be useful to share and discuss these as a Committee.

7. **RESITS AND ACADEMIC FAILURE TASK GROUP**

The Dean of Students gave a verbal update on the work of this Task Group of CSPC.

He noted that ambiguity currently existed in the Regulations around the number of permissible assessment attempts, which had resulted in inconsistent experiences for students. The Task Group had canvassed opinions on this matter from Directors of Teaching, which varied across Schools. The intention was to put produce a proposal for further consultation and eventual submission to Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.
Academic Services would be attending a future meeting to engage in discussion around a draft paper on this matter.

8. **Ordinary Degrees**

It was clarified that the Taught Assessment Regulations only permit the award of Credit on Aggregate to students on Honours degrees. Students on Ordinary degrees cannot be awarded CA, and should instead be offered resit attempts.

Previously, the College had commonly applied CA for those transferred onto the Ordinary programme who had failed 40 credits or less. This had allowed the students to graduate immediately with an Ordinary Degree. In Academic Year 2015/16 CSPC had awarded the College a concession to apply CA for students who had been misdirected by their Personal Tutor. The concession applied to 15/16 only.

It was clarified that any further concessions to this regulation would require the College to present a further concession request to CSPC. Given that some students had already been assured of an Ordinary Degree by way of CA, further discussion with Academic Services was required. The Convener agreed to seek further advice from Academic Services and/or CSPC regarding those students on the Ordinary degree currently expecting to receive CA.

The Head of Academic Affairs advised the Committee that it was her intention to commission a piece of work within the College Office to look at undergraduate progression in the College. This exercise was intended to investigate the number of students being excluded (or choosing to withdraw prior to forcibly being excluded) due to lack of academic progress, the prevalence and impact of elevated progression hurdles and the variety of options for students unsuccessfully progressing to Honours study to exit with a lesser award. The aim was to assess whether there was scope to introduce additional exit awards for such students, such as variants of the Ordinary degree, reintroduction of the General degree, or alternative models based on the non-accredited degree introduced by Engineering. It was agreed that a draft paper would be presented to a future meeting.

**ACTION: GR/AL**

9. **Students’ Association – Engagement Statement**

The Students’ Association Engagement Statement was noted.

It was also noted that from the next academic year, a college specific representative was expected as a part time role (10 hours per week). The detail of this role was currently being discussed between the Students’ Association, the Dean of Quality Assurance and College Office staff.

The Committee recommended that input from School academic and student representatives would be beneficial. It was further noted that thought should be given to how the role would be combined with academic pressures and other student commitments.

**ACTION: LH**

10. **Any Other Business**

   a) **Change to Data Science Course**

   A proposal to change the Data Science Course to 20 credits was approved by Convener’s Action. The Committee ratified this Action.
b) TPRs in GeoSciences and Mathematics

These papers were circulated for information and were noted by the Committee.

The School of Mathematics TPR had made reference to the scaling of marks. There was a lack of guidance around specific or recommended approaches to scaling, which it would be beneficial to clarify. It was noted that the APT Project had also identified possible issues in relation to scaling.

The Convener agreed to consult Academic Services and the APT Project Lead to ascertain whether there was scope for work in this area.

**ACTION: GR**

c) Update on Tier 4

The Service Excellence Programme’s Student Administration and Support strand was considering procedures around the monitoring of Tier 4 student attendance and engagement as part of its remit. This may lead to significant changes in how the University deals with Tier 4 students in future, but more information would be available in due course.

For 16/17, the updated College Tier 4 Handbook was due to be circulated to School Tier 4 Contact Officers, along with a set of templates for producing School Engagement Monitoring Plans and key communications with students.

d) Exclusions

A recommendation had been made by the new Head of Academic Affairs that it may be beneficial to introduce College-level interviews for students referred for exclusion. This would bring the College in line with practice elsewhere, based on the premise that decisions with the greatest potential impact on the academic careers of individual students would benefit from an additional level of review (i.e. interviews at School and College level), and was linked to the intended work in relation to UG progression.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that interviews would not be introduced during the current academic year, but that a paper would be presented to a future meeting outlining a proposal to interview students referred for exclusion in 17/18.

**ACTION: AL**

10  **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

18th October 2016 at 2.00 pm.