Present
Prof G Reid Convener
Dr W Hossack School of Physics & Astronomy
Dr M Gallagher School of Biological Sciences
Prof C Pulham School of Chemistry
Dr G McDougall Dean of Quality Assurance
Dr S Warrington School of Engineering
Dr D Williams Head of Academic Affairs
Prof W Williams School of GeoSciences

In attendance:
Mrs L Archibald Minutes Secretary

1. **APOLOGIES**

   Apologies were received from Toby Bailey (Mathematics), Lynda Henderson (College Office), Alan Murray (Dean of Students), Ian Stark (Informatics), and Ilona Kovieraite (Student Representative)

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

   The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2012 were approved as a correct record.

2.1 **Matters Arising**

   **Return of Marks and Graduation Dates**

   Thanks were extended to members for the positive approach to the meeting with Craig Shearer in September.

   Mr Shearer had now discussed this matter with his colleagues in Registry and Senior Management and a compromise on dates had been reached.

   **Resits for Professional Purposes**

   Stephen Warrington had produced a paper (Paper B) outlining the outcome of the operation of this regulation in its first year. This was noted.

   **BSc Ordinary and General Degrees**

   David Williams had produced a paper (Paper C) for information. This paper outlined the updated programme information for Ordinary Degrees and implemented the decisions made at the last meeting.

   These new procedures would be added to the College website and brought to the attention of Senior Directors at their forthcoming
meeting.

**Committee Remit**

The Committee remit had been redrafted and tabled. The remit builds on the current remit and includes reference to the student experience and updated names of University Committees.

Members with any comments should contact David Williams by the end of this week. If no comments are received, the revised remit would be adopted.

**Course Questionnaires /MCQ Software**

The possibility of Schools putting together a joint bid to purchase up-to-date software and hardware for course questionnaires and MCQ examinations had been raised at the last meeting of CLTC.

The possibility of a centrally delivered tool which could be used for this purpose was currently being discussed at the University Taskgroup. Gordon McDougall would continue to monitor this situation and keep the Committee up to date with developments.

3. **Conveners Report**

**Student Disability Stickers**

At Senate Learning and Teaching Committee last year, the issue of discontinuing Disability Stickers for student coursework was discussed. This matter was re-visited in a meeting with the Student Disability Service recently.

Members were asked to give thought to whether the discontinuation of these stickers in coursework would cause any problems within their School.

Noted:

- students with disabilities will have had adjustments, such as extra time, before handing in coursework;
- the opportunity to use spelling, grammar check and proof reading will have also been given;
- it should not be necessary to give further compensation for coursework and therefore the separate handling of these documents was not required.

Agreed

In order to ensure students are not disadvantaged in any way, it may be useful to have a more uniform guideline for marking similar pieces of work.
Members were asked to send the Convener a copy of their current marking guidelines which will be discussed at a future meeting of CLTC.

4. **Update on Quality Assurance Matters**

Members received an update from the Dean of Quality Assurance regarding QA Matters.

**Weighting of Academic Years**

It was noted that Biology had moved to an honours classification weighting of 1-2 for 3rd and 4th year students. It was suggested that other Schools who are considering changing the weighting in 3rd year might wish to follow a similar model for common practice, where possible.

**Student engagement**

It was extremely important that the College has student representation on Committees and problems were being experienced finding suitable students for the Quality Assurance Committee.

This matter was being addressed at a meeting with EUSA and students next week but members were asked to put forward names of any enthusiastic student representatives they think might be interested in these openings to Gordon McDougall.

**External Examiner Comments**

Members had received a summary of External Examiner Comments (Paper D). Gordon McDougall outlined the salient points:

Noted:

- The moderation of marks and tracking of decision documentation has been greatly improved. However, improvements could still be made regarding the consistent marking of scripts and tracking course documentation;

- More detail in outline answers was requested and the marking of scripts in a pen of contrasting colour would be helpful;

- Short timescales of Board of Examiners meetings were noted and thought should be given to sending final year dissertations in advance where possible.

- A briefing or orientation session would be useful for Examiners to determine duties and the structure of Schools. The opportunity to meet with students where possible would be appreciated.

- Material needed for the examination of borderline cases should be collated ahead of time. Variations exist with the amount of information given to Examiners for these cases and some consistency should be
ensured.

- There was some suggestion that Examiners would be sympathetic to the use of more open book exams or oral examinations within constraints.

- Detailed marking schemes were needed particularly for essays and dissertations. Descriptors were needed particularly for ‘extremes’ on the marking scale with a need for decisions to be well documented and applied consistently. Encouragement should be given for the use of the entire range of the marking scale.

- Support was given for the further use of distance learning materials in placement years and the inclusion of marks gained during study abroad into degree classification.

- Various comments had been received regarding special circumstances and the balance between confidentiality and information required in making informed decisions. These comments had been collated and members would be forwarded a copy of this for information.

- Consideration should be given to the best use of Innovative Learning Week. A pool of information regarding School experiences could be gathered to promote best practice. Members will be re-sent reports gathered from Schools to stimulate thought and discussion on this matter.

- Examiners noted that there was no strict relationship between the number of course credits and the time given for examinations. Thought should be given to whether exam length is appropriate in each case.

- Large variations exist between Universities in the classification of 1st and 2nd class degrees. A GASP report expected in November collating HESA data will allow our University to gauge its standing and take stock.

- The gathering of statistics on entrance qualifications was still very difficult and the University has experienced increased enquiries regarding these. Sue Rigby is currently exploring how we can extract this data and Gordon McDougall would keep the Committee informed of any progress.

- A further paper ‘Learning from Programme Reviews’ had been circulated to Teaching Organisations. This paper contained a compendium of External Examiner comments regarding PPRs and TPRs. Members were encouraged to read this document which may provide useful information.

5. **MSc Dissertation Leave of Absence**

The issue of MSc students leaving Edinburgh for dissertations was raised and the current guidelines tabled.
Often these students are working with a collaborating University or an industrial partner where guidelines were built into the design of the course. However, care must be taken that arrangements are in place for supervision, resources and care for ad hoc arrangements which involve individual students. UKBA guidelines must also be adhered to where necessary.

The current procedure requires that any student studying away from the University must have formal College approval through the CLTC sub-committee. Comments were invited from the Committee regarding ways the College can strengthen these procedures in order to avoid potential problems.

It was noted:

- The monitoring and provision of supervision for students was critical.

- The assessment of any work should follow strict guidelines regarding the method of assessment and how any visit would contribute to their programme.

- Limitations on the amount of paid work a student can carry out is required.

- A written record for the programme director should be recorded. This could take the form of a proforma with the supervisor name, plan of work and relevant collected information. After one month, the student on placement should be asked to complete an online questionnaire and a brief project outline.

The College Office would ensure that guidance is prominent for both continuing and programme design. The website would be updated and URL circulated to Members.

6. Reports from Senate Committees/Working Groups

Senate Learning & Teaching Committee

There is a clear driver for opening up different routes to study in the University.

The issue of how the University will interface with Advanced Highers and whether we will be looking at these for entry grades. Physics currently has a document regarding entry grades which will be circulated to Members.

There is a desire to reduce dependency on resits and broaden the type of assessments used within the University.

It was thought that the College should consider the wider question of the nature and forms of assessment and whether current procedures
were the best means of assessing students.

Consideration could be given to ‘take home’ exams, oral or open book exams and assessment reduced dependency on degree exams.

It was imperative that equivalent levels of assessment are given across the Board and concern was expressed that ‘take-home’ exams may displace hurdles and be perceived as an ‘easier option’.

This matter would be considered again at a future meeting of College Learning and Teaching Committee.

7. **Any Other Business**

It was noted that the start of this semester had been extremely stressful both for teaching and administrative staff. This had been mainly caused by the introduction of several new initiatives simultaneously.

It was important that Schools were given as much time as possible before and between any new project to allow an environment of proactivity rather than ‘fire-fighting’.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

The meeting on 20th November had been cancelled and would now take place after the Programme Approval Meeting on 27th November:

27th November 2012

Programme Approval Meeting : 13.00
College Learning & Teaching Committee : 14.30 (approx.)