College of Science and Engineering  
College Learning and Teaching Committee  
Minutes of meeting held on 29 September 2015

Present
Prof G Reid       Convener, Dean of Learning and Teaching  
Dr P Bailey       School of Chemistry  
Dr T Bailey       School of Mathematics  
Mrs J Candlish   Head of Academic Affairs  
Prof J Hardy      School of Physics & Astronomy  
Ms L Henderson   Academic Affairs Officer  
Dr B Franke       School of Informatics  
Dr G McDougall   Dean of Quality Assurance  
Dr P McLaughlin  School of Biological Sciences (on behalf of M Gallagher)  
Mr S Warrington  School of Engineering  
Prof W Williams   School of GeoSciences

Attending:
Dr D Robertson    School of Informatics (Item 8)  
Mrs L Archibald  Secretary

1. **APOLOGIES**

   Apologies were received from: Prof A Murray (Dean of Students) and Prof M Gallagher (School of Biological Sciences)

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

   The minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2015 were approved, subject to an amendment to Item 4 to read ‘21st September’.

2.1 **MATTERS ARISING**

   There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

3. **CONVENERS REPORT**

   **Special Circumstances**

   A new more consistent and simplified form has been created. This will be available on the College wiki and it is important that these are the only forms used.

   Schools across the University have interpreted special circumstances differently, giving some cause for concern. To cover some matters arising, such as evidence and Personal Tutor interpretations, the College is intending to set up a briefing on these forms.

   A Task group is also being set up to look at various issues. An email had been sent from the College Office asking for potential nominations to serve on this group which should include academic and administrative staff. Nominations had been gratefully received from several Schools.

   LHJC
Year Abroad Progression (Optional Study Abroad Progression Board)

The Optional Study Abroad Progression Board had been operated by the Colleges for the first time this year.

From the College of Science & Engineering perspective, this had worked fairly well with no major issues. 78 students had now been processed by the Board with 10 students still outstanding, due to late examinations.

While the process had not been entirely perfect, a meeting between the Colleges and the International Office was scheduled to review the procedures. It was felt that this new system allowed the University more academic oversight and to make more robust and consistent decisions.

Concessions

A particularly large number of concession requests had been received this year and some concerns had been highlighted.

These concessions included a number of transfer requests for students who were not in good academic standing (failed courses and unable to progress through their own School). Allowing concessions was further complicated by the regulations regarding Tier 4 students. Repeat years and transfers, even for those students in good standing, must be given careful consideration because these have to be clearly justified to UKVI.

In light of the new regulations for Tier 4 students, the College Office intends to review the policies and procedures for transfers. This will also look at the purpose of allowing students to transfer, which should be for the benefit of the student in allowing them to follow a specified goal or specialised subject.

It was felt that the term ‘not in good academic standing’ may be too restrictive. Where students may be required to repeat a year, the opportunity to do this within a different discipline may be beneficial.

Clarification was needed regarding the term and clearer guidelines, including the basis on which decisions were made, were also required.

A paper on this subject would be considered at a future meeting of the College Learning and Teaching Committee.

Overseas Exams/resits abroad.

Committee members were asked to give thought to the offering and management of overseas examinations in the August diet for pre-honours students.

Examinations overseas were conducted in British Council Offices within the Country and were normally sat by relatively small numbers of students (thought to be about 50 this year across the University).
It was felt that allowing overseas exams should be viable for 1st and 2nd year courses and Schools would be supportive of this proposal in principle.

It was noted that in the case of a cross-College programme, difficulties may be experienced where Schools do not offer an overseas exam option.

**Support for study**

Each College has been charged with setting up a panel to assist Schools and students with difficult cases.

These cases may include behavioural problems, long-term illness and extreme cases involving mental health issues. The Ethos of this policy is to support students and provide a mechanism to move situations forward when an impasse has been reached.

These panel meetings are expected to be rare and will be set up ad-hoc. Lynda Henderson will approach Schools for nominees on this panel and organise a briefing session as soon as possible.

**Distance education**

A revised version of the Distance Education Initiative may come into effect. It is important that Schools continue to give thought to areas which can be expanded or developed.

**Resits for visiting students**

It was noted:

- A consistent policy has not been developed for visiting students
- While some students are allowed to resit papers, others may be allowed credits on aggregate.
- All Schools allow or provide resits within their School, although these are not specifically set for visiting students
- Courses taken in semester 1 are not examined in some Schools until April/May.
  - It was felt that the current academic year is not sustainable and that examinations in January, rather than December would be more fair

**Visiting Students (previously Item 5)**

It was noted:

- Academic Affairs had met with Undergraduate Admissions to discuss visiting students and how these students were assigned to Schools.
- It was very difficult for Admissions to find an appropriate Personal Tutor for visiting students without knowing which subject they wished to take.

- In the event that a student was assigned to a Personal Tutor outwith their subject, the Personal Tutor could request that the student was assigned to another School.

- Schools may wish to assign a specialist Personal Tutor who is aware of the issues that affect visiting students. This, however, could involve a very heavy workload with a change of students each year.

- The number of visiting students are notified to Schools very late in terms of allocating Personal Tutors. Advance notice of student numbers well in advance is extremely important. Lynda Henderson would follow this up with Recruitment and Admissions.

**Recruitment strategy**

A Recruitment Strategy Group has recently been set up for the University. Four strands have been identified; one is considering fees and related issues (with Bruce Nelson representing CSE), one examining portfolio development (with Graeme Reid representing CSE) and the other groups examining communication and International communication.

The Convener reported back from the first meeting of the Portfolio development group. Some concern had been expressed over the large number of programmes across the university with small student numbers. While the strategy is likely to have minimum effect at undergraduate level due to the large generic programmes that are common in CSE, more impact is likely with taught postgraduate programmes.

Large numbers of programmes with very few academic differences are also difficult for Recruitment to market to students.

Members should contact the Convener with any issues they wish to be considered by this Group. It was hoped that a Strategy would be in place by January 2016.

4. **PROGRESSION BOARDS REVIEW**

The Convener asked members to give a short verbal report on how Progression Boards had operated within their School this year and any issues they wished to highlight.

**Biological Sciences**

The Board had operated well and no issues were reported.

**Chemistry**

The Board had gone well but had proved time-consuming. Some conflict was observed in the University Regulations where it stated a student has the right to an interview before the Board’s decision.
Informatics

There had been a few 'teething' problems but no major issues. Some students had also taken Mathematics courses and extra criteria was required. Unfortunately some of this information was not available directly from EUCLID.

Mathematics

It had become apparent that students did not understand conditional progression. It is also not possible to input this status into EUCLID.

Some other Schools had not met their deadlines and some non-attendance meant that data had not been input. Data is also not available for Resit as First Attempt students.

Engineering

The School had held 4 Progression Boards which had proved informative. It was felt that more information on the summary sheets provided would be helpful including year of attendance and programme.

A presentation was held on what to do with the output of the Board, looking at academic and student circumstances, forms received and examining proposals from Personal Tutors as to the way forward.

Physics

The School aimed to process this Board in a similar way to progression interviews. This proved difficult as the paperwork supplied lacked some necessary information, including null sits not being recorded and the number of sits a student had attempted not being provided.

GeoSciences

The Board had gone relatively well with any non-progression decisions being passed to the Senior Personal Tutor.

Difficulties had been experienced with the lack of information received but this had been dealt with reasonably quickly.

The School had come across issues with communication of outcomes. It was felt that had the student met with their Personal Tutor, they may have understood the situation more clearly.

It was felt by all Members that the paperwork provided for these Boards should be improved.

The wording of progression outcomes must be clarified for students to avoid any misunderstanding.

Members/
It was hoped that the operation of Progression Boards would be reviewed at the Curriculum and Student Progression Committee. Members were asked to contact the Convener with any other issues arising.

5. **Visiting Students**

This subject had been covered under Item 4.

6. **BCS Accreditation**

Dr Franke reported that the Schools of Informatics and Engineering had received a visit from British Computer Society. The School of Informatics had presented an extensive document and various accreditation levels had been applied for. These levels were dependent on the amount of computing content included.

All accreditations had now been granted subject to minor changes to existing courses and some additional content added.

Mr Warrington advised that following the accreditation visit, the School of Engineering had created their proposal. The School currently had 4 programmes, two of which have different routes with either computer science or engineering directions.

It is hoped to discontinue these and rationalise programmes with the creation of an Electronics and Computer Science BEng and MEng in Engineering for the 16/17 intake.

All students this year in an accredited cohort will graduate with an accredited degree.

7. **Reports from Senate/Working Group**

7.1 **Senate Learning and Teaching Committee**

The Senate Learning and Teaching Committee had been held the previous week and had discussed:

**Innovative Learning Week.** This Week is in the calendar for 2016 but as innovative learning takes place throughout the year agreement has been reached that a change of name is necessary.

Attendance during this week has been low and has not reached the goals for which it was intended.

Although the week itself will remain, the uses for this week will be re-imagined. Possible uses which were suggested included a reading week, where students consolidate their learning. The inclusion of sessions for preparing courses and occasional student events were also suggested.

**Feedback Turnaround.** Members will have received an email from Tom Ward this Summer regarding the required 15 day turnaround for feedback.
Some concerns have been raised regarding this timing. It was felt that often the feedback quality required demanded a longer time scale. Such a deadline for larger, double-marked or moderated pieces of work was also felt to be unreasonable.

The Convener would email members to gauge opinion on this subject. Any requests for exemptions should be made on the basis of pedagogical sense and be for the benefit of students.

7.2 Knowledge Strategy Committee.

The University will appoint a Senior Computer Information Security Officer who will take the lead on the management of computer information across the University.

The Committee will solicit a review of PT tools and timetabling.

8. Any Other Business

Examination of Advanced Vision and Introduction to Vision and Robotics by an External Provider

Prof D Robertson gave a verbal report on a paper by Prof Fisher regarding the proposal to assess two distance education courses using an external provider. It was noted:

- These courses are based on two existing PG Certificate courses and it is hoped that an MSc version of these may be designed in the future.
- CSPC have accepted this proposal as a pilot.
- Based in the College of Medicine, these are also available to the whole University.
- These will run in exactly the same way as other distance learning courses, the only alteration will be to the examination.
- Examinations will be written by the University of Edinburgh and delivered to Pearson VUE. Students attend an examination centre where answers are typed into a computer. Answers are then encrypted and returned to the School of Informatics.
- Student numbers for these courses are likely to be 10-20.

Committee felt this was an interesting and worthwhile trial and looked forward to receiving feedback on its successful operation.

Tier 4 Engagement
Concern was raised regarding the realisation of the 10 contact points for Tier 4 students. It was noted:

- contact points for students can include engagement points
- While student matriculation cards have a barcode, Schools are unable to use this as a means of identification or registration. The University should consider ways in which this source could be utilised.

- The University as a whole should be encouraged to come up with innovative solutions to the challenge of student monitoring as soon as possible.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 20th October 2015

**Commented [RG1]:** You might want to wait another year till the next meeting but I’m not sure we’d get away with it!!