GCU
Glasgow Caledonian
University

Meeting APPC18/5
Confirmed

ACADEMIC POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019

PRESENT:		Professor N. Andrew, Ms C. Bowick, Professor I. Cameron, Dr D Chalmers, Dr M. Ferguson, Ms C. Hulsen, Ms J. Main, Mrs M. McCann, Mr S. Lopez, Dr N. McLarnon, Professor A. Nelson, Dr S. Rate, Mr R. Ruthven, Professor V. Webster (Chair), Mrs M. Wright
APOLOGIES:		Professor A. Britton, Professor R. Clougherty, Ms D.Donnet, Ms E. Fulton, Professor J. Lennon, Professor A. Morgan, Ms R. Simpson, Professor B. Steves
IN ATTENDANCE:		Mr A. MacKinlay (*vice* Mrs H. Brown), Mr D. Steed (for item A.04 *Degree Classification*), Mr P. Woods (Secretary)
MINUTES		
018.202	Considered	Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019 (**APPC18/47/01**)
018.203	Resolved	That subject to the following amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record: 1. Adding Professor Nelson to the list of attendees 2. At 18.166 (Minimum Entry Requirements) to note that SCEBE would direct non standard entrants to the BEng Mechanical Electronic Systems Engineering as there is a progression route to the MEng of this programme.
MATTERS ARISING		
Undergraduate Entry Criteria - West African Senior School Certificate and Kenyan Certificate Of Secondary Education (*arising on 018.159*)		
018.204	Discussion	Members discussed whether entrants' progress could be monitored by using the student record system. Mr Lopez commented that it would be possible using SIMS but not currently under ISIS.
018.205	Resolved	That monitoring is delineated by: 1. Recruitment numbers by Marketing and Recruitment 2. Student progress via Schools and support departments. 3. System report (with SIMS) eventually

Minimum Entry Requirements (arising on 018.167)		
018.206	Reported	By the Chair that Schools had now signalled their contentment with the report, subject to the change noted in 018.203.

ASSESSMENT LOADING		
018.207	Considered	A summary paper from GSBS, SHLS and SCEBE (**APPC18/51/01**).
018.208	Reported	By Dr McLarnon that in HLS one department was out of alignment with University guidance. The anomalies will be addressed at programme reapproval or earlier.
018.209	Reported	By Mrs McCann that GSBS were now content that all modules with assessment exceeding the guidance had sound pedagogical rationales or were complying with professional body requirements.
018.210	Reported	By Dr Ferguson that some modules had assessments that were not in line with the module descriptor but these were now being updated. Word count had been noted as being out of line in some module assessments. The rationales put forward were, as with the other Schools, in relation to PSRB and pedagogical requirements i.e. lab reports and preparation for examinations. The School will continue to revisit and refresh as appropriate.
018.211	Discussion	There was some scepticism about PSRB reasons. Student feedback was that there are too many assessments and feedback was insufficient. This is suggestive of both staff and students being overloaded. Variations in word count were also an issue. There was a discussion on smaller courseworks being grouped together under a "shell" or portfolio. It was noted that the SCEBE would be considering all of these implications in an extraordinary SMG. Members further discussed the potential for doing things differently without compromising the pedagogical depth required and generally agreed that there needed to be a balance between formative and summative assessment. Members were appreciative of the process to review assessment and agreed that it had been a valuable exercise. There was a need keep this as an ongoing focus. Professor Andrew informed members that there would be an amnesty period to allow a general tidy up of module/module descriptors on the system. This may allow descriptors to be less specific and therefore less likely to go out of date so soon, removal of obsolete modules but not a reduction in contact hours. It was agreed that module code creation needed to be tightly controlled. Mr Lopez informed members that this will be easier to manage in SIMS as versioning could be employed rather than an entirely new code (as is the case now).
018.212	Resolved	1. That Schools clarify with AQD business partner which modules are

		being changed now and which modules will changed as part of programme approval/reapproval (**Action: ADLTQs**).
		2. That there be a continued focus on assessment loading (**APPC/Schools/AQD**).
		3. That the report be recommended to Senate.
DEGREE CLASSIFICATION		
018.213	Considered	A report from the Degree Classification – Task and Finish Group (**APPC18/57/01**).
018.214	Reported	By Mr Steed that this was a report from the Task and Finish Group to provide an update and reassurance for APPC and Senate. The Group had looked at the following data:
		1. UKSQA Degree Classification Consultation Document
		2. Statistical analysis from Strategy & Planning highlighting;
		a. Honours classification trends (GCU and sector analysis)
		b. Modelling of Honours profiling calculations (with boundaries at 3%, 2%, 1%)
		3. Current, approved, exceptions to the GCU Honours degree regulations (as recorded within the GCU Exceptions Sub-Committee records)
		4. Current Honours calculation regulations, for review
		5. A sample of current profiling and classification mechanisms from the UK HE sector (Scottish and English institutions)
		Early analysis by the Group focused on the following:
		1. Review of exceptions to standard Assessment Regulations for Honours Degree calculations.
		The exceptions did reconcile with ISIS but not all were current and these would be revoked.
		2. Impact of changing Honours Profiling Boundary (Currently 3%)
		The rationale for 3% was not obvious but modelling of the impact of changing to 2% or 1% suggested the impact would not be large.
		3. Degree algorithm (Best 180 count)
		There were no concerns about the algorithm and it wasn't uncharacteristic of the sector, where numerous approaches were taken.
		The group acknowledged that banded grading proposals would also impact on decision making. The St Andrews system was interesting, although not currently implementable at GCU.
018. 215	Discussion	One member stated that the University should resist terminology of "good" Honours degrees although it was accepted that this was league

		table terminology.
		In general members were supportive of reducing potential for grade inflation by sensible incremental means and were supportive of reducing the 3% boundary by 1 or 2%.
		Any change would be subject to a transition period as with any other changes to the assessment regulations.
		Professor Andrew informed members that this was a complex area and with the investment in student support by the University an uplift in grades would be expected. Where there were concerns would be in specific areas where there appeared to be an abnormal or unexplained uplift.
		It was suggested that the group focus on programmes showing this type of abnormal uplift.
018.216	Resolved	1. That this paper be updated to reflect the above discussion and note the ongoing work of the Banded Grading T&F Group (**Action: D.Steed, AQD**). 2. That the update be presented to Senate for information as an interim report.
BANDED GRADING		
018.217	Considered	An update from the Task & Finish Group exploring the potential benefits and impacts of a banded grading system (**APPC18/59/01**).
018.218	Reported	By Professor Nelson that the T&F Group had focused on 3 strands: 1. Learning from others 2. Consultation (internal and external) 3. Constructing a draft model The next steps would be to consult on the draft model and prepare a proposal for Senate.
018.219	Discussion	Members discussed possible staff resistance to changing current grading rubrics that appear to working e.g. in respect of feedback to students. Professor Nelson agreed that it was important to engage and consult with staff and students in developing proposals. The current system contained some arbitrary precision and it should be straightforward to map rubrics on to a banded system. It should, in theory, be easier. Members were supportive of the model "starter for ten" approach in order to aid conceptualisation of banded grading. Members then discussed the process for consultation. Also how the proposals could feed into the SIMS implementation. Also discussed was the process to transition (as with other regulatory changes) and the impact this

		would have on the system development.
		Mr Lopez informed members that it was an advantage to be aware during the implementation phase. He added that there was a site on SharePoint devoted to banded grading and this may be the easiest method to facilitate consultation.
018.220	Resolved	1. That the proposed next steps be approved. 2. That SharePoint be used to facilitate the consultation on the model (**Actions: Banded Grading T&F Group**).

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS WORKING GROUP

018.221	Considered	Recommendations from the Assessment Regulations Working Group (**APPC18/48/01**).
018.222	Reported	By Dr Rate that there were three items where approval was being sought from APPC and a further six items for discussion.

GCU Student Performance Feedback Policy

018.223	Reported	By Dr Rate that the policy had been updated to address student expectations around timescales, remove potential for inconsistency in arrangements for project/dissertation feedback and provide much greater clarity around student responsibilities. There was also further detail on the purpose of feedback and forms that feedback can take. It was further recommended that a good practice guide be developed and Academic Development has been asked to develop this.
018.224	Discussion	A member asked for clarification on generic feedback. Dr Rate explained that this was a recognition that for large modules detailed feedback for each examination candidate was impractical. However indicative answers could be provided with optional individual feedback.
018.225	Resolved	1. That the updated policy be approved 2. That the good practice development be endorsed.

Assessment Regulations consistency with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

018.226	Reported	By Dr Rate that there had been potential for confusion about the eligibility of students with RPL for merit or distinction. A review of the sector revealed that there was no consistent approach by other HEIs. This text provided clarification at the outset of the current regulations. The ARWG recommended a review of the applicability in relation merit/distinction in due course.
018.227	Discussion	There was discussion about the distinction between RPL and RPiL. Members were generally supportive of the view that students could bring a mark + credit across from another HEI. RPiL required more discussion and clear guidance.
018.228	Resolved	1. That the proposal be approved. 2. That the text be reviewed for further clarity on RPiL.

Pilot of TESTA review of assessment loading and student feedback		
018.229	Reported	By Dr Rate that AQD had developed a proposal and the ARWG were supportive. The proposed pilot for 2019-20 would be a light touch version of TESTA involving one programme per School. If successful the aim would be to have full roll out in 2020-21. A review of the pilot would be undertaken by ARWG in Trimester B 2019-20.
018.230	Resolved	That the proposal be approved.
Consideration of Resit/Resubmission processes for non-standard starts		
018.231	Reported	By Dr Rate that the examination arrangements from Trimester A had provided an unintended pilot of early retrieval. There were two aspects to the issue: early retrieval from trimester A and postgraduate starts in January and when they should resit. Currently there is a mixed approach across the University. A subgroup of the ARWG had looked at the logistics of this and proposed allowing early retrieval of coursework assessment in one failed module. Examinations were thought to be too complex at this stage – the unofficial pilot had showed around 25% of students taking up the opportunity to resit early. Therefore it was recommended that a policy is implemented to allow early resits for Tri B-start PG students failing module(s) in the first Trimester of their programme of study from academic year 2020/2021. The regulations on 'Next Available Diet Resits' would be updated in the Terms of Reference of Assessment Boards and Assessment Regulations to allow consideration of student profiles after 60 completed credits and resits to be taken at the next available diet. This would also involve revision of the Assessment Regulations to outline the application of compensation and the implications for early resits.
018.232	Discussion	It was felt that coursework only option for early retrieval fits with student perceptions of the distinction between formal examinations and coursework. Dr Rate informed members that some further modelling was required to ascertain the scale of rolling out across all students. Members were in favour of early retrieval and there was a suggestion that the proposal was too conservative. Dr Rate replied that although cautious this was a strong proposal and the group were not comfortable in going beyond this without further modelling of the impact. Given the nature of the proposed changes, piloting and consultation was recommended. Members discussed the operationalising of the "progression review" boards. Members counselled against describing these as informal as the boards were intended to make decisions and ratify marks.

		Mr Lopez stated that there are many informal January reviews at the moment. To formalise would involve procedural practicalities with marks recording and release – these marks are provisional until May/June under the current system. In order to confirm the marks in January the "progression review" would need to have the quality assurance measures of an assessment board i.e. external examiner input.
018.233	Resolved	1. That a formal proposal for early retrieval/next available diet resit be developed, including proposals for a pilot and appropriate consultation with students and staff. 2. That January progression review proposals are formalised with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. 3. Schools confirm to what levels external examiners are currently attached. (**Action: ARWG**).
Clarity around the criteria for Generic Awards for both staff and students		
018.234	Reported	By Dr Rate that there was clarification of eligibility for transfer to a generic award i.e. students who have exhausted attempts at module credit and who are up to 40 credits short of an exit award. The GSBS generic award titles, agreed at the last APPC, were also clarified.
018.235	Discussion	The reference to NCH "unnamed" awards was queried. It was agreed that this was an error. Another member asked if there was any linkage to aegrotat or posthumous awards. The Academic Registrar clarified that these awards were entirely separate and based on what the candidate was expected to have achieved. These can only be agreed in specific circumstances and agreed by the Dean, DVC, and Academic Registrar. PSRB restrictions are taken into account.
018.236	Resolved	That the update be noted.
GCU Assessment Handbook: Policy on the Retention of Student Work		
018.237	Reported	By Dr Rate that Senate had raised concerns around the retention period and possible Senate Disciplinary Committee actions. Feedback from Governance (Records Management) suggested that increasing the retention period was currently impractical due to lack of infrastructure. Further sector scoping suggested that GCU was not out of step with other HEIs. An electronic storage system could be considered.
018.238	Discussion	Members agreed that an electronic preservation system was a wider discussion. In the meantime, to avoid misinterpretation, the extract from the GCU Generic Retention Policy should be incorporated into the Policy and Procedures for Examination.
018.239	Resolved	1. That an extract from the GCU Generic Retention Policy is

		incorporated in the Policy and Procedures for Examination Papers. (**Action: ARWG**)
		2. That the issue is raised to Senate and EB as part of wider discussion (**Action: ARWG**).
		3. That electronic storage infrastructure is noted as an issue for IGC (via Governance).

Appointment of External Examiners

018.240	Reported	By Dr Rate that this was a proposed mechanism to ensure balanced external examining teams i.e. industry experts should always be paired with an academic expert.
018.241	Resolved	That the clarification be approved (**Action: AQ**).

Mobility Mark Calculations

018.242	Reported	By Dr Rate that this was a draft policy and not yet ready for approval. An operational process was required and it was proposed that and task and finish group be established to complete this. It was hoped that ARWG would report back to APPC in November 2019.
018.243	Discussion	It was suggested that the most straightforward approach was for programme leaders to agree on the appropriateness of partner institutions' in advance. Translating marks after they are received was not desirable. The Group should also consider keep in touch mechanisms for students on exchange. It was noted that Strategy and Planning were happy to support the Group and had an interest as mobility is reported to HESA.
018.244	Resolved	That the proposed approach be noted.

Threshold Minimum Marks – update to the UG Assessment Regulations

018.245	Reported	By Dr Rate that the updated text was included at appendix G.
018.246	Resolved	That the updated text be approved.

ARWG Work Plan

018.247	Resolved	That the work plan be approved.

GCU QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – REGULATORY CHANGE

018.248	Considered	A proposal to amend current regulation (GCU Qualifications Framework Section 4: 4.2) to facilitate potential delivery of an honours and/or accelerated undergraduate degree programme in three years (**APPC18-58-01**).
018.249	Reported	By Professor Andrew that this proposal was to increase flexibility in the QF by including "normally" in the timescale required to complete a Scottish Bachelor's Degree/Scottish Bachelor's Degree with Honours. A clearer definition of study length could be added prescribing a min/max number of trimesters required.

018.250	Discussion	The Chair agreed this proposal was useful and the flexibility would be welcomed by some TNE programmes. Other members voiced concern about a possible trend towards diminishing the 4 year Honours degree and referenced trends in the English sector to introduce compressed/accelerated degrees. The Chair reassured members that the core of the University's provision was the 4 year honours degree and this could not change without a much wider debate. APPC would have a strong role in monitoring any proposals coming forward.
018.251	Resolved	That the Committee: 1. Approves these changes (**Action: AQ**). 2. Reaffirms the University's commitment to the four year Honours degree. 3. Affirms APPC's guardianship role.
GCU ELIR4		
018.252	Considered	An update on ELIR4 (**APPC18/50/01**).
018.253	Reported	By Professor Andrew that the paper provided and update on ELIR 4 preparations.
018.254	Discussion	It was noted that the consultation with students had been very positive and the ISB had been very good.
018.255	Resolved	That the update be noted.
UPDATE ON THEMATIC REVIEW OF THE ARTICULATING STUDENT EXPERIENCE -ACTION PLAN		
018.256	Considered	The action plan arising from the Thematic Review of the articulating student experience (**APPC18/49/01**).
018.257	Reported	By Professor Andrew that the thematic review had been discussed at the previous meeting of APPC. This was the action plan for that thematic review.
018.258	Discussion	One member asked about the Student Experience scholarships. Professor Andrew explained that there now 3 scholarships per year. They were all based on existing work. That the articulation pathways be reviewed?
018.259	Resolved	That the action plan be approved.
TRANSNATIONAL PARTNERS' REPORTS		
018.260	Considered	1. The annual report 2016-17 College of Engineering Of The National University of Science and Technology, Oman (Formerly Caledonian College Of Engineering) (**APPC18/54/01).** 2. African Leadership College Quality Audit Report, December 2018 (**APPC18/55/01**)
018.261	Reported	By Professor Cameron that the report provided operational oversight of the partnership. The College was now a Faculty of the National University of Science and Technology but this did not involve much in the way of operational change. He highlighted that student performance was broadly comparable to GCU Home students. There were a number of issues around the operation of Assessment Boards,

		possible grade inflation and students' English language. The University provided 64 days a year support mainly in upskilling of local staff, project supervision and PhD supervision.
018.262	Resolved	That the CENU report be noted.
018.263	Reported	By Mr MacKinlay that the ALC Quality Audit Report reflected the visit of December 2018 by a GCU review team. The context for the review was the upcoming Academic and Contract Milestone Review in 2019. The report identified a number of areas of good practice and areas for enhancement. The ALC staff had also found the process useful in preparation for future Mauritius Tertiary Education (TEC) Quality Audits.
018.264	Discussion	Mr MacKinlay informed members that the action plan had been received and feedback would be provided to ALC.

A member asked for clarification on the students' use or non-use of the library. Mr MacKinlay replied that students were using a combination of library and electronic resources.

The Chair informed members that there was currently a process underway to recruit a new librarian, working closely with GCU Library.

Further clarification was sought on the use of GCU Learn and was there any support for ALC staff in this respect. Mr MacKinlay replied that there was support from GCU for the associate lecturers and expectation of support from module leaders for contextualisation. It was also reported that School learning technologists provided good support and input.

Mr MacKinlay stated that the aim was to develop a LDC type of service at ALC. |
| 018.265 | Resolved | That the African Leadership College Quality Audit Report, December 2018 be noted. |

POST GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT EXPERIENCE (PGRSE) THEMATIC REVIEW: ACTION PLAN

018.266	Considered	The PGRSE Thematic Review Action Plan updated (**APPC18/35/02**).
018.267	Reported	By Professor Andrew that this was now the final version of the action plan. The Director of the Graduate School was leading on many of these items.
018.268	Reported	By the Academic Registrar that there was some work to be done to translate RDC forms for SIMs. He anticipated some simplification of the forms to remove any duplication.
018.269	Resolved	That the action plan be noted.

COLLABORATION WITH COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CENU), OMAN

018.270	Considered	A proposal to deliver MSc Applied Instrumentation and Control (Oil & Gas) and transitioning to a Dual Award including a response to APPC's specific questions about the proposal **(APPC18/44/02).**

018.271	Reported	By Dr Ferguson that the proposal was being brought back to the Committee in response to APPC requirements for clarification on library requirements and dual awards which were now included in the proposal.
018.272	Resolved	That the proposal be approved.

TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION		
018.273	Considered	GSBS Academic Cases for: 1. CDC Management, Malaysia MSc Risk Management (Distance Learning) **(APPC18/61/01)** 2. IEG Campus, Malaysia, Masters in Business Administration and BA (Hons) Business Management top up degrees **(APPC18/60/01)**
018.274	Reported	**CDC Management, Malaysia** By Dr Rate that the proposal was for recruitment onto the MSc Risk Management by Distance Learning in collaboration with CDC Management in Malaysia. CDC will undertake recruitment, marketing, admissions and provide a base for students in Malaysia and pastoral care for students. The delivery will be fully undertaken by GCU online and the students will join the existing distance learning programme. CDC have good experience of recruitment and will use their existing network to recruit onto the programme.
018.275	Discussion	Members had some queries about the proposal around: • Library provision • Will the cohort be GCU students • Evidence of programme viability • Graduation arrangements • Equality impact assessment Dr Rate that the students would be GCU students and all other arrangements would be as for existing distance learning students. The business case was available and could be provided.
018.276	Resolved	That the following be provided and/or clarified before final approval: • Business case • EIA • A statement of library requirements • Clarity of graduation arrangements *Secretary's Note: Clarification on these issues was provided post-meeting.*
018.277	Reported	**IEG Campus, Malaysia** By Dr Rate that the model was similar to ALC. IEG had partners in both Australia and the USA and the Dean and ADI had visited IEG and were content that they were an appropriate partner.

		IEG would deliver Masters in Business Administration and BA (Hons) Business Management top up degrees using GCU materials. The main costs associated with the proposal were administrative and quality oversight and staff support visits.
018.278	Discussion	Members had similar queries to the previous proposal: • Evidence of programme viability • Graduation arrangements • Equality impact assessment • Clarification of quality oversight • Library provision • Marketing arrangements
018.279	Resolved	That the following be provided and/or clarified before final approval: • Evidence of programme viability • Graduation arrangements • Equality impact assessment • Clarification of quality oversight • Library provision • Marketing arrangements *Secretary's Note: Clarification on these issues was provided post-meeting.*
EXCEPTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE		
018.280	Approved	The Exceptions Subcommittee Annual Report 2017-18 **(APPC18/56/01).**

Ag/appc/minutes/1May 2019