



Meeting APPC18/4
Confirmed

ACADEMIC POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2019

PRESENT:	Professor N. Andrew, Professor I. Cameron, Dr D Chalmers, Dr M. Ferguson, Ms E. Fulton, Ms C. Hulsen, Mr S. Lopez, Ms J. Main, Mrs M. McCann, Dr N. McLarnon, Dr T. Peshken (<i>vice</i> Professor A. Morgan), Dr S. Rate (<i>vice</i> Prof. J Lennon), Mr R. Ruthven, Professor V. Webster (Chair), Mrs M. Wright	
APOLOGIES:	Professor A. Britton, Professor R. Clougherty, Ms J. Fisher, Ms R. Simpson, Professor B. Steves	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms D. Donnet, Ms V. Wilson (Head of Marketing and Recruitment), Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
MINUTES		
018.098	Considered	Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2018 (APPC18/21/01)
018.099	Resolved	That the minutes be approved as a correct record.
MATTERS ARISING		
Mitigating Circumstances Policy – Fit to Sit (Arising on 018.054)		
018.100	Reported	By the Chair that the intention was to have a wider discussion on “fit to sit” at APPC which would encompass issues such as mental health. This discussion was required before any policy decisions could be made.
018.101	Reported	By Professor Andrew that the University Level Board guidance was attached to the minute as appendix 1. The guidance would be uploaded to the intranet.
Student Experience – Assessment Loading Review (Arising on 018.063)		
018.102	Reported	By the ADLTQs that the review was underway.
Student Experience Scholarships – Personal tutor role (Arising on 018.067)		
018.103	Reported	By Professor Andrew that the principles of the personal tutor role were attached to the minutes as appendix 2. These principles would be uploaded to the intranet.

Entry Requirements – Chinese entrants (Arising on 018.074)		
018.104	Reported	The Director of Strategy and Planning asked for clarification about progression monitoring of the entrants.
018.105	Reported	By the Chair that the intention of this resolution was for the Schools to be alert to any issues raised by programme staff, support departments or Assessment Boards and to monitor informally in order to identify any potential issues.
ELISR Timetable 2018 – 2023 (Arising on 018.077)		
018.106	Reported	By Professor Andrew that comments on the timetable had been received and Academic Quality had met with business partners to finalise the timetable.
SHLS Guidance for AHP students on placement (Arising on 018.091)		
018.107	Reported	By Dr McLarnon that the changes required by APPC had been made.
Report on Non-Quorate Assessment Boards 17/18 (Arising on 018.092)		
018.108	Reported	By the Academic Registrar that the report was now available on SharePoint.
UNDERGRADUATE ENTRY CRITERIA - KAZAKHSTAN		
018.109	Considered	A proposed variation of entry requirements for applicants from Kazakhstan to GCU undergraduate programmes (APPC18-22-01).
018.110	Reported	By Ms Wilson that the proposal was in the context of a potential competitive advantage in the sector. It was known that only 3 HEIs in the UK accepted the <i>Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools</i> (NIS) grade 12 into year 1 of undergraduate programmes. This proposal is for GCU to match this offer in order to attract students from Kazakhstan into GCU second year of our Bachelor's degree. She emphasised that Kazakhstan was not a priority market but there were contacts via INTO's agent network in the region.
018.111	Discussion	Members asked if there were any reasons why the qualification was not more broadly recognised in the UK. Ms Wilson replied that it is new and thus far had not been promoted in the UK. This was likely to change in the near future.
018.112	Resolved	That the proposal be approved subject to core subjects being met for the individual programmes (Action: Head of Marketing and Recruitment).
STUDENT PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION		
018.113	Considered	An update on Student Progression and Completion 2017-18 (APPC18/31/01).
018.114	Reported	By Director Strategy and Planning that highlights were as follows: Undergraduate students – progression decreased slightly at Levels 1 and 2 and Level 3 and 4 were static.

		<p>The GSBS position improved overall; SCEBE had an issue with level 2 which the School has identified as being linked to the decrease in progression of articulating students. SHLS progression was relatively stable.</p> <p>Honours Classification analysis showed 22% of successful Honours Degree students received a 1st Class Honours in 2017-18; an increase of five percentage points. Upper Second Class has increased compared a decrease in Lower Second Class. 1% received a 3rd Class Honours. Most notable changes were in GSBS and SHLS.</p> <p>For international undergraduate students, Level 1 and Level 3 progression decreased and Level 2 progression increased. Completion at Level 4 had decreased. She cautioned members that the small size of the international cohort tended to make any changes appear more dramatic.</p> <p>Part-time undergraduate students showed an increase of 3% with SCEBE having most students.</p> <p>For taught postgraduate students she asked members to note that the reporting system did not include 2 year TPG programmes. Otherwise performance had increased by 1%, with 88% of students achieving a positive outcome (defined as exiting with a postgraduate taught award or being eligible to continue to the next stage of their study).</p> <p>For international postgraduate taught students, 92% of international students achieved a positive outcome although the proportion of international students gaining a Masters is lower at 68% than Home/EU students at 75%.</p>
018. 115	Discussion	<p>One member asked about the improvement in Honours classifications in GSBS which seemed anomalous within the context of reported increased staff workloads. The Chair agreed that there was a need to understand why there has been a positive outcome just as we need to understand any negatives.</p> <p>Dr Rate informed members that there was no obvious issue raised through external examiner reports, apart from requests to use the full range of marks, both higher and lower.</p> <p>Dr McLarnon confirmed that the SHLS areas of note were being investigated.</p> <p>Professor Cameron added that in SCEBE that one issue for level 2 articulating students appeared to be a lack of examination practice. This was a reoccurrence of an issue faced in previous sessions. He also noted a potential linkage to the assessment loading agenda. The School would update APPC on the School's investigations at a future meeting.</p>
018. 116	Resolved	That the update be noted.

MODULE EVALUATION SURVEYS		
018.117	Considered	A report on Module Evaluation Surveys Trimester A 2018-19 (APPC18/32/01).
018.118	Reported	By Director Strategy and Planning that the survey had received a good response and the survey period would be extended in future sessions. In summary students satisfaction had improved overall, the biggest improvements were in GSBS, there were some issues in SCEBE, GCU London satisfaction had decreased and Honours level students were the least likely to be satisfied. These results were now available on GCU Dash.
018.119	Discussion	Members discussed the methodology and any potential skewing of results by small numbers of respondents. It was also noted that 15% of modules had 0 responses. ADLTQs reported that they were looking at possible reasons behind this. Ms Hulsen stated that there were nuances in the summary given and there will be more specific conversations with Schools about the outcomes.
018.120	Resolved	That the results be noted.
UK DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS		
018.121	Considered	A report and consultation by UKSCQA on UK Degree Classifications (APPC18/25/01).
018.122	Reported	By the Academic Registrar that the paper summarises a UK wide report looking at a general upward trend of honours degree classifications. He referred to the comments earlier about progression and completion and also the ARWG work. The main recommendations of the report were for HEIs to make a statement of intent to protect the value of qualifications over time by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing analysis of institutional degree outcomes, supported by appropriate external assurance, in a 'degree outcomes statement' or equivalent. • Publishing and explaining the design of the degree classification algorithm, including where it deviates from accepted norms of practice. • Enhancing the consistency of classification practice, including narrowing the range of rules that are used to classify degrees and using stretching criteria to guide the assessment of students • Ensuring that assessment criteria meet and exceed sector reference points and reviewing the use of data in quality assurance processes. • Supporting the professional development of academics working as external examiners to help maintain standards and the value of qualifications. • Reviewing the structure of the degree classification system to ensure that it remains useful for students and employers. • The report also recommends the publishing of descriptions for each

		<p>degree classification.</p> <p>The report and its outcomes were currently out for a UK-wide consultation. The DVC Academic would respond on behalf of the University.</p> <p>The current position on Honours classification at GCU was that performance over the best 180 credits at levels 9 and 10 were considered (including the dissertation, project or equivalent), a 3% boundary qualified students for profiling (and a potential higher classification) and there were 9 different Honours classification algorithms. This meant that technically it was possible for students on different programmes to get different classifications with the same performance on their profile.</p>
018.123	Discussion	<p>Members agreed there were some obvious questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is there a 3% boundary (with sector norm being 1%)? • Why are there so many Honours classification algorithms? <p>The Chair stated that a short task and finish group would look at this.</p> <p>The reference in the report to support for external examiners was welcomed. Feedback from GCU staff is externals elsewhere would be a resource that the University could to tap into.</p> <p>One member asked if the review would look at the full range of honours banding e.g. what third class means. Members agreed terms such as “good” degree were not helpful as a third class degree also requires to have fulfilled the standard required for an Honours degree.</p> <p>Members agreed that this was a big project both nationally and internally, particularly in addressing how classifications are viewed by employers in different employment sectors and potentially out-of-date thinking with regard to what employer’s value from an honours degree.</p>
018.124	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a Task & Finish Group look at Honours classification algorithms (Action: Academic Registrar). 2. That there is further discussion when the consultation outcome is published.
BANDED GRADING		
018.116	Considered	A paper initiating discussion on Banded Marking Scheme (APPC18/26/01).
018.117	Reported	By the Academic Registrar that a small group of the Assessment Regulations Working Group discussed whether there were any insurmountable barriers to a shift from numerical to grade band marking. While it was agreed that there would be challenges, it was not felt that this was the case and other HEIs have done exactly this. He pointed out that this was a preliminary discussion and that institutional –wide consultation would be required before any action.

		The group had felt that the advantages were greater accuracy, more consistent feedback, use of the full range of marks, and easier facilitation of a GPA system. The most obvious difficulties would be integration with the student information system and the timing of any change.
018.118	Discussion	<p>The paper was welcomed as was the debate on this matter. Members agreed a wider debate was required including the input of School Boards. An equality impact assessment would be needed for any formal proposal.</p> <p>The Academic Registrar informed members that the next stage would be a task and finish group including Deans and then further consultation through School Boards. GCUSA would also be invited to feed into the debate. A modelling exercise would be undertaken when a proposal was finalised.</p> <p>Members remarked that there are already some informal banded marking schemes in use in the University.</p> <p>One member pointed out that the paper contained the phrase “subjective marking” which was not helpful as marking was, and should be, objective. This phrase should be changed.</p> <p>Another member cited the Abertay category “marginal fail” as potentially helpful in defining the category of student who should get an opportunity to retrieve an examination fail before the resit diet.</p>
018.119	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The phrase “subjective marking” is removed. 2. The Academic Registrar continues with the consultation described before bringing a proposal back to APPC (Action: Head of Academic Quality).
ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS WORKING GROUP		
018.120	Considered	A report by the Assessment Regulations Working Group (APPC18-24-01).
018.121	Reported	<p>By Dr Rate that the paper was a composite of items, for approval or discussion.</p> <p>For approval:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider the approval of a GCU Assessment Procedures Handbook to signpost GCU assessment policies and guidelines for staff. 2. Provision of clarity around the criteria for Generic Awards for both staff and students <p>For discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider proposals for review of the current GCU Student Performance Feedback Policy, 2. its principles and applicability for Project and Dissertation submissions

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Consideration of pilot of 'TESTA' review of assessment loading and student feedback. 4. Grade Point Average (GPA) Banded Grades review 5. To consider updating the Assessment Regulations to require that all students successfully complete all SCQF level 9 modules prior to entering honours project
018.122	Reported	<p>GCU Assessment Procedures Handbook</p> <p>By Dr Rate that the handbook was developed with input from the ADLTQs with some additional changes made by the ARWG. It was proposed to use this as a resource for staff signposting all relevant assessment regulations and associated policies as well as responsibilities of staff in the assessment process.</p>
018.123	Resolved	That the Handbook be approved and recommended to Senate with appropriate version control (Action: ARWG).
018.124	Reported	<p>Clarity around the criteria for Generic Awards for both staff and students</p> <p>By Dr Rate that this was a short guide to the purpose and use of generic awards.</p>
018.125	Resolved	That the text be approved and recommended to Senate (Action: ARWG).
018.126	Reported	<p>GCU Student Performance Feedback Policy – Dissertation/Projects</p> <p>By Dr Rate that this was intended to initiate a discussion on dissertations and student feedback with a view to better managing expectations of students. It was also proposed to review other modules of similar size and scale in this context.</p>
018.127	Discussion	<p>Members welcomed the proposed review. A member stated that it was welcome that modules of similar scale were included as it can be a challenge to meet the timescales of the Feedback Policy.</p> <p>The Chair voiced concern about the linkage of dissertations/projects and other modules and stated that she felt there was sufficient flexibility already in the policy to allow for large modules to be managed. There may be accompanying staff resource issues with big modules but that was outside APPC's remit.</p> <p>It was agreed that there was a link to workloads and resources and also with definition of what would constitute a "large" module.</p> <p>A Student's Association member commented that students were usually appreciative if staff signalled at an early stage where delays in provision of feedback were likely.</p> <p>Members felt there was a wider conversation required about quality and timing of feedback which also tied in with the discussions on assessment loading.</p>

018.128	Resolved	That the proposal is reviewed and revisited at a future meeting of APPC (Action: ARWG).
018.129	Reported	Consideration of pilot of 'TESTA' review of assessment loading and student feedback. By Dr Rate that TESTA was aimed at developing an assessment strategy at programme level. It described a framework of support and HEIs who had used it found a subsequent rebalancing of assessment loading. The ARWG were supportive of the process and the proposal was to have a pilot project, either targeted or voluntary.
018.130	Discussion	Members felt this highlighted a need to expand guidance at programme development stage and include the Testa principles. With regard to a pilot there would need to be a costing of the proposal. Targeting was thought to be the most appropriate method. Strengthen guidance as a starting point.
018.131	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen guidance on assessment strategy development (Action: Head of Academic Quality). 2. There is a costing of the proposed pilot (Action: Head of Academic Development/Head of Academic Quality).
018.132	Reported	Grade Point Average (GPA) Banded Grades review By Dr Rate that this was considered as part of the banded grading discussion above.
018.133	Reported	All students successfully complete all SCQF level 9 modules prior to entering honours project The background data on this issue suggested that there were small numbers of affected students and there was no serious issue. Research methods modules had been looked at but there was a wide variance of practice so no action was proposed. There were remaining questions surrounding design of modules as pre-requisites.
018.134	Discussion	It was agreed there was a wider discussion to be had around pre and co-requisites. Pre/Co-requisites could be applicable to some programmes but not others. Additional guidance may be required.
018.135	Resolved	There is an AQD workshop on programme and assessment strategy design (Action: DVCA/Head of Academic Quality).
ELIR 4		
018.136	Considered	A report on the format and preparations for ELIR4 (APPC18/30/01).
018.137	Resolved	That any further feedback is sent to Professor Andrew.
UPDATE ON JANUARY 2019 EXAMINATIONS		
018.138	Considered	An update by the Academic Registrar on the January 2019 examination diet (APPC18-23-01).

018.139	Reported	By the Academic Registrar that the combined total of candidates sitting examinations was as normal. There remained some practical issues around processing results in cases where capping would not be applied as normal. Further assessment would be required to look at the scale of extra retrievals and where it could be fitted in.
018.140	Resolved	That the update be noted.
SHLS FITNESS TO PRACTISE POLICY UPDATE		
018.141	Considered	Updates to the current Fitness to Practise Policy (APPC18/27/01).
018.142	Reported	By Dr McLarnon that the text had been revised to take account of new departmental structures and to update terminology. The draft had been circulated to the School Board for comments and these had been incorporated.
018.143	Resolved	That the revised Fitness to Practise Policy be approved.
SHLS –PORTFOLIO REFRESH		
018.144	Considered	Proposed withdrawal of the BSc Paramedic Practice programme (APPC18/28/01).
018.145	Reported	By Dr McLarnon that changes to Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) Standard of Education Threshold to BSc Honours level was the main driver.
018.146	Approved	The proposed withdrawal of the BSc Paramedic Practice programme.
GCU LONDON: ACADEMIC CASE MASTERS INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY		
018.147	Considered	Academic Case for a new International Diplomacy suite of Masters programmes for delivery at GCU London (APPC18/33/01).
018.148	Reported	By Dr Peshken that the business case was still being finalised but provisional approval of the academic case was being sought here.
018.149	Reported	By Professor Ayad that his own experience was in diplomacy and international relations. The programme(s) proposed were a good fit with the underpinning expertise at GCU London and the digital element of this programme was unique to the UK. Programme suite was highly distinctive. The market for the programmes was potentially diverse e.g. diplomatic corps in London, media, police, corporations.
018.150	Discussion	Members acknowledged the distinctiveness of the proposal but asked the programme development team to bear in mind: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That an equality impact assessment may be required. 2. Consultation on cybersecurity may be necessary. 3. That inclusion of a diagram of the programme structure(s) would be helpful. 4. Some minor typographical errors required to be corrected. 5. That additional detail on flexible delivery modes and professional development would strengthen the case.

018.151	Resolved	That the final proposal be presented for Chair's action subject to the above actions having been completed (Action: Programme Development Team).
ACADEMIC QUALITY POLICY AND PRACTICE (AQPP) MINOR CHANGES		
018.152	Received	Minor changes to the AQPP text (APPC18-29-01).

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