



Meeting APPC19/3
Unconfirmed

ACADEMIC POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020

PRESENT:	Professor N. Andrew, Professor A. Britton, Dr D. Chalmers, Dr C. Choromides (<i>vice</i> Mrs M. Wright), Dr M. Ferguson, Ms E. Fulton, Ms J. Main, Mrs M. McCann, Professor J. Lennon, Mr S. Lopez, Dr N. McLarnon, Professor A. Nelson, Ms S. Pitticas, Dr S. Rate, Ms K Roden (<i>vice</i> Ms C. Hulsen), Mr R. Ruthven, Dr U. Shahani, Ms B. Stevenson, Professor V. Webster (Chair)	
APOLOGIES:	Professor I. Cameron, Ms D. Donnet, Professor A. Morgan, Professor B. Steves	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Ms R. Hyslop (<i>for item A.4</i>), Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
MINUTES		
19.107	Considered	Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 (APPC19/28/01).
19.108	Resolved	That the minutes be approved as a correct record.
MATTERS ARISING		
19.109	Considered	Any matters arising from the above minutes not otherwise covered on the agenda (APPC19/29/01).
19.110	Reported	<p>By the Chair to update members on ELIR, the University had now received the initial identification of themes, good practice and other issues the ELIR panel wish to investigate?</p> <p>There would be a planning day in the following week and three meetings involving the DVC, Head of QA, Academic Quality staff and students. For the remaining time the panel would be in their base.</p> <p>It was possible that more documentation would be requested and then an investigation of key themes. There would be further meetings with student representatives and students more generally and potentially with a range of professional services colleagues.</p> <p>She thanked all colleagues for their work in preparing for ELIR and asked them to bear in mind any possible last minute changes required.</p>

APPC FORWARD LOOK		
19.111	Considered	The Academic Policy and Practice Committee forward work plan for Session 2019/20 (APPC19/04/03).
19.112	Reported	By the Chair that a number of items would be added including learning capture and development of the new strategy for learning, which should be complete by spring 2021. If members identified any items that should be added to the forward plan they should contact the APPC secretary.
19.113	Discussion	The Chair informed members that 62% of modules were VLE compliant now and there would be extensive communications and support for Schools. It was important not to over focus on making teaching materials compliant. All new materials should be and others would be made so.
19.114	Resolved	Add items to forward plan (Action: APPC Secretary)
CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY		
19.114	Considered	Updates to the University Corporate Parenting Strategy (APPC19/30/01).
19.115	Reported	<p>By Ms Hyslop that following the passing of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, GCU, alongside all post-16 further and higher education providers were named as Corporate Parents to looked after children and care-experienced young people in Scotland. Under the Act, GCU is required to fulfil six named duties. In order to do this, the University developed a Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan, which has been updated with our current and evolving provision as well as any associated actions.</p> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Duty 1: To be alert to matters which could adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers</p> <p>Duty 2: To assess the needs of care-experienced young people for the services and support provided by the corporate parent</p> <p>Duty 3: To promote the interests of looked after children and care leavers</p> <p>Duty 4: To seek to provide care-experienced young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing</p> <p>Duty 5: i) To access opportunities provided by the corporate parent ii) To make use of services, and access support, provided by the corporate parent</p> <p>Duty 6: To take any other action considered appropriate to improve the way the corporate parent exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people</p> </div> <p>The revised strategy and action plan included all updates and these were summarised in the executive summary. Most recent statistics were included. Ms Hyslop informed members that not all care leavers were counted and many were over CP age.</p> <p>Ms Hyslop described the changes in more detail:</p> <p><u>Under Duty 1</u></p> <p>Page 4: there is an added reference to the Care Experienced Student Officer.</p>

		<p>Page 5: a change to West of Scotland HEI group name and added reference to CEYP (Care Experienced Young Person) in the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. Also referenced is the case conference process established to provide support in critical instances.</p> <p><u>Under Duty 2</u></p> <p>Page 6: Refers to the named contact system established to enhance monitoring and mentoring.</p> <p><u>Under Duty 3</u></p> <p>Page 7: Notes the appointment of the Care-Experienced Student Officer and GCU contribution to the nation CP training module. Also there is reference to the Contextualised Admissions Policy and the assessment of CE applicants against Minimum Entry Requirements.</p> <p>Page 8: Financial support has changed so there is activity to signpost relevant support for all CE students.</p> <p>Page 9: includes an update to accommodation availability and the partnership with Unite Foundation on both accommodation and scholarship availability. Also highlighted is activity around recruitment of staff mentors, intended as a signposting role rather than a pastoral role.</p> <p>Page 10: highlights activity to encourage take up of support from LDCs and the Library i.e. academic development and long term borrowing of laptops.</p> <p><u>Under Duty 4</u></p> <p>Page 12: highlights an increased number of care-experienced student mentors, including around 5 in the ALC.</p> <p>Page13: Identifies aim to support care-experienced staff.</p> <p><u>Monitoring and Review</u></p> <p>On page 14 the forward dates were included.</p>
19.115	Discussion	<p>Chair asked if data was captured around CE applicants and students. Ms Hyslop replied that data was growing year on year, and not exclusively for statutory Scottish government provision but for all applicants/students.</p> <p>A member asked how staff could be aware and if there was a pathway for them to raise concerns. Ms Hyslop replied that as a CE declaration was sensitive data there could be a pathway through the personal tutor but this had to be subject specific agreement of the student. She informed members that there would be more awareness raising events (e.g. on Care Day) and there was web-based information.</p> <p>Members heard that most care experienced students were located in SHLS</p>

		<p>but could be anywhere and that students who have disclosed have declared that they felt supported. It was hoped that SIMs would allow some means of flagging CE upon disclosure at any point of a student’s career and help to enhance monitoring and reporting.</p> <p>Members asked about accommodation provision. Ms Hyslop stated that current arrangements offered free accommodation for up to 2 years in University's halls of residence, awarded on a needs basis. There was also a partnership with Unite Foundation to provide accommodation for up to 3 years.</p> <p>She informed members that although proving support required a constant conversation, all needs of GCU students had been met so far.</p> <p>With regard to the laptops one current issue was with requirements for specialised software not currently available on the pool laptops. The Chair noted that this was a potential additional resourcing requirement that may require consideration by the Executive Board.</p> <p>A member suggested that there was a need to make support for care-experienced staff more widely known. Ms Hyslop informed members that this was part of the action plan (under Duty 5) and People Services were currently doing work in this area.</p>
19.116	Resolved	That the updates be recommended to SAGE, the University Executive Board and Senate (Action: School Connect Manager).
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY UPDATE		
19.117	Considered	Proposed amendments to the University’s Mitigating Circumstances Policy (APPC19/35/01).
19.118	Reported	<p>By Professor Andrew that at previous APPC discussions it was agreed that the current MITs process was unwieldy and overly complex. GDPR compliance added further complication with the current process’ demands for potentially sensitive personal data as evidence. APPC had agreed that a root and branch review was timely.</p> <p>It is clear from sector-wide groups that this is a problem across the sector. With this in mind a workshop was convened to examine our current policy and look at alternatives. The major issues related to administration of the current process were identified as timing, evidence gathering, elevation of serious cases and all of this contributing to a large administrative burden and a burden on students in trying to provide evidence.</p> <p>Some emerging principles were identified in the initial discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain current definition of mitigating circumstances (i.e. acute and unforeseen circumstances impacting on assessment performance). • Clarify where extensions should be used instead of MITs • Move away from the need for students to provide evidence of MITS

		<p>at a time when they are likely to be under stress and remove the need to articulate potentially distressing circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the personal tutor role • Consider incorporating a “fit to sit “approach where an attempt is considered a declaration of fitness at that time and where students can declare beforehand or within e.g. a 48 hour post assessment window that they were not fit.
19.119	Discussion	<p>The Student President welcomed the debate and the emerging principles. The only concern she had was with the fit to sit element and how it would work in practice. She welcomed, however, the proposed ongoing consultation via stakeholders and including SAGE.</p> <p>Another member asked what would happen if a student missed the window to withdraw their attempt. The Chair stated that the process should be made clear i.e. that there is a time-bound option to withdraw their attempt. Equally we should recognise that there may be extraordinary cases and allow flexibility in the process to make extraordinary decisions.</p> <p>Another member welcomed clarification of where to use extensions and giving authority to module leaders to make these decisions.</p> <p>Members also discussed how to integrate complex and ongoing circumstances and how to incorporate RAPs into the process. The Chair agreed that RAPs were important. There required to be enough flexibility in the process to allow for institutional oversight, the ability to deal with complex circumstances and make rational decisions based on knowledge of a student’s circumstances.</p> <p>Members discussed further implications for University regulations including for suspension of studies, preservation (or otherwise) of attempts and its linkage to MITs. Members felt that further clarity on regulations around returning to study was required.</p> <p>The Chair clarified for members that the personal tutor role would be in relation to knowledge of a student’s circumstances and the ability to advocate, in confidence, to Assessment Board Chairs on the student’s behalf.</p> <p>Professor Andrew informed members that the review aimed to ensure that students would not be disadvantaged by any changes of approach and that these initial discussions focused on providing a more straightforward and humane approach to MITs.</p> <p>The Chair informed members that her preferred approach would be to pilot a new process next session and report on the pilot to APPC and Senate.</p>
19.120	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Committee endorses the paper and the programme of ongoing consultation and recommends the update to Senate. 2. That the 48 hour post assessment reflection period be amended to 2 working days (Action: Academic Registrar).

BANDED MARKING		
19.121	Considered	An update on the banded marking Task and Finish Group (APPC19-36-01).
19.122	Reported	<p>By Professor Nelson that the report summarised the feedback from the consultation exercise involving staff and students. As a result of that feedback the key recommendation was engage further with students and staff on a number of key questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rationale for banded marking, and impact on learning b. Deciding a potential GCU Model of banded marking c. How banded marking impacts Degree classification calculations d. Ensuring feedback is considered in the round, with 'mark' and feedback comments / rubrics used to both acknowledge strengths, and identify areas for improvement. <p>Additionally there was a need to clarify what would be provided to students (banded mark and "raw" mark or only banded mark). Students appeared to be split on this point. Staff were broadly supportive and it was noted that some assessments may be more amenable to "raw" marks e.g. MCQs and that should be available.</p> <p>Other questions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a pilot feasible? • What time and support is required for transition? • Is the new system adopted <i>en masse</i> or rolled out gradually?
19.123	Discussion	<p>Members welcomed the update. One member suggested that a pilot would be desirable, possibly for years 1 and 2 (where it is less controversial). Members discussed why there may be resistance at all.</p> <p>Professor Nelson suggested this may be a lack of understanding and there may be a fear on the students' part that it will change the honours classification. So perhaps more discussion and explanation was required.</p> <p>Other members thought that rather than having underlying "raw" marks, the system was more designed to remove spurious precision in marking (which is much more subjective).</p> <p>Members asked for clarification on the SIMs implementation schedule. The Academic Registrar informed members that it wouldn't prevent ongoing work.</p> <p>Members discussed big bang versus gradual introduction. Members could see pros and cons in both but largely felt that a mixed economy system tended to be confusing. If the technological underpinning (i.e. in SIMs) was in place then a big bang approach was appealing.</p> <p>One member proposed that there should be a pilot run alongside original method in order to provide data on whether there is grade inflation, for example.</p>

		<p>It was suggested that it could simply be modelled using existing data, rather than piloted. Markers should not be marking differently i.e. the marking schemes should not be substantially different.</p> <p>There was further discussion about rubrics and contextualisation of a “master” rubric</p>
19.124	Resolved	That the recommendations for further engagement with students and staff be approved and recommended to Senate (Action: Chair of T&F Group).
HONOURS CLASSIFICATIONS		
19.125	Considered	An oral update from each School on Honours classifications.
19.126	Reported	<p>SHLS – Dr McLarnon informed members that there had been discussions at the Senior Management Group and 5 programmes had been identified as contributing to the upswing. Teams had reported that placement marks had skewed the overall mark. All of these programmes (with the exception of Optometry) and assurances had been received that this was now addressed.</p> <p>SCEBE – Dr Ferguson informed members that there was not grade inflation across the board but 4 programmes had given some cause for concern. The numbers were small but historical data showed an upwards trend. Programme monitoring reports would be coming soon and further reports would be requested.</p> <p>GSBS – Mrs McCann informed members that GSBS was below average in GCU but there had been discussions with the programme teams about the general uplift. More and targeted support for Honours level had been cited as a major factor and this reflected in the uplift. Seven programmes were scrutinised: 3 said they had high class applicants, others said they were comparable with the sector, others that there was no long term trend. 1 programme agreed that there appeared to grade inflation and re-marked all dissertations. Another programme cited the inclusion of a placement.</p>
19.127	Discussion	<p>The Chair reminded members that this was a live issue in the sector with HESA scrutinising the uplift in degree classifications. It was an issue for employers who perceived a devaluing of degrees. We have to be cautious about spikes becoming trends.</p> <p>Members asked if there were mechanisms for adjustments and if ADLTQs had the tools they needed to address this. Dr Ferguson stated that the mechanisms were there but there was no advance warning to allow this to be used. Programme Leaders needed to take responsibility to do this.</p>
19.128	Resolved	That the update be noted and revisited at future APPC.

PROGRESSION AND COMPLETION		
19.129	Considered	An overview of 2018-19 progression and completion following the SFC census date (APPC19-32-01)
19.130	Reported	<p>By Ms Roden that the report provided an overview of 2018-19 progression and completion. It detailed performance at University and School level and included Nursing, GCU London, international, articulation and taught postgraduate cohorts. Appendix A provides an overview of FT UG data by protected characteristics, being from an SIMD20 area and for care-experienced students.</p> <p>There were some concerns around level 1 performance with dips in both SCEBE and SHLS. Honours performance had been spoken about in the previous item and she informed members that Strategy and Planning would be happy to provide any data necessary.</p> <p>For postgraduate programmes, the report concentrated on new entrants on one year Masters programmes to provide a clearer picture of performance. It was intended to enhance PG reporting in future years.</p>
19.131	Discussion	<p>A member raised concern regarding the data showing only 16% of BME students receive firsts and suggested this warranted closer examination.</p> <p>The Chair replied that there was a current enhancement theme on BME student experience and similar work being undertaken by People Services in relation to staff.</p> <p>Ms Roden stated that there was limited comparative data available from other HEIs at this stage however HESA data would provide this.</p> <p>The Chair stated there needs to be more focus on BME student experience addressing issues such as unconscious bias from staff or other students, lack of support (for international students). It was hoped that an action plan would develop out of the ongoing work and what Schools are doing to address this.</p> <p>Dr Ferguson suggested that there was a reported link to excessive assessment. This was in a programme not due to go through the programme review cycle. It was suggested this could be dealt with in the manner of the “amnesty” of 2019 and that a discussion with AQ business partners would be of value.</p> <p>Broader discussion required on students who fail at the first diet.</p>
19.132	Resolved	The report be noted and revisited at future APPC.
ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE		
19.133	Considered	An oral interim report from the ARSC Chair.
19.134	Reported	By Dr Rate that Senate had agreed to a pilot of early retrieval. A progression review had also been agreed. Benchmarking was ongoing

		<p>with assistance from the Academic Registrar. The pilot involved levels 10 (UG year 4) and 11 (PG/Masters) and fails in tri A can be retrieved in tri B. There were ongoing discussions about compatibility in SIMs. Estimated roll out would be session 2021-22. Dr Rate said that capping had not been considered at this stage. Another issue was that the pilot only included coursework and defining course works has been a challenge. For tri B starts there was already a mixed model with some allowed to retrieve at the earliest date and others required to wait for resit diet. There were pros and cons to both ways and system-related issues for early retrieval. The biggest issue was compensation which cannot be applied when the level is not complete.</p> <p>Student Mobility – an operational handbook was almost complete. Policy development would follow.</p> <p>Moderation Policy – looking at sample sizes. Currently policy says ALL fails go to external examiners. Proposals on sample sizes will come back. External Examiners – consistency on communications. Academic Quality was included in these discussions.</p>
19.135	Discussion	<p>It was considered that compensation should not be a major issue if students were informed correctly.</p> <p>Further question on sampling – how to choose the fails to be moderated?</p> <p>Dr Rate replied that the reasoning was that the load was too high for some large modules. It was a challenge but the aim was to develop guidance related top sampling.</p> <p>Professor Andrew reminded members that the EE’s role was to confirm the overall standard not to recommend higher marks for a particular student.</p>
19.136	Resolved	That proposals are brought back to APPC when ready (Action: Chair ARSC)
INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY		
19.137	Considered	A discussion item on inclusion at diversity at GCU.
19.138	Reported	By the Chair, that following on from the discussion under Progression and Completion, she wanted to initiate work under the broad them of inclusion and diversity. She asked members to consider who may be able to lead such a project.
19.139	Resolved	That members provide suggestions to the Chair.
GCU MODULE EVALUATION SURVEYS – TRIMESTER A 2019-20		
19.140	Considered	A summary of the quantitative outcomes of the Trimester A 2019-20 module evaluations for GCU (APPC19/31/01).
19.141	Reported	By Ms Roden that the MEQs had been revised and there had been a pilot, on

		<p>which APPC would be updated at the next meeting. This included the automated redaction of names and inappropriate comments.</p> <p>In the overview satisfaction levels were broadly comparable to previous years and highest in year one Masters programmes. Placement feedback was particularly good.</p>
19.142	Discussion	<p>Some members were cautious about the placement statistics as students in modules without a placement element had also answered this question.</p> <p>Ms Roden stated that the MEQ would be modified to make it clearer to identify placement module.</p> <p>It was noted that there was significant variation in the trend data between different trimesters and that this warranted further investigation.</p>
19.143	Resolved	That Schools scrutinise the outcomes and report back on the trimester variations (Action: ADLTQs).
ACADEMIC CASE		
19.144	Considered	Academic Case for BA (Hons) Economic Policy Direct entry (APPC19/33/01).
19.145	Resolved	That the case be approved subject to approval of the concept at the Deans Group (Action: Programme Development Team)
APPC CHAIR'S ACTION		
19.146	Received	Chair's action approving delivery of MSc Environmental Management to a cohort of students at GCU London, commencing January 2020 (APPC19/34/01)