



Meeting Number APC15/4
Confirmed

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2016

PRESENT:	Dr R. Clougherty, Mr S. Lopez, Ms J. Main, Ms S. McGiffen, Mr V. McKay, Professor A. Morgan, Mr R. Ruthven, Dr S. Rate, Dr M. Sharp, Mr I. Stewart, Dr N. McLarnon, Professor V. Webster (Chair), Professor L. Creanor (<i>vice</i> Professor R Whittaker)	
APOLOGIES:	Professor I. Cameron, Professor T. Hilton, Professor B. Steves	
BY INVITATION:	Ms D. Donnet	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
MINUTES		
15.098	Considered	The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2016 (APC15/27/1).
15.099	Resolved	That the minutes be approved as a correct record.
MATTERS ARISING		
ADMISSIONS/CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS POLICY (<i>Arising on 15.012</i>)		
15.100	Reported	By the Secretary that the revised Policy would be brought to the meeting on 11 May 2016 before being brought to Senate.
THE TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY (<i>Arising on 15.127</i>)		
15.101	Reported	By Professor Creanor that School contextualised data had been circulated. There would an update following feedback from Schools.
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNIVERSITY		
15.102	Considered	A discussion item to consider key academic requirements for the University.
15.103	Reported	By the Chair that this was a discussion item to consider key academic requirements, compliance matters and items regarding academic practice and quality assurance/enhancement requiring attention.

		<p>Some initial thoughts identified from discussions were around the following issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact hours, module and programme delivery 2. A general re-engagement with assessment guidance 3. Some specific assessment regulatory matters which would be coming forward from the Assessment Regulations Working Group.
15.104	Discussion	<p><u>Contact Hours</u></p> <p>Members discussed developments in USA HE where there were developments in competency-based programmes in which contact hours were not a pre-defined measure of learning.</p> <p>Members thought that although there were some elements of competency-based learning at GCU it was perhaps not far advanced. Some members pointed out those international and widening participation students, in particular, valued a more face-to face approach to learning. Members were largely in favour of exploring more flexible approaches where content could be delivered in a number of different ways. The challenge was to have flexibility in our provision and our systems, whilst maintaining high quality.</p> <p><u>Programme and module management</u></p> <p>Members agreed there was a need to take the responsibilities of module ownership seriously and control who is able to modify module content. It was felt that, currently, there were too many changes being made without proper adherence to quality enhancement procedures and relevant consultation. It was recognised that there are rules and procedures in place now but perhaps better guidance to staff was required. There was a need to reassert the quality enhancement processes particularly in the light of CMA guidelines on University provision.</p> <p>In terms of portfolio development, it was suggested that a timeline aligned to the recruitment cycle would be beneficial, with some flexibility when a programme had an immediate market, for example, new work-based or closed-cohort programmes.</p> <p>Liaising with the Library regarding reading list at an early stage would be a major step forward in allowing the Library to use its budget most effectively. At the moment lists were inaccurate leading to unnecessary wastage or poor student experience due to lack of material. The list setting needs to be a formal process and updated on an annual basis.</p> <p>Members agreed that this was part of good programme management and extended to specifications for equipment, accommodation and the student experience in general.</p> <p>It was felt that programme monitoring data should be streamlined. Members also remarked that a robust module feedback process was also required to allow module leaders to target enhancement where it was needed.</p> <p>The role of the programme leader was raised. Members felt that the definition of the role was clear but for some reason programme leaders do not perceive they have the authority. It was acknowledged that work with Programme Leads</p>

		<p>was needed to raise awareness that they have authority over their programmes, including the modules contributing to it and module changes should not happen without their authorisation.</p> <p><u>Exchange Programmes</u></p> <p>Members also raised issues with exchange programmes where there is an issue with equivalence and interpretation of marks on the academic transcripts the students return with from their host institution. There was a need for consistency which was lacking at the moment. The solution could be criteria mapping in advance.</p>
15.105	Resolved	Those members forward any further suggestions to the Secretary. (Action: APC)
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES ANNUAL REPORT		
15.106	Considered	Annual report on the operation of the Mitigating Circumstances Policy (APC15/41/1).
15. 107	Reported	<p>By Dr Walsh that overall number of MITs received had increased but this was identified as being largely as a result of one day of bad weather. The tables in the report showed total numbers and these would be split into UG and TPG for future reports. The acceptance rates were static and pre-screening has helped make the process less onerous. Non-School based programmes were dealt with in a combined board representing Graduate School, GCU Lead and SWBE.</p> <p>The MITs process had led to a significant reduction in academic appeals since 2012. There were no appeals route within the MITs process but 22 complaints had been received related to MITs. Broadly these were as a result of incorrect application MITs guidelines and poor applications from students with long term conditions who were not able to relate the evidence to MITs. The MITs Working Group considered that there was no need for a separate appeals route but flexibility relating to students with long term conditions and guidance for MITs Board Chairs would be issued. Appeals against the procedural handling of MITs should be via the academic appeals policy, as is normal in the sector.</p> <p>Online submission was being discussed and developments were anticipated in the near future.</p>
15. 108	Discussion	<p>Members queried the process in relation to declarations of disability. Dr Walsh said that the MITs process was aiming to be more flexible and to that end had co-opted representation from Disability Service.</p> <p>Members asked what students would do in outbreaks of types of virus (e.g. norovirus) where patients were not advised to attend GP. Ms Donnet said she felt there was flexibility in the process to deal with these cases whenever issues like that arose. The responsibility was also on the student to highlight.</p>
15. 109	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the further advice as outlined at 6 above be issued to Mitigating Circumstances Boards in relation to students with long term medical condition or impairments is agreed subject to confirmation of clarity of wording with Schools. (Action: Chair of MITs Working Group) 2. The work to date undertaken by the Mitigating Circumstances Working Group and the ongoing work in relation to further development of the guidelines as a result of feedback received and the development of on-

		<p>line submission of mitigating circumstances applications be noted.</p> <p>3. That a separate appeals process for MITs is not appropriate and that MITs applicants wishing to appeal on procedural grounds are directed towards the Academic Appeals Policy.</p>
COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE – 2014/15 OVERVIEW		
15. 110	Considered	The 2014-15 overview of the Complaints Handling Procedure (APC15/42/1).
15. 111	Reported	<p>By Ms Donnet that this was the second annual overview report following the adoption of the SPSO approved process in 2013. Highlights were that the number of frontline complaints was down by 53, from 160 to 107. She informed members that from consideration of the figures it was likely that there was a degree of under-reporting in some areas. The Library had recorded most but was very robust in recording complaints, which were not all in relation to the Library. GCU London will feature separately in next year's report.</p> <p>44 Stage 2 complaints were recorded which a significant increase was on the 15 received in 2013-14. However it should be noted that 22 of these complaints related specifically to MITs.</p> <p>Lessons learned were a key aspect of the complaints process and this was now detailed in a section of the overview report.</p> <p>Ms Donnet informed members that there was still work to do in awareness training and development work with Schools and Professional Support Departments to ensure that all staff is aware of the CHP and their responsibilities in implementing it and learning from it.</p> <p>The report minus the data on complaints about Mits outcomes would be submitted to Senate, Court and the SPSO in line with the CHP requirements.</p>
15.112	Discussion	Members welcomed in particular the lessons learned section of the process and felt that it would be useful to have these available for staff to see, whether on a web page or through the portal/sharepoint.
15.113	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the report is welcomed, endorsed and recommended to Senate and Court. 2. Those additional channels for sharing <i>lessons learned</i> are investigated. <p>(Action: Department of Governance)</p>
RELEASE OF ASSESSMENT BOARD DECISIONS TO TUITION FEE DEBTORS		
15.114	Considered	A proposed review of processes and related policies (APC15/43/1).
15.115	Reported	<p>By Mr Lopez that the Credit Control and Debt Management Policy contained the sanction that student debtors were not allowed to get their marks. The practice meant that students in this position did not get any notification email of an assessment board outcome. They get, instead, an email telling them to pay their debt first. This has posed an administrative problem with students required to withdraw and students who don't know they have resits. Currently attempts are not counted if a student is unaware of the resit.</p> <p>The practice was anomalous but the Finance Office has not been willing to change the policy even though students could get their results via a subject access request (which are paid for currently).</p>

		This proposal was to release decisions but not actual marks. The Finance Office had agreed to this measure. For 15/16 this would have to be a manual exercise undertaken by School staff, with a move to a central automated process for 16/17.
15.116	Discussion	<p>Members asked if student debtors were able to resit normally if they were aware of the need to. Mr Lopez said that the student debtor is not able to progress but they are able to resit.</p> <p>There was discussion around whether it was more logical to prevent debtors from resitting rather than withhold their marks. It was also pointed out that students will generally have their marks other than exam marks. Also students could pass and only would need to pay debts if they wanted their award parchment.</p> <p>Other members felt that the proposal was the simplest and most workable solution and resolved some issues for students with visas.</p>
15.117	Resolved	That the Chair would further discuss potential resolutions with the Finance Office. (Action: APC Chair)
GCU ONLINE SIMILARITY CHECKING POLICY		
15.118	Considered	A proposed University policy for the use of online similarity checking (APC15/16/2).
15.119	Reported	<p>By Professor Creanor that the policy had been revised with feedback from APC. The changes were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change of title 2. Inserting and policy statement 3. Defining the principles 4. Guidance was separated out <p>The remaining questions were how many submissions were to be allowed; why is similarity checking being used; should this be a global policy or for individual modules.</p>
15.120	Discussion	<p>Members thought that Learning Technologists would be the best conduit for the guidance contained in the paper. Professor Creanor agreed and stated that this is referred to in the guidance.</p> <p>Members felt that there were a number of unresolved issues. The key questions were is this mandatory or not and is it primarily formative or a plagiarism detection tool? It was accepted that not all assessments were suitable for the system.</p> <p>Other issues were timing of deadlines (and technical problems) and communicating of outcomes to students.</p> <p>Members were broadly in favour of mandatory use for text-based assessments but felt that the document delegated too much responsibility to module leaders and their academic judgement. The intention of having a global policy was to remove inconsistency and this approach would not change that. For example the final sentence of 4.3 was too open to inconsistency at module level.</p>

		<p>Members also felt that reference to plagiarism procedures from the Code of Student Conduct was required e.g at 4.4. to guide staff on what to do next.</p> <p>Members were also not sure if the software licence would extend to GCU New York.</p> <p>In terms of making the policy and guidance available to students members felt that introducing at induction and into programme documentation would be appropriate.</p>
15.121	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the document is revised to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide more specificity of interpretation of a failed submission. b. To remove the statements on academic judgement at 2.3 at 4.3. c. To appropriately reference the Code of Student Conduct plagiarism procedures. 2. That the principle of providing guidance to students at induction and associated documentation is agreed. <p>(Action: Prof. Creanor)</p>
AOCB		
ELIR		
15.122	Reported	By the Chair that the QAA 2016 timetable would be suspended pending the outcome of Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) consultation. The Scottish sector had signalled their preference for an enhancement model.
Research Teaching Linkages		
15.123	Reported	By the Chair that some work around providing examples of research-teaching linkages was being undertaken.
GLASGOW SCHOOL FOR BUSINESS AND SOCIETY – ACADEMIC CASE		
15.124	Considered	An academic case for the programme Executive Postgraduate Certificate in Strategic Human Resource Management (APC15/44/1) subject to the revision of the programme title and other clarifications.
15.125	Discussion	<p>Members noted that the title (“Executive PGC”) was not a current GCU award and requested that the title be changed e.g. a title such as <i>PGC Strategic HRM for Executives</i>.</p> <p>Members also queried some of the details in the Business Case section which appeared contradictory.</p>
15.126	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the title be amended in accordance with the above discussion. 2. That the Programme Development Team clarify the following points: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contact time: 2 days face-face contact time and 75 hours total contact both specified – clarify balance of face-to face contact and online. b. Verify total FTEs numbers. (Action: Programme Development Team) 3. It was agreed by APC to resubmit the amended case to the Chair for approval via Chair’s Action.

GCU NEW YORK EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS		
15.127	Received	The compliance requirements for GCU New York Module Assessments and Module Assessment Boards incorporating the revisions specified by APC (APC15/28/2).
LEARNING AND TEACHING SUBCOMMITTEE		
15.128	Received	Confirmed minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2016 (LTSC15/46/1).

Ag/apc/March2016/minutes