

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2013

- PRESENT:** Professor J Wilson (Chair), Professor R Whittaker, Mr R Ruthven, Mr T Kilpatrick (Vice Prof Greenhalgh), Mr Stewart Laing (to 13.032), Mr I Stewart, Mr M Lamb (to 13.032), Mr N Clark (to 13.032), Ms J Main, Professor D Smith (to 13.032, Dr J Edwards, Professor V Webster (to 13.028)
- APOLOGIES:** Professor B Steves, Professor D Greenhalgh, Mr A Pierotti
- BY INVITATION:** Ms I Bruce, Dr K Benske, Ms K Roden, Dr R Ingram, Mr A Lui, Ms K Thomson, Mrs S Rate
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs D Donnet (Secretary)

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the newly elected student sabbatical officers to their first meeting of the Academic Policy Committee and thanked the past President and VP Education for their valuable contribution to the work of APC over the last academic session. He also welcomed to their first meeting Ms I Bruce, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Enhancement and Dr S. Rate, Associate Dean Learning and Teaching Quality, GSBS, as well as Dr K Benske, Ms K Roden, Dr R Ingram, Mr A. Lui who were in attendance to speak to reports on the agenda.

MINUTES

- 13.001 Considered The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Academic Policy Committee meeting held on 22nd May (Doc APC13/1/1).
- 13.002 Resolved: That, with the amendment of some minor typographical errors, the minutes be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.
(Action: DGQE).

MATTERS ARISING

Blended Learning Roadmap (arising on APCMin 12.152)

- 13.003 Reported: That this would be considered at the next Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and a report would be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

APC/LTSC Away Day (arising on APCMin 12.153)

13.004 Reported: By the Chair that this was on the agenda for discussion at this meeting

Review and Rebranding of Consideration of Special Factors (arising on APCMin 12.131)

13.005 Reported: By the Chair that this was to be launched in October with events for both staff and students and it would be in operation with effect from the January 2014 assessment period.

Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) (arising on APCMin 12.156)

13.006 Reported: By K Thomson that due to an ISIS delay it would now be piloted in two streams in nursing for the November 2013 graduation.

Strategy for Learning (arising on APCMin 12.157)

13.007 Reported: By the Chair that the Strategy for Learning had been approved by Senate and was on the agenda for this meeting.

Student Experience Framework (Arising on APCMin 12.165)

13.008 Reported: By the Chair that the Implementation plan was being formulated. Work was ongoing on the student-facing version of the Framework with the first draft expected by the end of September 2013.

KIS Update (arising on APCMin 12.169)

13.009 Reported: By the Director of Policy and Planning that the information had been submitted in August and that the results were expected at the end of September. A paper on KIS, NSS and League Tables would be submitted to the next meeting.
(Action: JE)

ELISR (arising on APCMin 12.171)

13.010 Reported: By the Chair that all recommendations for University-wide consideration have been provided to the relevant functional area.

Feedback Enhancement Group (arising on APCMin 12.175)

13.011 Reported: By the Chair that the University had achieved significant increases in the Assessment and Feedback section of the 2013 NSS and showed the largest improvement of all Scottish and University Alliance universities. He congratulated the members of the Feedback Enhancement Working

Group and all colleagues who had contributed to this outcome.

Complaint Handling Procedure (arising on APCMin 12.183)

13.012 Reported: By the Chair that the Complaint Handling Procedure had been approved by Senate and was live. A number of briefing sessions across the University had already been held and open sessions were planned for early October and all staff were invited to attend.

DRAFT ENGAGE: STRATEGY for LEARNING ANNUAL OPERATIONAL Plan 2013/14

13.013 Considered: Draft Engage: Strategy for Learning Operational Plan 2013/14 (APC13/2/1)

13.014 Reported: Director, GCU LEAD

- i. That following the approval of the Strategy for Learning (SfL) by Senate in June it had been agreed to establish a University-wide curriculum change initiative *Engage* to support cross- University coordination and collaboration to achieve the objectives of the SfL.
- ii. Engage would address academic and professional development needs linked to the implementation of the SfL.
- iii. That Academic Policy Committee would act as the Steering Group for the Engage initiative and the implementation of the SfL with the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee as the forum for discussion of progress and planned developments.
- iv. Many of the actions identified were already underway.
- v. It was proposed to hold a University-wide learning and teaching conference every other year with School-based events being held in alternate years.

13.015 Discussed: The idea of identifying partners for specific actions was welcomed by members. However, it was suggested that it would be useful to name the lead individual in each instance.

In respect of “University Systems” more work in relation to module performance and review was required and it was noted that this was being considered by the Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

The change towards a University-wide learning and teaching event being held biannually with Schools hosting local events in alternate years was also welcomed. It was noted that the timing of these events would be crucial to ensure engagement across the University and the first event would be held in 2014.

It was highlighted that *Engage* was a top-level plan with each area having its own operational plans sitting beneath it. The need for key deliverables for 2013/14 was stressed, although it was acknowledged

that some actions would be on-going for a longer period and that this should be made clearer in the document.

- 13.016 Resolved: To approve *Engage: Strategy for Learning Operational Plan 2013/14* subject to the points raised during discussion.
(Action:RW)

FAIR CURRICULUM PROJECT

- 13.017 Considered : A proposal for the FAIR (Flexible, Accessible, Inclusive and Real) Curriculum Project (APC13/2/1)

- 13.018 Reported: By Dr K Benske, GCU Lead, that the proposal was for the development of a FAIR curriculum as part of the University's Engage Initiative to support the development of the Strategy for Learning and the Equalities Outcome Framework.

The project aspires to support the integration of flexibility, accessibility, inclusivity and real-life experiences into programmes across the University and it aims to reach beyond the anticipatory duty of the Equality Act 2010 by taking into account the educational, social and cultural background of all students. Students will benefit from an education that is FAIR and that will allow them to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes required to achieve the University's 'commitment to the participation, progression and success of all students regardless of background' as stated in the Strategy for Learning.

During the first phase of the project it is intended to benchmark current activity and map this onto a FAIR curriculum and, based on this, an audit tool would be developed to support programme teams with the portfolio refresh and programme approval or re-approval. This tool would be disseminated across the University and AccelerATE professional Development Centre workshops would be devised and delivered to programme teams to support them in the application of the audit tool.

- 13.019 Discussed: Members were supportive of the FAIR Curriculum Project but requested that elements of it should be accelerated to fit in with work currently being undertaken at programme level on the Portfolio Refresh.

- 13.020 Resolved:
- i. To approve in principle the proposal for the FAIR Curriculum Project and that the development of the audit tool be accelerated and circulated to programme leads to inform the Portfolio Refresh.
 - ii. That the implementation of Project be reviewed and be reported back to the May 21st meeting of this Committee prior to committing to the next stage.

(Action: KB)

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM COLLEGE TO UNIVERSITY: THE EXPERIENCE OF HN STUDENTS – FINAL REPORT

- 13.021 Considered: Making the Transition from College to University: The experiences of HN students. Final Report (APC13/3/1)

- 13.022 Reported: By Dr Ingram, GCU Lead, that

- i. The purpose of the Greater Glasgow Articulation Partnership (GGAP) funded study was to identify issues which are relevant to students in the transition from HN to degree programmes so that their experience can be enhanced. In this way, the study aimed to support the work of the GGAP Hub and the other articulation hubs.
- ii. The study aimed primarily to gather data on the experiences of full-time direct entrants, that is those who entered with full advanced standing to Level 2 with an HNC or Level 3 with an HND as well as the experiences of part-time students who articulate through their equivalent progression route.
- iii. The findings were grouped into 6 key areas which if implemented could improve the preparation of students for degree level study and their successful transition to the University.
 - a) Ensuring students have the information for informed decision making;
 - b) Facilitating successful transition from college to university;
 - c) Preparing students for successful degree level study;
 - d) Providing appropriate support within the degree programmes;
 - e) Support from student mentors and the Students' Association; and
 - f) Ensuring appropriate curriculum matching.
- iv. The findings and recommendations should be considered in relation to the implementation of the GGAP operational plan 2013/15, the College Connect Strategy and the Student Experience Framework.

13.023 Discussion Members welcomed the report. It was noted that it had not been possible to make contact with students who had withdrawn from the University to find out the reasons for their withdrawal and it was suggested that Programme Leaders may be able to provide some background information.

13.024 Resolved

- i. To note the report and its recommendations; and
- ii. To request that the recommendations be considered by the University in relation to the implementation of the GGAP operational plan 2013/15, the College Connect Strategy and the Student Experience Framework.

(Action: RI)

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

13.025 Considered: A summary of the 2012 National Student Survey (NSS) results (APC13/6/1).

13.026 Reported: By K. Roden, Policy and Planning, that overall the University had performed well and that in particular

- Students' overall satisfaction of their experience at GCU is 84%, a minimal decrease from 2012 (85%) and just below the Key Performance Indicator in this area (also 85%).

- Categories that have remained unchanged are *The teaching on my course* (84%) and *Personal Development* (83%).
- There have been improvements in Assessment and Feedback (8%); Academic Support (+1%); Organisation and Management (+1%); Learning
- Resources (+1%) and Students' Association (+8%).

Further analysis was being undertaken and reports will be circulated to Schools on programme performance and sector analysis and this will enable Schools to complete their NSS Action Plans for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

13.027 Discussion: The improved results were welcomed. However, it was noted that this had no correlation with the University's *Overall Satisfaction* results which had dropped by 1% since 2012.

The issue of where ownership and management of the NSS Action Plans lay was raised. Whilst the co-ordination of the survey completion, analysis and dissemination of results fell within the remit of Policy and Planning, there was no overall co-ordination of the resulting Action Plans to ensure best practice across the University. Whilst School Boards were responsible for specific actions, there was no wider, cross-University direction. It was accepted that there was a need for better management of the action plans and the Chair suggested that this should fall within his remit of PVC Learning and Teaching.

13.028 Resolved:

- i. To note the report.
- ii. That the PVC Learning and Teaching take overall responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of the NSS Action Plans.

(Action: JW)

PORTFOLIO REFRESH

13.029 Considered: Pro-forma templates from each School providing a summary of their proposals for the Portfolio Refresh (APC13/15/1)

13.030 Reported: By the Chair that each of the Schools was in the final stages of their Portfolio Refresh. As agreed by this Committee, Schools had been requested to complete a template to ensure a level of presentational consistency and the Strategy for Learning would ensure consistency of content.

In the case of GSBS, the proposals were confined to the undergraduate portfolio following the successful postgraduate approval events earlier in the year. However, the proposals were likely to be supplemented by a small number of additional Masters titles.

In both SHLS and SEBE, the proposals relate to both the undergraduate and postgraduate portfolios.

13.031 Discussed: It was observed that the proposals submitted by SEBE did not seem to be as transformational as those submitted by the other two Schools and the Committee was informed that this was because the School had begun a review of its portfolio with the establishment of the new School in 2011, and it had been iterative over the years rather than one "big bang".

There was still some concern over the move from “short-fat” to “long and thin” modules and the impact this would have in cross-programme flexibility as well as exchange programmes such as Erasmus. Further communication and consultation on this was seen as being essential.

- 13.032 Resolved: To agree the portfolio refresh proposals as submitted by each School that they be referred to Senate for approval.
(Action: DGQE)

QUORUM

The Committee Secretary informed that due to Committee members leaving during the course of the meeting, that the meeting was now inquorate. It was agreed to continue with the remaining business on the agenda.

DIGNITY AT WORK AND STUDY POLICY

- 13.033 Considered The Dignity at Work Policy APC13/5/1).

- 13.034 Reported By the Equality and Diversity Advisor

- i. That this Policy updated the University’s current Equality and Diversity Policy.
- ii. An earlier version of the updated Equality and Diversity Policy was presented to Staff Policy Committee as part of a previous policy review cycle in May and September 2011. It was subsequently agreed to put the approval of the Policy on hold in anticipation of a Single Equality Scheme, to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Scheme was published in April 2013, as the Equality Outcomes Framework.
- iii. The title of the draft Policy was changed to Dignity at Work and Study Policy to reflect the legacy of the Dignity at Work and Study initiative (first launched in 2007), and the more proactive emphasis of the words (rather than a more ‘neutral’ Equality and Diversity Policy).
- iv. This latest draft Policy was approved by the Equality and Diversity Committee in March 2013.
- v. The Policy has been checked and approved in relation to disability equality by Business Disability Forum (formerly Employers Forum on Disability).
- vi. As this is a staff and student-facing Policy, it will go through the agreed approval route for HR policies (including Executive Board, Staff Policy Committee, and Court), as well as through this Committee and Senate

- 13.035 Resolved To agree the Policy and that it be submitted to Senate for approval.
(Action: AL)

EXCEPTIONS COMMITTEE WORKING METHODS AND ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

- 13.036 Considered: A report by the Secretary to the Exceptions Committee Working Group proposing changes to the Exceptions Committee working methods and attaching the Exceptions Committee Annual Report 2012/13 (DocAPC13/12/1).
- 13.037 Reported: By the Chair that the Exceptions Committee generally met on a virtual basis as business arose but that this process lacked rigour and discipline and therefore the following changes to the Committee's normal operations were proposed:-
- i. For session 2013-14 that cases will be considered only at a meeting on 15 March 2014 with one follow up meeting on 3rd September 2014 for any outstanding cases.
 - ii. From session 2014-15 that one Exceptions meeting is timetabled per year in March to consider any cases.
 - iii. That any cases that arise outwith this timescale can only be considered with the agreement of the Chair of APC.
 - iv. That all cases will henceforth be required to be submitted on a standard pro forma.
 - v. That all cases must have explicit approval of the appropriate Associate Dean for Learning, Teaching and Quality.
 - vi. That the annual (or biannual for 2013-14) meeting will be convened as a conventional committee meeting. Cases will no longer be considered by email.
- 13.038 Resolved
- i. To approve the changes outlined about for the operation of the Exceptions Committee; and
 - ii. To note the Exceptions Committee Annual Report 2012/13
(Action: DGQE)

APC SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

- 13.039 Considered: A summary of the Sub-Committee and Working Groups reporting to this committee or the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee (APC13/16/1).
- 13.040 Resolved: Having heard from Ms I. Bruce, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Enhancement, that she was undertaking a review of the terms of reference for this Committee, its sub-committees and the remit and number of working groups, it was agreed to defer consideration of this matter until the next meeting of the Committee on 13th November 2013.
(Action:IB)

EXTERNAL ASSESSORS

- 13.041 Considered A report outlining changes to External Assessors as required by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code (DocAPC13/17/1)
- 13.042 Reported: By Ms I. Bruce, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Enhancement, that the Department of Governance and Quality Enhancement was

undertaking a mapping exercise to ensure that its academic governance and regulatory framework, and the supporting operational procedures were compliant with the QAA Quality Code.

In undertaking the mapping of Chapter B7 of the Code in relation to External Examining, there were a number of areas where further work was required to ensure compliance, and these were detailed within the report.

- 13.043 Resolved:
- i. To approve the actions outlined in the report to ensure that the University is compliant with Chapter B7 of the Code whilst at the same time taking consideration of best practice within the sector.
 - ii. To note that the Code refers to “External Examiners” and not “Assessors” and therefore any changes to the regulations and operational procedures would reflect this terminology.
- (Action: DGQE)**

TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

- 13.044 Resolved: To defer consideration of the Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership until the next meeting when the Committee would be considering the review of the terms of reference for this Committee, its sub-committees and the remit and number of working groups as detailed in paragraph 13.040 above.
- (Action: DGQE)**

EXITING WITH AN ORDINARY DEGREE (AND DEGREE CLASSIFICATION) RESEARCH PROJECT

- 13.045 Approved: A report informing that the Exiting with an Ordinary Degree (and degree classification) research project was complete and requesting agreement to undertake consultation prior to the final report being submitted to the next Committee meeting in November (APC13/8/1).
- (Action: CRLL)**

CHAIR'S ACTIONS

- 13.046 Received: Chair's Action to approve the addition of the full-time MBA programme to the GCU London Portfolio (APC13/9/1).
- 13.047 Received: Chair's Action to approve a proposal from the School of Health and Life Sciences to rename the BSc (Hons) Professional Development to the BSc (Hons) Professional Studies in Nursing (APC13/10/1).

OUTCOME AGREEMENTS: OVERVIEW OF 2014/15 PROCESS

- 13.048 Received: A report by the Director of Policy and Planning outlining the GCU approach to the development of the Outcome Agreement (APC13/4/1).

CALEDONIAN SCHOLAR INITIATIVE

- 13.049 Received: The announcement of the 2013/14 Caledonian Scholars, Senior Scholars and Caledonian Associates (APC13/4/1).

STUDENT PERFORMANCE: DEFINITIONS OF PROGRESSION

- 13.050 Received: A paper outlining the definitions for full-time undergraduate and taught

postgraduate performance (APC13/11/1).