

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE SUB-COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 6 February 2018 (0930-1110hrs).

Present: Mr F Antoniazzi (Convener), Mrs C Brooker, Ms M Buchan, Ms M Collie, Ms A Dixon, Ms H Douglas, Ms M Downie, Mr J Dunphy (for items 1 and 6), Mr M Ife, Dr J Isaacs, Mr M Lewis, Mr M Shepherd and Ms J Steed.

Apologies: Ms L Campbell, Dr M Dignan, Ms V Forbes, Ms S Keast, Ms S McManus, Ms S Millar, Ms R Pirie and Dr H Vosper.

In Attendance: Ms K Campbell (for items 2.2, 2.3 and 3) and Mrs A Smart (Secretary).

	Action
<p>1. MINUTE</p>	
<p>The Minute of the Meeting held on 31 October 2017 [reference LISC/18/1] was approved and a matters arising report was considered.</p>	
<p>1.1 Academic Calendar (LISC/17/3/11)</p>	
<p>The Convener of the Graduation Working Group provided an update at the meeting of Academic Council on 4 December 2017, indicating that: -</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feasibility of moving the summer Graduation Ceremonies forward by two weeks, from the summer of 2019 onwards, was being explored. • Consideration had been given to what adjustments to “normal” University processes/schedules would be required to facilitate an earlier graduation e.g. timetabling of examinations, assessment administration timescales, the timing of Assessment Boards and venue availability. • Associated risks to the University had also been considered. • The Working Group had agreed that Award Assessment Boards should be given priority and brought forward to the first week of the 2-week Board period and, similarly, examinations contributing to the Award Boards plus large exams would need to be timetabled earlier in the diet to allow sufficient time for marking. • Further substantive work regarding an analysis of the required changes to the Assessment Board schedule was required; this would be delayed until the availability of a suitable venue for graduation had been confirmed. • The Theatre, the preferred venue for the Summer Graduation, had indicated that they could not accommodate a booking during June. 	
<p>It was reported that the Theatre had finally confirmed that it could accommodate a move forward by one week to the first week in July in summer 2019. However, the Deputy Principal had confirmed that, given the uncertainty whilst awaiting a response, the change might not be implemented until 2020. Further discussion was ongoing with regard to the timing of Assessment Boards, particularly award boards where there was an impact on marking in terms of results being submitted in time for graduation preparation.</p>	
<p>One member queried the timing of the local holiday in September (Monday 24 September 2018) and the impact on University opening hours; the Library and RGU Sport would still be open but it was generally believed that this holiday had a negative impact on students who had just arrived for the start of Semester. It was agreed that the ongoing appropriateness of this holiday for the University would be raised with HR. It was also believed that Unison had conducted a ballot in the past.</p>	<p>F Antoniazzi to L Ross</p>

1.2 ***Student Partnership Agreement***

At its meeting on 4 December 2017, Academic Council had noted that the University's lowest scoring question in the *National Student Survey* was for the *student voice*, however, the University performed well against other Scottish institutions in this area. The *Student Partnership Agreement's* objectives for 2017-18 were to develop the *student voice* at School level, as well as enhance student wellbeing and resilience (refer also item 4 below).

2. **APPRAISAL AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

2.1 ***Annual Appraisal Process***

The Convener gave an oral update on progress with revisions to the annual appraisal process for student facing support services. A small group of service representatives had met to discuss appraisal and members noted the minute of this meeting, held on 24 January 2018. The following issues were highlighted: -

- There was a desire to enhance the current process in order to ensure Heads of Service (HoS) could demonstrate how they were meeting students' needs; confirmation of this from Heads of School would be included as a specific question/statement in the revised form. It had been agreed that students should be used to help design, deliver and appraise activities.
- Some services were more clearly defined and branded than others e.g. Library, perhaps making them easier for students to recognise and provide feedback on.
- The appraisal process should enable services to capture elements of shared, cross-service activity.
- It had been queried whether there should be a stronger/clearer link with Schools as part of the student facing services appraisal process. The process should allow services to discuss with Schools their specific needs. LISC members agreed that the level of importance/relevance of this would depend on the service.
- It was recognised that different measurements were likely to be used by different Heads of Service; the ways in which they demonstrated engagement with students were also likely to vary.

F Antoniazzi

A draft list of services to be appraised, based on the previous year's appraisal process, was considered: -

- Accommodation
- Catering
- Counselling and Wellbeing Centre
- DELTA
- Disability and Dyslexia Centre
- Employability
- Enrolment
- Graduation
- IT Services
- Library
- Marketing and Communications
- ResLife
- RGU: SPORT
- Student Finance
- Student Immigration
- Student Recruitment
- Timetabling
- Travel and Transport

The following issues were raised:-

- It was believed that Alumni should be included.
- It was questioned whether or not Marketing and Communications should be appraised together as they were managed by different Heads.
- It was queried whether Admissions should be included with Student Recruitment.

It was agreed that a draft list should be circulated to Heads of Service for comment. The general belief was that *services/functions* as opposed to *departments* should be the focus of each area that was to be appraised but this should be confirmed by each relevant Head. If separate functions were to be appraised within one report this should be made clear within the appraisal. The revised process would be in place in time for reporting to QAEC on 30 May 2018.

F Antoniazzi to
HoS

2.2 **Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) Results**

Members considered the Semester One SEQ results, in particular Question 6 (a) which related to services. This had been a relatively short, sharp survey intended to provide staff with 'in-year' feedback to work with. It had been released in Week 6 for a period of two weeks and the response rate had not been particularly high; all feedback had been passed directly to Heads of School. The Committee Secretary had collated a summary of the qualitative responses to this question and initial observations indicated that:-

- The majority of students who had sought help had been satisfied with the support they had received
- Many students had indicated that they had not needed help but knew where to get it if they did.
- The Law School and the School of Engineering had received the lowest overall satisfaction rates in the headline report, but there was nothing in the comments to suggest a particular problem in either School.
- A relatively small number of negative comments were made.

Members discussed the results and made the following comments:-

- The Law School were aware of one particular module that had received negative feedback, primarily from direct entrants. It was believed that issues raised had subsequently been resolved satisfactorily.
- Often, simply making sure that all students knew who to go to for support was the most important factor.
- The timing and short release period had possibly meant that a lot of students simply missed the questionnaire.
- Given that there was feedback to suggest that not all students understood what they were being asked about in Q6, it was queried whether this could be further qualified to help students to understand what was meant by 'other aspects of university life'. Further discussion with students might be helpful in this regard.
- It was agreed that qualitative responses at module level would benefit from greater investigation.

K Campbell

K Campbell/
DELTA [Heads
of School]

2.3 **Enhancement Theme Plan**

Members considered the institutional plan *Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience*, which gave an overview of the context and planned activity/outcomes for Year 1. Kirsty Campbell, Learning Analytics Partnership Lead, DELTA, gave an oral update highlighting key aspects, including: the first meeting of the leadership group; three institutional projects which were linked to ongoing

activity; looking for opportunities to involve students in enhancements; ways to make better use of data sources i.e. linking statistics with enhancements; the roll-out of Tableau; the impact and reach of SEQs; links to the SPA themes, including the student voice and closing the feedback loop more effectively.

Two further meetings of the leadership group had been scheduled with a view to reporting on the outcomes in June 2018.

K Campbell

3. REVIEW OF STUDENT-FACING SUPPORT SERVICES

3.1 2016/17 Theme: The Student Journey: From Enquiry to Enrolment

Members considered updated recommendations from the final report from the 2016/17 theme: *The Student Journey: from Enquiry to Enrolment*, prepared by Kirsty Campbell, DELTA. A further report on progress with the actions identified would come back to the Sub-Committee's next meeting.

K Campbell

3.2 2017/18 Theme: Alumni Services/Engagement

This theme was being led by Mark Sollis, the Vice Principal for University Advancement. Kirsty Campbell would be meeting with him in the near future to share learning from the previous theme and agree how this theme would operate. A progress report would be submitted to the next meeting.

K Campbell

4. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (SPA) 2017

The Sub-Committee considered the SPA objectives for Session 2017/18. It was not clear that all staff had received a copy of the SPA document and it was agreed that it would be helpful to ensure that departmental support staff also received it. It can also be accessed online [here](#).

M Collie/
K Campbell

The Convener reported that there had been a lot of activity around the SPA and highlighted the following, with additional input from members: -

- Work on wellbeing, including the development of a revised Mental Health Agreement to be signed by the Principal and the Student Union President (Communication and Democracy).
- Mental health training: more support was clearly needed and, although there was no budget for this at the moment, he had been in discussion with the Director of HR with regard to the provision of additional online support for staff. Consideration was also being given to counselling support for students.
- It was queried whether the University could do more work around "resilience" in liaison with FE and secondary schools, particularly as the Scottish Government had been challenging schools in this area; some direct support might be available.
- Reference was made to a presentation by David Coyne at a recent event for Senior Fellows; this contained an interesting diagram in relation to the nature of transition and changing career paths and it would be circulated to members for information.
- It was agreed there would be a more substantive discussion around Wellbeing at the next meeting.

F Antoniazzi

A Smart

F Antoniazzi

- Developing the student voice: whilst a high proportion of students indicated they had the opportunity to give feedback, a smaller proportion indicated they were not aware of how that had been acted upon.
- Schools and services had been asked for their views on partnership activity in terms of support, enhancement etc. It was anticipated that Student Reps would consider feedback and emerging themes and that staff and students would be brought together to consider what might work in practice.
- Feedback indicated that students were most interested in changes taken at course and module level so identifying themes at that level would probably be most useful. Consideration was being given to the development of a template for providing feedback to students on actions taken in response to their feedback.
- It was queried how the University could identify whether students actually felt that the SPA was helpful to them, so that they would actively engage in trying to influence its content. This was something that Student Reps might assist with.

K Harrison/
K Campbell

K Harrison

K Harrison/
K Campbell

K Harrison

A report on actions taken would come back to the next meeting.

F Antoniazzi/
K Campbell

5. PERSONAL TUTOR SYSTEM

The Sub-Committee noted the minutes of the meetings held on 4 December 2017 and 22 January 2018. It was also noted, as part of matters arising, that minutes of the meetings held on 24 August and 24 September 2017 had been circulated to Heads of School for information on 20 November 2017.

The Convener gave an oral update on progress: -

- An audit of practice in Schools had indicated that different approaches to personal tutoring were taken in different areas. In addition, a variety of titles were used to describe staff engaged in personal tutoring.
- Most Schools appeared to target all students equally; some relied on students to make contact with their Personal Tutor if they needed to.
- The issues that Personal Tutors had to deal with were becoming increasingly complex with regard to, for example, boundaries and mental health.
- Feedback from Schools indicated that the evaluation of the effectiveness of their systems could be better. School Academic Boards had a key role in terms of monitoring this.
- It had been agreed that whilst the current *University Policy on Personal Tutoring* made sense and included everything that Schools should be doing, it might benefit from some minor revision to ensure that: there was more support from the centre; that the *Policy* itself was well communicated; that some form of annual audit was undertaken in each School for consideration by LISC; and that each Schools approach was clearly communicated with students.
- One of the key challenges to the University would be ensuring it was providing appropriate support to Personal Tutors.

F Antoniazzi

A final report would come back to the next meeting. The attachments that were issued with the notes of the PTS meetings would be circulated to LISC members.

F Antoniazzi

A Smart

6. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)

The Director of DELTA confirmed that the *2018 National Student Survey (NSS)* had launched the previous day. The NSS provided an opportunity for final stage undergraduate students to provide feedback on their overall experience of studying

within the University. During the fieldwork eligible students would receive a sequence of email communications encouraging completion. In addition Survey Coordinators had been appointed in each School and these colleagues would be in contact with relevant Course Leaders and students to support engagement with the survey. So far, a normal pattern of responses had been observed and it was hoped that the high response rate of the previous year would be obtained again. The output would be available towards July/August.

7. **AOB – STUDENT UNION**

Michael Ife and Michelle Collie provide feedback on a recent referendum within the Student Union, with regard to the executive structure. It was the first time such a referendum had been conducted and, although the 10% of members (1300) required for the vote to be valid had not been reached, there had been around 1100 votes which was considered to be an achievement, particularly as voting was limited to a 2-day period.

8. **ANNUAL LEARNING AND TEACHING CONFERENCE**

Members noted that the 2017/18 conference would be held on 2 May 2018. The main theme would be 'Future Work, Future Graduates: Forging the Link'.

9. **SUB-COMMITTEE EVALUATION**

Members would be requested to complete an electronic evaluation prior to the next meeting.

A Smart

10. **MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Members noted that the Committee had last met on 19 September 2017.

11. **OPERATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (OAC)**

The minutes of the meeting of the OAC (ICRGU) held on 7 November 2017 were circulated to members on 17 November 2017.

12. **SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION ITEMS**

It was intended that the next meeting would include a substantive item on 'mental wellbeing'.

ALL

13. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 1 May 2018.

ALL