

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

## LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE SUB-COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 31 October 2017.

**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, Ms V Forbes, Mr M Ife, Mr M Lewis, Ms R Pirie, Mr M Shepherd and Dr H Vosper.

**Apologies:** Ms L Campbell, Dr M Dignan, Dr J Isaacs, Ms S Keast, Ms S McManus, Ms S Millar and Ms J Steed.

**In Attendance:** Mr P Chan (item 3), Mrs A Smart (Secretary) and Mrs V Strachan.

### WELCOME

The Convener welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Session, in particular new members.

### Action

#### 1. MINUTE

The Minute of the Meeting held on 2 May 2017 [reference LISC/17/3] was approved.

The timing of summer graduation was yet to be decided (refer LISC/17/3/11). It was not possible to bring forward the venue booking by 2 weeks in 2019, but the University had asked about the possibility of the Theatre bringing this forward by 1 week. A decision should be made by Easter 2018. It was agreed that a brief update should be submitted for consideration by Academic Council at its meeting in December.

C Brooker/  
H Douglas

It was noted that the minutes from ICRGU's Operations Advisory Committee (OAC) would come to the Sub-Committee for noting, with a view to improving communication between ICRGU and the University on support service issues.

A Smart

#### 2. REMIT AND COMPOSITION

The remit, composition and membership of the Sub-Committee for Session 2017/18 was noted. The Sub-Committee **approved** the appointment of Ms Margaret Buchan as the Vice-Convener.

M Buchan

#### 3. APPRAISAL AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The *Student-Facing Support Services Annual Appraisal Process* had consisted of the completion of the undernoted *Annual Appraisal Reports* by individual services (a report had not been received in respect of Graduation), which included consideration of: institution-wide student evaluation data sources; service collected feedback/evidence on service delivery and its impact on the

student experience; significant changes in service delivery; and planned actions for 2017/18, and/or subsequent years.

- Accommodation (Estates Elements)
- Catering Provision
- Counselling and Wellbeing Centre
- DELTA
- Disability and Dyslexia Centre
- Employability Hub
- Enrolment
- IT Services
- Library Service
- Marketing and Communications
- ResLife
- RGU SPORT
- Student Finance
- Student Immigration Team
- Student Recruitment
- Timetabling (Central Timetabling Team)
- Travel and Transport

The Convener gave a presentation to the Sub-Committee which included discussion of the reason for the process; how appraisal linked to the quality assurance processes of the University; comparison with the School Appraisal process; types of evidence utilised; student involvement; as well as revisiting previously agreed service standards and impacts. The following issues were discussed/noted:

- The process for appraising student-facing support services would be reviewed over the coming months and the Academic Quality Handbook, Section 2: Annual Appraisal process would be updated accordingly.
- There tended to be less clarity and consistency, compared to academic appraisal, in terms of the data considered.
- It was often difficult to identify which areas should be categorised as a student-facing service, and this also needed to be clarified following recent restructuring. It would be important to have student input to the design and delivery of the appraisal process, particularly to ensure that enhancement could be demonstrated.
- It was possible that there would still need to be an element of variation across services; ensuring that Heads of Service could be responsive as well as accountable was vital.
- Collectively, the University had agreed a set of service standards (accessible, responsive, supporting, trusted, valued) and the collective impacts of the services (learning, citizenship, wellbeing, personal development) which provided a framework of expectations for students of how services would be delivered to them and how these would impact on their experience. It was believed that these were still applicable, although focus had perhaps drifted away from these specific standards and impacts over time.
- A range of evidence had been cited in the appraisal reports e.g. student questionnaire outcomes, department level surveys and focus groups, student consultation, management decisions (enhancement, changes etc.). It was noted that different services would get different levels of feedback/input from questionnaires.

F Antoniazzi/  
A Smart

- It was not always clearly stated why certain decisions had been taken; these could often be based on day-to-day observations. It was also not always clear how students had been used in terms of providing feedback.
- A considerable number of enhancements were highlighted, including the restructure of several services. These would be summarised within the report to QAEC.

In addition, the Convener shared a pilot questionnaire: *Student Life Service Appraisal 2016/17*, which provided a comparison of the following services: Disability and Dyslexia; RGU: Sport; ResLife; and Counselling and Wellbeing. The following points were highlighted:

- Each service identified their own questions, framed around the identified University standards and impacts, which could be measured and quantified using a Likert Scale. It had been more difficult to do this with regard to impacts.
- Qualitative comments had been drawn out, labelled and quantified. Where there was an individual comment of concern the Convener would liaise with the services concerned about addressing any issues.
- It was recognised that this format may not suit all student-facing support services but the approach could be utilised by services if they thought useful.

Members made the following observations:

- Different levels of responses across services and the lack of common questions meant that it was not possible to undertake a like-for-like comparison of services.
- It was important to avoid 'survey fatigue'. In this respect, the Sub-Committee would continue to maintain an overview of all surveys issued to students.
- It was suggested that a useful starting point would be the view of the Director or Head of the service e.g. were they of the opinion that they were providing a high quality service to students?
- Some services had a helpdesk facility e.g. IT Services, with access to user statistics. However, some services were quite small and did not have access to a helpdesk facility to enable some common data collection and analysis.
- The use of a complaints log would, presumably, lead to plans for enhancement.
- One student member indicated that Class Representatives were very under-utilised, with many students not even aware of who their Class Representative was; not all Class Representatives identified themselves.
- It was agreed that focus groups, across a range of services and/or themes, would be helpful. Engagement with Student School Officers would be key to this, and they in turn should engage with Class Reps.

LISC agreed that, based on the above, there had been effective management and deployment of service and that, individually, and collectively, the annual appraisal process provided general assurance in respect of the quality of student services. Subject to no substantive relevant issues being raised through QAEC as part of the School appraisal process, a general statement of assurance could therefore be provided on the basis of the appraisal evidence.

F Antoniazzi

F Antoniazzi/  
Report to  
QAEC

It was noted that the presentation and subsequent discussions would form the basis of the report to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) (22 November 2017).

F Antoniazzi/  
Report to  
QAEC

#### 4. **REVIEW OF STUDENT-FACING SUPPORT SERVICES**

##### 4.1 **2016/17 Theme: The Student Journey: From Enquiry to Enrolment**

Members considered the draft report from the 2016/17 theme: *The Student Journey: from Enquiry to Enrolment*, prepared by Ms K Campbell, DELTA. The following key points were considered/noted:

- There had been a significant level of engagement with students whilst addressing the theme.
- There had been significant changes to leadership in this area.
- It had been noted that not all stages of the enquiry and application process were covered by the current appraisal process, nor was transition and welcome to the University. This was reflected in the final recommendations (refer below).
- Section 6.2 of the report provided a summary of recommendations which recommended that the University:
  - o Continue work to develop rich media content to provide information, advice and guidance which meets the needs and expectations of prospective students and their advisors.
  - o Further extend its capacity to record, and effectively act on, enquiries.
  - o Extend the use of its Student-facing Support Services Annual Appraisal Process to better reflect the service offer to enquirers, applicants and students.
  - o Reviews and update guidance for staff on the use and content of Campus Moodle Course Welcome areas.
- One member queried whether the review had really addressed enrolment; there was a sense that it hadn't gone as far as it might have in that respect. It was acknowledged that there were greater concerns with regard to the enquiry stage, however, it was believed there should be some further discussion before the report was finalised.

C Brooker/V  
Strachan to  
K Campbell

The Sub-Committee extended its thanks to everyone involved in the theme.

##### 4.2 **2017/18 Theme: Alumni Services/Engagement**

Members noted the proposed theme for 2017/18 was *Alumni Services/Engagement*. This was being led by the Vice Principal (University Advancement) with support from Kirsty Campbell, DELTA. A progress report would be submitted to the next meeting.

Holding File

#### 5. **STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (SPA)**

The Sub-Committee considered the *Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)* objectives for Session 2017/18. Although still in draft format, two themes would

be developed with students over the course of the year around the “student voice” and “wellbeing and resilience”.

A number of issues would be explored around, for example, how to design services to better meet the needs of particular types of student, e.g. distance learning students and mature students on undergraduate courses.

It was noted that the *Student Partnership Agreement* should reflect partnership at School and departmental level as well as partnership with the centre. Once complete it was important that the *Agreement* be circulated extensively to staff and students.

## 6. EMPLOYABILITY

Members received an oral update from the Assistant Chief Academic Officer. The following issues were highlighted:

- The new Employability Hub was essentially a ‘one-stop-shop’ which incorporated the careers service, placement offices, study abroad as well as the activities of Talent Exchange.
- Work was being undertaken to develop a ‘graduate outcomes’ portfolio throughout courses, which included extra-curricular activity, work-related experiences and other life experiences.
- Engagement with Personal Tutors was key, in terms of reviewing portfolios with students. It was suggested that Personal Tutors could perhaps schedule one day per semester for portfolio consolidation work.
- One student member highlighted a negative experience with the Careers Service when seeking help with their CV. It was acknowledged that certain services had to be tailored to meet the needs of different students.

A further update would come back to the Sub-Committee at its meeting in May 2018.

Holding File

## 7. TIMETABLING

It was noted that the Timetabling Working Group had met several times over the course of 2016/17 and many issues had been raised, including the potential for timetabling to move to Phase 2 of the SITS Project. A number of small changes had been implemented to improve the user experience.

## 8. PERSONAL TUTOR SYSTEM

It was noted that a short-life working group, with membership drawn from LISC and TLASC, had met twice so far to look at personal tutoring. Members were still welcome to join the group. It was agreed that it would be helpful to circulate the notes of the meetings to Schools. A further meeting would take place before the Christmas break with an item back for discussion at the Sub-Committee’s meeting in February 2018, to help shape the way forward.

F Antoniazzi/  
A Smart

9. **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)**

A summary of results from NSS 2017 was noted.

10. **MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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

11. **SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Members were invited to forward possible topics for substantive discussion to the Convener and/or Secretary.

ALL

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 6 February 2018.

ALL

Mr F Antoniazzi C. November 2017