UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Committee was held on Thursday 27 September 2012.

Present: Professor D Coates (Convener), Professor R Abboud, Professor D Bearn, Mr S Cross, Ms R Doherty (DUSA), Ms P Elliott, Dr M Frame, Professor G Hutton, Ms L Jones, Dr N Laker, Dr L McLellan, Dr L Monk, Ms C Normand, Dr W Murray, Ms G Pallis, Dr R Parsons, Dr K Petrie, Dr A Schloerscheidt, Dr F Smith, Dr D Walker, Dr W Whitfield, Dr K Wilke.

Apologies: Mr J Baldwin, Professor G Mires, Professor R Soames.

In Attendance: Dr M Glover.

1. MINUTES

Resolved: to approve the minutes of the meeting of 14th May 2012.

2. MATTERS ARISING

(1) National Student Survey

Noted: that the School of Computing’s participation in the pilot of a new version of the National Student Survey will be in academic year 2012/13.

(2) Evasys Course Evaluation

Noted: that course evaluation will be discussed at the Learning & Teaching Committee meeting of date needed as part of the plan of work.

(3) Library and Learning Centre Update

Noted: that library fines had been increased as proposed after consultation.

(4) Articulation Working Group

Noted: that the Working Group will report to the next meeting as part of the plan of work.

(5) Cleanliness of Teaching Accommodation

Noted: that specific issues should be reported to the Facilities Manager through the Estates & Buildings Service Desk and systemic issues should be raised with the Convener.
Noted: that there was a particular problem with the lack of accurate clocks in teaching rooms and more widely across the institution.

3. UNIVERSITY VISION

The Committee heard a presentation of the University Vision from the Director of External Affairs.

The University Vision aimed to be true to the values that have always been central to the institution, enshrined in the Charter, and still able to shape the vision and to help achieve the long-term and inspirational goal to become Scotland’s leading University.

The Committee heard that at the heart of the Vision was the inspiring but practical task of transforming lives, both locally and internationally, through research, teaching and scholarship that delivers tangible and enduring benefits in those areas where the University was able to make the strongest impact.

The Vision will challenge the University to take the lead on transformational change where it is most needed - the sustainable use of global resources, innovative design that shapes the future and the creation of an intellectual climate that promotes social, cultural and physical wellbeing.

Resolved: to thank the Director for her presentation that helped set the challenging and exciting context for the discussion of the Learning & Teaching strategy.

4. LEARNING & TEACHING STRATEGY  PAPERS B1 & B2

The Committee considered the University Learning & Teaching Strategy and the related Operational Planning paper.

The Convener outlined the history and structure of the strategy document and drew attention to the summaries of each sub-aim that sets out specific tasks and asks further questions where the direction of travel is not clear and allows schools to define their own contribution.

It was noted that some confusion exists between Learning & Teaching Plans and School operational planning. To help clarify the relationship between these it was proposed that Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement reports would feed directly into each School’s own detailed operational plans (to inform activity in 2013/14 in most cases).

Activity in early 2013 would focus on formulating and aligning School plans allowing each College to begin to lead on the process. Quality Enhancement reports would be submitted to Learning & Teaching Committee in March 2013 and then integrated into wider strategy for operational implementation in 2013/4. Learning & Teaching Committee will then provide a supervisory role.
The Convener noted that strategic work would run on a 5 year cycle as part of the longer term Vision but Quality Enhancement Reports would run on an annual cycle and linked into annual SFC reporting.

The Convener also asked the Committee to note that an early action in the process to embed the Learning and Teaching Strategy would involve meetings at College level to agree a wider role for College Learning & Teaching heads.

Some members reported that those aspects of the Strategy document that described the current situation seemed overly negative. The Committee agreed that there needed to be a balance between an honest view of the present context that could (wrongly) be taken to undervalue learning and teaching and the need for clarity on those areas that must improve.

**Widening participation strategy**

The Convener reported that a working group, under the auspices of the Committee will be reconstituted to further develop policy in this area. This is in response to the challenges of the new Strategy and the requirements of the SFC Outcomes Agreement.

The Committee asked that past practices and programmes be examined carefully as these had produced some excellent students but, regrettfully, also many failing students.

**Retention strategy**

The Committee were asked to note that the performance measure traditionally used to track retention (Yr1 to Yr2 progression) was not a useful statistic in the context of L&T Strategy Implementation. Work will be carried out to identify a measure that ranges over complete student progression and attainment data.

The Convener was asked by the Committee to include student support performance in the wider measures being considered as this has an important role in recruitment and retention.

**Noted:** the Plan of Work for the Committee in 2012/13 (Paper I)

**Resolved:** for its part, to endorse the University Learning & Teaching Strategy and related planning and implementation proposals.

5. **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2011-12**

The Committee received an oral report from the Director of Quality Assurance on the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) for 2011/12. The Director reported that the full data set has now been made available to the University and a comprehensive report would be circulated in the usual way to Deans and Schools for reflection, comment and action where appropriate.
The Committee was asked to note that performance was generally good in most areas and appeared to be at, or above, sector levels. Satisfaction scores for the Students’ Association were high, for example – and overall the performance was better than last year. However, as in previous years, scores on assessment and feedback, and on organisation and management were disappointing.

Members of the Committee pointed out that student dissatisfaction with organisation may be a consequence of timetabling issues – although it was noted that scores in this area were low across all aspects of organisation and management.

On a positive note, the Director drew attention to the ongoing work of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group, the HEA supported TESTA project and the new review project to be carried out by former DUSA Deputy President Mr Stuart Fitzpatrick.

Resolved: to thank the Director for her report of the NSS results and to await a full written report in due course.

6. ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

The Committee heard an oral report from the Director of Quality Assurance on the dates, timetable and planning for the Enhancement Led Institutional Review in 2013.

The Committee was asked to note that the initial QAA ELIR visit would take place on 15-17 October 2013 and the follow up visit starting on 18th November 2013. This timetable would mean that the institutional Reflective Analysis would need to be approved by Senate in May 2013 for submission to QAA in August. The Learning and Teaching Quality Forum would take ELIR as its main business in 2012/13 and the Committee was asked to note that members may be co-opted as necessary.

Resolved: to thank the Director for her report and to duly note the dates for ELIR in 2013.

7. INTERNAL SUBJECT REVIEW ANNUAL STATEMENT TO SFC

The Committee considered internal subject review and the Annual Statement to the Scottish Funding Council.

The Director of Quality Assurance reported that the Annual Statement had demonstrated good practice in programme review – highlighting such issues as graduate employability and skills, sustainability, better and smarter timetabling and provision for flexible learning.

The Committee were concerned, however, with low rates of equality and diversity training being completed.

Resolved: to welcome the many aspects of good practice contained in the Annual Statement and to ask the Convener to begin a consultation with Deans on action points that emerge from annual reviews.
Resolved: to ask the Director of Policy, Governance and Legal Affairs, on behalf of the Committee, to raise the issue of equality and diversity training rates with the Human Resources Committee.

8. HIGHER EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT REPORT (HEAR)

The Committee received a discussion paper that set out details of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). The Convener asked members to consult with colleagues on the benefits of this approach; to approve a wider scoping exercise and to provide feedback through the Committee.

Resolved: to approve a scoping exercise led by the Convener with support from relevant staff reporting back to the Committee

9. POLICY ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON TEACHING AND SPORT

The Committee were asked to consider the proposal, already endorsed by the Senatus, from the Sports Union to protect Wednesday afternoons as non-teaching time to allow students to participate in sporting activities.

The Committee recognised that the biggest challenges to implementation would come from timetabling pressures and from clinical courses that needed to provide patient contact throughout the week. The Convener agreed to work with the Timetabling Team in Student Operations to model various options so as to quantify potential difficulties. The Director of Student Operations offered to explore ways in which the issue could be covered through the I-Graduate Survey.

Resolved: to produce a workable implementation plan based on evidence from timetabling modelling and from student feedback through the I-Graduate survey.

10. E-LEARNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report from the e-Learning Sub-committee meeting of 11th May 2012. The Committee heard an oral report from the sub-committee secretary (Dr Glover) on the e-Learning away-day that took place in August. The recommendations from the away day and the subsequent efforts of the Sub-Committee convener have made a positive start in meeting the challenges listed in item 3 of the Sub-Committee minutes (Strategic Issues Questionnaire).

The Committee were asked to note the following key points:

- The e-Learning Sub-committee will focus on formal business, policy and operational developments along side a re-constituted e-learning forum to focus on the sharing of best practice, engagement and influencing strategic planning.

- The LLC, assisted by the Sub-committee will lead a review and consultation on the use of technologies in learning and teaching across the institution (with the focus on learning and teaching rather than platforms/systems).
The Sub-Committee will assist in the identification of a senior level e-learning champion to help develop and implement a revised e-learning strategy – with a first draft by December 2012.

The Committee discussed the current situation and some members expressed a concern with the continued lack of flexibility in the University’s systems that acted as a barrier, at times, to innovation and engagement.

Resolved: to welcome the positive approach taken by the Sub-Committee and to ask it to continue to monitor the level of support and flexibility available to support teaching and scholarship across the University.

*The Committee received the following items for information and noted each without further observation.

11.* STANDING ITEMS:

(i) Learning and Teaching Quality Forum
(ii) Report from Library and Learning Centre

12.* LEARNING & TEACHING COMMITTEE: PLAN OF WORK FOR 2012-13

13.* UOD AND SFC – OUTCOME AGREEMENT

14. POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON THE RECORDING OF LECTURES

The Committee received the draft policy and guidelines on recording of lectures that had been developed by the Director of Quality Assurance, Head of the Disability Service and the Assistant Director (Educational Development) Library and Learning Centre.

Resolved: to welcome the draft policy and to ask that Committee members take the document back to Schools and units for consultation and to report back.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other Business.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee will be held at 10 a.m. on 13th November 2012.

Professor David Coates
Deputy Principal (Learning & Teaching) 
Convener