The University of Edinburgh

The Moray House School of Education

School Postgraduate Studies Committee

Minute of the meeting held at 2pm on 24 November 2010 in Room G38 Paterson’s Land

Present: Dr G Macleod (Convener), Dr P Allison, Dr S Beames, Dr J Cutting, Mr R Easton, Mr P Evans, Ms Y Foley, Mr V Galloway, Dr L Hamilton, Dr A Irvine, Dr R Nicol, Dr G Reid, Mr H Richards, Dr P Sangster, Ms J Sugden Ms D Torrance, and Ms K Woomble.

In attendance Ms L Rowand

Apologies Dr K Cebula, Mr A Ducklin, Professor C Kreber, Dr H Macleod, Mr B Martin, Ms A Rae, Professor L Tett and Dr T Turner

1. Welcome and apologies

The Convener welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received as noted above.

2. Minute of the meeting held on 29 September 2010

2.1 Accuracy of minute

The minute was approved as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Open Day (Item 2.2.4)

This had been a successful event and had been attended by roughly the same number of potential applicants as the previous year’s event. The Convener thanked all who had contributed to its success.

2.2.2 Enhanced provision of pre-sessional English Language Support (Item 5)

The Convener and Ms Woomble had recently met with representatives of the English Language Teaching Centre (previously the Institute for Applied Linguistics Studies). Although ELTC may have increased capacity in future years, the timing of the courses was not suitable for many overseas taught postgraduate students starting on programmes within the Moray House School of Education in autumn 2011. Alternative ways of strengthening students’ competence and confidence in English were therefore under discussion. Possibilities included a highly intensive one or two week course immediately before the start of the academic year or providing more staff development for relevant staff on working with international students.

The development of additional online resources for overseas students (which could be made available to applicants in receipt of a conditional offer) was also discussed. These online resources would not be another English language teaching tool but instead would aim to help orientate students with the city and the University prior to their arrival here. Richard Easton had agreed to lead this development and was in the process of consulting with colleagues elsewhere in the University who had experience in supporting large numbers of international students.
It was noted that the English Language requirements for entry on to the School’s programmes would not be raised for entry in 2011/12. Further discussion was required regarding whether nor not to change it in future years.

Colleagues raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of the piloted Integrated English for Academic Purposes (IEAP) scheme. Ms Woomble confirmed that other Schools in the College shared the concern that students who had gained entry via this scheme were not always fulfilling their requirements. However, it had been decided that IEAP would run again for entry to academic year 2011/12.

2.2.3 Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Reports 2010/11 (Item 6)

The Convener reminded the committee that the effectiveness of this process relied on the colleagues producing reports which were truly reflective and which highlighted both new and ongoing examples of good practice. The themes arising from the programme reports would be used as the basis of the School postgraduate QA report.

3. Convener’s Business

3.1 Assessment Regulations Task Group

The Convener was a member of this task group. Its remit was to revise and re-organise the current regulations into policy, regulation and guidance, for adoption for use from academic year 2011/12. Members of SPGSC were encouraged to feed in any comments on improvements to the regulations via Dr Macleod.

3.2 Moderation and second marking of assignments submitted electronically

The Convener’s suggestion discussed at the previous meeting of the committee had been intended to help colleagues to meet the deadline for returning marks to students. Programme directors were free to organise moderation however they wished as long as the four week turn around was met. It was noted and reiterated that there was no requirement for course assignments to be second marked but second marking of dissertations was required in line with the University assessment regulation (refer to 7.1 of the Taught Postgraduate Regulations).

3.3 Open Day and e-Open Day

Building on its Open Day activities, the University was now to be hosting a pilot e-Open Day (now entitled Virtual Open Week) from 21 – 25 February 2011. Potential applicants would be able to log on to chat rooms and speak to postgraduate staff and current students. Staff were invited to volunteer to take part in these chat room events with training available on 29th November and 1st December 2010. Further details were available at: http://www.csc.hss.ed.ac.uk/docs/open/e-Postgraduate_Open_Week_Paper_1.pdf. Members of staff were also encouraged to record short videos discussing their programmes and these would be posted on the Virtual Open Week’s site. It was noted that colleagues in the School had experience of making such videos for recruitment trips and that they had proved useful and could later be put on programme websites. The Convener asked programme directors to nominate themselves or another member of their teaching team to record a video and also to seek student volunteers who would also be happy to be filmed talking about their course. Once names had been received a meeting would be organised to plan the video recording sessions. [Action: Programme Directors and Convener]

3.4 Response times by IT helpdesk to classroom problems

There was concern that since IT support had been moved off site support for problems arising in classrooms was not as good as previously. The experience of members of the
committee suggested that support during the 9-5 working day was fine but there were difficulties in accessing support in the evenings. Some colleagues had experienced a number of IT problems on successive occasions and this obviously created a poor impression with students. The equipment in some classrooms was more reliable than others. The Convener agreed to raise this matter at the School Policy and Resources Committee. [Action: Convener]

3.5 Distance Education Initiative

The Principal’s Strategy Group had approved funding of £4.5 million over the next 5 years to greatly expand postgraduate distance education at the University of Edinburgh. The intention was to reach new postgraduate (including CPD) audiences by a substantial increase in the number and breadth of courses and programmes offered by the University via online distance education. Colleagues were invited to read the paper at [http://www.cpgsc.hss.ed.ac.uk/docs/open/5._Distance_learning_paper_for_CPGSC_December_2010.doc](http://www.cpgsc.hss.ed.ac.uk/docs/open/5._Distance_learning_paper_for_CPGSC_December_2010.doc). The aim was for the University to expand this type of provision to the point at which it had as many postgraduate students off campus as it had on campus. Schools could submit bids for funds to develop existing programmes on this basis but would be required to demonstrate that programmes had a substantial distance education market and would be self sufficient within a few years as funding would not continue indefinitely.

4. Draft School of Education Postgraduate Plan

Colleagues welcomed the chance to comment on the draft postgraduate plan and a number of interesting points were raised. These included the question (relating to aim 4 of the plan) of how many more PGT students could realistically be supported on the School’s campus. The marked increase in students on the TESOL programme had raised a number of resource issues in terms of the library, support services and social space etc. The students themselves had also commented that as a group they had been unable to form an identity as there were few spaces where they could meet. A job description was currently being drawn up which would include responsibility for organising student social events and it was likely that the postholder would be required to be an Arabic or Chinese speaker. Aim 5 concerned the provision of excellent doctoral supervision and it was therefore disappointing to note that staff attendance at PhD student seminars this year had been poor.

Unlike institute plans, the postgraduate plan was not included on the agenda for the next School Policy and Resources committee.

5. Programme Proposal: MSc in International Educational Leadership

The programme proposal had been approved by the Board of Studies at its meeting on 10 November 2010. It had now been forwarded to the College for consideration and assessors external to the School would report on it at a future meeting of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee. It was hoped that the programme would be able to recruit for an intake in 2011. Once the programme was advertised it would be helpful if admissions staff at the College Postgraduate Office could monitor the type of queries it received as this would help tailor the programme content further. [Action: KW for noting]

6. Update on generic research method courses

Students were about to submit their assignments for the first generic research method course (The sources of knowledge: Understanding and analysing research literature). Online delivery, workshops and readings all seem to have worked relatively well. Some comments from students had already been collected by a Staff Student Liaison Committee and an informal feedback form. Inevitably some things will be changed for next year but overall it seems to have gone smoothly.
The second course (*Research Methods: Planning Research*) would start in January. Lectures were currently being recorded for posting on the web. Colleagues were reminded to submit readings for students on their programmes as soon as possible. The course would be available for students to access on WebCT from 10 January 2011 and workshops would commence on 17 January 2011.

7. **A.O.C.B.**

7.1 **CPD provision**

It was not clear following the restructuring of the School who now had the remit for the administration of CPD courses. Some Graduate School courses had previously been accessed by teachers for CPD purposes. Staff had received phone calls from teachers interested in enrolling on these this year but did not know who to refer applicants to in regard to enrolment and payment of fees. The Convener agreed to raise the matter at the School Policy and Resources Committee. [Action: Convener]

**CLOSED BUSINESS**

8. **PG Admissions Figures 2010**

In most cases applications were up on this time last year, especially for MSc TESOL. PhD admissions were slightly lower than in 2009. The College Postgraduate Office was processing applications efficiently and had noted that English language scores were generally quite high.

9. **External Examiner appointments**

The committee approved the External Examiner appointments for MSc TESOL (Professor C Leung), Pg Certificate in Swimming Science (Dr C Peyton) and Pg Certificate in University Teaching (Professor P Blackmore).

10. **Accreditation of Prior Learning/Advanced Standing Applications**

The applications in respect of three students were approved.

Ms Lesley Rowand
Secretary, School Postgraduate Studies Committee