

Management in University Lifelong Learning

Minutes of a Meeting of the Management in University Lifelong Learning sub-committee held on Friday 30 October 2009 at the University of Dundee.

MINUTES

Present:

Donald Paterson (Aberdeen)
Keith Mackle (Dundee)
Kay Stevenson (Dundee)
Sharon Hamilton (Dundee)
Graham Venters (Edinburgh)
Helen McWhirr (Glasgow)
Alix McDonald (Strathclyde)
Theresa Hoare (SUALL and Glasgow)
Jackie Blake (UWS)

1. Welcomes & Apologies

Sharon Hamilton from University of Dundee was welcomed to her first meeting and Graham Venters from University of Edinburgh was welcomed back to the group. Apologies were received from Raymond Thomson, Sherrey Landles, Claire Hill, Claire Wylie, Moira Bannigan, Karen Laidlaw, Tom Birrell, Jill McKay and Irene Vezza.

2. Minutes of previous Meeting – 29 May 2009

Accepted as accurate.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 ILA Update

Questions raised at the last meeting were:

1. Is ILA500 a personal year or an academic year? A: Academic year
2. Is it the course or credit amount that determines if it is full- or part-time? A: the credit determines if a student is full-time or part-time.
3. How does the 40-credit for u/g relate to the 40-credit threshold for p/g? A: there is no difference between u/g and p/g.
4. If a student signs up for 40 credits and withdraws after completing 30 (and ILA500 has paid out), what happens? A: Nothing happens; the institution retains the money from ILA to pay for the 30 credits the student has completed.

Recommendations were made at the last meeting that there should be named signatories within institutions for ILA500 applications. At Aberdeen only 3 members of staff are authorised to sign ILA 500 forms, however, this is an institutional rule, not an ILA rule. It would be helpful if ILA set up authorised signatories for institutions to prevent anyone signing a form.

ILA has been backdating applications received in September and October to allow more learners to apply for and use an ILA, and to account for delays with ILA processing. This has caused problems with Universities in booking and claiming ILA funds and concerns were raised that this contravenes ILA's own rules.

We have 60 days from the start date of the course to claim the money, if an application is processed late; this reduces the time we have to claim.

ILA have confirmed verbally that a student can be full-time over part of the year and still qualify for ILA500 however this has not yet been put in writing. Can this be confirmed in writing?

Dundee classifies anything over 80 credits as full-time for the purposes of fee waiver. Members would like to know if ILA has a similar threshold. Is there a maximum amount of credit a student can study for and still qualify for ILA funding? Other Universities allow students to do up to 100 credits in an academic year under a fee waiver.

What is the income threshold for Income Support?

If someone is on a low income but does not claim benefits how do they prove this to the University for fee waiver purposes? Dundee asks for bank statements if a student has no evidence of benefits.

Donald agreed to take these issues to the next meeting of the part-time ginger group. They have agreed to listen to any issues raised. It was also noted that not every University is represented at this group and a request was made for Mr Mackle to represent Dundee.

Action: DP

3.2 Part-Time Tutors

Glasgow explained that they had recently changed part-time lecturers onto zero hour contracts, instead of casual contracts. They noted that there were differences in holiday pay rates between these two types of contract. They also commented that they have changed the authorisation procedure for these lectures as previous there had been too many levels of authorisation, which was overloading the system due to the volume of part-time lecturers.

Aberdeen have all of their lecturers on zero hour contracts.

Dundee contract their lecturers from August to May each year, emailing details of how many hours each lecturer is doing each year to HR.

Edinburgh call their contracts "hours to be notified" which is very similar to zero hour contracts. They have recently merged with another part of the University and their part-time lecturers are still on casual contracts, however this does not appear to have caused any problems to date.

UWS are currently reviewing the role of the part-time lecturer, to identify whether they are writing and developing courses, or just teaching from notes/handouts provided by someone else. This is likely to influence the rate of pay that part-time lecturers receive.

Strathclyde offer their lecturers a low number of guaranteed hours and then top it up to more hours as required, these are known as fractional contracts.

Glasgow noted that they have to discuss each case individually when they reach 65.

Edinburgh commented that the same applied with their institution. However, this tended to be short term extension and was very hard to get.

4. Reports from members

Strathclyde: Had an increase of 35% in student numbers over the summer, making it their most successful. They managed to get their non-accredited courses approved for ILA funding, which may have contributed, however the increase in student numbers does not reflect in an increase in ILA numbers. There is restructuring within the department with 3 senior members of staff taking early retirement between now and April 2010; this will have

implications within the department as this only leaves 2 senior members of staff. The department will be moving under the Faculty of Education and a lot of changes are expected.

Dundee: Enrolment and student numbers have increased this year, and it has been noted that the number of younger students has increased. It is thought is due to new courses attracting a younger group. ILA numbers have not changed very much. The issues concerning Dundee at the moment are the points based system for immigration and attendance monitoring.

Edinburgh: Enrolments are up on last year and they have successfully rolled out online application and enrolment for their students. The Office of Lifelong Learning and the Institute of Applied Language Studies have merged into one department, combining 23 OLL staff with 70 Language Studies staff. Edinburgh are also implementing a new student information system called Tribal (SITS) however they are currently behind schedule and have had some problems with development.

Glasgow: A new principal is now in place and is undertaking major restructuring of the University, 9 Faculties, will become 4 Colleges with 4-6 Schools within each College, and all departments will be abolished. In theory this means that DACE will no longer exist. These changes will be agreed by Christmas 2009 and will be implemented for Academic session 2010/11. Glasgow is also moving on to a new student life-cycle system and every student (including non-credit bearing) will go on. This is Oracles Campus Solutions and will track students from enquiry to alumni. It will show the student's entire history, including short courses and CPD, and will also allow for online payment.

Student numbers are up; however they have more students doing fewer courses. ILAs are also up by approximately 200.

UWS: renamed as Lifelong Learning Academy, to encourage more research activities. We are also piloting a shared reception area with Student Administration at our Hamilton campus, with the view of a "one stop shop" being implemented at other campuses and also including Student Services, Admissions and possibly Finance.

Aberdeen: Are currently developing a part-time MA course, where students will have access to recordings of lectures via WebCT. There will also be audio conference tutorials. Numbers overall are up by 20%, due to heavy marketing in the North East.

5. Any Other Business

- **Membership of the Group**

It was noted that the following institutions were not represented on the group; Open University, Napier, Scottish Agricultural College, St Andrews, UHI, Robert Gordon, Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian. It was agreed that we would try to contact staff within these institutions to try and establish some new members.

- **Website**

It was agreed that the website would be updated in the near future. There is a member of staff at Aberdeen who is happy to make changes and add any new content for us.

Action: DP/TH

6. Date and Time of Next Meeting

To be confirmed by email

7. Online Registration and Payment (presentation by Graham Venters, University of Edinburgh)

Graham gave a short presentation on the online application, payment and enrolment system they have recently launched at Edinburgh University.

The project took 21 months from start to finish, has been running since July and they have successfully enrolled 50% of their students using this system, which equates to approximately 1700 students. They no longer take telephone bookings, but students still have the option of postal applications or in person in their offices. The system links together several systems and databases, and includes a link to World pay to allow secure financial transactions. It can apply discounts to courses and fee reductions. The courses offered

through this system are non-accredited and exists outwith the main University enrolment system.

Students go onto their website and enter all of their personal details, set up an account, with user ID and a password. Students can amend or update their own details at any time. They can then choose the course that they wish to undertake and put this in the basket, similar to any other online store. Once they have made their choices they select Checkout and can then select payment method and complete the transaction.

When a student puts a course in their basket, a place is deducted from the class list. Only if they abandon the transaction will the place be reinstated for someone else to choose.

Once their transaction is complete they will receive an email confirming their place and giving details of when the class starts, the venue and any other relevant information.

The service is in its early stages, but indications show that it has worked very well with the volume of transactions and is actually capable of accepting a much higher number of transactions than it ever will. It is hoped that more students will use the service in the future and this will have a positive impact on the service offered, and reduce the data input requirement for Lifelong Learning staff.

Graham was thanked for his presentation and members were able to ask questions afterwards. Graham also offered to answer any further questions by email.