

# UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CURRICULUM REFORM REPORT SUMMARY

## A. INTRODUCTION

Regular reviews of the curriculum are an important part of the responsibilities of any group of scholars. They provide an opportunity to celebrate the strengths of what we do but also to reflect and to consider what changes are desirable and necessary in our pursuit of excellence in teaching.

The primary objectives of Curriculum Reform are:

- to make our approach distinctive within the UK and aligned with developments in some of the world's leading universities;
- to enhance the Aberdeen learning experience;
- to enhance disciplinary study; and
- to produce better informed, more rounded and more intellectually flexible graduates.

Our proposals are designed to achieve these. In doing so, we will make our programmes:

- more attractive to students;
- more relevant to employers; and
- more relevant to wider societal needs.

## B. BACKGROUND

The evidence base used to inform our proposals was:

- A desk study of the strategic context for curriculum reform;
- External consultations with a wide range of interest groups;

- Internal consultations and feedback on the reports;
- International experiences of curriculum reform;
- Market research on the views of prospective students, their parents and employers;
- Two surveys of our students' views, undertaken last session and this session, by the Students' Association;
- A survey of school guidance teachers;
- Discussions with the Business Committee of the General Council; and
- Reports from three sub-groups of the Commission.

## C. GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

We propose a set of Graduate Attributes. These are designed so that a University of Aberdeen education will *enable* graduates to become:

- Academically excellent;
- Critical thinkers and effective communicators;
- Open to learning and personal development; and
- Active citizens.

## D. THE FRAMEWORK FOR PROVISION

We propose that there should be a five year framework which incorporates the following:

- A traditional four year Scottish honours degree;
- An advanced entry, three year honours degree for applicants with appropriate subjects and grades in Advanced Highers, A-levels or a possible new University advanced entry examination;
- A three year degree, which would be an enhancement of the old ordinary degree;

- A one year taught postgraduate masters level programme, which develops core discipline material;
- A five year integrated undergraduate programme where required for professional accreditation, such as the MEng and MChem;
- Two further exit qualifications – a certificate after one year and a diploma after two years – in recognition of successful study; and
- Flexible entry (depending on prior qualifications) to and exit from any year of the five, in order to accommodate breaks in study.

#### E. CURRICULUM CONTENT

We propose that students should normally undertake a programme of **Enhanced Study** as part of their degree programme. To accommodate this, there would be a move to four 15 credit courses each semester.

Enhanced Study would comprise four 15-credit courses (60 credits out of 240) across levels one and two, and two 15-credit courses (30 credits out of 240) across levels three and four.

Students would select the courses from three types:

- **Sixth Century Courses** (6CCs), designed to consider and contrast different approaches to knowledge and different methods of enquiry and, normally, examining real world problems;
- A small number of **Sustained Study Programmes** (SSPs) (such as a language or business), comprising normally four separate courses; and
- A selection of **Disciplinary Breadth Courses** (DBC), proposed from the University Catalogue of Courses by each Degree Programme Team to

ensure that the objectives of Enhanced Study are fulfilled.

#### F. SUPPORTING THE CURRICULUM

We propose that there should be enhancement of existing provision or new provision in the following areas:

- Scholarships;
- Engagement with schools and colleges;
- Induction;
- A Statement of Rights and Responsibilities,
- Assessment strategy;
- Student support;
- Learning and teaching facilities;
- Student skills assessment, and writing and numeracy skills;
- Information Technology (IT);
- Extending best practices;
- The timetable;
- The co-curriculum;
- University-wide lectures;
- Engagement with employers; and
- A graduate transcript.

#### G. IMPLEMENTATION

We propose an Implementation Board, consistent with the University's template for project boards, to take a strategic overview of the management of the different parts of the proposals.

The proposals could not be effectively implemented unless they were properly resourced.

Changes to administrative structures and capital investments would be phased in from **September 2009**. Changes to curriculum content and associated regulations would be phased in from **September 2010**. Full implementation would last for **six years**.