

UPDATE ON THE ELIR 2018 RECOMMENDATIONS (MARCH 2024)

Area for Development	Specific Recommendation	Update	Status
<p>The balance between institutional and school responsibilities</p>	<p>Reflect on the balance between institutional and School responsibilities for establishing and implementing policy and practice to assure itself that all those studying for a University of Aberdeen (UoA) award have parity of experience.</p>	<p><u>In the one-year follow-up report we:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specified the committee structure that enabled dissemination of policy changes and afforded a mechanism to monitor School-level compliance with such changes. • Described several policies relating to assessment and classification changes approved through Senate to be implemented in Academic Year 2019/2020. Due to some uncertainty over the communication of some of these changes with students, however, many of the changes had to be delayed. <p><u>In our October 2022 updated we noted we had:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refined the Education committee structure, ensuring increased School representation on Committees including the University Education Committee (UEC) (formally the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL)), and more clearly distinguishing the roles between the QAC and the UEC. • Ensured the effective rollout of the policies relating to assessment and classification changes referred to within the one-year follow up report. • Developed a suite of procedures (No Detriment Procedures and Comprehensive Measures refer) in consultation with Schools in respect of Assessment procedures to ensure students' classifications were not disadvantaged due to the Covid-19 pandemic. • Held several sessions for School Examination Officers and School administrative staff to ensure awareness and understanding of these procedures. Bespoke sessions were held on request. • Ensured the practice of providing this level of training and support remains in place, despite the transition from 'emergency' Covid measures to more standard means of degree classification and award. • Reviewed all policy documentation, in the context of Covid-19 and the transition to blended learning, to ensure each was up to date and remained fit for purpose. • Published a Policy Review Plan, providing a transparent approach to ensure education policies are reviewed on a regular basis and not solely on an 'ad-hoc' basis or as external factors (such as the publication of regulatory guidance) require. 	<p>COMPLETE</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published a 'Late Submission of Work Policy' ensuring parity of experience for all students who, without good reason, submit assessment after the published deadline for doing so. Considered a proposal regarding the attendance of a QAC member or Registry staff representative at Examiners Meetings. This remains under consideration. <p><u>Since October 2022 we have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published an updated Policy Review Plan, providing a transparent approach to ensure education policies are reviewed on a regular basis and not solely on an 'ad-hoc' basis or as external factors (such as the publication of regulatory guidance) require. The plan responds to feedback from Schools regarding particular areas of concern, with a view to ensuring consistency across our policies, streamlining processes and reducing workloads. 	
<p>Monitoring and expansion of personal tutoring</p>	<p>Continue to monitor personal tutoring arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose, in the context of the University's changing student population. The University should progress its intention to introduce personal tutoring for postgraduate taught students, including those studying online.</p>	<p><u>In the one-year follow-up report we:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed the QAA of the introduction of personal tutors for PGT students. The principles of which were supported by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and Senate. As a consequence of differing approaches withing Schools to assigning personal tutors, a review of the effectiveness of School-based personal tutor systems for PGT students would be undertaken. Noted that the personal tutor system for undergraduate students was implemented in September 2013 and that a holistic review of the approach was timely, so that enhancements could be implemented as needed. <p><u>In our October 2022 update we noted we had:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged in initial informal discussions with Aberdeen University Students' Association, Heads of School and Senior Personal Tutors regarding the delivery of the undergraduate personal tutor system, including in respect of Qatar. Widened the Senior Personal Tutor Forum to include all staff leading on delivery of pastoral support alongside the specialist services. This includes Postgraduate Taught programme leads, professional services colleagues from some schools and from on demand who have this responsibility and the Postgraduate Research Centre. Developed a website to make the Pastoral and Guidance support that is provided for students clear to all staff and students and new training and resources have been developed for staff. 	<p>COMPLETE</p>

- In direct response to the recommendation in the ELIR report, established a 'Pastoral Support Review' Task and Finish Group (TFG) to review the pastoral support provided for PGT students, and the UG PT system.
- The TFG, will recommend any changes which should be made to the UG personal tutoring and PGT pastoral support on the Aberdeen and Qatar campuses for on campus/blended/online teaching in respect of:
 - who is to deliver it
 - the nature of the support and information sharing needed to support this
 - how to enhance staff and student engagement with the personal tutor and pastoral support systems
 - identify priorities and prepare and deliver an implementation plan, including as appropriate requests for additional resource
 - develop an internal benchmarking and evaluation plan.
- Continued the work of the TFG, under the leadership of the Dean for Student Support and Experience, with future updates to follow to the Education Committee structure.

In our October 2023 update, we noted we had:

- Reviewed webpages for both staff and students, enhancing the purpose and clarity of the personal tutor and other pastoral guidance roles, and highlighting resources and sources of support as appropriate.
- In-person staff training for pastoral support and guidance session delivered, with further workshops scheduled.
- Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance forum oversees and reviews the consistency and equity of the student experience, reporting to the Student Support and Experience Committee.
- Communications issued to staff and students with information pertinent to pastoral support arrangements to ensure each cohort have the most up-to-date information, including information in induction materials.

Since the October 2023 update, we have:

- Completed the work of the 'Pastoral Support Review' Task and Finish Group (TFG), including a review of pastoral support provided for PGT students, and the UG personal tutor system.
- Providing PGT and online pastoral support by all schools via a mixture of personal tutoring and pastoral leads dependent on school resource.
- Providing pastoral support to both Aberdeen and Qatar campuses with in-person personal tutors assigned to Qatari students.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified information of UG personal tutoring/regent roles and updated on pastoral guidance webpages. • Undertaken a marketing campaign promoting engagement with personal tutors/regents and all support services so that regular reminders are placed on digital noticeboards, newsletters etc. • Staff and student pastoral support and personal tutoring webpages have been combined and clarity provided as to the role / purpose being one of sign-posting to the relevant professional support services available. • Created a separate staff resource page that includes advice, information, and updated online training resources. • Delivered an in-person staff workshop for pastoral support and guidance each semester. • Produced a Pastoral Support Training slide pack for School training which is delivered by Senior Personal Tutors. • Updated information as part of new staff induction session, which now includes pastoral support and guidance information and opportunity to meet key staff. • The Senior Pastoral Support Group (SPSG) meets five times a year and consists of senior pastoral UG and PGT leads from each School, PGR rep, and senior Professional Services representatives. The committee is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the delivery and strategic development of pastoral support, reporting to the Student Support and Experience Committee. • The Aberdeen Student Experience Survey which goes to all students includes questions relating to personal tutoring and pastoral support to allow institutional and school evaluation of pastoral support delivery and evaluated by SPSG. 	
<p>Relationship between Postgraduate Research School and Schools and training of PhD supervisors</p>	<p>Continue work defining the role of the Postgraduate Research School and its relationship to the academic Schools, enabling the University to ensure that all research students have an equivalent experience. The University is also asked to ensure that new postgraduate research supervisors undertake the training provided by the University.</p>	<p>This area for development was fully addressed in the one-year follow-up report (<i>the extract below refers</i>) and the processes as described continue as standard practice.</p> <p>In the 12 months following ELIR 2018, the Postgraduate Research (PGR) School made significant progress in harmonising processes across the University and in doing so made improvements to recruitment processes, induction and online training and the processes for reviewing progression of PGR students. Other improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rebuilding the PGR School website, • re-vamping <i>PGR Study Here</i> pages with streamlined research area information, and • developing a researcher roadmap to help researchers understand and plan their personal development journey with links to the researcher 	<p>COMPLETE</p>

development programme offered by the PGR School. These improvements are helping to ensure that all new PGR students have an equivalent experience.

A Doctoral Researchers Group (DRG) has been established to help improve communication within and across Schools and to ensure that the needs and views of our PGR students are heard and can be addressed. This group comprises of a PGR student representative from each academic School, the elected PGR AUSA representative and the Manager of the PGR School. The DRG provides a forum for student-led discussion to raise important common needs and issues facing PGR students from across the University, to enable these to be raised at appropriate committees and to ensure PGRs are involved in decision making on matters directly related to them. Members of the DRG sit on the PGR committee and other institution-wide committees and working groups.

The DRG has led to the creation of a Doctoral Society or 'Doc Soc'. The Doctoral Society is the first completely PGR student-led society incorporated within AUSA. It brings together PGR students from all Schools to hold social, career development and wellbeing events throughout the year. The purpose of the society is to create a warm and inclusive environment for all PGR students at Aberdeen to socialise, network and share experiences. As many of our PGR students travel from across the world to study here these opportunities are vital to allow them to succeed during their time here.

Details of our comprehensive four-stage professional development programme for PGR supervisors, implemented in AY 2019/20 are detailed below. From October 2019, the PGR School keeps an active record of supervisors who have attended training courses (either new or refresher) and this will form the benchmark for ongoing reporting. Supervisors will be invited after 5 years to attend refresher sessions. The PGR School receives a monthly report from HR with information on new members of academic staff who have joined the University. New members of staff are contacted by email and invited to attend a training session. If individuals have not attended within 12 months, the PGR Coordinator and /or Head of School will be contacted to ensure attendance prior to PGR student supervision.

An interactive supervisor handbook has been developed to provide information about the Code of Practice, policies and processes encountered during PGR study from registration to assessment and submission. It also includes information about

		<p>the help and support that is available if students encounter difficulties during their studies, both within the PGR School and across the University.</p> <p>All new supervisors (new to supervising and new to the University of Aberdeen) are required to attend an introduction to PGR supervision workshop. This workshop covers the philosophy of PhD study at Aberdeen and includes research culture and integrity, the role of supervisors as well as the processes/systems which guide and support supervisors to induct, supervise, develop and ensure progress for postgraduate researchers. It signposts policies, regulations, resources and guides that are required when working with students.</p> <p>Experienced supervisors are required to attend a regular update session to ensure they are kept up to date on policies/processes/activities related to supervising PGR students at the University of Aberdeen. These sessions also provide an opportunity to showcase best practice.</p> <p>This series explores topics related to doctoral supervision, supervision relationships, tensions, worries, and pitfalls on PGR progression, development and career. Sessions provide a platform to discuss issues, share good practice and use case studies to inform practice. Example topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving communication with your PGR student • Examining research doctorates • Supporting distance/online doctorates • PGR transitions – into and out of the PhD. 	
<p>Preparation for teaching</p>	<p>Ensure all new staff and postgraduate students who teach and assess complete, as a minimum, the University’s ‘Learning and Teaching in HE’ course before taking up teaching responsibilities.</p>	<p>This area for development was fully addressed in the one-year follow-up report (<i>the extract below refers</i>) and the processes as described continue as standard practice.</p> <p><u>Preparation for Teaching: Staff</u></p> <p>In April 2019, the UCTL approved a proposal from the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) to enhance the current provision by providing all new teaching staff with support from their first day in post by:</p> <p>(i) Ensuring that completion of the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Aberdeen two-day course be compulsory <i>within the first year</i> of arrival at the University of Aberdeen. The Course runs every September and January however this has been enhanced with the addition of a run in April to provide further capacity and opportunity for engagement. CAD monitors and</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>

records course attendance to ensure that all staff requiring to complete this training within their first year of appointment have done so.

- (ii) Developing a *short welcome video* which will explain how the Centre can support new staff from the outset and encourage them get in touch directly if they have any specific academic development needs. The video was made available, along with a suite of online resources which address aspects of teaching practice such as course design and planning at the University of Aberdeen, from a 'New Staff' webpage on StaffNet at the end of January 2020. We will monitor use and seek feedback to ensure that it is a useful resource.
- (iii) Through liaison with academic Schools and disciplines, an *email from the Centre is sent to new staff on arrival* with links to the video and the online resources and includes the Centre's contact details. The online induction pack provided by Human Resources to new staff includes links to the welcome video and staff development resources provided by CAD.

Preparation for Teaching: Postgraduate Research Students

A comprehensive four-stage professional development programme for learning and teaching for Postgraduate Research Students has been developed by CAD. This programme includes:

- (i) *The development of an online introduction to teaching course*: A new, bespoke online course in MyAberdeen which covers basic principles of teaching and learning is available for all PGR students, with those engaged in teaching activities being required to take the course before doing any teaching. The course has been developed by CAD in collaboration with the Postgraduate Research School and was made available at the end of January 2020. The Postgraduate Research School will publicise the learning opportunity and monitor completion of the course which will include an assessment. Materials provided through this course will continue to be available to the student throughout the duration of their PhD.
- (ii) *Mandatory training by Schools*: In the early part of the first half session 2019/20, ten out of twelve schools provided mandatory training for PGRs before they undertook any tutoring, demonstrating or field work supervision. CAD delivered the majority of this training and also provides guidance to Schools who wish to provide their own training so as to ensure an institution-wide consistency of approach. Work is ongoing, led by CAD, to ensure that there is comprehensive provision across all Schools. CAD is working with Schools and the Postgraduate Research School to ensure that all PGR students who are involved in teaching undertake this training. Discussions are also ongoing

		<p>to explore how this monitoring process might be streamlined to provide a more efficient way to allow student engagement to be tracked.</p> <p>(iii) <i>Peer observation:</i> The Schools of Psychology and Biological Sciences will pilot a peer observation process developed by the CAD in the second half-session of 2019/20. Ultimately, all Schools will be required to undertake one peer observation for each PGR student in the first year during which they have teaching responsibilities. Schools will be provided with a template developed by the CAD and will be required to keep a record of this information alongside training attendance. Schools are also required to provide students with a named contact for advice and support should it be required.</p> <p><i>Principles of Learning & Teaching in HE:</i> This popular course which has consistently high attendance, accredited by the Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE) since 2010, will continue to be offered to PGR students who are actively involved in teaching and have a role in supporting the learning of others through activities such as lecturing, running tutorials, demonstrating in laboratory sessions and supervising students. The course runs in November and May and is also offered online in August.</p>	
<p>Review of Professional Services</p>	<p>Continue with plans to develop processes for the routine review of student-facing professional services.</p>	<p>A separate review process for student-facing Professional Services has not been implemented. The processes that are already in place to review professional services, as part of School review processes, are a more meaningful way to review how well professional services function to support the student experience.</p> <p>As part of the annual planning process, Schools are asked to highlight areas requiring support from Professional Services and with effect from AY2019/20, the annual planning process was strengthened with the inclusion of meetings with senior staff from each Professional Services Directorate.</p> <p>As part of the University's mechanism for Institution Led-Review (ILR), termed Internal Teaching Review (ITR), representatives of the Professional Services, including the Registry, the Careers and Employability Service and Student Support are invited to attend and contribute to panel visits. A specific session during the ITR enables the ITR Panel to capture the strengths (and weaknesses, if any) of our Professional Services in education-related matters. All ITRs from AY2019/2020 onwards have had this bespoke session. Documentation associated with the ITR has been amended to clearly reflect the following aims: (i) to review the extent and quality of the interactions between relevant professional services and a School and its student and identify any areas for enhancement and (ii) to encourage and support engagement with relevant professional services.</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>

		These processes as described will continue as standard practice.	
Monitoring, training and induction of External Examiners	<p>Reflect on the effectiveness of its current arrangements for monitoring the training and induction provided for external examiners at School level. In addition, it should ensure that all students have easy access to the external examiners' reports for their programme.</p>	<p><u>In the one-year follow-up report we:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Described the information all External Examiners (EEs) are provided with relating to their role in the University, including but not limited to: links to various teaching policies and regulations and advice on how to access the virtual learning environment, MyAberdeen. It was noted that Individual Schools also provide additional induction. • Confirmed that a review of the training and induction provided to EEs had been undertaken. The review identified a number of enhancements to improve the efficiency of delivery and user friendliness of the information provided to EEs. • Noted that making external examiner reports accessible to students is an action that is in progress. <p><u>In our October 2022 update we noted we had:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begun a review of the current External Examining process from beginning to end. To date, work undertaken has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a review of review of the appropriateness of all documentation pertaining to the nomination and recruitment of EEs was undertaken; ○ the creation of a QAC-owned MyAberdeen organisational area for EEs which houses policy, institutional information and a training package to cover information pertinent to all EEs. From this area, EEs gain access to School-specific areas which provide further information, training, School contacts and key dates as required throughout the year. • Established a small group, comprised of academic staff and key stakeholders, to continue this review work, more specifically in respect of policies governing the EE process. <p>In terms of ensuring students have access to External Examiner reports, within the <u>one-year follow-up report we</u> proposed to modify the form to include a section that contained the EEs assurance of the quality of the course/programme that could be released to students, with the more detailed considerations of the EE kept more private. This has subsequently been actioned as a recommendation from QESR.</p> <p><u>Since October 2022 we have:</u></p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalised the review of the External Examining process, in respect of policies governing the EE process. The review output was approved by Senate in April 2023. Agreed, at a meeting of the University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), a proposal to arrange for the publishing of all EE reports online with access restricted to staff and students of the University, and the relevant EEs. EE reports will be made available for a period of three years, updated annually on a rolling basis. This project was rolled out in September 2023. 	
Review processes for Collaborative Provision to ensure accuracy of Register of Partnerships	Review processes for maintaining the Register of Partnerships and Collaborative Provision, to ensure its ongoing currency and completeness.	<p>The Register of Partnerships is now managed by the Academic Services team who ensure actions for partnerships, such as renewals or terminations, are progressed as appropriate and liaise with QA contacts, the Contracts Coordinator in Research & Innovation and with the Lead International Governance Officer as necessary.</p> <p>A process for the approval and management of International Partnerships is in place and work remains ongoing to align the processes for other partnerships to this.</p>	COMPLETE