

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Tuesday, 26 September 2023

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS HAVE BEEN WITHHELD ON THE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

3.2 Minutes of the Closed Business Sessions 21 June 2023

7.1 Audit and Risk Committee Report

9.2 Update on Year-End Position and 2023/24 Financial/Recruitment Update

10.4 Aberdeen 2040: Operational Plan for 2023-24

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS ARE ENCLOSED BUT HAVE BEEN REDACTED ON THE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

9.1 Finance and Resourcing Committee Report: Sections 6.4, 6.6, 6.9-6.10, 6.13-6.15



There will be a meeting of the **UNIVERSITY COURT** on Tuesday 26th September 2023 at 4pm in the **Old Senate Room, King's College. Followed by Dinner at 7.30pm in the Linklater Rooms, Elphinstone Hall.**

BUSINESS

All items of business are for discussion, providing information or context relevant for current or future decisions. Those items that require a decision today are annotated accordingly.

- 1 4pm WELCOME AND RECTOR'S REPORT (enclosed)
- 2 4.05pm DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES (enclosed)
- 3 4.05pm MINUTES OF 21 June 2023: For Approval (enclosed)
- 4 4.05pm ACTION LOG, MATTERS ARISING AND DECISIONS BY CIRCULATION REPORT (enclosed)
- 5 4.10pm REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

Business for Approval or Reporting

- 6 4.15pm GOVERNANCE & REGULATORY
 - 6.1 SFC Outcome Agreement: For Approval (enclosed)
 - 6.2 Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality: For Approval (enclosed)
 - 6.3 Committee Memberships for 2023/24: For Approval (enclosed)
 - 6.4 Court Schedule of Business for 2023/24 (enclosed)
- 7 4.45pm REPORTS FROM COURT SUB-COMMITTEES
 - 7.1 Audit and Risk Committee: For Approval **Strictly Confidential** (enclosed)
 - 7.2 Remuneration Committee (enclosed)
 - 7.3 Pensions Advisory Group (enclosed)

Business Items Informing the Context for the Strategy Day

- 8 5.00pm REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON THE SECTOR/OPERATING CONTEXT (enclosed)

- 9 5.20pm FINANCE
- 9.1 Finance and Resourcing Committee: For Approval (enclosed)
- 9.2 Update on Year-End Position and 2023/24
Financial/Recruitment Update **Strictly Confidential** (enclosed)
- 10 6.00pm STRATEGY AND FRAMING FOR STRATEGY DAY
- 10.1 Strategic Risk Management Framework: For Approval (enclosed)
- 10.2 Strategic Risk bi-annual Update (enclosed)
- 10.3 Aberdeen 2040: Summary of Performance 2022/23 (enclosed)
- 10.4 Aberdeen 2040: Operational Plan for 2023-24 **Strictly Confidential** (enclosed)
- NB: Court will be asked to formally approve the plan at the conclusion of the Strategy Day.*
- 10.5 Update on the re-imagining the Campuses Project (enclosed)
- Close of Formal Business**
- 11 7.00pm Closed Session: Court Members and Secretary to Court Only - Court Effectiveness - Reflections on the Meeting
- 7.15pm Close of Meeting – followed by Dinner at 7:30pm**
- FURTHER REPORTS FOR NOTE OR REFERENCE AVAILABLE IN RESOURCES AREA OF DECISION TIME
- Report from the Partnership, Negotiating & Consultative Committee
- 12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 21 November 2023, 9am to 3pm

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COURT
REPORT FROM THE RECTOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

1.1 This paper provides Court with a report from the Rector.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 The paper is for information and no action is required.

3 REPORT ON ACTIVITIES SINCE LAST MEETING

- Attended all the summer graduations.
- Commercialisation Committee meeting.
- Business Committee Meeting.
- Attended events both within the University and outside the University.
- Met some of our alumni during my trip to Rome and Dubai. It was lovely to hear their success stories, a true showcase of the lives being transformed through the quality education we provide at the University of Aberdeen.
- Working with Career Services & AFBE Scotland for a full day Career & Employability event for students in STEM.
- Had meetings with staff and students who had concerns covering a range of issues.
- Listening to student concerns regarding pass rates in a particular master's class in Engineering.
- I continue to have regular Rector surgeries (in-person and online) where I listen to students concerns and liaise with staff to address these concerns, and my monthly meetings with designated staff within the University.
- I am now looking a bit more outward and I have started meeting with leaders (both in politics and businesses) within the region and rest of UK to showcase the many examples of brilliant work we are doing at the University.

4 FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information is available from the Rector, rector@abdn.ac.uk.

Confidentiality Status: Open



UNIVERSITY COURT

26 September 2023

**DECLARATION OF INTEREST, BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION
AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

DECLARATION OF INTEREST:

Any member or individual in attendance (including officers) who has a clear interest in a matter on the agenda must declare that interest at the meeting.

BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION:

All items of business are for discussion, providing information or context relevant for current or future decisions. Those items that require a decision today are annotated accordingly.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURT AND COURT MEMBERS

Enclosed is a reminder for Court, for information, of:

- (a) its remit and primary responsibilities and the schedule of decisions reserved to it;
- (b) the role and duties of members, in particular, as trustees in charity law.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk.

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURT AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS AS CHARITY TRUSTEES

1. REMIT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1.1 The constitutional basis, authority and responsibilities of the University Court are derived largely from the statutes contained in the Universities (Scotland) Acts from 1858 to 1966 and in the Ordinances and Resolutions made thereunder. Latterly this has been supplemented by the requirements of the Higher Education Governance Scotland (Act). The University is also a registered Scottish Charity and as such the Court as the governing body is the board of trustees, its members are charity trustees and subject to Scottish charities law, with accountability to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The powers and functions of the Court are drawn from these requirements of statute and are set out in its Statement of Primary Responsibilities <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/court-information.php#panel2452>
- 1.2 The Court has delegated many of its functions to its sub-committees: Audit and Risk, Commercialisation, Finance and Resourcing, Governance and Nominations, and Remuneration. These are set out in the respective remits of each Committee – and going forward brought together under a Schedule of Delegations expected to be considered by Court in November 2022. It should be noted, however, that Court as the governing body remains ultimately responsible for any decisions made by sub-committees on its behalf.

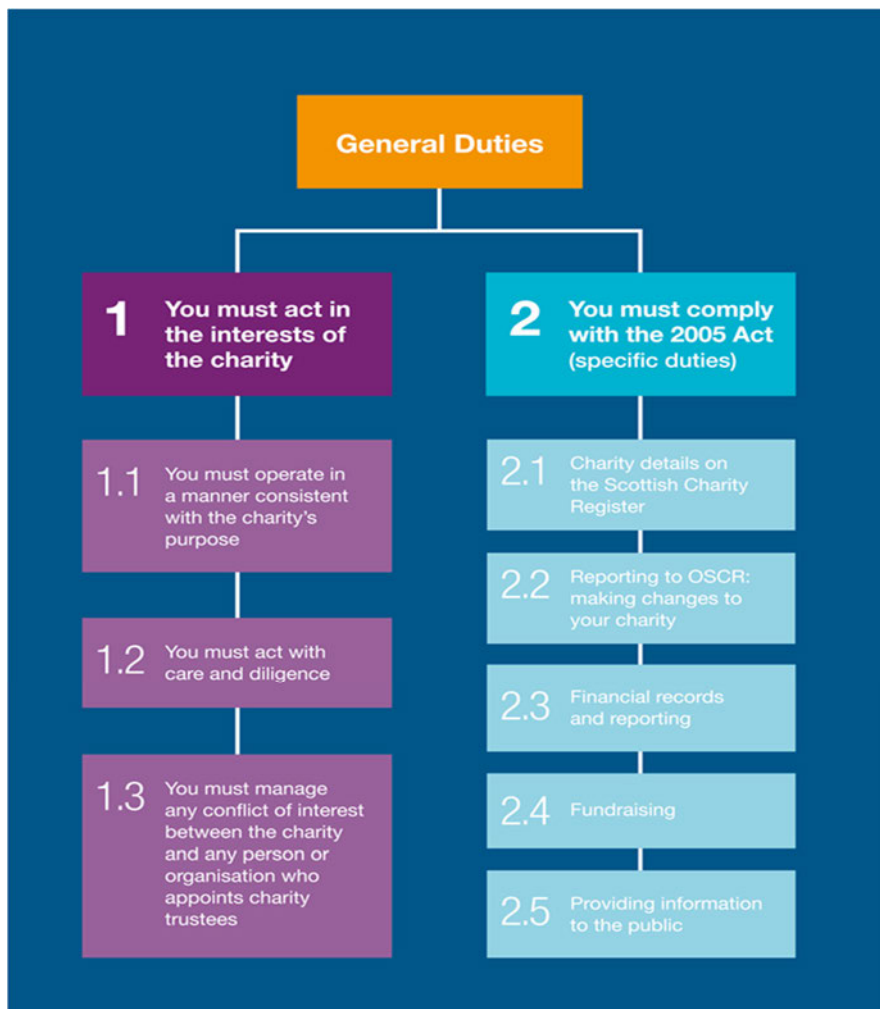
2. ROLE OF MEMBERS, CODE OF CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 2.1 Members are reminded of their role as a governor (detailed below), the Court's Code of Conduct for Members (provided in your letter of appointment a condition of appointment) and, in particular, your duties as charity trustees under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. You should also be aware of the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance <http://www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk/2023code/> and the Financial Memorandum with the Scottish Funding Council: [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidance_Governance/Financial Memorandum with higher education institutions - 1 December 2014.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidance_Governance/Financial_Memorandum_with_higher_education_institutions_-_1_December_2014.pdf)

Duties in Charities Law

- 2.2 These are summarised below, but more detailed guidance on the duties of charity trustees OSCR were provided in papers for the September 2020 meeting or available here <https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees/> All members are asked to regularly review their responsibilities as individual charity trustees in law.

- 2.3 All charity trustees have legal duties and responsibilities under the **2005 Act**. A duty is something that you must do, and all the duties must be met. These duties are separated out into **general duties**, that set out a broad framework that all charity trustees must work within, and **specific duties** detailed in the 2005 Act – OSCR note that you might delegate the practical details of the specific duties to your charity’s staff, volunteers or professional advisers, but that the charity trustees are ultimately responsible for making sure the specific duties are met. The general and specific duties apply equally to **all** charity trustees and to **all** charities. All of the charity’s trustees should work together to make sure that these duties are met. If you fail to comply with these duties then this is **misconduct** and OSCR have powers to take action against charity trustees, where appropriate. OSCR state that their response will be proportionate depending on the situation. Where a charity trustee has acted reasonably and honestly it is unlikely to be treated as misconduct.
- 2.4 As a charity trustee, the key duty is to look after the charity’s **assets** and for making sure that the charity fulfils its **charitable purpose(s) – the University’s purposes based on OSCR registration categorisations are:** the advancement of higher education, of health, of citizenship or community development, and the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science.
- 2.5 The general and specific duties under the 2005 Act are:



3. COURT'S AGREED ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR COURT MEMBERS

3.1 In addition to the duties under law, the Court's agreed role description for governors, taking into account the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance is:

Each governor is responsible, collectively with fellow governors, for the effective leadership of the University in all its aspects. That translates into more specific responsibilities of which the following are key:

- To play an appropriate part in furthering the values of higher education and the mission of the University of Aberdeen in particular;
- To ensure that the Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud;
- To exercise oversight in respect of the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource functions delegated to the authority of the Principal as chief executive;
- To ensure that Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability and stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership and respect. Members must at all times regulate their personal conduct as members of the Court in accordance with these standards;
- To establish constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University employees with whom they come into contact, whilst recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management;
- To act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate;

Ends

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2023

Present: Julie Ashworth (in the Chair for Minutes 196 onwards)
Eleanor Bentley
George Boyne (except for Minutes 231-232)
Martina Chukwuma-Ezike (in the Chair for Minutes 193 to 195 onwards)
Owen Cox
Nick Edwards
Iain Mackay (via Teams)
Gary McRae (via Teams except for Minutes 201 to 214 and 217 to 233)
Helen Martin
Lyndsay Menzies (except for Minutes 210 to 214)
Caryn Miller
Anne Minto (via Teams)
Vanessa Mabonso Nzola
Iain Percival
Joachim Schaper
Diane Skåtun
Otto Thoresen
Camilo Torres Barragán
Robert Traynham
Neil Vargesson
Ilia Xypolia

In attendance: Liza Boffen-Yordanov (except for Minutes 231)
Debbie Dyker (except for Minutes 231)
Pete Edwards (via Teams for Minutes 210 to 216)
David Evans
Karl Leydecker (except for Minutes 231)
Tracey Slaven
Alan Speight (except for Minutes 225 to 233)
Ruth Taylor (except for Minutes 231)
Louise Thomson (except for Minute 231 (ii))
Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan (except for Minutes 225 to 233)
Mark White (except for Minutes 231)
Bruce Purdon (Clerk) (except for Minutes 231)

Apologies: Keith Anderson
Colette Backwell
Martin Mills
Charlotte Pope-Williams
Iain Torrance KCVO

THANKS AND RECTOR'S REPORT

- 193 The Rector opened the meeting and provided an oral report to Court on activities that she had undertaken since the last meeting. As part of this, the Rector highlighted the marking and assessment boycott and welcomed that the University expected that all students would be able to graduate. The Rector also noted her enjoyment of the Founder's Day events and looked ahead to graduations, and invited members to thank all staff who had contributed to those events and to the education of the students who would graduate.
- 194 The Rector noted that this was the last meeting for Keith Anderson, Camilo Torres Barragán, Collette Backwell and David Evans and, on behalf of Court, thanked them for their contributions to its work and to that of the wider University.
- 195 The Rector welcomed (as an observer) Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan, Students' Association Vice President Welfare, who had been nominated to succeed Camillo Torres Barragán, as one of the Association's two members of Court from 1 July 2023.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- 196 The Court noted the standing reminder of the responsibilities of Court and members as charity trustees (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). Dr Martin noted an interest in the agenda in regard to any discussion of the University and College Union's marking and assessment boycott.

MINUTES

- 197 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 April 2023 were approved.

ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

- 198 The Court noted a report on the updated Action Log (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

- 199 The Court received and noted a report from the Senior Governor on the meetings and activities she had undertaken since the previous meeting (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON THE SECTOR/UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

- 200 The Court received a report on policy developments relating to higher education and the recent achievements of staff and students at Aberdeen University (*copy*

filed with the principal copy of the Minutes), which was supplemented by an oral report from the Principal. From these reports the Court discussed:

- The financial context within which the proposed University budget for the next three years to be considered later in the agenda was discussed. The Principal noted the impact of high inflation on Scottish Funding Council funding which was already static in real terms and therefore the importance of generating income from other sources. The Principal also noted that the underfunding of higher education over several years, made increasing the pay of staff to match inflation unaffordable, exacerbated by recent decisions to transfer higher education budget to meet rising pay costs in other areas of education. The University would continue to lobby government on the issue of funding while also exploring other opportunities, such as commercial income from the increasing number of tourists visiting Aberdeen.
- The announcement of recommendations for the future operation of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and, were these to be adopted, their potential implications for the University. The University would need to review its approach to REF once there had been a response to the recommendations at UK Government level later in 2023.
- The publication of new Transparent Approach to Costing Data at sector level. This illustrated that under the current funding models, teaching 'home' students was increasingly being subsidised by fee income from international students and that the cost to institutions of undertaking research was increasing. The data also showed that the income available from international student fees to subsidise both these two key activities had decreased.
- Marking and assessment boycott, where it was noted that all students due to graduate would do so. The Court agreed to record its thanks to staff and the Students' Association for their contribution to this outcome. The importance of degree awards being completed for other processes for students, such as visa, job or further study applications was also noted.
- The recent precautionary closure of some buildings following inspections and discovery of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in roof areas.
- The UK Government announcement of funding cuts to Confucius Institutes, but Court was assured that these would not impact on the University's Institute due to the Scottish Government taking a different policy position.
- Immigration restrictions for international students with families, where the Court was assured that the University was regularly highlighting the positive contribution of international students to the wider community, as well as to the University community, with politicians and regional stakeholders.

FINANCE AND PLANNING

2022/23 UPDATED FINANCIAL POSITION AND PROJECTION

201 The Court received an updated paper on the year-end projected financial position (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

202 The Court noted that:

- The current forecast position was for a £2.68m year-end deficit, as compared to the agreed budget of a £1.9m deficit. This year end out-turn would achieve covenant compliance.
- Following the January 2023 student intake numbers being below budget, a savings programme was implemented to scale back proposed investments and control discretionary spend. These focused primarily on core staffing, operating costs and elements of additional income. Since the projected deficit of £7.1m reported to Court on the 1st March 2023, an additional (circa) £5m of further savings and additional income had been identified.
- Work would continue to achieve the £1.9m target, although the risk of inflationary cost pressures remained.

BUDGETS 2023/24 TO 2025/26

203 The Court received a paper which outlined the detailed revenue plans for 2023/24 to 2025/26, including the underlying assumptions, assessed risks and sensitivities and an assessment of performance metrics and loan covenant compliance. The revenue plans also considered how the ambition of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy could be brought to life in a financially sustainable way (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). The budgets had been reviewed by the Finance and Resourcing Committee which had recommended their approval to Court.

204 The three-year plan proposed a budget with an underlying deficit of £3.9m in 2023/24, break even in 2024/25 and a £3m surplus in 2025/26. The paper also set out the forecast 10-year cash position supported by the budget, which peaked at £96m in July 2023, reducing to £23.5m in 2032/33. The plans would meet both internal and external covenant requirements and the risks, opportunities and sensitivities that had been identified in the paper. It was noted, however, that compliance with covenants would be tight across two of the key metrics used.

205 The Court noted that key elements of the plan include continued growth in fee income, particularly international fee income (price and volume) and on-line programme and short course provision, and research grants. These would be offset by increasing staff costs (primarily wage inflation) and operating costs. The plan reflected the need for limited, targeted investment in academic staffing to continue to address areas of high student:staff ratio and to strengthen research capacity, and in professional services to support research, commercial income generation and education. It also included some investment in the REF action plan, as a key strategic driver. The Court also noted that the plan required a focused reduction in staffing costs in certain disciplines in relation to restructuring. This was estimated for 2023/24 at £0.5m but rising to £3.5m in 2024/25. The paper noted that there were several disciplines whose

contribution was structurally below expectations and would result in an unacceptable institutional deficit if not otherwise addressed.

206 The Court discussed the budget plans in detail, in particular their underpinning assumptions around income growth and costs. The following key points were noted from that discussion:

- A number of members noted that the plan required significant levels of growth in international student fee income (being set at the higher/optimal end of the sensitivity analysis) and sought reassurance that the projected level of growth was achievable, particularly given the challenges, both internal and external, experienced by the University in international student recruitment recently. The Court was assured by the Senior Management Team that in terms of market share the University was below where it should be and that this and the proven record of growth in student recruitment when taken together over the previous three years, was the basis for the proposed budget, rather than the immediate past year.
- Members sought reassurance that, in the event of the target growth in student recruitment not being achieved, that the University had the ability to take action and swiftly if necessary to address any financial shortfall. The Court was advised that the University could review costs or consider its portfolio of assets if absolutely necessary. Some members noted that they would have welcomed more information on a 'plan b' and one member requested receipt of more detail on the contingency plan for a scenario where the target growth was not achieved.
- Members also discussed, in the scenario of the growth target not being achieved, the level of headroom versus the covenant compliance.
- Members requested that given the ambition of the plan and the risks to its achievement, that they should receive regular reports on progress against the plan over the coming months across the recruitment cycles.
- It was confirmed that the University had the physical space capacity to accommodate the projected increases in student numbers.
- The pressure on staff pay and workload was also discussed and it was confirmed that the Professional Services budget component included savings and income growth targets.

207 The Court agreed:

- (i) To approve the three-year revenue budget plan which makes an underlying deficit of £3.9m in 2023/24, break even in 2024/25 and £3m surplus in 2025/26.
- (ii) That given the risks discussed above, the Court should receive regular updates on progress against the plan, particularly with regard to the ambitious student recruitment targets and that it should

receive further detail on a contingency plan should those targets not be achieved.

- (iii) To approve the 10-year cash position as set out in the paper.

STRATEGIC PLAN FORECAST TO SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL FOR 2022-23 TO 2024-25

- 208 The Court received and approved the Strategic Plan Forecast (SPF) with actual figures for 2021/22 and forecast figures for 2022/23 and a further two financial years 2023/24 to 2024/25, for submission to SFC by 30 June 2023 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

FINANCE AND RESOURCING COMMITTEE

- 209 The Court received a report on the business conducted by the Finance and Resourcing Committee at its meeting of 8 June 2023, which provided an overview of the assurances it obtained and decisions it had made under its authority from Court (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). As noted above, the Committee also had recommended to Court approval of the budget and detailed revenue plans for 2023-24 to 2025-26.

ESTATES AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

- 210 The Court received a presentation on capital investments focused on the King's Quarter and Johnston Projects. This reminded Court of the original project objectives, the current cost estimates following conclusion of the respective tender processes and the outcome of the assurance review for both projects.
- 211 Following consideration of these various processes, the Estates Committee and Senior Management Team recommended to Court that:
- The current construction contract procurement for both projects should be paused.
 - The development of an Estates Strategy and Master Plan that would support the 2040 Strategy be completed (which Court was to receive a presentation regarding as part of a subsequent agenda item – see minutes 215-216).
 - A University-wide survey of future space requirements aligned to the 2040 Strategy be undertaken.
- 212 The Court noted that key factors in reaching these recommendations, had been the impact of the pandemic and high inflation on the likely cost of the projects significantly exceeding the original budget and, related to this, that the assurance review had concluded that the successful delivery of the projects appeared unachievable and that the projects should not proceed to their next phase until the level of risk and their viability had been re-confirmed.

- 213 In discussion, the Court was assured that the terms of the bond finance were not tied to the delivery of these projects although the University was not permitted to use bond finance for working capital.
- 214 The Court agreed to accept the recommendation of the Estates Committee and Senior Management Team and as such that the King's Quarter and Johnston projects would not proceed. It was noted that as part of next steps arising from the decision, communication internally and externally with stakeholders would be required, in particular with the Business School, and that any points of learning from the process would inform future projects)

PRESENTATION ON CAMPUS RE-IMAGINING PROJECT

- 215 The Court received a presentation, for information, on the Campus Re-imagining Project. This outlined:
- The underpinning ambitions and aspirations for the campuses, both in physical space and digital technology terms, and the linkage with the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, which formed the context for the project.
 - The remit of the project board, the approach to engagement with stakeholders and the timeframe, with an aim for the project to deliver its initial findings by June 2024.
- 216 From a wide-ranging discussion, the following key points were noted:
- The need to re-imagine and plan for the future of the campuses also needed to be reconciled with the cost and what the University could afford.
 - Following the earlier decision around the Johnston Project, a number of members noted the need to explore in the short-term, as well as the longer-term, what other options for the Business School were available.
 - Some members suggested that the project's objectives be reduced in number and categorised between short-term and longer-term.
 - Student growth and re-purposing unused space rather than new buildings were suggested as part of the issues for the project to consider.
 - The size and membership of the project board were discussed but it was considered by the executive that it required the breadth of input that its composition enabled.
 - Some members suggested the timeframe for the project should be accelerated, however, the Court was advised that it was critical that the necessary time to engage with stakeholders, most of all the University community, was taken to develop a vision for the campuses which was supported in the same way that Aberdeen 2040 had been.

REPORTS FROM SENATE AND COURT SUB-COMMITTEES

SENATE

217 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by Senate at its meetings on 19 April and 7 June 2023, together with an additional meeting held on 24 May (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Senate: the draft Resolutions, 'Resolution for Changes to Various Degrees - No 309' and 'Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) - No 310', and that, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, the draft Resolutions be passed forthwith, so that the amended provisions may be applied with immediate effect.

218 In discussion, it was confirmed that the Senate had endorsed a call for UK and Scottish Governments to provide sustainable funding for higher education so that the sector could more easily address the cost of living pressures being faced by colleagues. The Court was advised that Senate had also passed a motion that the Senate called upon Universities and Colleges Employers Association to return to negotiations on pay and working conditions while recognising that this was a Court matter and would need to be considered in the context of the University's finances. In addition, the Court noted that the Senate had agreed by consensus to call on relevant parties, including UCEA and UCU, to return to national negotiations on precarity and pay gaps, workload pressures and the pay spine.

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

219 The Court received a report on the business considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its last meeting on 6 June 2023 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

220 On the recommendation of the Committee, the Court approved the re-appointment of PwC as the University's internal auditor for an initial period of three years from 1 August 2023. This followed a competitive tender process and presentation from three bidders to the Committee's Selection Panel.

221 In discussion, it was noted that the Committee would be receiving a further report on the completion of mandatory cyber security training for staff where completion levels were low. It was clarified that volume of mandatory training courses for staff was not excessive and that the risk of a cyber attack due to lack of awareness in staff was real.

COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE

222 The Court received a report on the business considered by the Commercialisation Committee at its last meeting on 1 June 2023 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

PENSIONS ADVISORY GROUP

223 The Court received a report on the main items of business discussed at the meeting of the Pensions Advisory Group of 31 May 2023. (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). As part of this, the Group reported that it had

considered proposals and a request from Universities UK that employers express their support, or otherwise, for a more detailed exploration of the possible implementation of a Conditional Indexation (CI) scheme design within USS. The Court noted that the Group had agreed that on balance to support the further exploration of conditional indexing but subject to several caveats which it had highlighted in responding to UUK.

- 224 In discussion, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that in recent days the University Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme had advised the University of its valuation. The Scheme's deficit was unchanged and the Chief Financial Officer would provide a more detailed report to the Pensions Advisory Group in due course.

GOVERNANCE & REGULATORY

UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF COURT

- 225 The Court received an oral update on the progress of the recruitment process for the appointment of new Independent Members of Court.

GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

- 226 This Court received a report on the key items of business considered by the Governance and Nominations Committee on 30 May 2023 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*). The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Committee, a revised approach to the identification, recording and management of conflicts of interest and loyalty, gifts and hospitality for members of Court, its committees and the Senior Management Team.

RESOLUTIONS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL

- 227 The Court received a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*) which provided Court with a report on the outcome of the statutory process of consultation regarding two Resolutions. Noting that no comments requiring changes to the proposals had been received, the Court formally approved the following Resolutions. These being:

- Omnibus Resolution Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees'; Resolution No 307; and
- Additional degrees available to Senate for award *honoris causa tantum*. Resolution No 308.

FORWARD FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS

- 228 The Court received a paper on a three-tiered future approach to assessing and reporting the skills, effectiveness and governance maturity of Court, which had been endorsed by the Governance and Nominations Committee in May 2023, together with a timeline for implementation (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

- 229 Members welcomed the approach and discussed a number of components related to including: skills mapping, measuring or evaluating behavioural/cultural factors to effectiveness, induction and development, and the quality of information presented to the Court.
- 230 The Court approved the proposed approach and the timeline for its integration into procedures.

CLOSED BUSINESS SESSION

- 231 The Court met in closed session to discuss:
- (i) The Court's Effectiveness (absent those in attendance bar the Secretary and the Head of Governance and Executive Support).
 - (ii) The Principal's Annual Performance Review (absent the Principal and those in attendance bar the Secretary).
- 232 The minutes of those discussions are restricted to Court members and held separately.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 233 It was noted that the Court Strategy Sessions would be held on Tuesday, 26 September 2023 from 4pm to 6:30pm, followed by the Court Dinner, and on Wednesday, 27 September 2023 from 9am to 3pm.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

ACTION LOG, MATTERS ARISING AND DECISIONS BY CIRCULATION**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper provides Court with a copy for information of the current Court Action Log (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2 It also formally notes the following items of business that were considered and agreed by circulation of Court since the last meeting:
- Appointment of three independent members of Court – Luke Halliday, Alison Rankin and Adaku Ufere

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered or approved by	n/a	
Further consideration/approval required by	n/a	n/a

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 3.1 The Court is invited to:
- (i) Note the action log (Appendix 1) and decision agreed by circulation noted above.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 4.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk.

19 September 2023

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY COURT: LOG OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FROM COURT MEETINGS

Appendix 1

Court Date	Minute Ref	Action Arising	Action By:-	Status
Mar 2022	170	<p>FUTURE BUSINESS</p> <p>It was agreed the Court should receive at a future meeting a paper on the strategy for developing courses and the infrastructure required to deliver these.</p>	VP Education/VP Global Student Recruitment	<p>Pending: To be scheduled for 2022/23 as part of April People Deep Dive with an overview of the process by which programmes are approved. Deferred to a future meeting to prioritise the extended discussion on Data Systems at the April 2023 meeting.</p>
Jun 2022	200	<p>GOVERNANCE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p><i>Committee Structure</i></p> <p>The Court approved Option B as the proposed structure of Court Committees for 2022/23 and noted that the operation of the structure would be reviewed after one year.</p>	University Secretary	<p>Pending: Scheduled for Autumn 2023</p>
Apr 2023	173	<p>GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT</p> <p>The Court was also advised that there was a vacancy for an independent member of Court on the Advisory Group on Collections Deaccessioning and Repatriation and that an update to the policy governing that procedure would be taken to a future Court or by circulation for approval.</p>	University Secretary	<p>Pending</p>

Jun 2023	206	<p>BUDGETS 2023/24 TO 2025/26</p> <p>The Court agreed:</p> <p>(ii) That given the risks discussed above, the Court should receive regular updates on progress against the plan, particularly with regard to the ambitious student recruitment targets and that it should receive further detail on a contingency plan should those targets not be achieved.</p>	Chief Financial Officer	Ongoing
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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

OUTCOME AGREEMENT WITH THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL (SFC) FOR 2023/24**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper provides Court with the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2023/24, noting associated documents are also enclosed. This was approved by the Senior Management Team when it met on 31st of August 2023 and then endorsed by the Finance and Resourcing Committee (FRC) on the 14th of September. The final iteration is due for submission to the SFC by their deadline of the 31st of October 2023. It should be noted that while these documents are in final form, they may be subject to minor changes prior to submitting to SFC.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously approved by	SMT	31 August 2023
Previously considered for information by	FRC	14 September 2023
Further approval required by	Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Court is invited to **consider and approve** the University's Outcome Agreement for 2023/24 along with the appended documentation.

4. SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The approach this year specified by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) was to capture at a high level, the deliverables, impacts, and outcomes from each university against a set of defined priorities, and to give assurance on the use of allocated funding in AY 2023-24. This Agreement is designed to provide that assurance, comprehensively demonstrating how the University has addressed the priority areas identified by the SFC. The Priority areas covered are:

- Fair access and Transitions.
- Quality Learning and Transitions
- Coherent Learning Provision
- Work-based learning and skills
- Net-Zero and environmental sustainability response
- High-quality research and innovation

A total of seven appendices to the main Outcome Agreement document are also enclosed, each required by the SFC as part of the wider submission, including four case studies. These are:

- Appendix 1: the National Table of Measures
- Appendix 2: the University's Self-Evaluation for the Interim Outcome Agreement for 2022-23.
- Appendix 3: the University's Innovation Fund report.
- Appendix 4: Non-Research Case Study 1
- Appendix 5: Non-Research Case Study 2
- Appendix 6, Research Case Study 1
- Appendix 7, Research Case Study 2

Additional points to note are:

- The documentation enclosed has already been considered twice in draft form for feedback by the SFC, with positive comments received on both format and content. In providing their second set of feedback, the SFC suggested a number of further minor additions or amendments, all of which have been addressed.
- The Table of Measures, enclosed as Appendix 1, is defined by the SFC and includes the key metrics against which progress will be measured over the coming year. As with last year, it is again focused on a smaller subset of prioritised metrics relative to the wider Table of Measure in place pre-Covid. Of note, the data to 2020-21 was provided by the SFC via HESA; the data for 2021-22 has been generated internally by the University, where available, and is currently provisional. The student population data for 2022-23 is projected, based on the July 2023 Snapshot 5 and is likewise subject to change; albeit, as above, any changes will likely be marginal rather than significant. Projected figures for 2023/24 are subject to consideration and will follow once data is confirmed for the current year when Snapshot 1 becomes available in October. Some of the figures will not be available until later in the academic year and a note has been provided where this is the case. The table of measures will be updated prior to its submission to the SFC in late October.
- The Self-Evaluation, enclosed as Appendix 2, provides a narrative commentary on the University's performance against the Outcome Agreement agreed with the SFC for 2022-23. It is structured to reflect the guidance and information requested by the SFC for 2022-23 and also includes a summary of performance relative to the previous year, against the measures included in the refined Table of Measures that year.
- The University Innovation Fund (UIF) report, enclosed as Appendix 3, is in a standard format and provides an overview of how the University is focusing and prioritising its knowledge exchange and innovation activities. The UIF report will be subject to amendment prior to submission to the Funding Council; sector-wide discussions on UIF reporting are ongoing with the SFC, which is expected to drive changes to content.
- The submission includes four case studies: two non-research case studies, and two related to research. This is in line with the SFC guidance, noting that the SFC have approved the subject matter for the non-research case studies, as was required; approval was not needed for the subject matter for the research specific case studies.

- Following consideration and approval by Court, the Outcome Agreement documentation will be finalised and submitted to the SFC by their deadline of the 31st of Outcome 2023. Following submission and sign-off by the SFC, the Agreement will be published on the SFC website in the Spring of 2024, along with those developed by all of the other Scottish universities. It will also be made available on the University's website.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer (tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk), Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk), Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning (i.grant@abdn.ac.uk) or Chris Sojka, Strategic Planning Officer (c.sojka@abdn.ac.uk).

19 September 2023

Confidentiality Status: Open



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

OUTCOME AGREEMENT

2023-2024

DRAFT

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DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the University of Aberdeen's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2023-24. It sets out the University's commitments to delivering outcomes prioritised by the Scottish Government via the SFC, relating to Fair Access and Transitions, Quality Learning and Transitions, Coherent Learning Provision, Work-based Learning and Skills, Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response and High-Quality Research and Innovation. The Outcome Agreement also includes an update on the University Innovation Fund plans.

This Outcome Agreement comes at a time when the University, as with the wider sector, focuses not just on furthering its post-pandemic recovery, but on mitigating an on-going cost of living crisis, driven by increases to inflation and rising costs. This document therefore outlines key measures taken by the University in response to these challenging environmental factors across the priority areas identified by the SFC, focusing not least on supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of the University community.

This ethos is underpinned by the University's [Aberdeen 2040 strategy](#) which was launched in February 2020. With its focus on Education and Research, and the four strategic themes of Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable, it sets out 20, high-level commitments to be delivered over the coming years; providing a framework for longer-term contributions to society as every effort is made to collectively navigate these challenging times. In this regard, the University is pleased to note that despite the challenges faced in recent years, its ability to work towards its strategic commitments has remained unchanged; reflected in key measures like the National Student Survey (NSS) where it ranks 2nd in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland for student satisfaction, and also across different league tables, where it currently ranks inside the UK top 20 in two of the primary domestic measures - 13th in the UK in the Guardian University Guide 2023, and 19th in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023.

Taking account of this wider context, this Agreement focuses on how the University will continue to address the key areas and priority outcomes identified by the Scottish Government via the SFC, in line with its own strategic priorities. It covers the following areas:

- Fair Access and Transitions
- Quality Learning and Transitions
- Coherent Learning Provision
- Work-Based Learning and Skills
- Net Zero and Environmental Sustainability Response
- High-quality Research and Innovation
 - Effective use of SFC Core Research grants in AY 2023-24
 - Supporting sustainability and future research excellence
 - Enabling an excellent research environment and positive cultures
- University Innovation Fund (UIF)

It should be noted at the outset that whilst this document focuses primarily on the Scottish context, the strategies, actions, standards and services taken forward and provided by the University to staff and students, are also applied to staff and students studying as part of the University's provision in Qatar, and other TNE initiatives such as the University's partnership with South China Normal University (SCNU), where applicable.

The Table of Measures provided by the SFC is attached as **Appendix 1**. This provides up-to-date data against each measure included by the SFC this year, with projections made against

the relevant measures for 2023-24. The University's Self-Evaluation for the 2022-23 Outcome Agreement is attached as **Appendix 2**. Any queries in relation to this Outcome Agreement or the affiliated documentation should be directed to the University's Director of Planning & Governance or Head of Strategic Planning in the first instance, via planning@abdn.ac.uk.

2. FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

The University of Aberdeen in AY 2023-24 will continue to champion, campaign for and actively support widening access to higher education. The University will do this by:

- Working with external stakeholders such as the Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council and Local Government, to ensure that Widening Access metrics effectively support regional and national ambitions for widening access.
- Reviewing Scottish Government data in relation to the characteristics of secondary schools and their pupils in the local region on a yearly basis, to ensure that the University is informed and agile in its response.
- By continuing to engage proactively with sector-wide organisations, to influence the development of, and the available support for, policy and initiatives to enhance access to, and successful completion of Higher Education.

The University will continue to provide pre-entry support for students from all widening access backgrounds ensuring that they have awareness of the opportunities for access to Higher Education, of the support arrangements available, and of the experience of other students. Some examples of the work that will be undertaken in this area include:

- Enabling the University's Academic Schools, through the innovation and enthusiasm of its staff community, to engage in outreach activities that raise aspirations.
- Continue to implement the University's [Contextualised Admissions Policy](#).
- To further progress opportunities for, and numbers of student progressing through, advanced standing articulation routes with FE partners, by increasing the efficacy of existing routes and exploring new routes, including in response to changes in qualifications frameworks.
- The University recognises Free School Meals (FSM) as one of its contextualised admissions metrics, but in November 2021, it decided to elevate the status of FSM to the same level as SIMD20. This approach better reflects the University's 2040 commitments, its wider commitments to the region, and to wider commitments to regional engagement. In AY 2023-24 the University will continue the implementation of this approach, adapting data capture, reporting lines, and promotional materials, among other measures.
- Continue to expand work to provide prospective students from widening access backgrounds and their supporters with information, advice and guidance to inform choice and support academic success.
- Implement enhanced Bridging Programmes to support access and transition to HE, across a wider range of discipline areas, and to augment the capacity of key initiatives such as Access Aberdeen, Articulate Aberdeen, and Reach (National Schools Programme).
- Work with SFC and stakeholders to develop the new National Schools Programme.

The University will continue to run, develop and evaluate the [Reach Programme](#), part of the National Schools programme funded by the SFC. The Reach Programme provides information, advice and guidance on applying for professional degrees. The programme hosted by the University offers support for Law and Medicine specifically. The project supports

S4-S6 pupils who meet the eligibility criteria, from across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Highlands, Orkney and Shetland.

The University will continue to provide scholarships and other means of support for students for whom tuition fees and other costs of study, direct and indirect, may be a barrier to entry, progression, and success. To do this, the University's Access and Articulation team actively works with the University's Development Trust, and possible providers of external funding, to develop a broad range of financial support for widening access students, including multi-year scholarships, within the framework of Access Aberdeen.

In AY 2023-24 the University will continue to implement its transitions strategy to support and prepare students at different stages of their student journey - from school to university, or from HNC to Year 2 - and for students with different needs, such as student carers. Please see a summary describing some of the activities and support that will be offered below:

- Delivery of an on-campus event for transitioning widening access and articulation students.
- Delivery of the Engineering Transitional Summer School for Advanced Entry Engineering Students.
- Introductory Ecology and Statistics online courses will be delivered for articulating Biological Science Students.

2.1 THE UNIVERSITY'S OUTLINE OF HOW IT SUPPORTS THE SECTOR'S DELIVERY OF THE COWA TARGETS

The University continues in its efforts to meet the sector-wide target of 10% for Scottish-domiciled entrants from the 20% most deprived areas in the country. In 2022-23 provisional data indicates that the University performance in this area dropped slightly from 7.9% to 7.0%. While this means that the University remains short of the overarching SFC target, this result reflects the context in the sector and the region. The majority of SIMD20 students do not live in the North East of Scotland region and the cost-of-living crisis, which started in earnest in AY 2022-23, means that students were less willing to travel for study. The Commissioner for Widening Access has acknowledged that the current SIMD20 metrics applied across Scotland do not meet the needs of the local Aberdeen city and Shire catchment.

Notwithstanding these points, the University continues to work with the SFC to best support the widening access agenda, both locally and nationally, by continuing to enhance entry routes into Higher Education. As already highlighted in this document there are numerous policies to support fair access and transitions, which directly support the delivery of the COWA targets. These include:

- Continued free accommodation to first year SIMD20 students.
- Continued promotion of the Eligibility for Free School Meals alongside SIMD20 as a key widening access measure.
- Contextualised admissions, with applicants meeting widening access criteria guaranteed an adjusted offer.
- Targeted Scholarships.
- Ongoing partnerships and collaborations that work with target learners at schools and colleges through University-funded initiatives.

3. QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING

3.1 QUALITY AND STANDARDS

The University oversees standards of its learning experience through its [Quality Assurance Committee](#) (QAC), which is further developing work to enhance consistency, transparency and sharing of good practice. The relevant University policies and regulations are [mapped](#) to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) [Quality Code](#), and this remains a live process.

In January 2023 the University established an [Academic Policy and Regulations Group](#) (APRG) to have responsibility for the development of new and existing policies and regulations, and for reviewing the mapping of institutional policies to the Quality Code (see above).

In AY 2023-24 the University will continue to complete, embed and reflect on work undertaken as part of the [Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#), particularly working to share practice and disseminate initiatives developed as part of the [Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme](#) (LTEP) projects, and the sector-wide work around [micro credentials](#).

Following the completion of the Enhancement Theme, the Resilient Learning Communities Community of Practice will be repurposed to focus on discussions and practice sharing around “embracing diversity”, which will be a theme around which teaching and learning development work will be focused. This theme was also the focus of the University’s Annual Academic Development symposium which took place in April 2023, and which included substantial student input. Some examples of this input include:

- All of the sessions (with the exception of the Keynote address) at the symposium included contributions from the University’s students, representing all levels of study.
- Students were involved in the Enhancement Projects Showcase, which shared some of the innovative practice which has been funded through the University’s Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme, which also aligned with QAA Scotland’s Enhancement Theme, Resilient Learning Communities.
- Several of the posters which were present at the Symposium involved students including Poster 1 - ‘Enhancing Assessment and Feedback Practices: The Student Wishlist’; 5 - ‘Collaborating with Students to Improve and Raise Awareness of Digital Accessibility’ and 7 - ‘Reasons Behind Contract Cheating: Investigation on students’ views on academic integrity and contract cheating’. All of the posters from the symposium were made available on the University’s website [here](#).

The actions indicated in the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) [report](#) are listed part of a University action plan and work will continue on resolving these actions moving forward in AY 2023-24. These actions specifically relate to external examiner reports and pastoral support provision for postgraduate students. The actions will help to improve student access to external examiner reports and pastoral support for this category of students. Please see a summary describing a selection of actions in the University’s plan below:

- Communications will be issued to external examiners, academic schools and students to ensure that every party has the information that they need to deliver or access the examiner reports.
- Pastoral support for PGT students will be reviewed in order to enhance consistency of provision and enhance student awareness and access to appropriate support networks.

Plans are underway for the next phase of the QESR, with the Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) scheduled for January 2024.

3.2 STUDENT SUPPORT AND WELLBEING

The University is strategically focused on caring for the wellbeing, health and safety of its people – staff and students – and on providing development support to help people achieve their full potential. Examples of initiatives in place for AY 2023-24 include:

- Introduction of a triage-based duty service across student support services enabling same day support across the University's main Student Advice Team. This team provides advice and support to students with additional needs, disabilities and temporary impairments that may require additional support or adjustments within the learning environment.
- Introduction of a 24/7 student helpline that offers all students access to counselling and in the moment support, over and above its own internal counselling services - which operate with no waiting list - to support them through the difficult periods in the student lifecycle.
- The University's Student Support and Experience Committee has been reviewing a range of provisions, post pandemic, with a view to ensuring the University is able to meet the evolving demands of students with disabilities. Further work on this is planned for AY 2023-24, with an aim to simplifying this process and clarifying the options for support.

3.3 STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

The University is committed to ensuring that students are able to contribute to their educational and wider experience through feedback, involvement with strategic initiatives and through committee membership. The following list details some key areas that will be further developed to enhance the opportunities for students to act in this regard:

- Students have been involved in all 21 LTEP projects during the [Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#), and are well represented on the Enhancement Theme Steering Group, Community of Practice and LTEP network.
- Following the positive impact these project experiences have had on [student experiences](#), further LTEP plan to continue to emphasise the importance of students as co-creators on these projects.
- Students will be consulted on key academic issues through their membership of central committees e.g. the [University Education Committee](#) (UEC), and governance structures e.g. [Senate](#), [Court](#)
- Students will continue to be integral to periodic review approaches, e.g. annual feedback cycles, internal teaching reviews.
- Students will continue to be a core part of the teams taking forward Institutional priorities e.g. [decolonising the curriculum](#), academic integrity, [TESTA*](#), National Student Survey engagement.
- Continuing to develop the [Student Partnership Agreement](#) (SPA) and provide annual updates detailing progress.
- Continuing to draw on the student voice from key measures such as the National Student Survey (NSS), and the 22/23 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and review of the Aberdeen Student Experience Surveys. These surveys inform School and Institutional action planning.

The following summary lists some of the key activities and developments that the University has undertaken, is continuing or is about to start as a result of feedback from students that was submitted via the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey, student focus groups or through student engagement in committees:

- Peer support networks are being enhanced so as to include opportunities for all PGT students.
- Changes have been made to the University's Library as a result of feedback from student representatives on the Library Transformation Board; these have included but are not limited to: the introduction of new, different zones in the libraries (silent, quiet, collaborative) to help the community make better use of library spaces.
- The University will continue to offer four to six bite sized sessions to help students develop their digital skills. This is in addition to a digital skills session called Pathways to Success, which helps students to specifically develop digital skills for the workplace.

(*TESTA stands for Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessments. It is a method of reviewing the assessment and feedback practices of a University at a programme-level to identify areas of enhancement and effective practice in higher education. Since its inception, TESTA and its methodologies have been implemented across a wide range of UK universities.)

3.4 ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The University has active plans to continue to enhance the experience of its students, which takes account of the evidence for enhancement. The following are some examples of the work and activities that will either take place during or will continue in AY 2023/24:

- In Phase II of the TESTA pilot, the University is advancing the implementation of the protocol in three additional schools, while also exploring its applicability with postgraduate taught students (PGTs). The evaluation of Phase I has revealed that a majority of the courses involved have made subsequent modifications to their learning outcomes, assessment practices, and feedback methods. By the end of the upcoming year, the University will assess whether these changes have indeed led to an improvement in the overall student experience.
- The University is currently engaged in comprehensive research in collaboration with students, aimed at exploring the topic of academic integrity. Specifically, this research focuses on identifying the barriers and facilitators that influence student engagement with contract cheating services, as well as understanding student attitudes towards the utilisation of generative AI in assessment practices. Both of these studies aim to gain insights into student attitudes and experiences, enabling the university to develop appropriate support and training mechanisms to enhance their overall academic experience.
- Enhanced student monitoring processes allow identification of a lack of engagement with learning and triggers a process by which academic and pastoral support is provided proactively. A review of the approach to monitoring student engagement has been completed which has resulted in significant financial investment to enhance IT services over 2023/24. In addition, regular community of practice meetings brings staff together to ensure that monitoring processes continue to remain effective.
- The University is currently undertaking the [EmilyTest Charter](#) to ensure that students have the best possible environment in which to move forward and be successful following an instance of gender based violence.
- The University will complete its review of the Pastoral Support provision in September 2023, which was conducted to revise existing personal tutoring practices and to ensure that appropriate pastoral support is provided for all students. Pastoral support is now provided to all students (UG/PGT) both on campus (Aberdeen, Qatar and South China Normal University (SCNU)) and for online students. Pastoral support webpages have

been fully revised, and enhanced staff-training is now provided to support staff in their pastoral roles.

4. COHERENT LEARNING PROVISION

The University is committed to the delivery of coherent learning provision that meets the needs of students, industry and other stakeholders.

4.1 ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The University's Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, Enterprise & Innovation Committee and Discipline specific Employer Boards provide an opportunity for the University to engage with relevant external stakeholders to inform both institutional strategy (via Aberdeen 2040) and discipline-level approaches its educational offering, thereby making sure that the University is making informed decisions on the future of our education and industry engagement.

The University's Academic Schools have positive working relationships with industry which help to inform curriculum design and support programme and course delivery. Some examples include:

- The School of Social Science has a long-standing relation with Enterprise Rent a Car regarding one of the Schools undergraduate employability courses. This course has benefitted from an annual stipend from Enterprise Rent a Car, which has been used to fund Belbin self-assessments for students and gives direct linkages between the business and the course delivery team to support delivery of the course's objectives.
- The School of Natural and Computing Sciences periodically collaborates with Arria in the Natural Language Generation course as part of the MSc in Artificial Intelligence. Arria is a leading company in the area of Natural Language Generation, and it contributes with realistic case studies for discussion in the lectures, practical sessions and assessments of the course.
- The School of Education has ongoing partnership with all of the Local Authorities with whom the University places students for School Experience as part of all of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. Meetings are held throughout the year, with colleagues from the Local Authorities, to discuss how the requirements of the placements and the work undertaken whilst on campus is preparing the students for life in the classroom. Staff from the Academic School meet regularly primary and secondary school staff and other relevant stakeholders to seek their input on assessments, courses content and structure. The General Teaching Council of Scotland's re-accreditation process also requires the School of Education to work with stakeholders as the programme is developed and changed as we move forward.

4.2 ENTREPRENEURIAL CAMPUS

With the recent publication of the [Scottish Government's Entrepreneurial Campus Report](#), the University is undertaking work to map its existing activities and to design future provision. This will support the University's ambitions as part of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy while also aligning its activity to the ambitions of the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region and nationally. Collaboration with key partners at regional and national levels will be fundamental.

4.3 REGIONAL LEARNING AND SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

The University is an active member of a group that is working on a new Skills Action Plan for the region, aligned to the new Regional Economic Strategy. The University has attended and

participated in workshops led by Skills Development Scotland that seek to inform this new action plan. Key partners in this work include:

- Tertiary and higher education providers in the Northeast of Scotland (Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, North East Scotland College, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Developing the Young Workforce North East).
- Sector and skills organisations (Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Enterprise, Opportunity North East, Skills Development Scotland, Grampian Regional Equality Council).

The overarching aim of this partnership is to inform regional provision, to identify skills gaps and to provide opportunities for collaboration between key partners for the people and communities in and around Aberdeen and North East of Scotland.

4.4 NE REGIONAL PATHFINDERS PROJECTS

The University continues to participate in the delivery of a series of pilot projects as part of the NE Regional Pathfinder, one of which is being delivered with the National Energy Skills Accelerator ([NESA](#)) to develop an interactive tool to help learners understand the pathways through education providers in the region, into renewable energy roles. Delivery of the prototype is expected in early 2024. The 'Simulation-Based Education' Pathfinder pilot project is progressing an exercise to map the relevant health and social-care simulation resources available in the NE of Scotland. It is also developing a better understanding of the unmet needs and challenges surrounding access to such technologies to support training and education.

4.5 CURRICULUM PLANNING & COHERENT LEARNING PROVISION

The University's planning process for academic programme commissioning and portfolio management is responsive, flexible and informed by local, regional and national developments and needs. Academic Schools when developing new programmes and making amendments to the other degrees in their portfolio, consult with and are informed by their Employer Boards, the Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, the Enterprise & Innovation Committee and their own extensive networks to ensure that their curriculum offer meets the needs of key stakeholders and skills demands. The University's Marketing team also work with the Academic Schools to ensure that academic programmes meet the needs and demands of the many different markets served by the University.

The University's Academic Schools receive regular updates with data and intelligence, from a variety of sources, which then inform their curriculum planning process. For example, the University's Academic School regularly commission marketing and feasibility reports from a range of companies and organisations and these then feed into the academic curriculum planning process. The University also works with national professional bodies, many of whom accredit some of the degrees offered by the University, to ensure that the University's academic offering is up to date and meeting the requirements of industry. The University's actively attends conferences and local industry events (e.g., Offshore Europe) to network, form new partnerships and open new pathways of communication with stakeholders. The University sends a variety of staff, and where appropriate students, to attend conferences and events. For example, academics attend conferences where they can learn about the latest developments in their subject areas and often how they relate to industry and other national or regional needs. These insights can then inform their teaching. Members of professional services staff, who are involved in curriculum planning, development and implementation regularly attend events where they can learn firsthand about what sort of skills are required by different sectors.

In AY 2023-24 The University will continue, as part of its commitment to the Pathfinders Programme, to actively work as part of a small group of Scottish HEIs and the SFC to build on the wider sectors understanding of the curriculum planning process and how it contributes to Coherent Learning Provision. As part of this endeavour the University will share good practice on curriculum planning and employer engagement.

5. WORK-BASED LEARNING AND SKILLS

The University is committed to providing quality work-based learning (WBL) provision and skills development opportunities.

5.1 WORK BASED LEARNING (WBL)

The University's Aberdeen 2040 strategy Education commitment states: *"We will provide more work-based learning, through placements and volunteering"*. Subsequent to the launch of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy, the University has now agreed an institutional vision that: *"All undergraduate and postgraduate taught University of Aberdeen students will have the option to gain experience via a flexible menu of work-based and work-related learning opportunities."*

A five-year plan is now being actively implemented to deliver this vision. This plan will enable the University to establish the infrastructure, systems, and processes to manage the upscaling of work-based learning delivery. The University is currently working on the development of an Experiential Learning Platform to facilitate WBL delivery from September 2024.

In addition, a work-based learning hub is being established by the University to centrally provide the staff resource required to support the growth of WBL. The following are some examples of work and activities already in place to support students with work-based learning and skills:

- Placements are currently available in the curriculum within a range of disciplines, such as Psychology, Computing Science, Biological Science, Museum Studies and Medical Sciences, and range from shorter placements for one semester, up to one-year placements.
- Work-based projects as a credit-bearing alternative to a dissertation or research is already an option in some PGT programmes, and is being considered within some UG programmes, including from the Business School and the School of Engineering.
- Work-related learning, taken as a credit-bearing course, is available to a range of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Developing more employer-led projects in courses is a current priority as an effective and accessible way to scale up engagement.
- A wide range of co-curricular part-time term and full-time vacation internship programmes and opportunities are being developed to enable greater numbers of students to gain valuable experience alongside their studies. Established programmes include the Third Sector Internships programmes, support by the Wood Foundation, the Aberdeen internship and Intern+ programmes and the Virtual Summer Team Internships programme.

5.2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

As detailed in section 4.1 the University, through the aforementioned Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, Enterprise & Innovation Committee and Discipline-specific Employer boards engages with the relevant external stakeholders to inform both institutional strategy (via Aberdeen 2040) and discipline-level approaches to its educational offering, thereby making sure that the University is making informed decisions on the future of its education and industry engagement, and that its students will have the skills that they need.

In addition, as detailed in section 4.3 the University is also, through the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, working on a new Skills Action Plan for the region, which will be aligned to the Regional Economic Strategy.

In AY 2023/24 the University will continue to develop its portfolio of skills-based learning opportunities. Please see the summary of key points and information related to this area of work below:

- In AY 2022/23 the University offered a total of 592 fee waivers with 560 registrations across 50 short courses.
- The University has seen an increase in the demand for courses in meta skills and as such will be working to create additional capacity in this area. Four new short courses focussing on leadership skills and change management will be launched in AY 2023-24 in response to feedback from applicants and discussions with industry partners.
- The University will continue to develop its short course route to full programme study option. This route allows students without the typical entry requirements to take two short courses to prove their capability of attaining a degree at Masters level. On successful completion of 30 credits, students can apply for a transfer to a suitable Masters programme. More of these opportunities are due to come on stream in the next academic year.
- Related to the point above, AY 2023-24 will also see the launch of the University's degree scheduler software. This will allow students to build their degrees to suit their requirements using flexible course options.
- In AY 2023-24 the University will have an increased focus on supporting skills gaps in the Energy industry through its work with the National Energy Skills Accelerator ([NESA](#)). This work will see a minimum of 135 fee waivers in short courses in various topics including engineering, leadership and project management.

The University continues to be involved in a wide range of regional groups allowing the University to respond to the current and prospective skills needs of all individuals at a regional level. The University's collaborative partnership under the National Energy Skills Accelerator ([NESA](#)) continues, and Academic Year 2023/24 will see two phases of provision delivered utilising the [Just Transition Funding](#) (JTF) that [NESA](#) is in receipt of, to respond to the skills demand required in the region as the North East transitions to renewable energies. As the project has progressed, each partner institution has been allocated a proportion of the JTF award to deliver relevant upskilling and reskilling provision to address the outcomes and recommendations from the project which have been formed following significant engagement with the energy industry. The initial outcomes and recommendations informed phase one delivery, with the final report due in the late autumn of 2023.

As referenced in the Coherent Learning Provision section, the University continues to participate in the delivery of a series of pilot projects as part of the NE Regional Pathfinder. Ongoing participation in the Pathfinder projects will give the University, through interactions with employers and other stakeholders, a better understanding off the skills needs of the region, which in turn will be reflected in the University's curriculum offer.

6. NET ZERO AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY RESPONSE

6.1 CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The University is committed to achieving Net zero, sustainability and responding to the Climate Emergency. This is reflected in the University Aberdeen 2040 strategy in which *Sustainable* is

a key strand. The following list of actions, activities and work, which will be delivered throughout AY 2023-24 and some cases beyond, will help the University to meet these commitments.

- In support of the University's 'whole institution' approach to sustainability, a Net Zero strategy with associated targets is currently being developed. The aim is to complete this strategy by end of calendar year 2023 (Please see section 6.2 for more info).
- The University is currently developing a staff training module to provide baseline sustainability learning for all categories of staff. This training module should be delivered by late 2023.
- Establishment of a programme of climate assemblies to engage the University's community in co-creating responses to sustainability challenges. This will be an ongoing programme of one assembly per semester.
- The University will continue to prioritise its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including through participation in the [Times Higher Education Impact Rankings](#) and the publication of a stand-alone [SDG report](#).
- As part of the journey to reducing the University's energy related emissions, a number of projects and programmes are underway. A Sustainable Heating Programme Board has been established to consider immediate and longer-term approaches to the eventual decarbonisation of heat sources. The University has also initiated a rolling programme of heat centre upgrades for this year and next that will improve the level of heating control it has across its facilities and will help prepare the institution's heat distribution network for a lower temperature future.
- In conjunction with the programme described in the point above, the University has endorsed a programme of energy saving measures that consist of behavioural, policy and control measures designed to assist with energy management, reduced demand and support behaviour change.
- The district heating network upgrade at the University's Hillhead student village is ongoing, with funding partially provided via the Scottish Funding Council's Financial Transactions scheme. This upgrade work will improve the stability of the network, whilst also preparing the site for the transition to a low carbon heat source, as part of our long-term heat decarbonisation ambition.

The University's approach to the aforementioned UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the wider embedding of sustainability thinking on its campuses continues to evolve. As well as compiling the annual SDG Reports and being assessed as part of the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking, other key indicators include:

- Routine mapping of research outputs against the SDGs.
- Embedding of active citizenship and sustainability as core component of the emerging graduate attributes framework.
- Initial assessment of the curriculum to reflect sustainability and SDG-related content.

6.2 NET ZERO STRATEGY

The University, as an integral part of its Aberdeen 2040 strategy, is committed to reaching Net Zero. To articulate this ambition fully, the University has established a Net Zero Strategies and Targets Working Group to lead the development of its Net Zero Strategy. The strategy will include decarbonisation pathways and associated targets across several key activities and emission sources including decarbonised heat, sustainable laboratories, biodiversity, behaviour change, sustainable IT, and sustainable procurement among others. Although a major undertaking, the Group aims to have this work complete by the end of 2023.

The University's Net Zero Strategies and Targets Working Group has also developed an improved reporting baseline, endorsed an approach that utilises a Science Based Targets methodology and is currently developing the pathways linking these to the relevant SDGs. As part of an effort to enhance the University's understanding of the breadth and scale of Scope 2 emission, AY 2022/23 saw it incorporate additional Scope 3 emissions in its Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) report for the first time. The University has taken steps to further develop its understanding of Scope 3 emissions sources through a successful internship that saw the University develop a calculation methodology for the emissions associated with domestic and international student travel to study. This tool has enabled the University to understand its emissions from this source but has also been developed as a sector-wide tool that is being promoted via the EAUC and is now [available](#) for all institutions to use.

In conjunction with the Net Zero strategy, the University has begun to populate a 'live' Net Zero Project Register to identify all types of intervention to assist in its decarbonisation journey. Initially focussing on energy and estates related projects, the register aims to provide details of possible projects, as well as criteria for prioritisation.

As part of the University's shift towards longer term Net Zero thinking, and to reflect changes in reporting expectations, AY 2022-23 has seen the institution enhance its understanding of Scope 3 emissions. For our AY 2021-22 PBCCD report the University included Procurement emissions for the first time and, following developments this year, the institution will further enhance its AY 2022-23 report with evidence-based estimations of other travel related emissions, notably staff and student commuting and student travel to study in Aberdeen.

The University has also taken the opportunity to retrospectively reviews its AY 2015-16 emissions baseline. As reported via PBBCD in 2016-17, our 2015-16 baseline at that time consisted of 31,520 tCO₂e emissions i.e., Scope 1 = 13,095 tCO₂e, Scope 2 = 12,568 tCO₂e, and Scope 3 = 5,958 tCO₂e. Those Scope 3 totals included business travel and waste emissions, with business travel accounting for 5,705 tCO₂e of the Scope 3 total.

With an improved understanding of methodology and the retrospective additions and correction of emissions associated with other Scope 3 categories, the University now estimates that our AY 2015-16 baseline consisted of some 92,556 tCO₂e (i.e., Scope 1 = 13,332 tCO₂e, Scope 2 = 11,319 tCO₂e, Scope 3 = 67,905 tCO₂e). This considerable increase in Scope 3 emissions reflects the addition of significant volumes of emissions associated with procurement, staff and student commuting, and domestic & international student travel to study. The University's full Public Bodies emissions reporting is available on here, on its [website](#).

7. HIGH-QUALITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

7.1 EFFECTIVE USE OF SFC CORE RESEARCH GRANTS IN AY 2023-24

Internal Research Excellence Grant (REG) allocations are generated by the University using the SFC funding formula and weighting and then passed onto the relevant Academic Schools. There is a pro rata 'charge' to the Academic Schools for central support provision. REG supports the following, among other work and activities:

At the Academic School level:

- Contribution to staff costs.
- Academic School managed funds for conference attendance, networking, travel, pump priming, open access and more.

- Academic School managed funds for research leave (this varies among the different Schools).
- Co-funding for external research grants where required and postgraduate research studentships.
- Research facilities.
- Support for Early Career researchers and new academic appointments.

At the institutional level:

- Support for interdisciplinary themes, leaders, research fellows and studentships, as part of the University's investment in research capacity and sustainability of the research base.
- Research excellence – pump priming, support for research pilots, idea generation, grant writing, impact support, internal and external review of research outputs.
- Researcher development, EDI monitoring, focused interventions in line with identified development needs.
- Central funds for research leave (up to 100 x 6 months sabbaticals each year), visiting scholar scheme, conference and networking funds; part of a major investment programme in research and impact quality.
- Implementation of concordats and voluntary instruments, including the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).
- Open access/dissemination infrastructure and processes; Aberdeen University Press.
- Research ethics and governance; compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements.

7.2 UTILIZATION OF THE RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE GRANT IN AY 2023-24.

In AY 2023-24 the entirety of the Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) will be allocated by the University to individual Academic Schools (pro rata based on PGR numbers and weighted by discipline). Each of the University's Academic Schools will define the activities to which the funding contributes. The funding will provide support for a wide range of activities including co-funding/contribution to full the economic costs for National Graduate Schools and Doctoral Training Partnerships; discipline-specific and interdisciplinary postgraduate researcher (PGR) training; PGR professional development and employability activities; contributions to institutional doctoral and research development infrastructure and individual PGR studentship awards.

7.3 SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

The University is committed to sustainable growth of research capacity and research income. Some of the ways in which the University will take forward this commitment in AY 2023-24 are as follows:

- **Focus on quality** – early intervention and peer support in the research cycle, co-creation and stakeholder engagement to facilitate impact, support for domestic and international collaborations and networking.
- **Grow a health portfolio of research income** – applications and grant support for a diversified portfolio, provision of co-funding where required.
- **Ensuring time to focus on research** – School and institutional research leave schemes, review of workload model and implementation of newly agreed promotions criteria.
- **Open and inclusive research culture** – focused support for researchers who are female, part-time, of ethnic minority background, early and mid-career, as indicated by analyses of research outcomes and REF Equality Impact Assessments. Strengthening of support for academic leadership through initiatives around responsible research & innovation and responsible leadership in research. Complete implementation of new open access

processes; continued participation in UK the Reproducibility network and monitoring of the DORA implantation.

- **Increased support for researchers at key transition stages (PGR, early-careers, mid-career)** – provision of career stage specific development initiatives that ensure individuals are enabled and prepared to move to the next stage of their career and ensuring researcher skills meet funder, user and employer expectations.
- **Review and revise governance structures to support culture change:** through review and development of policy and process to embed open and inclusive culture aspirations.

7.4 ENABLING AN EXCELLENT RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND POSITIVE CULTURES

In AY 2023-24 the University will continue the work and activities which are designed to enable an excellent research environment and positive research culture within the institution. Please see some information on examples of related work below:

Implementation of the recommendations of the Research Culture Task and Finish Group: The University has established an oversight group to monitor the implementation of its Research Culture Task and Finish Group and to ensure that this work complements the measures in place under other Concordats. The monitoring includes representatives from a variety of professional backgrounds and at various career stages. The recommendations are being implemented alongside the actions to which we have committed under the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and those of the University's HR Excellence Plan.

Increased engagement with research stakeholders through the University's Enterprise and Innovations Networks: The University is focusing on increased engagement with research stakeholders through its Enterprise and Innovations networks, working through the Vice Principal for Regional Engagement and the newly appointed Dean for Enterprise and Innovation. The University has changed its promotions criteria to reward engagement and impact related work and is looking to increase co-creation of research and the larger variety of outputs that this may create. Where, appropriate, the University is encouraging the use of CREDIT and SCOPE Guidelines to ensure that contributions to research outputs by all levels and variety of staff are properly recognised. The University continues to be an active member of the UK Reproducibility Network.

Revised open access processes: The University's revised open access processes enable researchers to retain the rights to their work and to make it publicly accessible in our repository from the point of publication. The University will be promoting open access pathways and monitor the open access compliance for longer form outputs.

Pan-Scotland Research Culture Network: The University will be participating in the nascent pan-Scotland Research Culture Network to share good practice and resources with others in the sector.

7.5 RESEARCH GOVERNANCE & INTEGRITY AND CONCORDATS

The following is a link to University Court on Research Governance and Integrity. This report contains updates on the University's research concordat commitments:

[Annual Research Gov Statement 2122.pdf \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)

The annual report for AY 2022-23 will be published once it has been approved by University Court later in the year.

8. UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND (UIF)

Please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the University Innovation Plan.

DRAFT

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	Actual								Provisional	Projected
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
A	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants									
B	Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes									
		139	197	211	212	185	130	284	TBC	
	Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing									
		15	25	37	51	71	62	126	TBC	
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing									
		10.8%	12.7%	17.5%	24.1%	38.4%	47.7%	44.4%	TBC	
C	COWA measure: Full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes									
	COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes									
	77	57	80	72	60	124	116	152	126	
	COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes									
	5.3%	4.3%	5.1%	6.0%	4.4%	8.6%	7.9%	7.9%	7%	
D	Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants with Care Experience									
	Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience									
	3	10	22	11	26	20	21	19	20	
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience									
	0.2%	0.7%	1.3%	0.8%	1.8%	1.3%	1.3%	0.9%	1.10%	
E1	Retention - Full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) returning to study in year two									
	Total number of full-time first year SDUE									
	1,055	1,422	1,317	1,549	1,190	1,410	1,460	1,484	TBC	
	Number of full-time first year SDUE retained									
	981	1,332	1,249	1,473	1,138	1,326	1,423	1,429	TBC	
	Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained									
	93.0%	93.7%	94.8%	95.1%	95.6%	94.0%	97.5%	96.3%	TBC	
E2	Retention - Full time first year SDUE from SIMD 0-40 retained									
	Total number of full-time first year SDUE from SIMD0-40									
	151	218	195	243	205	222	254	260	TBC	
	Number of full time first year SDUE from SIMD 0-40 retained									
	135	193	179	212	196	202	246	248	TBC	
E3	Retention - Full time first year care-experienced students retained									
	Total number of full-time first year SDUE that are care-experienced									
	1	2	10	20	9	28	20	21	TBC	
	Number of full time first year SDUE that are care-experienced retained									
	1	2	10	20	9	28	19	21	TBC	
F	Satisfaction - The % of students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey									
	The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey									
	0	1	0	1	1.91	2.79	7.51	5.54	6.1	
G1	Graduate Outcomes - Graduates entering positive destinations									
	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	687	726	832	678			
	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	656	680	799	635			
	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.5%	93.7%	96.0%	93.7%			
G2	Graduate Outcomes - Respondents who are working in professional occupations									
	The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	506	536	628	510			
	The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	355	376	431	369			
	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above									
	N/A	N/A	N/A	70.2%	70.1%	68.6%	72.4%			
H	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers									
	1,411	1,588	1,110	1,309	1,329	1,524	1,234	1,366	TBC	
I	Current total greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) - estimated or actual baseline emissions, scope 1 emissions total, scope 2 emissions total, and scope 3 business travel total.									
	Scope 1 (tCO2E)									
		13,094.67	12,957.79	12,577.78	10,373.10	10,085.30	10,082.46	10,200.14	TBC	N/A
	Scope 2 (tCO2E)									
		12,467.96	10,275.94	7,540.02	6,766.65	7,658.70	5,578.85	3,594.97	TBC	N/A
	Scope 3 (tCO2E)									
		5,957.53	4,754.81	4,337.21	4,192.01	2,994.40	1,330.57	36,668.26	TBC	N/A
	Total (tCO2E)									
		31,520.16	27,988.54	24,455.01	21,331.76	20,738.40	16,991.88	50,463.37	TBC	N/A

* The actual data for 2014-15 to 2021-22 is provided by the SFC via HESA.

* The actual data for 2022-23 is internal data generated by the University where it is available (aside from the NSS data which is provided externally) and is currently classed as provisional. This means the figures here are subject to change, though any change would likely be minor.

* Please note that 2018-19 and 2019-20 figures for measures G1 and G2, 2019-20 figures for measures F and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years

* Please note that the 2022-23 figures for measure I are not available yet. It is not possible to project figures for 2023-24 for measure I.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

2023-2024 Outcome Agreement

Outcome and Impact Framework 2022-2023 Self Evaluation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The University of Aberdeen's 2022-23 Outcome Agreement outlines its commitment to fair access, quality education, student support, improved participation, equal opportunities, impactful learning, sustainable research and collaboration. It also highlights the University's role in economic recovery, addressing the climate emergency, producing job-ready graduates and fostering knowledge exchange. The 2022/23 self-evaluation report is structured into the following sections:

- **Section 1:** Introduction
- **Section 2:** Statistical performance data for AY 2022-23
- **Section 3:** Key actions and initiatives
- **Section 4:** How the University's learning and teaching strategies are adapting to the opportunities and challenges of digital and blended learning
- **Section 5:** Early mitigations to address challenges moving into AY 2023-24
- **Section 6:** Utilisation and impact of additional in-year funding from the SFC.

Appendix 1 provides a copy of the National Table of Measures provided by the SFC, with 2022-23 data supplied by the University using internal data where it is available. This data is still projected and may be subject to change.

It should be further noted that any data for AY 2022-23 referred to in this report relating to the student population will also be subject to change; The current data are based on a snapshot generated in July 2023.

2.0 AVAILABLE STATISTICAL/ PERFORMANCE DATA FOR AY 2022-2023

2.1 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED UNDERGRADUATE ENTRANTS

The University recruited a total of **1881** Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2022/23, based on internal data. The number of Scottish-Domiciled Undergraduate entrants for 2021/22 was **2013**. The current data from the provisional July 2023 snapshot show a decrease in the number of students by **132** students. This represents a proportional decrease by **6.5%** since 2021/22. Even though we are not entirely certain on the factors that contributed to this reduction in numbers, we hypothesise that geographical reasons, the cost-of-living crisis and emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic could be some of them.

2.2 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED HN ENTRANTS FROM SCOTTISH COLLEGES TO UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES (ADVANCED STANDING/ ARTICULATION)

At the current time, the University does not have internal data to confirm the number of students articulating from college with advanced standing in 2022-23 as official data has not yet been published. However, it should be noted that the University continues in its efforts to maximise the number of articulating students who transition with advanced standing, viewing this as a priority area under the wider widening access agenda. For 2022-23, the target set was 46%, marginally higher than the 2021-22 of 44.4%. Information

on current and planned future initiatives is also provided in this year's Outcome Agreement.

2.3 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED FULL-TIME DEGREE ENTRANTS FROM THE 20% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS

Internal provisional data indicated the number of Scottish-domiciled full-time degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland (CoWA measure) dropped to **126** in 2022-23 (**7.0%**) (July snapshot) from **151** in 2021-22 (**7.9%**) of total SDUEs. This represents a fractional decrease in proportion compared with the previous year, though, in actual terms, this indicates reduction in the number of SIMD20 students in 2022-23 by **25 students**. While there is no clear reason evident for this decline, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, along with other geographical factors like the University's location and associated demographics, are likely to be having an impact on prospective students who may be reluctant to travel north; noting the majority of SIMD20 student nationwide reside in and around the central belt. Indeed this decline comes despite the University continuing to put significant effort into achieving the sector-wide target of 10% for SIMD20 recruitment including the offer of free accommodation. However, as acknowledged by the Commissioner for Widening Access, there are particular demographic challenges in the north-east of Scotland which make it difficult for local universities to achieve this target, thereby recognising this may not be the most appropriate measure for the region.

2.4 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED UNDERGRADUATE ENTRANTS WITH CARE EXPERIENCE (CARE-EXPERIENCED)

Internal data indicates that the number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience increased slightly to **20** in 2022-23 comprising **1.1%** of the total SDUEs. This is slightly higher than 2021-22 where the number was **19** and the proportion was **0.9%** and exceeds the targets set out in the OA for AY 2022-23 (**19** students, **0.9%**).

The University, as a committed Corporate Parent, will continue to offer access opportunities and support to care experienced applicants and offer holders. All **20** new care experienced entrants are supported by the University in line with its duties as a Corporate Parent, in addition to other care experienced students who are not normally Scottish-domiciled.

2.5 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED FIRST YEAR ENTRANTS/ RETURNING TO STUDY IN YEAR 2

Numbers to be confirmed in December.

The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in AY 2021/22 were 1760 from a population of 1925, equating to 91.4%. This represents a decrease in the percentage of students retained in comparison to the year before, 95.0% in 2020/21, but it represents an increase in actual numbers as to the total number of Scottish-domiciled first year entrants returning to study in year 2 by 349 students.

2.6 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS)

The University is pleased to report another very positive result in the 2023 National Student Survey, published in August 2023. In terms of performance against the SFC metric, which focuses on the percentage of students satisfied with the overall quality of their course, the University sits at 6.1 percentage points above the benchmark value, and in turn, above its own target figure of 4. More broadly, the University ranked 2nd across all devolved nations

(Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) under the same measure, and 10th UK wide for average positive response across all questions (excluding Student Union question).

2.7 GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Based on the latest set of Graduate Outcomes Survey results, released in August 2023, covered qualifiers who completed their studies during or at the end of AY 2020-21, 93.7% of Scottish domiciled qualifiers from the University were either employed or in further study within 15 months of completion. Added to this, a total of 72.4% of Scottish domiciled students were employed at 'Professional' level or above; meaning graduate level positions. This is an increase from the previous year, up from 68.6%, representing positive progression for the University.

2.8 NUMBER OF SCOTTISH-DOMICILED UNDERGRADUATE QUALIFIERS

The numbers of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers will be provided in October 2023 as agreed with the Department of Planning and Governance. The results are still being processed.

3.0 REPORTING ON KEY ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES

This section of the report provides an overview of progress made by the University in delivering key initiatives set out in the 2022-23 Outcome Agreement. Each of the following sub-sections provides examples of work progressed; more information is available upon request.

3.1 OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS (2022-2023)

3.1.1 FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS 2022-23

The University is fully committed to providing fair access to students from all backgrounds including students from deprived areas and care-experienced students. In the last year the University provided the following support:

- Continued development and deployment of **contextualised admissions and advanced standing articulation routes** to enhance access to university study.
- Partnership with others under the umbrella of **SFC's National Schools Engagement Programme** to encourage pupils to pursue access to higher education.
- Provision of **scholarships to students for whom financial difficulties can impair access** and progression to HE. This includes the continuation of free accommodation to UG SIMD20 students.
- **Pre-entry support**, where applicants can receive tailored support with aspects of entry to HE (e.g. funding, accommodation, and so forth)
- **Offer of Admission**, where the University provides a guaranteed offer of admission to applicants who meet the minimum entry requirements (Contextualised admissions and access threshold policy)
- **Accommodation**: The University offers year-round accommodation to care-experienced students. These students can also apply for the University's Rental Guarantor Scheme should they wish to rent from a private landlord.
- **Financial Assistance**: The University provides a range of scholarship opportunities for which the students can apply for.

- **Transition support:** Access to bespoke, online transition courses developed to help boost confidence when starting at the University.
- **Advice and support office:** Care-experienced students have access to the University's support and advice office, which can offer impartial and confidential advice and support on a range of issues.

Prior learning is considered, and entrants are supported by Articulate Aberdeen while the University is also engaging with the SQA on their "Next generation HN" programme. Additionally, a third year of Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTPE) funding helped enhance resilience of Advanced Entry (AE) students building on previous work. Feedback from students who chose not to enter University is in the process of being gathered in order to help inform strategies on how to provide better support.

Finally, a "Transitions" strategy for students that aims to support and prepare students at different stages of their student journey and for different needs, has been implemented, as well as a new Finding guide which has been well received.

The University continually strives to develop bridging programmes to enhance access and transition to HE. So far a bridging programme for Biology has been implemented and programmes for Engineering and Arts will become available in the next AY (2023-24). The University's digital systems are in the process of being adjusted to ensure capturing of FSM (Free School Meal) data. Despite delays due to staffing issues, the project has now moved to its second aspect.

3.1.2 HIGH QUALITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT.

The University took forward all the goals set out in AY 2022-23 for this area, and the following examples are evidence of the work that was undertaken.

- 21 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) projects were involved in the work around Resilient Learning Communities.
- Staff are supported towards development of high-quality learning and teaching with courses such as: Micro credentials short-course- Enhancing your teaching for 2023-24, and Principles of learning and teaching in higher education.

The University also proactively supports student mental health and well-being and has taken forward every goal set out in last year's OA.

- There were over 185 staff trained in the [Emily Test Risk](#) Assessment Training and the University is aiming to upskill an additional 350. The [Emily Test Risk](#) Assessment toolkit and a subsequent training programme aim to equip all staff with the skills to respond safely and responsibly to students disclosing Gender Based Violence.
- A new Student Support Adviser was recently appointed to deal with complex cases and to support students in crisis.
- An additional Student Support Manager has been appointed to enhance existing delivery of objectives.
- Members of our Counselling Service have undertaken specialist training in offering trauma informed care and there are also counsellors available to support students in Mandarin and Cantonese.
- The University has committed to the support of the student helpline app for a minimum of two more years. The app also supports promotion of Mental health awareness week.

3.1.3 PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The University continues to identify opportunities to strengthen partnership between student bodies and institutional leadership teams. Some examples are outlined below:

- The Events and Engagement working group has revised its remit, composition, and operations to provide greater opportunity for staff and students to collaborate more freely.
- The Library Transformation Board includes student representation both on the board and in its focus groups, to inform and prioritise improvements which align with the needs of the student body.
- Student members from outside our Students' Union have a role on the institutional Student Support and Experience Committee and the Addressing GBV and Sexual Harassment Strategy Group to ensure we are able to seek as broad a range of opinions and input as possible. We also engage directly with specific student groups or Societies where specific issues are being discussed and actively engage with liberations forums (such as the Disability Forum) on issues linked to student experience.

Below are some examples of what the University of Aberdeen has done in response to feedback submitted in the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey, student focus groups and student engagement in groups and committees.

- Enhancement of the peer support system, widening it to include PGT students.
- Improvement of communication with students, enhancement of website and social media; Content of the student newsletter is more tailored to type, year and school of study. We have seen the opening rate increase from 16% to 45% over the past 3 years.
- Some of the recommendations that are taken forward during the library transformation include introduction of zones based on floors rather than having a mix of spaces in a single floor; providing spaces to enable independent study and offer a level of privacy; introduce enclosed spaces where conversations can take place; create designated wellbeing spaces.
- Update the current PGR information skills' programme in collaboration with SLS. New sessions have been introduced for copyright and Academic Integrity.
- Developed a digital skills' session for the Pathway to Success to develop digital skills for the workplace and supporting the employability agenda.
- Improved access to free period products across campus.
- Implemented Grab and Go Mindful menus to support students through the cost-of-living crisis.

3.1.3 LEARNING WITH IMPACT

The University is continuing to implement its objectives from last year's Outcome Agreement. Below, are a few examples work taken forward.

- Enhancement of assessment and feedback has been supported by the Annual Academic Development Symposium, the establishment of the "Turnitin Authorship and Academic Integrity" Task and Finish group and multiple discussion panels organised for staff, with particular focus on Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence.
- All students are introduced to the importance of career and skills planning via a prescribed online 0-credit course, enabling students to make informed career and

skills development plans during their studies. 83% of undergraduate students and 91% of taught postgraduate students completed the course in 2022/23.

- 6972 employer opportunities were advertised in 2022-2023. These included part-time jobs, volunteering, internship, and placement opportunities, and opportunities for graduate positions.

Furthermore, the University is committed to ensuring there are appropriate support arrangements in place for the graduating cohort. Some examples are included below:

- The ABDN Grad Challenge Programme, which gives graduating students the opportunity to work in teams in a virtual professional environment to solve employer-led challenges.
- The ABDN Connect Experience Programme, which provides a development pathway for students to reflect on their skills development while undertaking an activity such as part-time work, internships, or volunteering.

The University is ensuring the curriculum and pedagogical offer remains fit for purpose and is responsive to changed needs and demand by:

- Maintaining discipline-specific Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) and an Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and to facilitate sharing of best practices.
- Prioritizing employability and graduate outcomes through various initiatives such as expanding placement and work-based learning opportunities, establishing a Skills Recognition Framework for Aberdeen 2040, and fostering partnerships with regional employers.
- Notably, the University recently organised a Life Sciences Careers Fair as part of its efforts to strengthen connections with industry.

The University is working to create a pipeline of appropriately skilled people for the labour market.

- 375 employer and employability events were advertised in 2022-23, and 2355 places booked by students; noting some events do not require bookings so the actual number will be higher.
- The Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills Framework workstream continues with work being partially delayed from the planned roll out in academic year 2023-24 due to delays in budgetary approvals. Development work has not stopped on this project with two current phases of work ongoing to develop the digital system to support delivery of the Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills.

3.1.4 EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

The University reviewed its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy as well as its Religion and Belief Policy in 2022-23. The implementation plans involve raising awareness of the University's Diversity Calendar. It has also launched a Neurodiversity Policy and a Menopause Policy where more than 175 members of staff have already been trained on. Last year the University conducted its first Race, Equality Charter Staff and Student Survey and more than 80% of students from white as well as racialised groups would recommend the University to a prospective student.

The University has also established an Antiracism Roundtable with local stakeholders to identify where action could support anti-racist work. The Confidential Online Reporting Tool was reviewed and updated. More sources of third-party support have been added and data from these reports are continually collected and analysed to identify trends. Finally, an internally designed, monitoring system was launched to aid the Senior Management Team in reviewing progress and identifying whether further action is needed.

3.2 OUTCOMES FOR RESEARCH

3.2.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Institutions produce excellent research outputs.

The REF eligible population of the University has increased by 6% since the census date for REF2021. Eleven interdisciplinary research fellows have been recruited to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration. A significant increase in overall value of research applications by 18.5% has been seen and several million pounds have been awarded so far. Web of Science outputs assigned to more than one research areas, used as a proxy of interdisciplinary outputs, increased by 4% in the last year.

The focus has been on quality of research by offering training sessions on how to achieve international excellence in research. Research income in 2021/22 increased by 10% compared to the year before and is expected to increase by around 8% in 2022/23. It represents an increase of research income per REF-eligible FTE from £67.2k to £74.4k. Workload review has been ongoing in Schools to address workload issues and a new programme was launched for all REF-eligible researchers which aims to provide 100 researchers per year with a sabbatical of up to six months to focus on excellent research. The University is focusing on applying measures to address gender and ethnicity gaps in performance in mid-career stages. The University has relaunched Aberdeen University Press as an open access press and has launched a rights retention policy to enable open access to our research outputs. Open access compliance for journal articles has increased from 70% in 2022 to 72% in 2023 (year to date).

Research Culture/ Environment

A Research Culture Oversight Group has now been formed, to ensure a co-ordinated and aligned approach to improving research culture across the University. The Concordat Steering group formulated a series of high-level principles to underpin implementation and covered: the expectation of support for postdocs to reach research independence, the 10 days' development time pro rata, expectations around mentorship, promotions process and criteria, postdoc membership on School and University committees, and postdoc eligibility for University Pump Priming funds.

In 22/23, the University implemented a programme of training for researchers on impact from research. This training was largely delivered by external experts and was discipline specific. Work in this area has been assisted by the appointment of Impact Champions within many of the University's academic schools.

3.2.2 RESEARCH SUSTAINABILITY

As part of the Promotions Review, a change of title for Grade 7 research staff, from 'Research Fellow' to 'Advanced Research Fellow', acknowledging the accumulation of

experience relative to Grade 6 researchers and facilitates clarity on the requirements for progression from Grade 6 to 7. Pump priming fund eligibility has been expanded to include all research active staff – hence Research Fellows and Advanced Research fellows (no longer REF eligible only staff) are able to apply for funding to support a broad range of professional development activities.

This year's development week delivered a series of workshops to support Early Career Researchers as they make these transitions and provided opportunities to explore a range of career paths and for 1-2-1 coaching sessions to support developing a career strategy. Additional funding was provided to support covid recovery of PhD activity. To date, 9 awards (4 SBS, 2 Geo; 3 MMSN) totalling £30,580 have been allocated to PGRs who continue to experience disruptions to research activity (e.g., fieldwork) as a result of covid restrictions applied in 2021. Finally, the University has adopted a whole person approach to assess candidates' readiness for PhD study considering their life experiences, personal achievements and challenges in addition to the traditional assessment of academic achievements. The University is still working on reviewing and strengthening academic mentoring at all career stages.

3.3 OUTCOMES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL

3.3.1 RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

A range of co-curricular programmes which ran during 2022-23, including Career Mentoring Programme (145 students), the BP Student Tutoring Programme (40 students) and a pilot programme, Pathway to Success (186 students), were well received by the students participating.

Career registration fully launched in January 2023 and has provided insight into student career readiness.

The Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills Framework rollout was partially delayed to the academic year 2023-24 due to budgetary approval delays. However, development work continues on the digital system and implementation plan with academic departments.

3.3.2 CONFIDENT AND HIGHLY CAPABLE – WORK READY GRADUATES.

Throughout 2022-23 the University delivered or continued to provide all the initiatives and activities described in the OA. It remained committed to supporting its students to be confident, highly capable and work ready. Some examples of how this was implemented are described below.

- The University ran again the Graduate Employability Life Sciences Masterclass, in collaboration with SULSA and RGU, where 30 students attended the sessions. The sessions were well received, and the students learnt from industry partners about career options, product lifecycles and work in industry.
- Career registration, which provides full insight into student career readiness, fully launched in January 2023. Based on the student responses, targeted communications were sent regarding opportunities for skills and experience development.

- The Careers and employability service continued to support students and it is well received with the number of interactions increasing from 2775 in AY 2021-22 to 3767 in AY 2022-23.
- The University ran the ABDN Grad Challenge Programme in May 2023 where students had the opportunity to virtually work in teams to solve employer-led challenges.

3.3.3 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION

The University shows its commitment to knowledge exchange and Innovation in the following ways:

- The University added an additional Royal Society supported Entrepreneur in Residence, specifically focused on translational research in biomedical sciences.
- Engagement with industry and other projects of the National Decommissioning Centre, aimed at energy transition and decarbonising, are continually supported, including a partnership with the Offshore Renewal Energy Catapult and Net Zero Technology Centre on Offshore Wind Marine Operations, its environmental impact and optimisation of anchor systems.
- The University's policy for intellectual policy exploitation is currently being reviewed to ensure that it encourages entrepreneurship in staff and research post-graduates.
- The University has been working with Opportunity North East (ONE) and Scottish Enterprise to develop a place-based framework to support staff and student entrepreneurs, led by our Vice Principal for Regional Engagement. This has included staff undertaking MIT's Entrepreneurship Development Programme and working with ONE to implement a pilot of MIT's Venture Mentoring System (VMS) for Innovation Driven Enterprises in North East Scotland. It is also supporting and developing a pipeline of spin out companies with industry sectors including energy, life sciences, medical devices and planetary sciences.
- The University's new Enterprise & Innovation Committee includes a champion from each school and is led by the Vice Principal for Regional Engagement. The committee facilitates knowledge exchange, innovation and entrepreneurship within the University, promoting increased interactions with industry.

3.3.4 COLLABORATION

The University shows its commitment to collaborating with several institutions through the following examples:

- The Sustainable Heating Programme Board and the Net Zero Strategy Working Group are reviewing the role of civic networks in the University's long-term ambitions surrounding decarbonised heat.
- The University is in early discussions with private sector entities for potential long-term partnerships to support its Net Zero ambitions. Further work is underway to determine the best way forward.
- The University expanded its electric vehicle charging network, with additional chargers. However, oversight, management and implementation are proving to be barriers to further expansion.
- The University had endorsed a collaboration with the City Bike scheme to host its bikes on its site, however, a start date is still under consideration.
- The ONE BioHub facility was officially opened on 29th May 2023 and will provide grounds for start-ups, spinouts and expanding life science businesses.

Furthermore, the University has continued its collaborative partnership under the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) to respond to the skills demand in the region. Through a North East Regional Pathfinder pilot project NESA is developing interactive pathway for learners to understand how to progress into renewable energy roles through education providers in the region. In another pathfinder project the University is working with regional partners to understand future requirements for health and social care simulation facilities. The University is also working together with the University of St Andrews, the Environmental Research Institute, Marine Scotland Science and SMRU on projects around facilitation of large-scale offshore wind deployment in the UK.

3.3.5 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The University is endorsing the [Scottish Government's guidance](#) on the global climate emergency and considers the following as its top three measures of action:

- Recruit to and establish a new sustainability Team in Estates and Facilities as well as establish a Net Zero Working group to take forward development of Net-Zero strategy.
- Develop a new policy and guidance on Sustainable Business Travel
- Introduce a programme of Climate and Sustainability Assemblies to engage staff and students.

The University is committed to taking action to reduce climate change and has done so in the following ways:

- A Net Zero Strategies and Targets Working Group is developing the University's strategy which includes decarbonised heat, sustainable labs, biodiversity and sustainable IT. The group has established a baseline and is working on pathway development linking them to the UN SDGs.
- Launched Climate and Sustainability Assemblies in 2022-23 to engage staff and students in shaping campus sustainability. Held every semester, the inaugural assembly focused on biodiversity, and the next one will centre on sustainable laboratories.
- A bespoke online sustainability training module on understanding sustainability commitments, challenges and solutions will be launched for staff.
- The University's scope 3 emissions' boundaries now include Procurement, Student Travel to study, staff, and student commuting.
- The University employed a student intern to develop an emissions calculation method for student travel. Her work was well received by the HE sector and is now available for all institutions to use, enhancing our scope 3 understanding.
- The bi-annual staff and student travel survey has been reinstated.
- An internal Net Zero Project register has been created, already including 130 projects.
- The University's [Second SDG Report](#) was generated in November 2022.
- With sustainability in mind, the University undertook a mapping exercise to identify courses that offer sustainability content, and an exercise to re-map the institutions graduate attributes to the sustainably goals is now underway.

The University is still investigating opportunities to provide more granular data on scope 3 Procurement emissions to stakeholders across the University. At the moment, the University is using the spend based calculation methodology which does not provide high level granularity and does not promote best practice. The University would welcome a new

methodology that looks at the quality and not the quantity of spend supporting the sector's effort for higher data quality and take part in this quest by its continued involvement in efforts to improve the data.

4.0 ADAPTING THE UNIVERSITY'S LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL AND BLENDED LEARNING.

The University has reflected on how its learning and teaching strategies have adapted to the opportunities and challenges of digital and blended learning. As part of this, the University's [Principles for the Delivery of Education](#) were implemented in AY2022/23 and continue to be promoted across Schools to support staff in addressing the evolving opportunities and challenges presented by the changing digital landscape. Examples of activities and infrastructure which demonstrate how the implementation of these Principles is being adapted include:

- **Active Learning:** Further training and resources have been provided to enhance staff confidence in using the digitally enhanced teaching spaces and to embrace the opportunities that these present.
- **Community Building:** The University has been breaking down the barriers between students studying online and on campus by bringing them together in a joint online course space, and developing teaching approaches that support interactions across the digital divide. After the successful 4-week Micro-credential, 'Enhancing your Online Teaching for 2021-22', we developed and ran a new 4-week Micro-credential [Enhancing your Teaching for 2022-23](#). By utilising the opportunities that digital learning provides, we were better able to meet the needs of all staff across all campuses.
- **Assessment:** The University continues to focus on the importance of [Academic Integrity](#) and in particular the challenges and opportunities provided by Generative AI. We have developed [guidance for staff](#) and students on approaches to engagement with Generative AI tools and have facilitated numerous discussion fora for staff to share challenges and practice. More information can be found on our [AI and ChatGPT](#) pages. The new [toolkit for students](#) has been launched to support their understanding of Academic Integrity which includes videos and learning resources. We have also been piloting online peer evaluation in group work to address the challenges of ensuring fairness of the assessment.
- **Feedback on Assessment:** The University has finished our implementation of the University's new course environment, Learn Ultra, which has provided an opportunity to enhance the timeliness, variety and quality of feedback available for assessed work. These opportunities are highlighted in regular [updates to staff](#).
- **Accessibility & Inclusivity:** The University has been continuing to promote and support the use of the institutional [Inclusivity & Accessibility in Education Framework](#), including running events which support the [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#) and prioritising accurate captions and transcription of video content. We have also established a [Course Accessibility Service](#) to support staff to improve the accessibility of learning materials. From the beginning of the development of our [Decolonising the Curriculum website](#) and online [Toolkit](#), which include guides, case studies and practical examples, we were mindful of the needs of *all* our learners, irrespective of their mode of study i.e. online or on campus.

5.0 REPORTING ON EARLY MITIGATIONS IN PLACE TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES MOVING INTO AY 2023-24

Please refer to the University's 2022-23 Outcome Agreement.

6.0 REPORTING ON THE UTILISATIONS AND IMPACT OF ADDITIONAL IN-YEAR FUNDING ALLOCATED BY THE SFC

Two predominant examples are given below:

- **SFC Upskilling Fund:** in 2022/23 the university offered a total of 592 fee waivers with 560 registrations across 50 short courses. Demand for courses in meta skills continues to increase and as such the University is working on creating additional capacity in this area for 2023/24 particularly around leadership skills, project management and change management.
- **Digital Inclusion Fund:** the award to the University of Aberdeen for 2022/23 amounted to £107,000. £102,285 has either been spent or fully committed against Digital Poverty for this year. For the remaining amount amounting to £4,715, a plan is in place to utilise the money relative to the conditions of the grant. A significant amount of the allocated funds supported the purchase of laptops to support student access to technology where there was a financial constraint. A bank of equipment has been retained to ensure the University has the capability to respond to short and long term needs of students identified as falling into the category of Digital Poverty. In order to widen the audience of the service the provision of three laptop cabinets in 24/7 areas on campus allowing those students to borrow on an on-going basis without the need to return to Student Services or visit the IT Helpdesk was made available.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data		Actual					Provisional (July Snapshot)	2022-23 Targets with RAG ratings
		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
A	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	1,307	1,474	1,551	1,571	2,013	1881	1877
B	Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	211	212	185	130	284	Tbc	Tbc
	Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	37	51	71	62	126	Tbc	Tbc
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	17.5%	24.1%	38.4%	47.7%	44.4%	Tbc	Tbc
C	COWA measure: Full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes							
	COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	72	60	124	116	152	126	126
	COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	6.0%	4.4%	8.6%	7.9%	7.9%	7.0%	7.9%
D	Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants with Care Experience							
	Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	11	26	20	21	19	20	20
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.8%	1.8%	1.3%	1.3%	0.9%	1.1%	1.1%
E1	Retention - Full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) returning to study in year two							
	Total number of full-time first year SDUE	1,549	1,190	1,410	1,460	1,484	Tbc	Tbc
	Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	1,473	1,138	1,326	1,423	1,429	Tbc	Tbc
	Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	95.1%	95.6%	94.0%	97.5%	96.3%	91.4%	96.0%
F	Satisfaction - The % of students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey							

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data		Actual					Provisional (July Snapshot)	2022-23 Targets with RAG ratings
	The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey	1	1.91	2.79	7.51	5.54	6.1	4.0
G1	Graduate Outcomes - Graduates entering positive destinations							
	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey	687	726	832	678	Tbc	Tbc	n/a
	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination	656	680	799	635	Tbc	Tbc	n/a
	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination	95.5%	93.7%	96.0%	93.7%	Tbc	Tbc	96%
G2	Graduate Outcomes - Respondents who are working in professional occupations							
	The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment	506	536	628	510	Tbc	Tbc	n/a
	The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above	355	376	431	369	Tbc	Tbc	n/a
	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above	70.2%	70.1%	68.6%	72.4%	Tbc	Tbc	70%
H	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	1,309	1,329	1,524	1,234	1,366	Tbc	Tbc

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

DRAFT UNIVERSITIES INNOVATION FUND (UIF) PLAN 2023/24

The University of Aberdeen's knowledge exchange and innovation activities continue to be closely aligned to the commitments from our Aberdeen 2040 strategy.

The University of Aberdeen will use its Outcome Grant to deliver a programme of activities to meet the seven agreed UIF Outcomes. The University will continue to work collaboratively with other HEIs, with regional and national partners and with industry to deliver these objectives. The University confirms its ability to utilise and match the Platform Grant.

Scotland's National Innovation Strategy (June 2023) states "We will design a new Research Commercialisation Framework for Scotland") The University of Aberdeen will work closely with the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG) to develop our detailed proposals for research commercialisation and welcome the opportunity to inform the detail and implementation of this strategy in collaboration via RCDG.

The University of Aberdeen confirms that it will use its UIF funding (including the 23/24 UIF Uplift) to work towards delivery of the National Innovation Strategy and the Entrepreneurial Campus Strategy and commits to continue to engage at a sector-wide and regional level on the utilisation of the UIF uplift to support the delivery of Entrepreneurial Campus. In this plan, activities have been marked where appropriate as relevant to Entrepreneurial Campus (EC), National Innovation Strategy (NIS) and UIF uplift (UIF+).

The University of Aberdeen's Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement is responsible for leading the implementation of a strategy for the University to make a comprehensive and effective contribution to the economic, social and cultural activity of the region. Key elements of delivery included: enhancing the capability and capacity for enterprise and innovation activities; collaborating with regional partners on developing and delivering support for innovation driven entrepreneurship; working with regional partners to secure Investment Zone status and delivering a programme of activity under the Just Transition Fund; implementing new promotions' criteria to support enterprise, impact and innovation and working with APUC on a Framework for a stakeholder engagement CRM.

The University will continue to work collaboratively with other institutions through RCDG and with the UIF Collaboration Manager, and as an active participant in clusters, workshops and other collaborative activities.

Outcome 1 - Demand Stimulation "Working with enterprise agencies, SG, Business networks, Interface and others... help increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services"

- The University of Aberdeen will continue to work with its partners in the North-East Scotland Innovation clusters focussed on energy transition, but also life sciences, food, drink and agriculture and digital economy (NIS).
- In 22/23, the University appointed a Dean for Enterprise and Innovation, 12 school based Enterprise and Innovation Champions and created a new committee to support and facilitate engagement with industry, enterprise and entrepreneurship (NIS, EC, UIF+).
- The University will continue its engagement with Opportunity North East, Net Zero Technology Centre and the two local councils to meet its City Deal objectives.

- We will also continue to work with other regional partners such as the Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC), CodeBase, the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce to facilitate engagement of researchers with business.
- The National Decommissioning Centre, a joint initiative between the University and NZTC will continue to provide a focal point to transform decommissioning for the energy sector with 22 projects currently underway.
- The University will continue to support the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA), a collaborative partnership to develop the skills of the existing and future energy workforce.
- The University currently has three Entrepreneurs in Residence (EiRs) funded by the Royal Society, working with Engineering, Computing Sciences and Medical Sciences. We intend to continue to engage with these EiRs, and to expand their number and scope in 23/24, e.g. by appointing a Creative Industries Entrepreneur in Residence (EC; UIF+).
- The University will work with regional partners to design a series of interventions aligned with the recently announced Aberdeen & North-East Scotland Investment Zone.
- The University of Aberdeen participates in ScotHERD (the practitioners' arm of Universities Scotland Researcher Development & Culture Committee) and will support the work underway to better understand the role that Researcher Developers play in feeding the KE&I pipeline in our institutions.

Outcome 2 - Simplification / Commercialisation: “In partnership with enterprise agencies and Interface...demonstrably simplified business access to the knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities”.

- The University of Aberdeen has undertaken a review of its support for enterprise and innovation. A number of initiatives have resulted from this review, as follows:
 - A new External Business Advisory Group comprising industry sector representatives, entrepreneurs, finance/VC experts has been established to act as a critical friend to the University.
 - A new Enterprise & Innovation Committee was created in 22/23. Each of the University's 12 academic schools provides an Enterprise & Innovation Champion to promote engagement with business and other stakeholders (NIS).
 - Strategic KPIs and associated targets have been set for engagement and entrepreneurship with all academic schools expected to contribute.
 - The University will review and revise key policies (Intellectual Property Exploitation and Revenue Sharing; Consultancy; Continuing Professional Development) in 23/24 (EC, NIS).
 - To increase capacity for business engagement, the University is recruiting into a number of new posts in this area in 23/24 (UIF+).
- The University of Aberdeen is exploring different pathways for industry engagement, through co-location of business development staff within ONE TechHub in 23/24; a more consistent approach to stakeholder engagement through the implementation of an institutional CRM platform; showcasing events to industry (including attendance at major industry events and conferences such as Offshore Europe (September 2023)).
- In 22/23, the University won a Capacity Building KTP project and delivered a well-received training programme for academic and research staff on how to engage with industry. This training programme will be delivered again in 23/24 (NIS).

- The University is finalising a Strategic Corporate Partnership offer to nurture long-term university-business partnership with relationship management.
- The University will continue to participate in the IP Commercialisation Peer Network to share resources and good practice, collaborate on sector-specific approaches and on responses to national strategies such as the NIS and NSET.

Outcome 3 - Simplification/ Greater Innovation: “In partnership with Enterprise Agencies and Interface... at a national level made use of their sectoral knowledge to promote greater innovation in the economy (including beyond non-STEM)”.

- The University is a key contributor to the Innovation strand in North-East Scotland’s new Regional Economic Strategy (refreshed for 2023).
- The University will continue to seek funding from Innovate UK, through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and other schemes to increase its engagement with industry and to apply innovation to the economy (NIS).
- In 23/24, we will continue to collaborate with other Scottish HEIs on mission-led funding through the Challenge Fund Network of Research/Business Development Managers which meets on a regular basis to enable peer-to-peer support, initiate new collaborations, engage with funders (including Innovate UK), and facilitate horizon scanning.
- On 6 September 2023, the Challenge Fund Network held a collaborative workshop with Scotland’s Innovation Centres, with a focus on Collaborative R&D funding (UKRI or other), specifically exploring the role Innovation Centres do or could play in capacity building between researchers and industry, influencing funders on next big opportunities and developing competitive collaborative bids. The University will continue such engagement.
- On an institutional basis and through RCDG, we will actively engage with Interface as they evolve their delivery model, moving towards supporting more strategic engagement between academia and industry. This has potential to increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services, and we are keen to exploit this opportunity with our colleagues in Interface. The University continues to support Interface at their board level.
- We will encourage academic engagement with the funding opportunities made available by Interface, including Innovation Vouchers (Student Placement, Standard and Advanced), Inward Investment Catalyst Fund, and Healthier Products for Innovation Fund for Scotland, and explore more strategic initiatives when opportunities arise.
- The indication is that the next generation Innovation Centres (as ‘infrastructure investments’) will be strategically closer to HEIs, and this has the potential to increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services. In an institutional capacity and through UIF collaborative groups, we will actively engage with Innovation Centres to influence more coherent relationships over the course of the next academic year.

Outcome 4 - Entrepreneurialism: “(The) sector will have made significant positive change in the way entrepreneurial opportunities are promoted and delivered to students, HEI staff and businesses”.

- As noted above, the University is reviewing and revising its policy for Intellectual Property Exploitation and Revenue Sharing with a view to encouraging and enabling staff entrepreneurship and removing any perceived barriers (EC).

- Our Deans for Enterprise and Innovation, and for Employability and Entrepreneurship are developing an Action Plan in response to the recently published Entrepreneurial Campus report (EC).
- A task and finish group will work to develop a model for the entrepreneurial curriculum across undergraduate and taught postgraduate education at the University (EC).
- We will continue to support and engage fully with Converge, including continuing to host one of the Converge Enterprise Executives at the University, and providing support at their board level. We value the role Converge plays in creating a community and providing opportunity to our spinouts and start-ups, while also putting a spotlight on the enterprise creation in Scottish HEIs. We will continue to actively support and take advantage of Converge throughout this year.
- As noted above, the University will be seeking to increase the number and range of its Entrepreneurs in Residence. (EC)
- We will work closely with Opportunity North East (ONE) to increase the number of Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs) and Innovation Entrepreneurs (IEs) in the North East of Scotland. There are two key routes: providing support for key University staff and entrepreneurs to participate in MIT's EDP, and working with ONE, RGU and SE to deliver a pilot of the Venture Mentoring Service (VMS) licensed from MIT.
- The University will continue to provide support for staff and student start-ups including microfinance for student start-ups and financial support for students participating in the Academic Accelerator run by Elevator. A new programme of Innovation Masterclasses and Innovation Challenges will culminate in our annual Lightbulb competition for student business ideas.
- We have launched a series of popular monthly drop-in sessions (StartHere! Breakfasts) for students and staff considering innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship which will continue throughout 23/24. The StartHere! events are also supported through the regional entrepreneurship network, with partners including Techscaler, NZTC's TechX, ETZ and ONE.
- Our current pipeline of 13 potential spin outs will be supported through a mini-accelerator programme based on the 24-step Disciplined Entrepreneurship model, following the University's participation in cohort development supported by ONE. Our strategic intent is to increase the number of spin outs in this pipeline (EC).
- We are planning an expansion of ABVenture Zone, our networking and incubation space for student and staff entrepreneurs at the University of Aberdeen. Following this expansion, the University will consider making this space open to local businesses.
- Session 23/24 will see new academic promotions criteria in operation; these formally recognise activities such as industry engagement, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship.
- We will continue to participate in Enterprise Support Group (ESG), a formal subgroup of RCDG, meeting quarterly to share best practice, deliver collaborative initiatives, and engage with the latest strategy and policy from Scottish and UK governments.
- In the coming year, Enterprise Support Group aims to identify opportunities for alignment between HEIs and the Scottish Government's Techscaler programme. We will explore ways to collaborate with other HEIs, colleges and Codebase (as the Techscaler delivery partner) to co-design and co-deliver new collaborative initiatives, where these may have a regional or sectoral focus.

Outcome 5 - International: “in partnership with SDI, Connected Scotland others...pooled knowledge and networks and shared good practice to promote and engaged Scotland internationally”.

- The University of Aberdeen is part of a strategic tripartite alliance with Curtin University (Perth, Australia) and the University of Calgary (Canada) to develop innovative solutions to tackle key global issues currently focussing on climate change and energy transition and to be expanded to AI and health.
- The University will continue to engage with the Connected Places Catapult regarding its participation in a UK-Australia Innovation Twins pilot.
- The University continues to support the World Energy Cities Partnership (WECP), through the membership of Aberdeen City Council; both Calgary and Perth are also WECP cities.
- The University’s International Leadership Development Programme supported learning visits to Universities of Bergen and Vermont, where their best practice in entrepreneurship is informing our Entrepreneurial Campus action plan.
- The Vice-Principal Regional Engagement is a member of the North-East Scotland Regional Inward Investment Forum, with the University supporting local authorities and other regional partners to attract inward investment.
- Through RCDG, we will influence the new Research Commercialisation Framework for Scotland, as proposed in Scottish Government’s Innovation Strategy (June 2023), which: ‘will include exploring options for developing consistent approaches to, and guidance for, handling the intellectual property that arises from both publicly funded research and inward investment, as set out in our Inward Investment Plan (2020).’

Outcome 6 - Inclusive Growth and Social Impact: building on current and good practice, Scottish HEIs will have scaled up their support of the Scottish Government’s ambitions for inclusive growth.

- As noted above, the University is a key contributor to the new North-East Scotland Regional Economic Strategy which has an emphasis on just transition and the wellbeing economy.
- As noted above, we are widening the scope of our Entrepreneurs in Residence to include Creative Industries, plan to host a number of Creatives in Residence, and will continue our support for Culture Aberdeen.
- The University ranked 70th in the world, and 18th in the UK for the Times Higher Impact Rankings, in supporting the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, 1st in the UK and 4th in world for Partnerships for the Goals (SDG17). We will continue to identify best practice in support inclusive growth and social impact.
- At a regional level we continue to be an active participant in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, in particular in relation to projects supporting prosperous economy, prosperous people and children, aimed at reducing inequalities across communities.
- In addition to engaging with ONE, we engage with other HEIs through the City Region & Growth Deal HEI Network which shares experience under common themes. In AY2023-24, the workshop themes include: benefits realization, regional economic strategies, and community engagement. Learnings are intended to develop more productive interactions and improve outcomes for our local communities and economy.

Outcome 7 - Equality and Diversity: building on current and good practice, HEIs will have ensured positive promotion of equality and diversity in staff and all who are affected by the use of the UIF.

- Through each of the sector's collaborative activities under UIF, we benefit from the diversity of our HEIs, including the diversity of individuals involved.
- The University is a signatory to the Advance HE's Race Equality Charter, and have committed at a strategic level to improve inclusivity at all levels, appointing race champions throughout the university, providing new training and online toolkit materials, overseen by the Race Equality Strategy Group.
- The University is working with NHSG and Patient and Public Participation groups to enhance inclusion and diversity for clinical research studies, and use of data-driven analytics to improve health and social outcomes.
- We are particularly aware of the skewed gender balance for entrepreneurship activities which we propose to address through Start HER events for female entrepreneurs. We will also ensure that there are no barriers created through timings and locations of events and training.

Two case studies relating to this report are attached as Appendix 1 and 2; the first focusing on the impact of *Entrepreneurs in Residence*, and the second on *Maximising the Impact of a Regional Entrepreneurial Ecosystem*.

Appendix 1

University of Aberdeen – University Innovation Fund Case Study

The Impact of Entrepreneurs in Residence

The University of Aberdeen was successful in securing three Royal Society Entrepreneurs in Residence (EiRs) for 2023 with the potential for all three to continue into 2024.

Our first EiRs were appointed in 2022, with one hosted by the University's Computing Science department and the other by the joint University/NZTC National Decommissioning Centre. A third EiR was appointed in 2023, hosted by the University's Institute of Medical Sciences.

The appointment of the EiRs was part of a renewed focus within the University on enterprise and innovation with the aims of increasing engagement with industry and business, and of growing the number of start up and spin out companies created by University students and staff.

Our EiRs worked with the University to develop their own projects, each focussing on aspects of the enterprise and innovation ecosystem that relates to their own experience and track record.

The EiRs have helped drive an increase in the University's entrepreneurship support activities, proposing ideas for engagement of students and staff, and advising academic researchers on routes for commercialisation of research, the latter activity initiating two spinout companies. In addition, our EiRs have provided a sounding board for University initiatives to enhance enterprise and innovation across all academic disciplines.

A key learning has been the importance of a critical mass of EiR appointments in achieving change. This is one that the University of Aberdeen has welcomed with the intention formed of using UIF funding to increase the number of EiRs working with the University and also of extending the sectors from which the EiRs are drawn.

Aberdeen's experience of the importance of EiRs for enterprise and innovation is reinforced by the recommendations within the Scottish Government's recently published Entrepreneurial Campus report.

Appendix 2

University of Aberdeen – University Innovation Fund Case Study

Maximising the impact of a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem in collaboration with Opportunity North East and regional stakeholders.

The University of Aberdeen is a key partner in the development of a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem in the North-East of Scotland.

The University is working collaboratively with Opportunity North East (ONE), Robert Gordon University, Energy Transition Zone, Net Zero Technology Centre, Scottish Enterprise and others to create an environment that supports entrepreneurs and new companies. One specific focus is Innovation Driven Entrepreneurs/Enterprises (IDEs) in sectors where the regional economy is growing, including renewables and energy transition, life sciences, digital and AI, and food, drink and agriculture. These are areas that match well with the University's interdisciplinary research centres of Energy Transition, Data and AI, and Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing.

The University has a role in both creating and supporting IDEs. Engagement with business across all sectors allows academic innovation to be adopted by businesses for the development of new products and services. A focus on the creation of new IDEs from University staff and students means that these IDEs can take advantage of a supportive environment for entrepreneurship.

For the latter objective, the University has provided opportunities for senior management and academic entrepreneurs to participate in MIT's Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) training, with the aim of developing a cohort of leaders in entrepreneurship across our institution and the region. To date, seven University of Aberdeen staff have taken part in the training with a further two due to participate in 23/24.

To provide on-going support to IDEs, the University has been working with ONE and our other partners to introduce MIT's Venture Mentoring Service to IDE businesses in North-East Scotland, with a pilot programme to launch in late 2023.

Empowering staff to deliver inclusive high-quality learning and teaching

The University of Aberdeen is committed to ensuring that students at all levels receive a high-quality, safe, and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed which is at the heart of the [Aberdeen 2040](#) commitments and our annual SFC Outcome Agreement. To deliver this we needed to articulate what is meant by inclusive high-quality learning and teaching and to empower staff with the knowledge and skills so they could deliver on these commitments. To do this we worked collaboratively with staff and students to develop a set of principles to support staff in the preparation and delivery of education in a post-covid learning environments. [The 5 Principles of Education](#) incorporated lessons learnt from the pivot to online learning in response to Covid-19 and our vision for inclusive teaching. The 5 principles underpinning the University of Aberdeen education are:

- Principle 1: [nurturing active learning](#)
- Principle 2: [opportunities for community building](#)
- Principle 3: [authentic and efficient assessments](#)
- Principle 4: [provide timely and meaningful feedback](#)
- Principle 5: [accessibility and inclusivity](#)

Inclusivity is an essential aspect of the Higher Educational experience that ensures equity of experience for all students regardless of background or circumstance. However, institutions often struggle to clearly define educational inclusivity, with little guidance or advice on how to incorporate this into teaching practice. We therefore developed the [Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework](#) to sit alongside the 5 principles to articulate this for staff.

To ensure that staff felt empowered to deliver inclusive high quality teaching, we embedded this work into a suite of well attended cross-institutional micro-credential CPD short courses ([2021-22](#), [2022-23](#), [2023-34](#)), which offer practical skills development and exchanges of effective practice, whilst also prompting interdisciplinary discussion, to help staff to enhance their inclusive teaching approaches. We have seen the impact of this work exemplified in a wide number of pedagogical research projects undertaken as part of our QAA (Scotland) [Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#) activity, and funded through our internal [Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme](#).

This work has helped us to enhance a culture of inclusive teaching practices at the University of Aberdeen, which is backed up by institutional commitment in supporting staff in developing their inclusive teaching practices. In doing this we are ensuring that all students receive an inclusive educational experience focussed on achieving successful outcomes for all students.

The work and activities described in this case study demonstrates some of the ways in which the University is fulfilling its commitment to the SFC's priority for Scottish HEIs to deliver quality learning and teaching and other aspects of its Outcome Agreement.

More information on how University is empowering its staff to deliver inclusive, high-quality learning and teaching, including examples of good practice, is available at the links given above and upon request.

University of Aberdeen – Driving Regional Engagement and Economic Development through Academic and Association Conferences

Value of Business and Association Events

Business Events is an important sector for the UK. Business visits accounted for 21% of all inbound visits in 2019, with 8.7 million such visits, and contributed £4.8 billion in spend.

Key highlights from Visit Britain’s research shows that spend by business event attendees is greater than that from leisure tourists; and that those who extend their stay for leisure purposes would, on average, spend double the amount of money than if they travelled home immediately after the event.

University Approach

The University is expanding its existing delivery of a range of professional development, academic and association conferences. The CPD and Events Services Team works in active partnership with P&J Live (the state-of-the-art venue opened in Aberdeen in 2019) and Visit Aberdeenshire’s Convention Bureau to identify and target conferences to come to the region which align with university and regional strategic aims and expertise.

The partners work with academic colleagues, regional stakeholders, external businesses and other HEIs bidding for and delivering conferences and events in the city / region. The long lead time for the event life cycle helps to provide a strong pipeline of events secured several years in advance and figures below show contracted business only – we are bidding for additional business that, if secured, will enhance these figures.

	International Delegates	UK Delegates	Total
2022/2023	£402,274.00	£141,568.00	£543,842.00
2023/2024	£510,500.00	£409,024.00	£919,524.00
2024/2025	£1,046,525.00	£358,400.00	£1,404,925.00
Totals	£1,959,299.00	£908,992.00	<u>£2,868,291.00</u>

Economic impact from academic and association conferences using the Visit Britain data

Other Benefits

The conferences and events hosted not only boost the regional economy, but yield a spectrum of benefits including:

- promoting research excellence locally,
- enhancing the reputation of the University globally as a place to work and study,
- linking into upskilling locally and nationally,
- incorporating regional engagement and public engagement with research and
- connecting with corporate events where possible.

Funding from Scottish Funding Council supports this provision by funding staff in the CPD and Events Services team, providing a pump priming fund to support new activities, underwriting conferences where required, and supporting investment in a new Event Management System. Additionally, academics researchers working with the CPD and Events Services team are supported by the Research Excellence Grant.

Appendix 5 – Non-research case study 2

This approach underscores the University of Aberdeen's commitment to not only fostering economic growth but also to bolstering its academic and research standing on a global scale, thereby enriching the educational landscape and broader community.

University of Aberdeen – Outcome Agreement Research Case Study Pioneering Medical Imaging

The University of Aberdeen has a long-standing role in developing pioneering medical imaging technology. In the 1970s, Professor John Mallard and colleagues built the first whole body MRI scanner and also provided the breakthrough (the spin-warp imaging pulse sequence) that is still used today and allows MRI to yield high quality images of the body. In 1980, the team demonstrated the clinical utility in diagnosis through the first whole body scan of a patient with terminal cancer, and further studies at Aberdeen provided the first images of MS, the effects of alcohol on the brain and the beginnings of dementia. Today MRI scanners are a routine part of medical treatment in many clinical specialities.

REG funding allowed the University to support the Aberdeen Biomedical Imaging Centre (ABIC), providing continuity of research into medical imaging across a number of modalities key members of the MRI research team to continue to be key in allowing the long-term stability and strength of MRI research at the University of Aberdeen and has attracted further funding from a number of sources, including for development of FCI.

The University has continued to support research in medical imaging with the latest focus on a radically new type of scanner called fast field cycling MRI or field cycling imaging (FCI). This differs from standard MRI in that the magnet is switched rapidly to many different strengths of magnetic field, thereby unlocking information from scans that is not accessible using standard fixed magnetic field scanners. The development of FCI has been supported by long-term funding from REG, with this continuity allowing the team to win significant funding from EPSRC and Horizon 2020 E, allowing the University to build two prototype FCI scanners and show that new information may be extracted using FCI that could benefit patients.

The promise of this new imaging modality has encouraged the build of an FCI scanner for clinical use which will be operational in late 2023 and available for clinical studies with patients. Parallel research and clinical studies in collaboration with NHS Grampian have backed up FCI's utility in many disease areas.

ABIC research continues to support the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland and beyond, adding to the scope of the life sciences innovation cluster in the North-East of Scotland, and supporting Scotland's National Innovation Strategy.

University of Aberdeen - HABIT and Water on Mars

The University of Aberdeen's Planetary Sciences group is focused on the study of Earth and planetary sciences and the development of instruments for Earth and planetary exploration. The group is renowned as having discovered the first evidence of transient liquid water on Mars and has been involved in the majority of discoveries made by NASA's Mars Curiosity Rover

REG funding was pivotal in the recruitment of the Planetary Sciences group in 2019, as part of the University's 2040 strategy, which seeks to enhance its status as a world leader in research. REG funding has contributed to the group's research activities, including the publication of research findings in reputed journals and the communication of its research to the public and policy makers.

The Planetary Sciences group, led by Professor Javier Martin-Torres, have built the HABIT instrument which will be included in a forthcoming Japanese mission to Mars through collaboration with the UK Space Agency. The HABIT instrument is composed of two units, BOTTLE (Brine Observation Transition to Liquid Experiment) and ENVPACK (Environmental Package), which will monitor the formation of brines and the conditions in which it takes place respectively. HABIT uses the expertise that the team have developed through years of research and development on devices for planetary exploration.

REG funding has aided the development of the HABIT instrument, from idea to hardware development, including calibration, operations, and data analysis. The funding has also allowed for continuous collaborations with universities and institutions around the world including Japan, USA and Canada. The quest about the habitability of present-day Mars is still an open challenge and a crucial aspect for the future human space exploration, and the continuity afforded by REG will be critical in facilitating further research in this field.

The research work of the Planetary Sciences group is well-aligned with Scotland's national strategies for innovation (National Strategy for Economic Transformation and Nation Innovation Strategy) with the group's focus on specialised instruments for Space explorations and the future opportunities for advanced manufacturing of such instruments.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW OF QUALITY, 2022/2023**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper details the Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality as required by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The Report is a condition of grant to ensure (i) that provision is of an acceptable quality and (ii) that all institutions have an appropriate strategy for quality enhancement.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Quality Assurance Committee (information) University Education Committee (information) Senior Management Team	By circulation 31 August 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Court (approval)	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Court is invited to **consider and approve** the annual report for submission to the SFC by 30th September 2023.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 An 'Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality' (*Annex A*) is required by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as a condition of grant to ensure (i) that provision is of an acceptable quality and (ii) that all institutions have an appropriate strategy for quality enhancement. SFC guidance states that the Report should include the following:

- A summary of the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) outcomes from the preceding AY including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations.
- The ways in which support services were reviewed or included in review processes, with regard to their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience.

- The role and nature of student engagement in ITR including at the self-evaluation stage during the AY.
- A reflective overview, which highlights key findings from the reviews in the preceding year, comments on 'distance travelled' and identifies any significant outcomes or actions relating to development needs or to good practice resulting from ITR processes.
- Relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, benchmarks and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, graduate destinations, and equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Reflection and key messages from qualitative and quantitative analysis of feedback from students (including the National Student Survey and external surveys of postgraduate students) and actions taken/planned as a result.
- An annex listing subject/programme areas which were reviewed by other bodies, for example, by PSRBs, during the academic year; and a copy of the institution's planned schedule of ITRs preferably for the full six-year cycle.

4.2 The University's governing body must provide the SFC with a signed 'Annual Statement of Assurance' (Appendix I to the Report below). This is a statement that confirms that the University's governing body has considered and is satisfied with the arrangements the University has in place to maintain standards and assure and enhance the quality of its provision.

4.3 The 'Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality' must show that the University's provision is of an acceptable quality and that it has in place an appropriate strategy for quality enhancement.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 Further information is available from Ruth Taylor (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk), Steve Tucker (s.j.tucker@abdn.ac.uk), Gillian Mackintosh (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk) or Liam Dyker (liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk).

1 September 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW OF QUALITY ACADEMIC YEAR
2022/2023****1 SUBJECT REVIEW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN****1.1 INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW**

- 1.1.1 The University of Aberdeen's arrangements to maintain standards and assure and enhance the quality of its provision are outlined in *Appendix II*. These include the University's process for periodic subject review, termed Internal Teaching Review (ITR).
- 1.1.2 A fundamental feature of the University's quality assurance procedures since 1994, the ITR process has continually evolved to reflect ongoing changes in the external and internal drivers for quality assurance and enhancement. The focus of each review is placed on enhancement and conversation, evident in the interactive and collegiate nature of the review itself. In alignment with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirement to undertake institution-led review, as detailed within the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF), each of the University's Schools are subject to ITR every sixth year, with the review covering the previous five years. Trained reviewers are engaged from institutions throughout the UK in order to make use of their external frame of reference on subject provision.
- 1.1.3 In recent years, as annual monitoring processes have developed (specifically the Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR)) they, in addition to External Examining (EE) procedures, rigorous Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) oversight and Curriculum Management processes have provided increased confidence that Quality Assurance (QA) procedures are robust. Additionally, the University's strategic planning process reviews a range of QA metrics via action planning in each School for review and discussion with the Senior Management Team (SMT) including benchmarking data such as degree classification, non-continuation, admission, and recruitment metrics. Together, these activities ensure the University meets Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) expectations regarding assuring the quality and standard of teaching provision without Schools having to re-submit duplicate information as part of an ITR process. ACR, APR, EE reports and all benchmarking data are held in a central repository.
- 1.1.4 The ITR process considers all centrally held QA metrics and analysis, allowing School submissions and the ITR panel visit to be more focused on quality enhancement. Schools are not required to duplicate information which exists in the central repository as part of annual monitoring or strategic planning processes, but rather provide more contextual data and its analysis to ITR panels. In addition to the online repository for all QA and School planning information, documentation required for submission by Schools for the purposes of ITR includes (i) an evidence-based Critical Analysis (CA), allowing a School's context to be set out clearly and to have a clear focus on enhancement and reflection on effectiveness of the delivery of its education throughout the process and (ii) a Curriculum Map, detailing how programmes address Subject Benchmark Statements and Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.
- 1.1.5 For academic year 2022/23, the University Education Committee (UEC) agreed that

ITRs should return to on-campus review, following the removal of all restrictions on in-person teaching in Higher Education in Scotland due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The ITR process has continued to deliver what was sought by its introduction: a Quality Enhancement driven discussion with the School on their teaching provision whilst confirming the academic rigour and assuring the quality of the Schools' programmes.

1.1.6 The review visit undertaken by the ITR panel comprises:

- a Quality Assurance (QA) session;
- an enhancement-focused discussion with students;
- enhancement-focused discussions with academic and professional services colleagues;
- a Pedagogic Partnership session, comprising academic colleagues and students, focusing on key issues raised and the drafting of an enhancement-focused action plan;
- a final meeting with all School staff.

The final report resulting from ITR consists of two parts; Part A is a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) report identifying the Quality Assurance (QA) findings, highlighting good practice, commending initiatives worthy of sharing across the institution or which might be considered institution or sector leading, and highlighting areas for development. Part B consists of a jointly devised action plan as part of the pedagogic partnership session, further developed by the ITR panel and approved by the School. Schools are asked to provide annual updates on the progress of this plan by way of a yearly action plan update. The report and annual action plan updates are considered by the QAC, which includes discussion of good practice and means of disseminating the good practice through School Education Committees. The approved report is thereafter posted to the University's ITR webpages.

1.2 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW

1.2.1 Students play an integral role in all aspects of the review process, including pedagogic review and action planning, with Schools encouraged to ensure their students are involved in the preparation of their Critical Analysis, which has proven invaluable in enabling useful preparatory discussions. They are also engaged with student-specific sessions as part of the in-person review itself. The final report and action plan are made available to students within the School. ITR panels meet with all levels of undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) students studying within the School under review, as well as with students holding representative roles, such as class representatives. The student groups include students from Transnational Education (TNE) provision, where relevant.

1.2.2 The University works in partnership with the Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA). All ITR panels include a student member of Senate, usually a senior representative from AUSA with responsibility for education. Student panel members receive training alongside academic panel members, and they play a full role on the panels, usually taking the lead when the panel meets with students. Student members also form part of any panel considering validation or accreditation as part of our collaborative activities with other institutions.

1.3 INTERNAL REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- 1.3.1 The engagement of student-facing Professional Services in education is a vital part of the ITR process in maintaining collaborative, collegiate relationships between Professional Services departments and Schools around the co-curriculum, educational development, and effective delivery of support. As part of the standard ITR scheduling, one session is included which involves both School and centrally based Professional Services colleagues, including those from Registry, the Careers and Employability Service, and Student Support. The inclusion of such a session ensures that the process captures the strengths (and areas for improvement, if any) of the Professional Services in education-related matters and the wider student experience, while maintaining a focus on the rigorous, wide-reaching nature of the review. Recent ITR panels have reported this session to be particularly valuable, with centrally based colleagues providing strong examples of the importance of quality relationships between the Professional Services and the School.
- 1.3.2 The University recognises the importance of including Professional Services as well as Schools in institutional planning processes. Integrating Professional Services planning into the wider planning cycle ensures that approaches, goals, and challenges are considered in a collegiate manner, and reinforces the institutional role played by Professional Services within the delivery of education within each of our Schools and the co-curricular activity provided. The collation of Professional Services action planning and reflection materials will also enhance our School-focused ITR process by demonstrating the positive effect of Professional Services involvement in School activity.

2 INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS, 2022/2023

2.1 REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN IN 2022/2023

2.1.1 During academic year 2022/2023, ITRs were conducted as follows:

School	Date
Business School	November 2022
School of Psychology	April 2023

- 2.1.2 The School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture was due to be reviewed in Spring 2023. However, the review has been postponed to Academic Year 2023/2024, due to extenuating circumstances, which remains within the six-year review cycle as required by Scottish Funding Council.
- 2.1.3 In each case, the panel considered documentation provided by the School in line with the requirements of the ITR process (*section 1.1 above refers*). A series of meetings with the School was scheduled across two days on campus.

2.2 BUSINESS SCHOOL, NOVEMBER 2022

- 2.2.1 The review of the Business School, conducted in November 2022, covered all aspects of taught provision within the School's three disciplines: (i) Accountancy, Finance and Real Estate; (ii) Business Management; and (iii) Economics.
- 2.2.2 The Panel was impressed by the School's approach to learning and teaching, particularly in relation to the high-quality student experience offered. Aspects of assessment and feedback processes, research-led teaching, and a focus on employability were commended. While employability was a key focus of the School,

further development of internships and work-based experiences was sought by the panel.

2.2.3 The School was commended for the positive work undertaken by their professional services team. However, student monitoring and administrative processes were highlighted by staff and students as an area for enhancement, to ensure that administrative responsibilities between professional services and academic colleagues are clarified.

2.2.4 The commitment to internationalisation and focus on equality, diversity and inclusion was commendable, particularly in relation to transnational education partnerships, as well as the progression of the renewal of the Athena SWAN charter. The School highlighted the ongoing accreditation processes for whole School accreditation and noted the enhanced employability of students and positive effect on reputation which will follow.

2.2.5 Key actions identified by way of an agreed action plan included:

- continuing to increase and enhance communication within the School by clarifying roles and responsibilities of professional services and academic staff, ensuring all webpages remain up-to-date, and promoting open and active discussion at all levels;
- enhancing the student experience by reviewing strategies to improve student engagement, developing opportunities for work-based learning, considering the appropriateness of assessments and delivery of teaching;
- enhancing the support offered to students by exploring the consistency of personal tutoring system across the School and ensuring student monitoring is carried out as effectively as possible; and
- continuing with the process for whole-School accreditation.

2.3 SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, APRIL 2023

2.3.1 The Panel confirmed that the quality of the teaching and learning provision within the School was particularly positive. The School's approach to marking, moderation and the provision of feedback was commended. The improvement in student retention rates and the approach to widening participation was highlighted, as was the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion within the School.

2.3.2 The strong emphasis placed on employability was recognised as positive, noting the variety of events, including seminars, workshops and career fairs. The School's investment in internships and work-based learning was commended also.

2.3.3 The administrative team was commended for their collegiate way of working, for the support they provide to staff and students, and particularly for facilitating an effective approach to monitoring students at risk and the management of extension requests.

2.3.4 Key actions identified by way of agreed action plan included:

- enhancing the support for postgraduate research (PGR) students by continuing to invest in PGR employability and implementing a system of pastoral support and training;
- reviewing delivery of teaching, learning and assessment by continuing to diversify assessments, incorporating authentic assessment, reviewing the use

of online exams and multiple-choice question assessments, and reviewing the approach to addressing subject benchmark statements; and

- improving the student experience by considering the means by which student engagement and a sense of community can be enhanced for On-Demand (fully online) programmes,
- removing the word limit associated with extension requests to allow students explain their circumstances.

2.4 FORWARD PLAN OF INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS, 2023/2024

2.4.1 During academic year 2023/2024, reviews are planned for the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, and the School of Biological Sciences. As noted in 1.1.5 above, these reviews are planned to be held on campus in Aberdeen.

Details of the schedule of Internal Teaching Review can be found in Appendix III.

3 REVIEWS BY PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES, 2022/2023

During 2022/2023, reviews by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies were conducted across the University's Schools as follows:

3.1 SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

- (i) The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment reaccredited the BSc Environmental Science, MSc Environmental Science, and MSc Environmental Management programmes, following a review in August 2022.

3.2 BUSINESS SCHOOL

- (i) The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) reaccredited the MA in Real Estate and all Postgraduate Taught programmes in Real Estate, following a review in March 2023.
- (ii) The outcome is awaited for the new accreditation pertinent to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) for the MSc International Human Resource Management programmes in both Aberdeen and Qatar, which was submitted by the deadline of 11 August 2023.

3.3 SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES

- (i) The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) reaccredited the Degree of Master of Land Economy, following a review in March 2023.
- (ii) The review for the Geological Society, which accredits the BSc Geology and Petroleum Geology programme, is underway and is yet to conclude.

3.4 SCHOOL OF LAW

- (i) The Law Society of Scotland has received the documentation required annually to review the ongoing accreditation of all LLB programmes and the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice. The outcome is currently awaited.

3.5 SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

- (i) Further to the inspections undertaken in November 2021 and May 2022, a further visit from the General Dental Council (GDC), which accredits the DipHE in Dental Technology, was undertaken in May 2023. The outcome of the visit is expected imminently.
- (ii) The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) received the University's annual report in January 2023, which was accepted.

3.6 SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

- (i) The British Psychological Society (BPS) carried out a virtual accreditation visit in February 2022. The confirmation of reaccreditation of all undergraduate Honours Psychology degrees and the MSc in Psychological Science has now been received.

Details of the reviews undertaken by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies in 2022/2023 can be found in Appendix IV.

4 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 4.1 The University monitors the quality of the educational experience through a range of educational metrics. These datasets are regularly reviewed by relevant committees and through the University's Annual Planning Process to ensure that appropriate action is taken when required. Key educational metrics which are regularly monitored include:
- Admission, recruitment and student population monitoring
 - Entry standards
 - Student satisfaction as measured by the National Student Survey (NSS), the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES),¹ the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
 - Continuation and in-year withdrawals
 - Degree classifications and degree awarding gap
 - Graduate employability as measured by the Graduate Outcomes Survey

Inclusion of the data and analysis within the ITR process, together with the metrics analysed within the ACR/APR process, meets SFC expectations regarding assuring the quality and standard of education provision without Schools having to provide additional information.

- 4.2 Admissions data is monitored closely by the Student Recruitment Committee, and analytical reports on recruitment and student population trends for all student categories are regularly considered by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Finance & Resourcing Committee. Course registrations and pass rates are considered annually as part of the Annual Course Review (ACR) and Annual Programme Review (APR) processes and are monitored regularly by both SMT and QAC.
- 4.3 Entry standards remain high and are monitored regularly through the annual School Planning Process. The University ranked 10th in the UK for entry standards in the

¹ The Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) is a survey open to all registered students at the University, and it has been designed to capture student's views on University services, facilities and communications.

Complete University Guide 2024, 8th in the Times and Sunday Times 2023, and 9th in the Guardian University Guide 2023.

- 4.4 The University aims to always provide students with the best possible educational experience and as part of the [Aberdeen 2040 Strategy](#) performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) is closely monitored as part of a suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The University has made great strides in recent years, achieving a score of 85.6% for overall satisfaction in 2022 (ranking 4th overall in the UK compared against a comparator group of 124 higher education institutions), and 84.7% in NSS 2023 (ranking 2nd in the devolved nations because this metric is not now available in England). For overall positivity, the University ranks 10th in the UK compared with a comparator group of 120 higher education institutions.
- 4.5 NSS data is analysed centrally and disseminated to academic Schools, including a detailed analysis of free-text comments, which then informs both institutional and School operational plans. The Dean for Student Support and Experience convenes a National Student Survey Steering Group which leads the institutional strategy for NSS. The University's strategies will continue to prioritise action on thematic areas where the University requires to make improvements, particularly Assessment and Feedback (ranking in quartile 3 in NSS 2023), as well as acting on individual questions where performance was less strong.
- 4.6 The University participated in the PTES and PRES surveys in 2023 for the first time in recent years. The overall satisfaction score for the University was 81% for PRES, and 80% for PTES, both of which were around the historical sector mean scores. The response rates were 21% (PRES) and 5% (PTES). It is hoped that the response rates can be improved going forward, noting that it was a relatively late decision to enter these surveys in 2023.
- 4.7 The University collects and makes extensive use of data from students, including survey and focus group data obtained for specific purposes. The Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) gives students the opportunity to share their experiences on University services, facilities and communications. Data from the ASES is analysed centrally and considered by the Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC), through to the UEC.
- 4.8 Student feedback at individual course level is obtained through ongoing annual quality processes, including the Course Feedback exercise and Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs). This information is considered and analysed as part of Annual Programme Reviews, which are submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee.
- 4.9 The University has strategies in place to address non-continuation at UG level with the institutional target of at least 96% of UG entrants, UK-domiciled, continuing their studies (HESA data). Withdrawal rates are monitored throughout the year and disseminated to Schools and the Student Support & Experience Committee. Non-continuation data, by year of study, student domicile, gender, ethnicity and disability are monitored regularly and considered by the UEC, Senior Management Team and Schools. The target was exceeded in 2021 with 97.4% of students continuing their studies but, as HESA has now discontinued their performance indicators which provide benchmarked data on non-continuation, the University will be reviewing how this KPI is monitored in future.
- 4.10 When reviewing non-continuation rates across all years of study, internal data shows that non-continuation has been rising since the Covid-19 pandemic with overall non-

continuation rising from 2.6% in 2019/20 to 3.2% in 2020/21 and 5.1% in 2021/22. Strategies are in place to address non-continuation at all levels.

- 4.11 The University monitors degree classifications at subject level. Analysis of 2021/22 HESA data shows that following a gradual increase in the proportion of Good Honours classifications (First or 2:1) between 2018/19 and 2020/21 at the University of Aberdeen, the proportion dropped again in 2021/22 from 92.7% to 89.1%. There is a correlation between the proportion of Good Honours awards and the University's high tariff rank in the sector (*section 4.3 above refers*) which therefore has an impact on classifications overall.
- 4.12 The University is paying particular attention to the degree awarding gap between White, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student groups and has set a target for the gap in student achievement to be reduced to no more than 5% by 2025. Good progress has been made to date with the awarding gap reduced from 8.8% in 2020, to 7.6% in 2021 and 4.1% in 2022.
- 4.13 The University has made ambitious commitments for graduate employability in its Aberdeen 2040 Strategy. Strategy and actions are developed and taken forward through partnership-working between the Careers and Employability Service and the Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability, with the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) providing oversight. The strategic actions include the commitment to enable more students to have access to placements or equivalent work-based learning experiences while studying at Aberdeen as part of an overall approach to equip them for global employment. A Graduate Outcomes Steering Group is also in place which implements the institutional strategy for the Graduate Outcomes Survey, including review of the data and action planning. The group reports into the EEC and subsequently into the University Education Committee.
- 4.14 The results of the Graduate Outcomes Survey in 2023 show that 92.8% of UK-domiciled full-time first-degree UG graduates were in employment or further study 15 months after graduation, a slight decrease from the previous year (down by one percentage point). The proportion of UK-domiciled postgraduate graduates in employment or further study had increased from 92.5% to 96.7%. The proportion of UK-domiciled full-time first-degree UG leavers in highly skilled employment had increased from 74.3% to 76.5%, with a similar increase at postgraduate level, from 90.5% to 93.2%. Analysis of the data informs further support for graduate employability and career development and is a key priority for the University.
- 4.15 The University monitors league table performance closely, with performance on education-related metrics being regularly reviewed by the University's League Table Working Group, academic Schools, and the Senior Management Team. The University has seen a very encouraging improvement in its UK ranking in the past three years.² The University's mean UK rank has improved year-on-year, from a mean rank of 27.6 in 2020/21 to 24.2 in 2022/23. As part of the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, we will be aiming to enhance this performance further with the aim to achieve a UK rank of top 25 in all five league tables.

5 ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS

² UK rank in five key league tables is closely monitored: Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide, Complete University Guide, Guardian University Guide, Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and QS World University Rankings.

- 5.1 The University's [Aberdeen 2040 Strategy](#) encompasses four themes: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International, and Sustainable. To achieve these strategic priorities for education, a number of Task and Finish Groups (TFGs) were established to lead the development in key strategic areas. The TFGs currently include: Decolonising the Curriculum; International Learning and Student Mobility; Work Placements; Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills; EduTechGenAI: Innovating in Higher Education through Technology and Generative Artificial Intelligence; and Monitoring, Absence and Engagement. The University has embarked on a workstream of activity to develop a set of Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills. During academic year 2022-2023, a wide-ranging scoping and consultation was carried out with students, staff and external stakeholders, which informed the creation of a Skills Recognition Framework that will allow students to evidence and reflect upon the Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills developed in parallel. This will allow enhanced flexibility for students to create their own skills pathway to match their career aspirations at the same time as being supported by the University Careers and Employability Service. Furthermore, the Skills Recognition Framework will allow students to highlight their skills to employers both during and after their studies. Across academic year 2023-2024, systems and approaches used will be trialled with students and other stakeholders, with the aim of launching the framework and associated attributes and skills in academic year 2024-2025.
- 5.2 The Work Placements Task and Finish Group has produced a set of recommendations, using an evidence-base of relevant research and sector knowledge and experience, to achieve upscaling of work-based learning (WBL). The recommendations informed an agreed institutional vision, strategy, and underpinning action plan to achieve our Aberdeen 2040 objective to enable students to have access to placement or equivalent experience during their studies. Current actions and progress towards upscaling WBL is divided into the following areas of activity: (i) establishing digital systems and processes; (ii) placements policy development; (iii) institutional reporting; and (iv) a work-based learning hub. A workstream, reporting to the University's Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee, a sub-committee of UEC, will continue to progress the work to upscale WBL during 2023-2024.
- 5.3 The Decolonising the Curriculum TFG was established to lead the University's strategy in relation to decolonisation of the curriculum and continues to engage staff across the University in this process. The project is taking a multi-faceted approach. There are various components which are contributing to the decolonisation of the curriculum, including: (i) creation of dedicated webpages to centralise resources and information pertinent to decolonisation; (ii) creation of Toolkit videos, which offer guidance and tips on how to begin the process of decolonising the curriculum; (iii) ongoing collaboration with staff and students, bringing together case studies to support continuous improvement; and (iv) a community approach to enhance the educational offering with a decolonised approach. Webpages and Toolkit resources have been organised into four main sections: (i) Working with Students as Partners; (ii) What We Teach; (iii) How We Teach; and (iv) Assessment and Feedback. The [Decolonising the Curriculum](#) webpages and [Toolkit](#) resources are now available for staff and students.
- 5.4 Improvements have been ongoing across the University to proactively address the challenges of [academic integrity](#). The University is focusing on shifting the culture towards encouraging academic integrity, rather than solely emphasising the prevention and detection of academic misconduct. This is an important aspect of maintaining a fair and ethical learning environment, as well as essential for the development of graduates for their future careers. The comprehensive strategy to address academic integrity

includes training, resources, research and targeted messaging to both staff and students. By fostering a culture that encourages academic integrity and addressing emerging issues, we hope to contribute to the overall quality and fairness of education. Continuing to monitor, adapt and improve these efforts based on research and feedback is essential to maintaining their effectiveness in future.

- 5.5 The University has been actively engaged in the [Enhancement Theme](#), Resilient Learning Communities, with the submission of the Year 3 Report in June 2023, which saw the University involved in an array of initiatives at local and sector-wide level. The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) projects at a local level have developed initiatives and resources to support development of broad aspects of the student experience. The outputs from the projects have been adopted widely across Schools and professional services and continue to be discussed and disseminated widely to further increase their impact. At a sector-wide level, the University has contributed to collaborative clusters relating to micro-credentials and recognition of prior learning and has resulted in development of our own micro-credential course in Enhancing your Teaching, a popular programme currently running twice per academic year.
- 5.6 The Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS) undertook a Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) of the University in February 2023. The University was advised that the Review Panel had **confidence** that the institution is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The [QESR report](#) highlighted a number of areas of commendation, including: (i) the effective implementation of University strategies; (ii) the engagement with the Enhancement themes; (iii) an inclusive approach to blended education; and (iv) student partnership. In terms of recommendations, the following was identified: (i) ensuring the publication of External Examiner Reports to students; and (ii) continuing to finalise the University's approach to personal tutoring arrangements. An action plan has been developed and will continue to be reviewed as actions are undertaken.
- 5.7 Following the QESR, the University is developing a central repository of External Examiner Reports and Staff-Student Liaison Committee minutes which will be made available to students via the University's Virtual Learning Environment, MyAberdeen. The repository will be entitled *Acting on Feedback* and allows the University the opportunity to demonstrate the closure of the feedback loop to students. The repository will be linked to School and Course organisation pages, in order that students will be able to access the reports easily. This allows for a transparent approach for our students in the ongoing enhancement of our programmes.
- 5.8 The University has undertaken an adapted pilot of the [Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment \(TESTA\) programme](#). The pilot was successfully completed in two Schools, covering seven single-honours degree programmes. Evaluation of the initial pilot phase is currently ongoing, and adjustments will be made to the programme based on the findings of this evaluation. In terms of future plans, the following changes have been identified already: (i) involvement of School Quality Assurance Representatives in programme review meetings; (ii) delivery of School-specific training immediately upon completion of the TESTA programme, focusing on Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); (iii) the introduction of PGT programmes within the Scheme; and (iv) the introduction of a qualitative student survey in place of a quantitative survey. In relation to the Schools who have undertaken the pilot, the

majority of courses have subsequently submitted changes to either the ILOs, the assessments or both following completion of the TESTA process. Further, all Schools have created action plans based on the pilot, and these will be reviewed by colleagues in the Centre for Academic Development with the relevant School within six months.

- 5.9 The University is undertaking a pilot of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which is a means of offering global education and intercultural experiences to staff and students in different countries through online collaboration. Initial designs for a collaborative teaching room have been approved, including a room layout with two distinct zones: (i) a flexible seating space for 25 students; and (ii) five soundproof booths, designed to allow five students to work with students from another location through an interactive monitor. The room is due to be ready for use in the coming academic year.
- 5.10 The University held its 14th Annual Academic Development Symposium for staff on 27 April 2023 with the Theme '[From Surviving to Thriving: Building Resilient Learners Through Assessment and Feedback](#)'. Over 180 participants from across Scotland attended the event (in person or online) along with representatives from Aarhus University in Denmark and the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø. The event opened with an engaging keynote presentation entitled '[From Surviving to Thriving: Using Compassionate Assessment and Feedback to Foster Engagement and Effective Learning](#)' from Professors Sally Brown and Kay Sambell, who also ran an interactive 'Pragmatic Approach to Designing and Delivering Authentic Assessment Tasks' workshop. The event concluded with an [Expert Panel](#) discussion on all aspects of resilient learning, feedback and assessment. All sessions included contributions from University of Aberdeen students representing all levels of study. The symposium created a collegiate, engaging environment for staff and students at and beyond the University to network and collaborate. The event continues to thrive in the hybrid format, attracting record numbers and excellent participation throughout. Planning of next year's Symposium (April 2024) is already underway with the working title 'Embracing Diversity'.
- 5.11 The international [Higher Education Teaching and Learning Conference](#) (HETL) was hosted by the University of Aberdeen in June 2023, at P&J Live (TECA). The title for the conference was *Re-imagining Education: Collaboration and Compassion*, and the themes were in line with the four themes as set out in the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy (see 5.1 above). The conference brought together Higher Education professionals and students from across the world and provided a platform for discussion, debate, networking and collaboration on all aspects of teaching and learning in HE. The conference heard from inspirational keynote speakers, including Professor Mona Siddiqi, Professor Susan van Schalkwyk, Professor Ruth Taylor and Heather Innes.

Professor Ruth Taylor
Vice-Principal (Education)
University of Aberdeen

Further information is available from Mr Liam Dyker, Acting Assistant Registrar (Academic Services) (liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk); Academic Services, Registry, University of Aberdeen

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT
(26 September 2023)

**ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE,
2022-2023, TO THE SCOTTISH
FUNDING COUNCIL**

On behalf of the governing body of the University of Aberdeen, I confirm that we have considered the institution's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for academic year 2022/2023, including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that we are satisfied that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. We can therefore provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by the Council.

Signed for and on behalf of the University Court of the University of Aberdeen,

at: Aberdeen

on: the 26th Day of September 2023

by:

[name and designation of the signatory]

THE UNIVERSITY COURT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN, a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC013683, University Office, King's College, Regent Walk, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX, ('Aberdeen')

THE UNIVERSITY'S ARRANGEMENTS TO MAINTAIN STANDARDS AND ASSURE AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF ITS PROVISION

The University Education Committee (UEC) has strategic oversight of all aspects of education and the wider student experience. The UEC is solely a committee of Senate, and its membership consists of, among others, student representatives, the Directors of Education in each School (ensuring a clear link to the work of each School), the Deans of Educational Innovation; Student Support and Experience; Quality Assurance and Enhancement; and Employability and Entrepreneurship; the Dean of the Graduate School, with senior representatives from key Professional Services directorates. The UEC currently has two sub-committees: the Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) and the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC).

The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) oversees the University's quality procedures. The QAC reports directly to University Senate. The Committee comprises representatives from each School as well as two student members. QAC members from each School serve as a local source of advice to their School, via membership of School Education Committees. In addition, QAC members have responsibility for reviewing Quality Assurance (QA) in a separate School, ensuring externality to the process and avoiding any conflict of interest. Members are responsible for all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research quality activities in that School and build up a sound knowledge of the context and requirements within which Schools operate. The QAC is a key forum for identifying and disseminating good practice as well as ensuring the alignment with the QAA Quality Code and wider academic infrastructure. The newly-established Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG) informs the work of the Committee and is responsible for the development and regular review of education policy and regulations.

Curriculum Management: The University has a Curriculum Management process for the approval of new courses and programmes as well as changes to, and withdrawal of, existing courses and programmes. Key aims of the system are to give greater visibility to the links between learning outcomes, assessments and content, provide greater flexibility for academic colleagues to make changes, and speedier approval. To reduce multiple requests to Schools for very similar data, the system brings together a number of activities that were previously handled separately. In addition, the Programme Management Committee considers business cases from a strategic perspective and the approval of business cases for new or withdrawn programmes was brought into the Curriculum Management process as a pre-requisite before the detailed quality assurance considerations. Curriculum proposal forms are designed to ensure conformity with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), European qualifications frameworks, and QAA guidelines for programme specifications. Proposals submitted by Schools are considered to ensure alignment with School policy and resource; QAC reviews proposals to ensure conformity to institutional regulations and practice, and compliance with the QAA Quality Code and SCQF.

Annual Monitoring: Courses and Programmes: All credit-bearing provision, including collaborative programmes with other institutions where partners are expected to operate equivalent processes, is subject to annual monitoring. The University's processes incorporate feedback from students, teaching colleagues, employers, professional bodies and external examiners. A framework of expectations and areas of responsibility is in place and supported by standard templates for Schools to follow. The ACR process encourages early consideration of changes requiring QAC approval and provides a foundation for

programme monitoring. ACRs are presented in one of two formats: a short report for established courses which requires an overview of achievements and areas of development; and a detailed form for newer or recently amended courses, which requires further comment from the Course Coordinator. The APR procedures require each programme, or group of cognate programmes, to be critically appraised with regard to analysis of the ACRs of constituent courses, student demand and PSRB expectations, national benchmark statements and areas for development. With over 700 programmes drawing on more than 5,500 courses being delivered throughout the institution annually, the QAC reviews a random sample of courses from each School annually and considers all APRs, responding formally to Schools on both. Any recommendations are responded to by Schools during the next cycle of review.

Internal Teaching Review (ITR) is the University's system of periodic review of Schools' teaching and learning provision and the process by which a Schools' programmes are revalidated. ITR provides a formal opportunity for Schools to reflect on and critically evaluate education provision and for the University to satisfy itself that quality and standards are being maintained and that issues are being addressed. As part of this process, the engagement of student-facing Professional Services helps to maintain collaborative, collegiate relationships between Professional Services departments and Schools around the co-curriculum, educational development, and effective delivery of support. The review process is enhancement driven and provides a collegiate and supportive forum for building upon existing good practice and identifying areas for potential enhancement.

External Examiners play a major role in monitoring the quality of provision, ensuring standards are maintained on a comparable level with universities throughout the UK, and the system of assessment is consistent, transparent and fair to all students. External examiners are appointed by the University Court in a procedure that aligns with the expectations of the QAA Quality Code. External Examiners input into the development of course and programme proposals and are asked to identify and provide details of any courses or programmes exemplifying what they consider to be good practice in their annual reports. They are asked to comment on the appropriateness of design, marking, standards, conduct and administration of assessments, ensuring they are just and unbiased. These reports are then considered and responded to formally by the relevant Head of School and by QAC. The reports are also made available to students via the Virtual Learning Environment, MyAberdeen. A number of institutional initiatives including the revisions to the grading process and the degree classification algorithms have been driven by the central analysis of comments raised by external examiners.

Student Feedback on taught courses is gathered primarily via an annual online 'Course Feedback' form, and twice-yearly 'Staff–Student Liaison Committee' (SSLC) meetings. Research student feedback is collected via annual questionnaire and six-monthly monitoring reports and forms a component – along with External Examiner comments – of our ACRs. Whilst the expected, and minimum, methods for Schools to gather student feedback are the course feedback exercise and SSLCs, Schools are encouraged to consider different and innovative methods to give students the opportunity to provide feedback. Several Schools have courses which make use of a mid-term course feedback form to identify any issues which then can be acted upon before the course ends, whilst others hold student focus groups and informal feedback sessions to allow students to express any concerns or raise issues with the School throughout the academic year.

The University's **Degree Regulations** specify the criteria for our awards. Specific assessment policy and practices are set out in the University's Academic Quality Handbook

(AQH) and conform to the SCQF and QAA Quality Code. The University employs a number of mechanisms related to ensuring the standards of its awards, including clear guidelines in regard to the procedures to be followed in instances of student misconduct, medical and other extenuating circumstances, and student appeals.

SCHEDULE OF INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS

Date of Review	School	Period Under Review
AY 2022/2023		
Autumn (Nov 2022)	Business School	2016/2017 – 2021/2022
Spring (Apr 2023)	School of Psychology	2017/2018 – 2021/2022
AY 2023/2024		
Autumn (Nov 2023)	School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture	2017/2018 – 2022/2023
Spring (Mar 2024)	School of Biological Sciences	2018/2019 – 2022/2023
AY 2024/2025		
Autumn (Oct 2024)	School of Engineering	2019/2020 – 2023/2024
Autumn (Nov 2024)	School of Education	2018/2019 – 2023/2024
Spring (Mar 2025)	School of Natural and Computing Science	2019/2020 – 2023/2024
AY 2025/2026		
Autumn (Nov 2025)	School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (Medical Sciences)	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
Spring (Feb 2026)	School of Law	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
Spring (Mar 2026)	School of Social Science	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
AY 2026/2027		
Autumn (Oct 2026)	School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (Medicine and Dentistry)	2021/2022 – 2025/2026
Spring (Feb 2027)	School of Geosciences	2021/2022 – 2025/2026
Spring (Mar 2027)	School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	2021/2022 – 2025/2026

APPENDIX IV**SCHEDULE OF REVIEWS BY PROFESSIONAL AND STATUTORY BODIES
ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/2023**

Accrediting Body	Accredited Programme(s)	Review Last Undertaken
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	MSc International Human Resource Management	--
General Dental Council	DipHE in Dental Technology	May 2023
Geological Society	BSc Geology and Petroleum Geology	August 2023
Nursing and Midwifery Council	Independent and Supplementary Nurse Prescribing (part of the MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice)	January 2023
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors	MA Real Estates PGT Programmes in Real Estate	March 2023
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors	Master of Land Economy	March 2023

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

COURT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS 2023/24**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper sets out recommendations from the Governance and Nominations Committee for the composition and membership of the Court's standing sub-committees to take effect for the remainder of the academic year 2023/24. These are detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The proposals include that the Senior Governor be appointed to Chair the Governance and Nominations Committee. This was a recommendation of the Phase 1 Review of Governance, which had been implemented in 2021/22 but paused in 2022/23 to enable the Senior Governor to focus on chairing meetings of Court.
- 1.3 The recommendations follow consideration by the Governance and Nominations Committee, by circulation.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER CONSIDERATION REQUIRED BY

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered by	Governance & Nominations Committee	By circulation September 2023
Further approval required by	Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 3.1 The paper is **for approval**.

4. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposals for changes to the committee memberships are in part a consequence of recent or forthcoming changes in the membership of Court, with some members retiring and new members joining. In addition, the changes respond to feedback that the Senior Governor has received from some members regarding workload where in some cases, in order to maintain independent majorities on committees, some members were undertaking two or three committee roles.

- 4.2 To address this, the proposals include adjustments to some of the committee compositions to reduce the number of independent members but introduce co-opted independent external members (as is currently done on Audit and Risk Committee). These would be independent (non-staff, non-student) but not members of Court. However, they could also be a potential “pipeline” of new independent members of Court.
- 4.3 The proposals also seek to reflect the expertise, experience or interests of members. Where changes to current portfolios are proposed, these have been the subject of specific engagement with the member concerned.
- 4.4 The Committee were reminded that Court previously agreed the following principles for the membership of Court committees:
- To adopt an approach which, consistent with the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, makes the skills, competencies and necessary time of members the primary determinant of committee membership as assessed and recommended to Court by the Governance and Nominations Committee;
 - That each Court member will be a member of at least one Court sub-committee;
 - That each committee, with the exception of the Audit and Risk Committee, will include at least one staff and one student member of Court. Their compositions would no longer, however, specify particular constituencies of staff court members although each should include at least one Senate Assessor;
 - That the gender and diversity mix of committees is also part of the assessment of the membership of Court committees;
 - That the requirements of sector guidance on composition and membership are also met, including for majorities of independent members on the Governance and Nominations and Remuneration Committee.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 5.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk).

19 September 2023

Confidentiality Status: Open

Court Committee and Sub-Committee/Advisory Group Memberships

2022/23

Court Member	AUDIT & RISK (6 including additional co-opted to core formal composition of 5)	GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS (9)	REMUNERATION (7)	FINANCE & RESOURCING (9)	COMMERCIAL'N (9)	INVESTMENT (sub-committee of FRC) (8)	PENSIONS ADVISORY GROUP (5)
CHAIR	Eleanor Bentley	Iain Percival	Iain Mackay	Anne Minto	Otto Thoresen	Caryn Miller	Gary McRae
Principal/SMT		George Boyne				Mark White (ex-officio)	Mark White
Staff/Student/TU		Vanessa Mabonso Helen Martin	Vanessa Mabonso Owen Cox	Camilo Torres-Barragan Nick Edwards	Martina Chukwuma-Ezike Martin Mills	Camilo Torres-Barragan (AUSA)	Owen Cox
Senate		Joachim Schaper	Diane Skatun	Ilia Xypolia	Neil Vargesson		Diane Skatun
Independent	Keith Anderson Caryn Miller	Julie Ashworth Colette Backwell Robert Traynham Vacancy	Julie Ashworth Colette Backwell Otto Thoresen	Julie Ashworth Gary McRae Lyndsay Menzies Robert Traynham Charlotte Pope-Williams	Julie Ashworth Gary McRae Iain Mackay Iain Percival Caryn Miller	Lyndsay Menzies (FRC)	Otto Thoresen Vacancy
External Co-opt	Luke Halliday Kevin Reynard Rhibetnan Yaktal					2 x Dev Trust 2 x External Appts.	

2023/24 (Green = new Members of Court, Blue = new to the Committee, strike through = current member moving out/to different category)

Court Member	AUDIT & RISK (5+1?)	GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS (8+2?)	REMUNERATION (6 + 1)	FINANCE & RESOURCING (7+2?)	COMMERCIALISATION (6+2?)	INVESTMENT (sub-committee of FRC) (8)	PENSIONS ADVISORY GROUP (5)
CHAIR (casting vote)	Eleanor Bentley	Julie Ashworth	Iain Mackay	Anne Minto	Otto Thoresen	Caryn Miller	Gary McRae Otto Thoresen
Principal/SMT		George Boyne				Mark White (ex-officio)	Mark White
Staff/Student/TU		Vanessa Mabonso Sai Shraddha S. Viswanathan Helen Martin Iain Grant	Vanessa Mabonso Owen Cox	Vanessa Mabonso Helen Martin	Martina Chukwuma-Ezike Martin Barker	Sai Shraddha S. Viswanathan (AUSA)	Owen Cox
Senate		Joachim Schaper Ilia Xypolia	Diane Skatun	Ilia Xypolia Neil Vargesson	Neil Vargesson Joachim Schaper		Diane Skatun
Independent	Caryn Miller Luke Halliday	Julie Ashworth Robert Traynham Alison Rankin Adaku Uhere (Senior Independent Member)	Julie Ashworth Otto Thoresen Charlotte Pope-Williams	Julie Ashworth Gary McRae Lyndsay Menzies Robert Traynham Charlotte Pope-Williams	Julie Ashworth Gary McRae Iain Mackay Caryn Miller	Lyndsay Menzies (FRC)	Otto Thoresen Luke Halliday
External Co-opt	Luke Halliday Kevin Reynard Rhibetnan Yaktal + 1 vacancy	+2? People/Culture	+1?	+1? financial	+2? HE pipeline experience	2 x Dev Trust 2 x External Appts.	

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COURT
SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

1.1 This paper encloses a draft schedule of Court business for the year ahead (Appendix 1). The schedule is grouped into three thematic areas of business:

- **Strategy & Performance;**
- **Compliance and Regulatory;**
- **Standing Items**

1.2 It is acknowledged that priorities for the Court's time may emerge from discussions at this forthcoming strategy meeting. It is anticipated that this will inform the schedule, in particular, topics for extended discussions across the year.

1.3 Comments and feedback are very much welcome on this and on whether there are further items of business that should be added to, or removed from, the schedule.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SMT	14 September 2023
Further consideration/approval required by	University Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 The paper is for information and comment.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk.

11 September 2023

Confidentiality Status: Open

COURT – Schedule of Business 2023-24

		Meeting Dates				
Business Area		September	November	February	April	June
STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE	Extended Discussion Session	Strategy Meeting	Engaging Court as Stakeholder on Re-imagining our Campus (or at pre-Court Dinner Seminar) (TBC)	Topic (TBC)	REF 'Stocktake' Report (TBC)	'Deep Dive': Results of the Re-Imagining our Campuses Project
	Financial Sustainability	Performance/KPIS for 2022-23 and Operational Plan for 2023-24 Update on Financial Year-End 2022-23 and in year 2023/24 Forecast Update	Budget Report/Student Population Intake for 2023/24 Update on Refresh of Student Recruitment Strategy	Report on Forecast Budget Position (Post-January Student Intake)	Report on Position of Pension Schemes and USS Debt Monitoring Report Report on Forecast Budget Position	Financial Planning and Budgets 2024/25 to 2026/27 (incl Cash Flow Projection Capital Expenditure) Report on Forecast Year-End Budget Position
	Risk	Bi-Annual Report on Risk Management			Bi-Annual Report on Risk Management	
	People & Inclusion			Update on Re-imagining Our Campuses Project Report Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Equal Pay Audit and Gender Pay Gap Report	
	Reputation and Engagement		League Table Performance		Development and Alumni Relations Annual Report Students' Association Report	

		Meeting Dates				
Business Area		September	November	February	April	June
	Sustainability			Update on Sustainability and Statutory Climate Report to Scottish Government		
	International				Report on International Partnerships inc Qatar AFG College Partnership	
	Research & Interdisciplinarity		Research Strategy and REF		See extended discussion item	
	Education		Update on 2040 Education Work			
COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY		Annual Report to SFC on Institutional-Led Review of Teaching Quality	Annual Report and Accounts		Annual Report on Gaelic Language Plan (fulfilling SFC requirement for Governing Bodies)	Strategic Financial Planning Forecast to SFC
		SFC Outcome Agreement	Going Concern Report		Prevent Duty Report	Senior Governor's Annual Performance Review
			External Auditor's Report and Rep Letter			Principal's Annual Performance Review
			Audit Committee Annual Report			Court Committee Memberships for 2024/25

	Meeting Dates				
Business Area	September	November	February	April	June
		Internal Auditor's Annual Report			Court Self-Effectiveness Evaluation
		Treasury Management Report (Bond Covenant Compliance)			
		Annual Report on Procurement			
		Modern Slavery Statement (Annual)			
		Research Governance Statement			
		Annual Report on Health, Safety & Wellbeing			
STANDING ITEMS	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees
	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log
	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update
	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update
	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update
		Senate	Senate	Senate	Senate

	Meeting Dates				
Business Area	September	November	February	April	June
	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports inc: Remuneration Committee Report on Mid-Year Review of Principal's Objectives Governance and Nominations Committee - Report on Recruitment of Court Members	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Remuneration Committee Report to Court**1. Purpose of the paper**

1.1 This paper is presented to Court to provide an overview of the business transacted at the most recent meeting of the Remuneration Committee on 10 August 2023.

2. Previous consideration by/further approval required

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	Court	26 September 2023

3. Recommended action

3.1 The University Court is invited to review and **note** the paper presented.

4. Remuneration Committee update

4.1 The Remuneration Committee met on the 10 August 2023 to discuss the following items of business:

- Recommendations from Senior Staff Pay Policy and implementation
- Severance and Retention Policy
- Salary banding
- Forward timetable and process for the Principal's review for the next academic year 2023/2024
- Principal's review 2022/23.

5. Recommendations from Senior Staff Pay Policy and implementation

5.1 The Committee received a paper from the Director of People regarding recommendations relating to, and implementation of, the Senior Staff Pay Policy.

5.2 The Committee discussed the difference in approach and outcomes for staff that were both 'on scale' and 'off scale'. These terms refer to the national pay spine used within the university sector, with there being 54 points on the pay scale and anything above that point would be regarded as 'off scale' (grade 9 within the University). Committee members were reminded that those on pay

grades 1-8 were eligible for an automatic national uplift and could apply for a recognition award (which could either be consolidated or non-consolidated).

- 5.3 The Committee discussed the success rate of applications and the perception of the policy amongst colleagues, specifically whether the process was seen as suitably collegiate and effective. In response it was recorded that not every application was successful and that the awards given were first assessed against the criteria and then calibrated against the budget envelope, if required.
- 5.4 The Committee enquired as to whether there were any identifiable obstacles preventing people from applying for awards under the policy. In response, it was explained that the panel reviewing applications consider a number of issues to ensure a balance of awards across different directorates and backgrounds and to take into consideration the current level of remuneration an individual receives.
- 5.5 The Chair recognised the work that had been done to improve the gender pay gap on the academic side, and commented that the direction of travel in the professional services area was more positive. It was noted that the Gender Pay Gap report reflected two genders and discussed the possibility of including other genders in future iterations of the report. A further point was made about data relating to ethnicity and nationality and how best to capture and report that data.
- 5.6 In conclusion, the Committee observed that the policy appeared to be working well and that the related criteria and processes were having the desired impact.

6. Severance and Retention Policy

- 6.1 A brief paper was provided to the Committee offering an update on cases that have been progressed under the policy.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed the retention aspect of the policy and enquired as to whether retention payments came with any conditions or deferrals/delayed release attached to the award. The use of deferral components are not used frequently by the University, but could be instigated for business critical functions or projects. It was suggested that this may benefit further reflection as it is considered good practice in some sectors.

7. Salary banding

- 7.1 The Committee reviewed and discussed the update of staff data relating to the different professorial and professional services salary bands. Contributions relating to this item focused on the purpose and benefit of this data being disclosed, with a view to making the information more relevant to interested parties.

8. Forward timetable and process for the Principal's review for the next academic year 2023/2024

- 8.1 The Committee reflected on the effectiveness of the recent review process for the Principal and agreed a timetable for 2023/24.
- 8.2 The Committee agreed to the proposed inclusion of a mid-year review of the Principal's objectives. This represents a new step within the process to ensure that the Principal is given the support required to successfully meet the agreed objectives and expectations of Court.

9. Principal's review

- 9.1 The Committee was invited to reflect on the recent review of the Principal and to note the objectives for 2023/24. The Senior Governor suggested there may be some benefit in introducing a written component to the process for future exercises.

10. Committee effectiveness

- 10.1 In addition to the above business, it was agreed that the Committee would reflect and review its overall remit and purpose and put forward revised terms of references, if required. This process would be supported by the effectiveness questionnaires circulated to Court and the Remuneration Committee.

11. Further information

- 11.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk), or Louise Thomson, Head of Governance and Executive Support (louise.thomson@abdn.ac.uk).

12 September 2023 v2

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

PENSIONS ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

- 1.1 This paper reports to Court on a meeting of the Pensions Advisory Group that was held on 4 September 2023, with a single item agenda to consider a consultation from Universities UK regarding the USS 2023 valuation. Due to the date of the consultation closing for responses on 22nd September, this has been separately communicated to Court together with a draft University response for approval by circulation.
- 1.2 The agenda and papers and draft minutes are available within the [Decision Time Resources](#) area for members of Court.
- 1.3 The report is for information.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER CONSIDERATION REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered by	n/a	n/a
Further consideration required by	University Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 3.1 The Court is invited to note the report which is for information.

4. UUK CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE USS TECHNICAL PROVISIONS FOR THE 2023 ACTUARIAL SCHEME VALUATION

- 4.1 The Group received documents relating to a consultation that had been received from Universities UK (UUK) regarding the USS scheme 2023 valuation. While the consultation was formally between the USS Trustee and UUK as the formally nominated employers' representative body, UUK was seeking comments and input from all employers to then put forward a response to USS that reflected the collective view. This covered two broad questions – the technical assumptions used for the valuation and the objectives for the future development and reform of USS.

4.2 The Group agreed that a response should be submitted. It discussed the likely content and key points that a University response should include and agreed to receive a draft response for review and for subsequent recommendation to Court for approval by circulation.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 Further information is available from or Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Pensions Advisory Group (email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk).

13 September 2023

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

UPDATE ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR AND UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS – OPERATING ENVIRONMENT CONTEXT BRIEFING

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides University Court with a brief overview of policy developments relating to higher education since the end of May 2023, which are of particular relevance for the University of Aberdeen.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY/FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SMT ARC FRC Senate	17 August 2023 5 September 2023 14 September 2023 20 September 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Court is invited to note the update.

4. DISCUSSION

The following sections highlight key policy developments of relevance to the University and the higher education sector from late May until September 2023.

UK DEVELOPMENTS**5. PAY AND PENSIONS**

- 5.1 USS is consulting employer representatives via UUK on restoring pension benefits to pre-April 2022 levels and reducing contributions from 31.4% to 20.6%, since an evaluation in July showed that the financial position of the pension fund had improved considerably and it was likely to report a surplus. The consultation process will conclude in late September with new rates likely to be effective by 1 April 2024.
- 5.2 The UCU current strike mandate on pay and conditions expires on 30 September and the UCU Higher Education Committee voted on 14 August to take further industrial action before the end of September and launch a rebalot to seek a mandate for further action beyond this date. The [marking and assessment boycott was withdrawn](#) in early September but strike action has been confirmed for 25-29 September. UCEA made clear in July its willingness to work with UCU and other unions on a joint, independently facilitated review of sector finances, but has not received a formal response.
- 5.3 The ongoing dispute has put the collective bargaining system under strain as the impact of the strikes is felt differently across the sector and universities' financial

positions vary greatly. MAB was undertaken by a small minority of UCU members and was concentrated in a minority of institutions (Russell Group and some other research-intensive universities) and in a minority of disciplines (mostly humanities and social sciences). Data provided by universities to UCEA suggests that around 97% of students across the UK graduated normally; 100% of students did so at the University of Aberdeen.

- 5.4 Unite [confirmed](#) that members in several Scottish universities were to be balloted for strike action between 17 July and 21 August following a failure to reach agreement on the 2023/24 pay award. Aberdeen was one of the universities balloted along with Heriot Watt, Glasgow, Strathclyde, Glasgow Caledonian, Glasgow School of Art, Dundee, Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier. The Aberdeen branch of Unite will not participate in industrial action as the 50% threshold for action was not met.
- 5.5 Unison ran a strike ballot from 31 May to 31 July and 13 higher education institutions have met the threshold for action. The Aberdeen branch of Unison will not participate as the 50% threshold for action was narrowly missed.

6. UK GOVERNMENT HE POLICY STATEMENT AND REFORM: RESPONSE TO THE POST-18 REVIEW

- 6.1 As readers may remember, Sir Philip Augar and his independent panel published the findings of their [review of post-18 education and funding](#) in May 2019. The UK government then carried out a [consultation on higher education reform](#) in 2022 to seek views on a range of policies derived from the Augar Review. As a final step in the review process, the Government published on 17 July its [response](#) to the consultation. The reforms only apply to the English HE sector but could have an impact on the devolved nations.
- 6.2 Of key interest is the Government's response to 'low value provision'. In response to the Augar Review, the consultation in 2022 had sought views on the introduction of student number controls and minimum entry requirements to 'bear down on low value degrees.' Both proposals created significant nervousness in the English sector. However, rather than impose direct controls, the Government has, in its response, instructed the OfS to use its existing powers to impose number caps on courses found, through a prior investigation, to be in breach of registration condition B3 (relating to student continuation and completion, outcomes and employment).
- 6.3 Financial support for foundation year degrees has been reduced with the maximum fee that can be charged for classroom-based foundation courses reduced from £9,250 to £5,760. There has been speculation that this could disproportionately affect the provision of foundation courses in social sciences and humanities in England, which in turn could potentially increase demand in Scotland.
- 6.4 There is some concern in the sector that the government's rhetoric around earning potential of university degrees will have a disproportionate impact on humanities and creative courses. [UUK](#) regretted the negative tone of the government's response emphasising that measures of quality and value in higher education should not be based on income data alone. UUK further noted that, as the vast majority of courses exceed the thresholds, any measures taken should be proportionate.

7. IMMIGRATION

- 7.1 Following on from Suella Braverman's [statement on 23 May](#) announcing action to be taken in response to the rapid increase in sponsored study visas, the Home Office updated the immigration rules on 17 July, removing the right for international students to bring dependants to the UK unless they are on PGR courses, and preventing

international students from switching out of the student route into work routes before their studies are completed. The changes will apply to students starting courses from 1 January 2024. There have been frequent calls in the sector for students to be removed from the net migration statistics, but the government has not commented on this issue.

- 7.2 On 13 July the UK government also [announced](#) in Parliament plans to increase the Immigration Health Surcharge by 66% to £1,035 per person (discounted rate for students will increase by 65% to £776), while the cost of study visas is set to rise by at least 20 percent, further increasing costs for international students. The Government has not confirmed when this increase will come into effect.

8. HORIZON EUROPE

- 8.1 [The UK Government finally confirmed](#) on 7 September that the UK would associate to the €100bn [Horizon Europe and Copernicus](#), the European Earth Observation programme, after a near three-year uncertainty and a particularly tense wait over the summer of 2023. UK researchers are now able to apply for grants and bid to take part in projects under Horizon as a fully associated member for the remaining life of the programme to 2027.
- 8.2 Following this news, the University's Research Committee has instructed School Research Directors to prioritise the revitalisation of European research networks and research activities relevant to the Horizon Europe scheme to maximise engagement.

9. FUTURE RESEARCH ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME (FRAP) – REF 2028

- 9.1 The [initial decisions of the Future Research Assessment Programme were](#) published on 15 June, setting out the parameters of the next REF. REF 2028 will have an increased emphasis on the research environment and research culture and to that end the methodology has been changed. 'Contribution to knowledge and understanding' will replace the 'outputs' element and will be reduced to 50 percent, with 10 percent of this score based on broader contributions to the advancement of the discipline. 'People, culture and environment' will replace the previous 'environment' element, contributing 25% to the overall assessment and has been expanded to include research culture. 'Engagement and impact' (via case studies) will contribute 25%, replacing the 'impact' element.
- 9.2 Work of all researchers and research-enabling staff is eligible for submission, and research volume determined by the number of staff with responsibility for research (drawn from HESA records). In an effort to increase inclusivity and move away from assessment of individuals, there will be no minimum or maximum contribution from individuals included in the exercise. Consultation processes have commenced with the [first consultation](#) closing on 6 October.
- 9.3 The UK funding bodies also published on 13 July [three new reports on REF 2021](#). The first report sets out costs associated with REF, showing that the widening of scope in REF 2021 contributed to approx. 50% increase in costs to universities but a community survey indicated that respondents believed the benefits outweighed the costs. REF 2028 aims to reduce costs by around £100 million. The second report on REF outcomes for equality-related characteristics found that staff with some characteristics are less likely to be included in REF and are more likely to receive lower scores, and the third report on engagement includes feedback on REF 2021.

10. INVESTMENT ZONE PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The University was proactive in lobbying for Aberdeen to be considered for the new [Investment Zone Programme](#) set forward in the UK Government Spring Budget in

March, and on 30 June it was announced that Aberdeen and Glasgow have been chosen as investment zones in Scotland.

- 10.2 A total of 12 knowledge-intensive low-tax growth zones will be established across the UK with a focus on sectors such as digital and technology, life sciences, creative industries, and green industries, to drive growth in key future sectors and bring investment to local areas. Each zone is to receive £80m over five years comprising a mix of flexible spend and fiscal incentives (including tax sites).
- 10.3 The detailed technical guidance for Investment Zones in England was released on 11 July, but the guidance for Scotland is still in preparation. The English guidance places research institutions at the centre of the proposals and requires at least one such organisation to be a co-signatory of any Investment Zone proposal.
- 10.4 The region has in place a Steering Group to oversee the development of Investment Zone (IZ) proposals, with the Principal representing the University of Aberdeen on this group. An Investment Zone Working Group has also been created to focus on developing the strategic case for an IZ in the region and a plan for possible interventions; the Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) is a member of the working group.

11. UUK: IMPACT OF UNIVERSITIES

- 11.1 Universities UK published on 30 June a report on sector impact entitled [Impact of Universities: In Numbers](#), providing data to evidence the UK university sector's key benefits, and how it grows the economy and leads in research and innovation.

12. UUK: TACKLING RACIAL HARASSMENT

- 12.1 On 5 July, UUK published a new report: [Tackling Racial Harassment: Progress Since 2020](#). The report provides an update on progress in addressing the recommendations set out in the original report in November 2020. The University contributed to the project, including a [case study](#) on internal and external partnership working, led by Ruth Taylor, VP Education, and Janine Chalmers, Head of Organisational Development, HR.

13. POLITICAL PARTY STRATEGIES

- 13.1 Keir Starmer launched the Labour party's [mission to break down barriers to opportunity](#) on 6 July, the last of five national missions underpinning the party manifesto ahead of the upcoming election. The fifth mission sets out policies for "shattering the glass ceiling" and expanding opportunity for every child at every stage of education. Specifically on higher education, the [statement](#) highlights the value and potential of universities, spreading opportunity and supporting local growth. Although the party has now confirmed that they have abandoned plans to abolish tuition fees, the statement commits to reforming the tuition fees system to make it fairer, streamlining of the regulatory landscape that covers the HE and FE sector, supporting cooperation and collaboration between colleges and universities, and harnessing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement to meet skills needs. The party also commits to working with universities to boost spin-outs to drive economic growth and productivity.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCOTLAND

June was a busy month for the Scottish Government with the publication of a raft of new strategies and consultation outcomes, none of which have been published with clear timescales or dedicated funding attached.

14. ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION (NSET)

14.1 The Scottish Government published its first [annual report for Scotland's ten year National Strategy for Economic Transformation \(NSET\)](#) on 21 June 2023. The report sets out progress against the Strategy's six programmes (and 79 actions) in the first year of implementation. Key milestones relevant to HE include the appointment of Mark Logan as Chief Entrepreneur, drafting of a blueprint for Entrepreneurial Campuses (see section 19 below), launch of the first tranche of the hydrogen investment programme, the allocation of £50m through the Just Transition Fund to support the transition of the North East and Moray towards a low carbon economy, an independent review of the Skills Delivery Landscape (see section 17 below), interim publication of the Purpose and Principles Plan (see section 20 below), and the establishment of the First Minister's Investor Panel to attract global investors.

15. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT LETTER OF GUIDANCE 2023-24

15.1 [The Ministerial letter of guidance to the Scottish Funding Council for 2023-24](#) was issued in early June. In the letter, Graeme Dey, Minister for Higher and Further Education, instructs the SFC to work in line with Scottish Government ambitions as set out in [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) (NSET – as above), the [Policy Prospectus](#) from April 2023, and the [National Performance Framework](#). It is noted that the letter may be updated once the Government has responded to the recommendations of the Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape (see section 17 below). The guidance emphasises SFC's role in identifying efficiencies and opportunities for reform to "sustain the delivery of public services within the budget allocations".

16. INNOVATION STRATEGY

16.1 The Scottish Government published a ten-year [Innovation Strategy](#) on 9 June, as set out in the 2021/22 Programme for Government. The new strategy, co-produced with partners across the country and led by a Steering Group co-chaired between Scottish Ministers and Sir Jim McDonald, sets out a plan for ensuring that Scottish innovators, entrepreneurs and companies catch up with international competitors and "return Scotland to a central role on the global innovation stage".

16.2 The strategy links directly with NSET and identifies four programmes of action: (i) Building four national innovation clusters in energy transition, health and life sciences, data and digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing; (ii) Recalibrate and consolidate the innovation investment landscape to maximise funding opportunities in areas of strength; (iii) Introduce a commercialisation programme in three parts (including plans to establish a co-invested £100m Innovation Fund although it is indicated that this may not all be new investment, the development of a Research Commercialisation Action Plan, and delivery of Entrepreneurial Campuses); and (iv) Introduce an innovation-themed National Productivity Programme to support SMEs. An innovation scorecard will be published to assess the strength and performance of this new innovation system underpinned by industry, academia and the public sector.

16.3 Capacity building efforts underway at the University, such as the appointment of School Enterprise and Innovation Champions, expansion of the number of Entrepreneurs in Residence, work with regional partners (including Opportunity North East) to develop a Venture Mentoring Service, and investment in Professional Services support for business engagement, all align with the ambitions of the Strategy. The strategy and the central role that universities will have in making Scotland a leader in innovation through its national and international connections was [welcomed by Universities Scotland](#).

17. REVIEW OF THE SKILLS DELIVERY LANDSCAPE (WITHERS REVIEW)

17.1 The outcome of a review of the skills delivery landscape in Scotland, [Fit for the future: Developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation](#), led by James Withers, was published on 7 June which made five key structural recommendations relating to the public body skills landscape: (i) move responsibility for the national skills agenda to the Government, away from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the SFC; (ii) create a single funding body with responsibility for all post-school learning and training, merging the functions of the SFC and SDS, and potentially taking over the responsibilities currently held by SAAS, (iii) move responsibility for the development and accreditation of all public post-school qualifications and the skills frameworks and occupational standards to a new qualifications body (successor to the SQA), (iv) reform SDS as a national careers service rather than a skills agency, and (v) give enterprise agencies a clear remit to support businesses with workforce planning.

17.2 The Minister for Further and Higher Education announced that he would review the findings over the summer, but concerns have been raised in the sector over the potential dislocation of university teaching and skills provision from research and knowledge exchange and the impact this could have on policy and funding support.

18. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT (HAYWARD REVIEW)

18.1 The outcome of another independent review commissioned by the Scottish Government and led by Louise Hayward, [Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#), was published on 22 June, proposing reform of qualifications for senior phase learners (15-18 years old).

18.2 The report puts forward 26 recommendations, including the introduction of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA) as a graduation certificate for all senior phase educational settings, a review of curriculum and assessment, the discontinuation of exams in S4 and no external exams until SCQF level 6 (i.e. Higher), and the introduction of a digital profile for all learners to allow them to record personal achievements and plan future learning.

18.3 Should the recommendations be adopted, universities will need to recognise the new SDA in admissions processes. A greater emphasis on interdisciplinarity at secondary level may also create increased demand at university level, but these changes will need UK-wide recognition.

19. ENTREPRENEURIAL CAMPUS BLUEPRINT (TUFFEE REVIEW)

19.1 On 27 June, the First Minister [launched a ten-year plan](#) towards developing a network of world-class entrepreneurial campuses at Scotland's universities and colleges. The Entrepreneurial Campus project arose out of the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in 2020 and was subsequently a key action in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) and in the Innovation Strategy (section 16 above).

19.2 The [report](#), drawn up by Ross Tuffee and Joe Little, sets out 58 actions for institutions and government under ten themes. The report notes that Scotland will need to accelerate the evolution of entrepreneurship through strategic leadership and cultural change within institutions, if it is to catch up with global competitors. It is recommended that the Scottish Government creates a National Centre for Social and Impact-Led Entrepreneurship to support institutions and establishes an umbrella function to oversee the change required to deliver the strategy. A place-based approach should be taken to collaborations, access to academics and campus resources for businesses looking to innovate should be simplified, the curriculum should be revised to deliver practical credit-bearing entrepreneurial skills courses for all students, universities

should attract alumni and entrepreneurs into the sector as practitioners and mentors, and provide support and education for spin-out founders. The University is currently carrying out a mapping exercise to understand how Aberdeen is positioned as an institution to respond to the strategy.

- 19.3 With regard to funding, it is recommended that universities and government offer funding for start-ups and scale-ups and that entrepreneurial maturity is gauged through the introduction of a sector-wide accreditation system. Further detail is awaited on the adoption of the recommendations but the SFC has announced a [£5.5m increase in the University Innovation Fund \(UIF\)](#) for the sector in 2023/24 to help universities deliver the blueprint and the Innovation Strategy.

20. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES FOR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SKILLS

- 20.1 Following the publication of the above reviews, the Scottish Government published on 28 June the [Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills](#), a framework which sets out the policy direction for reforms of the tertiary education, skills and research system to create a 'transparent, resilient and trusted, supportive and equitable, high quality, globally respected, and agile and responsive post-school system'.
- 20.2 The Purpose and Principles framework and the supporting documents has been heavily informed by the Withers and Hayward reviews, with [initial priorities](#) including: the development of a new national model of public funding for the HE and FE sector, including consideration of options to deliver a single funding body; the introduction of a model for student support that takes account of all provision pathways and looks specifically at part-time learners; reform of the post-school qualifications landscape; embedding careers advice and education within communities, educational settings and workplaces (as recommended by the [Careers by Design Review Report](#) in 2022); review of apprenticeships and training; a pilot international mobility programme; and moving skills planning to the Scottish Government as recommended by the Withers Review.
- 20.3 The sector has cautiously welcomed the Purpose and Principles Framework with widespread concerns that the proposed single funding body will become a governmental body rather than arms-length, and that funding per student will be aligned at FE and HE level and levelled down. [Universities Scotland](#) noted that the Purpose and Principles policy could add value as an overarching framework for the various strategic reports issued by the Scottish government in June, but reiterated the need for clear connections between the different strategies published recently, and proper investment to ensure the principles could be delivered in practice.

21. SUMMER SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 21.1 The Scottish Government has completed a review of the future of student summer support which started in 2021 and published a [report](#) on 28 June setting out interim recommendations for tackling inequality in relation to summer support for students. Key recommendations relate to financial support available over the summer, the timing of payments, and the provision of holistic support beyond financial matters. The majority of the recommendations have been implemented, including the announcement of a £900 uplift to the HE UG student support package in 2023/24 and an uplift to the care experienced bursary.

UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

22. RECENT STAFF GRANTS

22.1 Recent research grants to staff over the summer include:

- Professor Kate Britton, School of Geosciences (Archaeology), has been awarded £1.7m from the European Research Council to investigate the earliest period in which humans may have inhabited Scotland.
- Three academics from the University of Aberdeen have been awarded funding from the RSE in the spring 2023 Research Awards Programme. Dr Kirsten Darling-McQuistan, School of Education, received funding as part of an international collaborative team who are investigating models of teacher education. Dr Burcu Yüksel Ripley, Dr Alisdair MacPherson and Ms Luci Carey in the School of Law received a Research Workshop Grant for research into digital assets in Scots private law; and Dr Ieuan Seymour, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, received an RSE Small Research Grant for an investigation into sustainable batteries.
- The Sand Injectites joint industry project, led by Dr Matthew Brett in the School of Geosciences, has secured £1.35m Phase 5 funding from a range of partners (AkerBP, Apache North Sea Limited, Conoco Phillips Skandinavia AS, DNO Norge AS, Equinor Energy AS, Inpex Idemitsu Norge AS, Neo Energy Upstream UK Limited, Premier Oil UK Limited, VAR Energi AS).
- Funding secured for investment into specialist research equipment include:
 - Dr Debbie Wilkinson and her team in the Microscopy and Histology Facility in MMSN have received a £533k grant from the BBSRC for a state-of-the-art Microscope for Transforming Imaging for Bioscience Discoveries.
 - Professor Marcel Jaspars and his team in the School of Natural and Computing Sciences have received a £810k grant from the BBSRC for Analysis of biological small molecule mixtures using multiple modes of mass spectrometric fragmentation coupled with new bioinformatics workflows.
 - The Fast Field cycling facility has received £500k from the Development Trust.
- Professors Jennie Macdiarmid, Director for the Interdisciplinary Centre for Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing, Ele Belfiore, Director for the Interdisciplinary Centre for Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity, and Pete Smith, School of Biological Sciences, and their interdisciplinary research team, have received £696k investment from the Wellcome Trust for a new project focusing on 'Maximising potential of plant-based convenience foods in real-life sustainable diets.'
- Three new Innovate UK awards totalling £720k have been received for new medical imaging and development of probiotics as a new medical treatment for diabetes: Najat Salameh and his team have received £475k for a project on 'V-LF-Spiro3D: Low-field 3D magnetic resonance spirometry for advanced regional exploration of respiratory diseases'; Dr Madalina Neacsu and team in the Rowett Institute have received £136k for a project on 'Biodiversification of nutrients to meet dietary needs of the UK population: prevention and control of Type 2 diabetes and promotion of a healthy gut'; and Dr Lionel Broche, MMSN, with Professor G Leontidis, Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Data and Artificial Intelligence, and Dr Tryphon Lambrou in Natural and Computing Sciences have received £110k for a project entitled 'A4IM: Affordable low-field MRI reference system'.
- Professor John Swinton in the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History (DHPA) has received £212k from AHRC for a project entitled 'We take

care of our own”: A theological ethnographic exploration of the experience of caregiving in the context of dementia across three cultures’.

- Professor Robert Frost in the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History has received £335k from the British Academy for a project on ‘Federalist Alternatives: Eastern Europe c.1880-c.1960.

22.2 Research-related awards and recognition:

- Professor James N’Dow, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, received the St Peter’s Medal from the British Association of Urological Surgeons in July 2023 for his ‘notable contribution to the advancement of urology’.
- Professor Celso Grebogi, School of Natural and Computing Sciences, was awarded the Badge of Honour at the annual meeting of the Max-Planck Society commemorating 75 years of the society and was also awarded the Lagrange Award for Lifetime Achievements in Nonlinear Science and Complexity.
- Professor Tom Greggs, Marischal Chair of Divinity, has been re-elected as one of 40 committee members of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the most senior ecclesial theological body in the world. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 120 countries and territories across the world.
- The University held a memorial event on 19 August to pay tribute to MRI pioneer, Professor John Mallard, who died in February 2021 aged 94, Professor Mallard led the team which built the first whole-body MRI scanner, transforming medical treatment around the world.
- Four PhD candidates, Gabriela Domené-López, Spanish & Latin America Studies, Jovita Fawcett, Archaeology and History, Edda Starck, Music, And Zoe Strong, Divinity & Religious Studies, have been awarded scholarships (including stipend, fee and access to a Research Training Support Grant) by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities.
- Students studying MSc programmes at the University of Aberdeen relating to the energy transition will benefit from new scholarship opportunities backed by Shell U.K. Ltd. The company is funding five scholarships worth up to a combined £150,000 for students commencing Masters programmes that align with the aims of the University of Aberdeen’s Centre for Energy Transition in the 2023/4 academic year.

23 EDUCATION-RELATED ACHIEVEMENTS

23.1 Key education-related achievements over the summer include:

- Professor Steve Tucker, in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition and Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement, has been presented with the annual editor performance award for his contribution to the British Journal of Pharmacology. The award recognises excellence in peer-review.
- The University hosted the [International Higher Education Teaching & Learning Association \(HETL\) Conference](#) at P&J Live on 12-14 June, with the conference programme and a series of social events taking place in the city and region focusing on the theme of “Re-imagining Education: Collaboration and Compassion”. The event attracted 281 educators from 29 countries around the world and included 10-2 talks, 61 posters and 15 workshops.

- The University was invited to submit a case study for an employability and skills themed campaign run by the QAA: “Transforming and embedding graduate attributes and skills at the University of Aberdeen.” The case study highlighted ongoing work on the Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills.
- In the third and final year, the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme continues to highlight the contribution that University staff and students have made to the Theme both locally and across the sector. The Enhancement Themes are selected by the Scottish HE sector with support from the QAA to facilitate collaborative working to enhance the learning experience.
- The North East Scotland Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment Group (TESTA) gathered for a second event in St Andrews along with colleagues from Aberdeen and Dundee to discuss progress with the TESTA project, which aims to improve the quality of student learning through collection of data on assessment and feedback practices.
- The Scottish Higher Education Learning Developers (ScotHELD) summer conference took place in Glasgow on 26 May. The University’s Centre for Academic Development’s Student Learning Service attended the event to discuss experiences and developments in working with students at all levels of study, and the collision of AI and GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence).
- Gavin Innes, eLearning Advisor in the Centre of Academic Development presented at the inaugural Digital Accessibility Conference at Nottingham University in June to provide insight into the University’s support to staff with accessibility issues.
- A number of University staff attended and contributed to the hybrid [‘Improving University Teaching’ Conference](#) in July. Staff also contributed to the Congress of Pharmacology in July, with several education sessions led by Professor Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement.
- In terms of recent educational publications, Dr Joy Perkins in the Centre for Academic Development and Dr Amy Irwin have published a book chapter, ‘The Practice of Online Internships’ in the Routledge International Handbook of Work-Integrated Learning.
- Dr Jacqui Hutchison and Dr Heather Branigan in the School of Psychology, and Dr Sally Middleton, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, have recently published a book chapter, ‘Exploring and Enhancing Support for Advanced Entry Students Transitioning into Higher Education’ in the IGI Global Publication ‘Perspectives on Enhancing Student Transition into Higher Education and Beyond.’
- The SFC published its [national report on widening access](#) on 25 July which showed that 7.9% of the University’s Scottish-domiciled entrants to undergraduate programmes came from an SIMD20 background in AY 2021/22, with the largest number of SIMD20 entrants since regular reporting commenced in 2013/14. The University ranked 4th in Scotland for the proportion of SIMD20 entrants who return to study in year 2 (94.8% compared to 96.2% for the total Scottish-domiciled entrants).
- The University was awarded second place in the Value for Money category of the StudentCrowd University Awards 2023 in June. It is one of eight categories in which the University is ranked within the UK’s top 20 institutions in the awards, based on reviews made by students.

- Physics and Philosophy student, Anastatia Mayers, and her mother embarked on a Galactic flight into suborbital space launched by Virgin Galactic on 10 August after winning their places on board after entering a sweepstake.

24 FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from George Boyne, Principal and Vice-Chancellor (boyne@abdn.ac.uk) and Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk).

12 September 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Open*

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

FINANCE AND RESOURCING COMMITTEE REPORT**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper is provided to University Court for information as an overview of the business conducted by the Finance and Resourcing Committee at its meeting on 14 September 2023, to provide an overview of the assurances obtained, and for onward approval and noting of specific items of business, as outlined in section 3 below.

The agenda, papers and draft minutes are available within [the Decision Time Resources](#) area for members of Court.

2. Previous Consideration By /Further Approval Required

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	N/A	

3. Recommended Action

3.1 The Finance and Resourcing Committee met on 8 June 2023 via Microsoft Teams. University Court is invited to:

- **Approve** the following item on the recommendation of the Committee:
 - The Committee's Remit, Composition and Terms of Reference for 2023-24 (items 5.1 – 5.5 refer) subject to confirmation of the Composition and Membership by the Governance & Nominations Committee.
 - The University's draft Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2023-24 (items 6.17 – 6.19 refer).
- **Note** the following items approved by the Committee via its delegated authority:
 - The Committee's approval via circulation on Friday 7 July of a proposal to request the realignment of budgets to progress works to refurbish the Medical Physics Centre for Medical Imaging (items 4.4 – 4.7 refer).
 - The Committee's Schedule of Business for 2023-24 (subject to amendment) (items 5.6 – 5.8 refer).
- **Note** the Committee's consideration and discussion of the following matters:
 - The Management Accounts and Draft Outturn for the Year Ended 31 July 2023 (items 6.1 – 6.4 refer).
 - An update on the early indications for student recruitment for September 2023 (items 6.5 – 6.11 refer).
 - Reporting on the financial implications of the projected September 2023 intake (items 6.12 – 6.16 refer).

- **Note** the Committee's receipt of the following items under matters arising:
 - A summary and benchmarking of the University's data relating to sickness absence (items 4.1 – 4.2 refer).
 - An update from the Director of Planning on the Higher Education sector and University developments (item 4.3 refers).

4. MATTERS ARISING

Sickness Absence Reporting

- 4.1. In response to an action from the June 2023 meeting of the Committee, the Head of Organisational Development had provided a summary and benchmarking of the University's data relating to sickness absence.
- 4.2. The Committee noted the document, querying why there appeared to be higher levels of reported sickness absence amongst professional services than academic staff. The University Secretary & COO reported that this was likely due to differing cultural practice for academic colleagues, who may work from home during non-teaching time and therefore not declare illness to the same extent as front-line professional services colleagues with roles carrying different expectations for cover.

Sector Update

- 4.3. The Committee also noted a sector update provided by the Director of Planning.

Approval by Circulation – Medical Physics Centre for Medical Imaging

- 4.4. The Committee formally noted its approval via circulation on Friday 7 July of a proposal to request the realignment of budgets to progress works to refurbish the Medical Physics Centre for Medical Imaging.
- 4.5. During their consideration of the proposals, Members had raised a number of concerns that the processes for project control may not be adequate. At the Committee's request, its concerns had been conveyed via a formal minute to the Project Board, the Head of School as Project Sponsor and senior Estates leads to ensure all the necessary controls were in place to complete the project within the revised budget.
- 4.6. The Senior Vice-Principal provided a verbal update on the formal response from the Project Board, which had been received following the circulation of papers for the current meeting. It was confirmed that the project remained on track and within the revised budget. Detailed reporting had recently been provided by the Project Board to the Estates Committee, which had confidence that appropriate project management was in place to achieve value for money.
- 4.7. The Committee urged that appropriate pre-planning was conducted to ensure that successful approaches could be made to key prospective partners for the commercialisation of the project, in order to maximise the opportunities for returns on the University's investment in the new scanner technology.

5. COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

Terms of Reference

- 5.1. The Committee considered and endorsed its Remit, Composition and Terms of Reference for 2023-24 for onward recommendation to Court for approval.
- 5.2. It was confirmed that there were no changes to the Terms of Reference, but that Members should review the statements under each governance theme to ensure their satisfaction that these remained appropriate.
- 5.3. The composition of Finance & Resourcing Committee remained unchanged. However, confirmation of the Committee membership was currently held pending appointment by the Governance & Nominations Committee of new Staff and Student Representatives to the Committee, following the retirement of AUSA Vice-President Communities, Camillo Torres-Barragàn upon the expiration of his term of office in July 2023, and given the pending end of term of Deputy Director of People, Nick Edwards in November 2023.
- 5.4. In addition, the Senior Governor had been considering the current memberships of Court Committees for the academic year ahead in order to balance workload and expectations for Court members, to reflect the need to maintain the full range of different perspectives across the various committees, and to utilise the developed knowledge base of members. As a result, the Governance and Nominations Committee would confirm any changes to Committee memberships shortly.
- 5.5. The final draft, following confirmation of the Committee's proposed Composition and Membership for 2023-24 by the Governance & Nominations Committee, is presented for Court approval under Appendix 1.

Schedule of Business

- 5.6. The University Secretary & COO presented the Committee's proposed Schedule of Business for 2023-24 for approval.
- 5.7. It was noted that a number of amendments had been made, including the re-focusing of previous deep-dive presentations to themed discussions around budgetary and financial elements, the scheduling of reporting on the Estates Reimagining and the establishment of new processes for the conduct of committee self-reflection, in line with the new approach agreed by University Court in July 2023.
- 5.8. The Committee suggested a number of additions to the Schedule, including: Reporting on fundraising activity and its financial impact; Horizon Europe bids; any potential future spin-out investments; earlier reporting on budget assumptions prior to the June meeting; and standing item student recruitment updates (to include interim reporting on pipeline management, continuation rates and ongoing actions to drive necessary recruitment improvements).

6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Draft Management Accounts (MMR) Outturn Year End 31 July 2023

- 6.1. The Chief Financial Officer updated the Committee on the draft results for the financial year ended 31 July 2023, which presented an underlying surplus of £0.4m. This compared to the Court approved budget of a £1.9m underlying deficit.
- 6.2. The following key points were highlighted for the Committee's attention:

- Research Grants performance had improved significantly, mainly due to additional Indirect Cost Contribution (ICC) of equipment capitalised at year end.
- The University had forecast within the Strategic Planning Forecast (SPF) submitted to SFC in July 2023 that cash balances at 31 July 2023 would be £39.5m. This compared to an actual cash balance at 31 July 2023 of £46m, and was due to an improvement in the operating position and less capital spend than forecast.
- The overall reported result was a loss of £3.8m, which included non-controllable and other individual significant items such as the movement in pension deficits, impairment write offs including the Johnston and Kings capital projects, unrealised gains on investments, and unrealised losses on the revaluation of properties.
- The outturn excluded the results for the University's subsidiary the Rowett Research Institute Limited, the University's joint venture Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) and pension adjustments.

6.3. It was also confirmed that the reported out-turn was subject to the annual External Audit review and final adjustments.

[REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

■ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Student Populations September 2023 Early Indications

- 6.5. The Interim Director of Student Recruitment delivered a presentation to update the Committee on the current September 2023 student intake projections, based on snapshot admissions data at 5 and 12 September 2023.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- 6.7. Discussion followed as to the market dynamics impacting on International PGT recruitment, and it was confirmed that the UK Government's June 2023 announcement regarding the withdrawal of spousal/family visas for international students from January 2024 had caused significant damage to recruitment levels across the UK higher education sector. The Principal confirmed that Universities UK was lobbying strongly, but it was unlikely that immigration policy adjustments would be seen in the short to medium term.

- 6.8. A coinciding downturn in the economies of the key recruitment markets of West Africa and South Asia had also had a detrimental impact on student recruitment at the University of Aberdeen and other peer institutions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6.11. A further update is also provided to Court under the current agenda.

Financial Implications of September 2023 Intake Projections

6.12. The Chief Financial Officer outlined the financial implications of the student intake projections and the suggested actions to mitigate the likely shortfall.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



6.15. Committee Members asked questions as follows:

- **How quickly the University could move forward portfolio management activity to identify and address under-performing areas.**

The Principal confirmed that a number of strategies were currently being considered to align resources with a focus on growth areas, whilst retaining a key focus on the University's legal requirement to support students to complete their existing programmes of study. Further information will be shared with University Court at its Strategy Day session on 27 September 2023.

- **Whether elements of the forward estates strategy could be accelerated in order to better understand where savings could be made, to 'right-size' the estate and to future proof it in terms of energy consumption.**

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that two key elements of the forward estates strategy would be to review the University's property portfolio in detail and to act in the short- to medium-term to reduce energy costs. The University Secretary & COO reported that discussions on this theme would take place at Court's forthcoming Strategy Day, to gauge Court's appetite for a number of strategies under consideration.

- **Whether an agreed target was currently in place for additional commercial revenue generation.**

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that an additional £0.5m had been factored into the budget for 2023-24, and it was hoped to increase targets further following the recruitment to the Associate Director of Commercial Services.

6.16. It was confirmed that further updates would also be provided to both the Committee and Court on the University's ongoing work to reimagine its campus, including considerations around RAAC, space utilisation, utilities usage, the requirements for research, education and pedagogy, and the needs of the University community.

Draft Outcome Agreement 2023-24

6.17. The University Secretary & COO presented the University's draft Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) 2023-24 for review and comment by the Committee prior to onward submission to Court for approval at its next scheduled meeting on 26 September 2023.

6.18. The documentation had already been considered in draft form for initial feedback by the SFC, with positive comments received on both format and content. In providing their initial feedback, the SFC suggested a number of minor additions or amendments, all of which had been addressed. The Outcome Agreement had been further submitted to the SFC for a final review before the documents were presented to University Court.

6.19. The final iteration of the Agreement is now presented to Court under the current agenda for approval prior to submission to the SFC by their deadline of 31 October 2023.

7 FURTHER INFORMATION

7.1. Further information is available from Jan Whitfield, Clerk to the Finance and Resourcing Committee, janine.whitfield@abdn.ac.uk

Confidentiality Status: The following sections contain commercially sensitive information and should remain closed: 6.4, 6.6, 6.9 - 6.10, 6.13 - 6.15.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**1. Purpose of the Paper**

This paper makes proposals for further development of the University's approach to strategic risk management, under its Risk Management Framework. It includes:

- A proposal to establish, monitor and report on 8-12 major strategic risks at institutional level, drawing on and informed by a refined version of the current strategic risk register (SRR).
- Initial proposals under consideration for refining the SRR, as part of changes to the Risk Management Framework more broadly.

The proposals made in this paper were previously endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee when it met on 5 September 2023.

2. Previous Consideration By /Further Approval Required

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Risk Management Committee Senior Management Team Audit & Risk Committee	7 August 2023 17 August 2023 5 September 2023
Further consideration/approval by	Court	26 September 2023

3. Recommended Action

The Court is invited to:

1. **Consider and approve** the approach and principle of 8-12 major, strategic risks, and comment on current first draft.
2. **Approve** the proposal to establish, monitor and report on these risks to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and to University Court, as part of the bi-annual reporting process. Under this arrangement, these bodies will no longer receive updates on the current Strategic Risk Register (SRR).
3. **Consider and discuss** an initial suite of nine major risks, noting that these will be further developed, with a particular focus on ensure they are specific to the University and its own environmental context, where required.
4. **Provide feedback** on potential refinements to the SRR, currently under consideration. Proposals on this will follow thereafter.

4. Background and Context

The University's current SRR is structured around 14 key risk areas (shown below in Section 5.2.2), which in total include over 100 individual risks. Following last year's internal audit by PwC into the University's risk management arrangements and subsequent discussions at ARC, it was agreed that the University should explicitly identify the major risks which either pose a significant threat to delivery of Aberdeen 2040; a significant threat across different functional areas; or which are inherent in the pursuit of strategic objectives via major projects and programmes. Under current arrangements, the large number of risks within the SRR make it difficult to identify such risks on an individual basis, including those which might reoccur or combine in impact across the 14 risk areas.

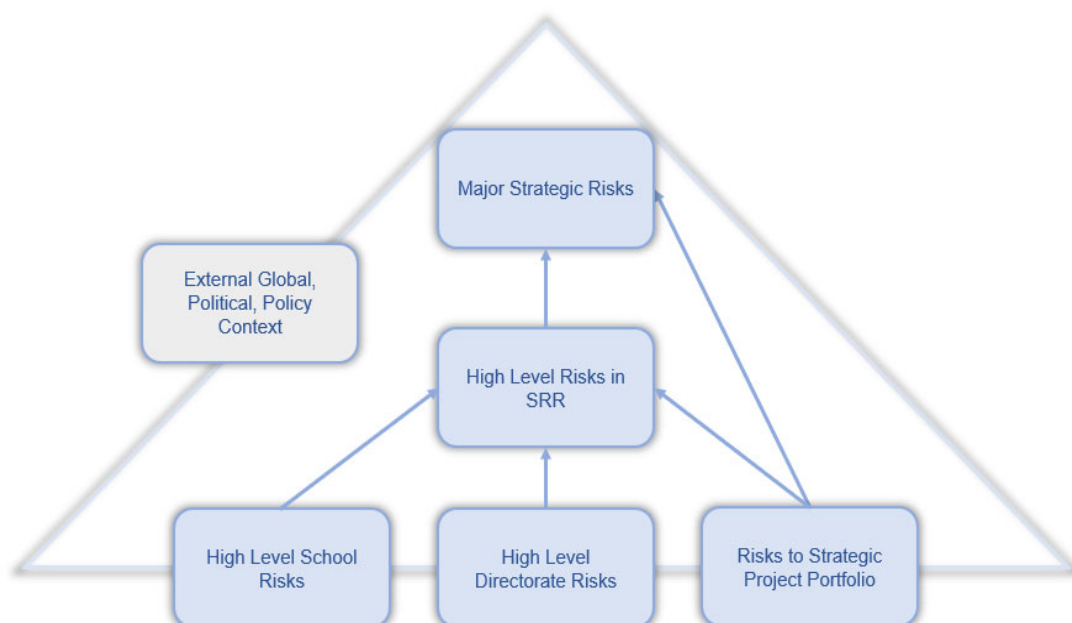
5. Proposed Approach Strategic Risk Management

5.1. Model for Strategic Risk Management

As part of further developing and maturing the University's approach to risk management, it is recognised that major strategic risks are likely to cut across multiple risk areas, giving rise to the potential for duplication, or for misalignment in how they are assessed. This may undermine the University's ability to recognise the likely impact of individual risks should they crystallise into issues.

Moreover, it is also recognised that the University's portfolio of strategic programmes and projects may also give rise to high-level, strategic risks, as different initiatives and opportunities are pursued, some of which will serve to mitigate other risks if they are delivered. In addition, high-level risks emerging at School or Directorate level must also be considered, and all of this within the context of a turbulent external environment, globally and politically. The diagram below highlights the inter-relationship between the different types of risks facing the University at a strategic level.

Figure 1: Strategic Risk Types: Inter-Relationships



Based on the above, a process for identifying approximately 8-12 'Major Strategic Risks' affecting the University at institutional level is proposed. All risks identified at this level will have the potential to adversely affect the University's ability to achieve its strategic objectives and will be monitored by ARC and Court going forward. The process is based on three steps, as follows:

1. Analysis of the current SRR, looking to identify high-level risks which have the potential for major, strategic impact at organisational level.
2. Analysis of risks specific to the University's portfolio of strategic projects and programmes, and high-level risks relevant to Schools and Directorates.
3. Consideration of the relationship between the risks identified in Steps 1 and 2, to inform identification of a suite of strategic risks for reporting. This will take account of recurring or reinforcing risks across each of the key areas identified above.

These three steps will form the basis of every bi-annual risk workshop, following which proposals will come forward for 'Major Strategic Risks' for consideration by the Risk Management Committee (RMC), and then approval by SMT prior to reporting to ARC and Court.

Under this arrangement, the Major Strategic Risks may change on a rolling basis, with changes identified as part of the established monitoring and reporting process. The SSR will continue as a key tool within the wider framework, ensuring that all major risks affecting strategic, functional and operational areas of activity continue to be reviewed and monitored regularly, with transparency; informing the identification of Major Strategic Risks at the highest level. There was broad agreement on this general approach at both the risk workshop, and the RMC meeting that followed.

5.2. Major Strategic Risks - Proposal

5.2.1. Environment Appraisal

The development of proposed Major Strategic Risks have taken account of the annual review undertaken by PwC of the UK higher education risk profile, which involves benchmarking a number of University risk registers sector-wide. PwC's report for 2023, '*Managing Risk in Higher Education: Higher Education Sector Risk Profile 2023*' highlights five top themes for risks in the UK HE sector in academic year (AY) 2022/23:

- Cyber security
- Environment and climate change
- Financial sustainability
- Estates capacity
- IT infrastructure

Other common risk areas highlighted by PwC include staff recruitment and retention, policy and engagement, student recruitment and student experience, and student welfare.

The Directorate of Planning & Governance Directorate also reviewed published strategic risks for three Russell Group universities based in England, and a further three Scottish universities. The results were generally consistent with the PwC analysis, and are attached as Appendix 1 for information.

5.2.2. University SRR – Current Position

The 14 risk areas that comprise the current SRR are shown below in Table 1. At present, this includes a total of 109 risks. Table 1 also shows how many risks are currently categorised Low (Green), Moderate (Yellow), High (Amber) and Critical (Red); further information on the specific risks categorised as critical under different risk areas is covered under the corresponding agenda item on risk; please cross refer; there are 18 in total. Based on the sector-wide analysis covered above, the risk areas included within the University SSR broadly align with trends sector-wide, albeit terminologies and headings vary.

Table 1: Risk Profile by Rating in Current SRR

		Low	Moderate	High	Critical	Totals
1	Financial Sustainability	0	1	7	4	12
2	Estates and Facilities	0	3	5	4	10
3	Student Recruitment	0	2	4	3	9
4	Education (UG and PGT)	0	7	1	1	9
5	Research and PGR	0	6	2	0	8
6	Digital & Information Services	0	5	3	2	10
7	People	1	3	2	1	7
8	Health, Safety & Wellbeing	0	5	0	0	5
9	International Partnerships	1	3	4	1	9
10	Reputation	3	5	3	0	11
11	External Environment	0	3	1	0	4
12	Environmental Sustainability	0	4	1	1	6
13	Leadership and Governance	0	2	1	0	3
14	AUSA and Other Third Parties	1	2	0	1	4
	Total	6	51	34	18	109
	Percentage of Total	6%	47%	31%	17%	100%

5.2.3. Major Strategic Risks Proposed

The initial draft list of Major Strategic Risks is given below in Table 2 for consideration and approval; designed to be reflective of the major risks posed at a strategic level in the current environment. It is emphasised that these risks will be fluid, likely to change and evolve over time, and not all will be rated critical; noting that these proposals also take account of potential impact should these risks manifest, not just their likely rating. It should also be noted that that each of these risks has the potential to adversely affect financial sustainability or reputation.

Table 2: Major Strategic Risks Proposed

No	Risk Description
1	Inability to achieve student recruitment and tuition fee income targets, as a consequence of factors such as global instability and government policy, undermining financial sustainability.
2	University reputation as a research-intensive university impacted by failure to improve relative research quality, in an increasingly competitive environment.
3	Potential for both the staff and student experience to be adversely impacted by sustained industrial action.
4	Failure to engage effectively as a key contributor to regional transformation.
5	Cyber-attack significantly disrupts University operations, adversely affecting key business functions.
6	A failure, absence or compromise of Information Governance procedures or controls which results in the breach of security, leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data; as well as the inability to meet accountability and legal obligations.
7	Constrained ability to resource, recruit and retain the level of high-quality staff required to achieve objectives, and to remain competitive within current environment.
8	Investment in digital and estates, to maintain and transform through projects and programmes, constrained by inadequate surplus levels, impacting University competitiveness.
9	Inability to meet Net Zero targets as a consequence of costs required to deliver.

6. Potential Refinements to SRR

Across both the risk workshop, the RMC meeting referenced above, and in subsequent discussions since, the format of the current SRR has been considered, and potential changes to approach were discussed. These discussions took account of a number of issues, including alignment to Aberdeen 2040, the scope of different risks areas, alignment of risks across different areas where there was a clear inter-relationship, differentiation between strategic and operational risks, and risk scoring. Key points noted or under consideration are:

- There was duplication between the risk area for Financial Sustainability and others within the register, particularly Student Recruitment. This created the potential for a disconnect between the way risks were scored in financial terms, relative to how they were scored at a functional level; for example, risks to tuition fee income under Finance, and their scores relative to risks specific to student numbers, under Student Recruitment.

- It was also evident that the articulation of the Financial Sustainability “risk area” meant that the SSR did not capture financial management or control risks as explicitly as it might. Based on these factors, it was recommended that the Financial Sustainability risk area be reconfigured and redefined as ‘Financial Management & Control’.
- Consideration should be given to adding a risk area for Regional Engagement, noting this is now an area of strategic importance, captured explicitly within the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan.
- The Education and Research risk areas should be reviewed to ensure that they capture all high-level risks specific to the Interdisciplinary theme, which forms part of Aberdeen 2040.
- The ‘People’ risk was predominantly focused on staff over students. This should be broadened to cover both, with additional risks added that were specific to staff and student welfare. This risk area might also be rebranded as ‘Inclusive’, thereby directly aligning to the Aberdeen 2040 theme. It was also agreed that there were risks specific to People that might be considered Major Strategic Risks; in particular, where the focus was on staff recruitment and retention.
- The risks areas for Reputation, External Environment, and AUSA and other Third Parties, should be reviewed and potentially removed; in particular, if there is excessive duplication, or if risks identified can be captured within other areas.
- Assuming approval of the above, presentation of the SRR should be amended, with those risk areas specific to Aberdeen 2040 themes coming first, followed by the risk areas specific to distinct business areas; thereby supporting the distinction made under 5.1, above, between risks to strategy, and risks to business-as-usual operations.

Pending any feedback, these proposals will be worked up more definitively for consideration and approval as part of the next reporting round.

7. Next Steps

If approved, the set of Major Strategic Risks proposed will be further developed in advance of the next reporting round, along with more definitive proposals for refining the SSR.

8. Further information

Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk, Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning and Governance (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk), Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning & Project Management Office, i.grant@abdn.ac.uk.

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Closed
(Until Major Strategic Risks are agreed)

Table 1: Critical Risks from Russell Group Sample

Russell Group Members		
Newcastle University	Durham University	Cambridge University
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality academic experience • High quality student experience • International student recruitment • Digital infrastructure and cyber security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand and value proposition • Business model and financial sustainability • People and culture • Infrastructure- Estate • Infrastructure- IT • Governance and Management • Pensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational and Financial Impact • Significant downturn in UK and/or Global financial markets • Changes to government policy resulting from increased funding pressures • Increased competitive landscape of research funding • Post-Brexit outcomes • Inability to attract and retain the best academics and adequately resource professional staff • Health and Safety related risks • Maintenance of the academic estate • Cyber security

Table 2: Sample of Scottish Universities – Critical Risks

Scottish Universities		
Edinburgh University	Glasgow University	Dundee University
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student experience • People • Social Responsibility and Sustainability • Core IT infrastructure • Information security/ data breach • Concentration Risk (over-reliance on specific sources of income) • Finance • Estate • Strategic Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • People and organisational development • Student experience and reputation • Technology and data • Financial • Research and innovation • Estates • Services and operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybersecurity • Financial Sustainability • Student experience • Research excellence • Staff experience

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**1 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This report provides Court with a bi-annual update on risk management at an institutional level. The report includes a short update on risk management more broadly, and then a more detailed analysis of the University's Strategic Risk Register (SRR, attached as Appendix 1), which has been reviewed and revised by Risk Owners and Managers in advance of this meeting.

2 PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previous consideration/ approval required by	Risk Workshop	31/07/2023
	Risk Management Committee	07/08/2023
	Audit & Risk Committee	05/09/2023
Further consideration/approval required by	Court	26/09/2023

3 RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Court is invited to:

- **Note** the update on developments to the Risk Management Framework.
- **Consider and discuss** the summary analysis of the latest iteration of the SRR, passing comment as appropriate.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK – DEVELOPMENTS**Strategic Risk Overlay**

- 4.1 Proposals have been developed to establish a 'strategic risk overlay'; in short, a subset of 8-12 major strategic risks which the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and Court will monitor going forward. This follows recommendations made by both ARC and PWC following the last audit into risk management. If the proposals are accepted, this will give major risks which are pertinent within a strategic context more visibility, adding clarity, and enhancing ease of management and reporting. A separate paper on this is included under the agenda; please cross refer.

Application of Risk Appetite

- 4.2 Further discussions have taken place on enhancing and maturing the University's approach to risk appetite, and its subsequent application under the Risk Management Framework. Proposals will follow as part of the next reporting round, noting these proposals are in-part contingent on the overarching approach agreed for risk management

at a strategic level, referred to above and covered under a corresponding agenda item, as noted.

5. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – CONTEXTUAL POINTS TO NOTE AND SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Contextual Points

- 5.1 The following provides a short summary of key points to note with the latest iteration of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR).
- 5.2 The enclosed SRR includes the 14 risk areas previously approved by Court; no additions have been made since the previous reporting round, though under a separate paper, changes have been proposed to the University’s approach to strategic risk management (please cross refer).
- 5.3 The SRR has been revised and refined relative to the previous iteration which was taken to Court in April 2023; each risk area is reviewed throughout the year as a matter of course, with consideration also given to specific risk areas at the relevant committees. A further review of the full register also took place at a workshop held on 31 July 2023, which included Risk Owners and Managers, and then thereafter, at the Risk Management Committee meeting on 7 August 2023.
- 5.4 This process was co-ordinated by the Directorate of Planning and Governance, though Risk Owners are accountable for content and scores allocated within their risk areas, in consultation with Risk Managers.

Summary Analysis

Table 1: Risk Profile Movement: March 2023 - July 2023

RISK PROFILE MOVEMENT: MARCH 2022 – JULY 2023																
No	Risk Area	Green			Yellow			Amber			Red			Total		
		Mar 23	Jul 23	+/-	Mar 23	Jul 23	+/-	Mar 23	Jul 23	+/-	Mar 23	Jul 23	+/-	Mar 23	Jul 23	+/-
1	Financial Sustainability	0	0	-	4	1	-3	6	7	+1	3	4	+1	13	12	-1
2	Estates and Facilities	0	0	-	1	3	+2	7	5	-2	1	4	+3	9	12	+1
3	Student Recruitment	0	0	-	2	2	-	4	4	-	3	3	-	9	9	-
4	Education (UG and PGT)	0	0	-	7	7	-	1	1	-	0	1	+1	8	9	+1
5	Research and PGR	0	0	-	8	6	-2	1	2	+1	0	0	-	9	8	-1
6	Digital & Information Services	0	0	-	7	5	-2	3	3	-	1	2	+1	11	10	-1
7	People	1	1	-	6	3	-3	0	2	+2	0	1	+1	7	7	-
8	Health, Safety & Wellbeing	0	0	-	5	5	-	0	0	-	0	0	-	5	5	-
9	International Partnerships	1	1	-	3	3	-	6	4	-2	0	1	+1	10	9	-1
10	Reputation	3	3	-	6	5	-1	2	3	+1	0	0	-	11	11	-
11	External Environment	0	0	-	4	3	-1	0	1	+1	1	0	-1	5	4	-1
12	Environmental Sustainability	0	0	-	4	4	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	6	6	-
13	Leadership and Governance	0	0	-	3	2	-1	1	1	-	0	0	-	4	3	-1
14	AUSA and Other Third Parties	1	1	-	2	2	-	0	0	-	1	1	-	4	4	-
Total		6	6	-	62	51	-11	32	34	+2	11	18	+7	111	109	-2
Percentage of Total		5%	6%	+1%	56%	47%	-9%	29%	31%	+2%	10%	16%	+6%	100%	100%	/

- 5.5 As shown above, **the SRR now includes 109 individual risks in total**, spread across the 14 areas: a **decrease of two risks** since the last reporting round.
- 5.6 **The number of risks rated Critical (red) in the current iteration is 18**, a net increase of seven relative to March 2023. Eight new risks were classified as critical (three of the risks that were added relate to Estates and Facilities, and then one each to Financial Sustainability, Education, DIS, People, and International Partnerships). One risks has also been downgraded from critical to other categories, under External Environment. This

equates to 16% of risks classified as critical, compared to 10% in the previous round. More information on risks rated as Critical is given under Section 6 below.

5.7 **A total of 34 risks are rated as High (amber) across all risk areas, equating to 31% of the total;** this reflects a 2% increase from the previous round. The area with the most risks rated as High is Financial Sustainability, with seven risks. Estates and Facilities follow with five risks rated as High. Student Recruitment and International Partnerships have four each, and Digital and Information Services and Reputation have three apiece. The People, and Research and PGR risk areas both have two. Education, External Environment, Environmental Sustainability and Leadership and Governance have one. In total, **47%** of all risks within the SRR are rated in the two highest categories of either High risk or Critical, an increase of **8%** over the period.

5.8 **Of the remaining risks, 51 are rated Moderate (yellow), equating to 47% of the total,** meaning more risks are scored within this category than in any other. Of these Education has the highest number of risks, with seven. This is followed by Research and PGR with six. Digital, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and Reputation have five apiece. Environmental Sustainability has four. Estates and Facilities, People, International Partnerships and External Environment have three each. Student Recruitment, Leadership and Governance, and AUSA and Other Third Parties have two moderate risks each. Finally, Financial Sustainability has one Moderate risk.

5.9 **The remaining six risks are rated as Low, equating to 6%,** with the same number of risks than in the previous round. These are spread across four risk areas. Reputation has three; People, International Partnerships and AUSA and Other Third Parties all have one Low risk.

6.0 CRITICAL RISKS – KEY POINTS TO NOTE

6.1 As noted above, the number of risks rated Critical within the SRR has increased from 11 to 18, with new and emerging risks factored in. These are listed in the table overleaf, with a summary provided thereafter.

Table 2: Critical Strategic Risks – August 2023

Risk Area	Critical Risk ●
Financial Sustainability	<p>Risk 1 (escalated): Failure to meet loan covenants and associated impact on going concern assurance.</p> <p>Risk 3 (escalated): Geopolitical disruptions could cut off student income from one or more markets with little warning.</p> <p>Risk 7: Failure to generate sufficient surpluses to fund strategic ambition (inability to fund the 2040 plan and commitments)</p> <p>Risk 9 (escalated): Tuition fees income drops below plans over a sustained period, particularly international students at PGT level</p>
Estates and Facilities	<p>Risk 1 (new): Property Terrier* - Lack of comprehensive land, property, building, commercial and service information, data, digital systems to store, manage and report.</p> <p>Risk 2 (new): Strategic Alignment - Lack of alignment of estates strategy and management with corporate priorities and strategy.</p> <p>Risk 3 (new): Strategic role of Estates in corporate finance - The management of the value and potential opportunities and risks of the</p>

Risk Area	Critical Risk ●
	<p>heritable assets on the university's balance sheet and income statements is not managed or exploited.</p> <p>Risk 11 (escalated): Supply Chain - Multiple impacts of geopolitical unrest, Covid and Brexit continue to magnify problems within the supply chain (both cost and availability).</p>
Student Recruitment	<p>Risk 2: Postgraduate research student recruitment levels continue to be out of line with competitor benchmark group.</p> <p>Risk 4 (escalated): Failure to meet growth targets for international PGT and international UG student numbers, possibly as a result of changes in the external environment obstructing/interrupting recruitment of international students (geopolitics, international travel, changes to immigration policy global health).</p> <p>Risk 7 (escalated): Failure to satisfy SFC student number controls and Scottish Government priorities (widening access, STEM) in relation to the home fee population.</p>
Education (UG and PGT)	<p>Risk 1 (escalated): Marking and assessment boycott (MAB) by UCU.</p>
Digital and Information Services	<p>Risk 1: Cyber Security. A failure, absence or compromise of IT Security procedures or controls results in loss, destruction or unauthorized access or modification of data and / or significant business interruption.</p> <p>Risk 4 (escalated): Financial Constraints. An inability to fund service operation and improvement activity due to escalating costs and/or constrained budgets. This risk includes the shift in demand for increased RevEx (compared to CapEx) in light of "as a Service" (e.g., Software as a Service, Infrastructure as a Service, Platform as a Service etc.) as well as increasing costs from the supply chain, energy costs, inflation and a growing demand for digital services to address workload pressures.</p>
People	<p>Risk 1 (escalated): Inability to recruit staff required to meet strategic priorities in Aberdeen 2040 and to deliver a positive staff and student experience, potentially exacerbated by skills shortages locally</p>
International Partnerships	<p>Risk 3: Economic, geopolitical, military or public health factors causing disruption to partnership activity in affected parts of the world.</p>
Environmental Sustainability	<p>Risk 1: Funding and Finance: Failure to make adequate capital and recurrent funding provision in long-term financial planning to support delivery of institutional net-zero and targets, including failure to mitigate financial impact of the eventual cost of offsetting hard to tackle emissions e.g., procurement, business travel, and student travel to study.</p>
AUSA and Other Third Parties	<p>Risk 2: ASV financial sustainability challenged following a prolonged period of lockdown and actions already taken e.g., restricted opening, reduced staffing, and other adaptations to recover from initial period of closure</p>

*A record of property owned or leased by the University

6.2 Three risks (1, 3 and 9) under Financial Sustainability have been escalated to Critical, one remained critical, and one has been de-escalated to High. Risks rated Critical reflect the

University's current financial position, taking account of failures to achieve the targeted levels of tuition fee income, and also the financial impacts arising from the REF results.

- 6.3 Under Estates and Facilities there are three new risks (1,2,3) and one risk has been escalated to critical (11). These are linked to exploitation of assets, alignment with the University's objectives, the role of Estates in corporate Finance and issues with the supply chain.
- 6.4 Under Student Recruitment, Risk 2 remained unaltered whereas Risks 4 and 7 have been escalated to critical. Risks 2 and 7 reflect the competitive environment for PGR students, and the University's difficulty in meeting government priorities with regard to home students.
- 6.5 In Education one risk (Risk 1) has been escalated to Critical. It refers to the current Marking and Assessment Boycott, and in particular, the impacts this might potentially have on students.
- 6.6 In the Digital and Information Services area Risk 1 remains rated as Critical and Risk 4 has been escalated since the last reporting round. Risk 1 refers to IT security, the potential for breaches, and the significant impact that may subsequently arise; Risk 4 refers to the impact of financial constraints to both service provision and acquisition of supplies.
- 6.7 Under the People risk area Risk 1 was escalated to critical to reflect difficulties in recruiting suitable staff to meet commitments for Aberdeen 2040.
- 6.8 In International Partnerships, one Risk (3) escalated to critical. The risk refers to the economic, geopolitical or public factors affecting international partnerships.
- 6.9 Under Environmental Sustainability Risk 1 remains Critical, relating to the substantive costs associated with achieving net-zero ambitions, and the need to invest if they are to be realised. This may pose a significant threat to the University's ability to achieve targets, particularly within the current financial context. It should be noted that this risk is also applicable more broadly, sector-wide.
- 6.10 Under the AUSA and Other Third Parties risk area, Risk 2 still remains critical. This risk refers to the financial sustainability challenges faced by Aberdeen Sports Village and the increased funding requirements on the joint venture partners (the University and Aberdeen City Council).

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 7.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk and Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning and Governance, hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk, Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning & Project Management Office, i.grant@abdn.ac.uk or Maria Ntessalen, Strategic Planning & Risk Officer, maria.ntessalen@abdn.ac.uk.

September 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

University of Aberdeen: Strategic Risk Register (SRR)

	Risk Areas	Count of Risks				Total	% of Total
		Green	Yellow	Amber	Red		
1	Financial Sustainability	0	1	7	4	12	11%
2	Estates and Facilities	0	3	5	4	12	11%
3	Student Recruitment	0	2	4	3	9	8%
4	Education (UG and PGT)	0	7	1	1	9	8%
5	Research and PGR	0	6	2	0	8	7%
6	Digital & Information Services	0	5	3	2	10	9%
7	People	1	3	2	1	7	6%
8	Health, Safety, Wellbeing & Res	0	5	0	0	5	5%
9	International Partnerships	1	3	4	1	9	8%
10	Reputation	3	5	3	0	11	10%
11	External Environment	0	3	1	0	4	4%
12	Environmental Sustainability	0	4	1	1	6	6%
13	Leadership and Governance	0	2	1	0	3	3%
14	AUSA and Other Third Parties	1	2	0	1	4	4%

Total	6	51	34	18	109
% of Total	6%	47%	31%	17%	100%

		Impact			
		Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Critical (4)
L i k e l i h o o d	Highly Likely (4)	4	8	12	16
	Likely (3)	3	6	9	12
	Feasible (2)	2	4	6	8
	Unlikely (1)	1	2	3	4

Risk Owners and Managers: abbreviations

SVP	Senior Vice-Principal
US & COO	University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
DD ER	Deputy Director External Relations
DoAS & OE	Director of Academic Services & Online Education
DoDDIS	Director of Digital and Information Services
DoDAR	Director of Development and Alumni Relations
DoEF	Director of Estates and Facilities
DoER	Director of External Relations
DoPlanning	Director of Planning
DoR&I	Director of Research & Innovation
HoSD	Head of Sustainable Development
VP E	Vice-Principal Education
VP R	Vice-Principal Research
VP RE	Vice-Principal Regional Engagement
VP GE	Vice-Principal Global Engagement
DDER (TNE IP)	Deputy Director External Relations (TNE and International Partnerships)

Strategic Risk Area:	Financial Sustainability
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Failure to meet loan covenants and associated impact on going concern assurance.	SVP	CFO	The University would need to open discussions with loan providers, the SFC and USS if covenant tests were not met. In an extreme situation, lenders may require repayment of loans which would also trigger loan break penalty costs. It is not possible to estimate these costs as each lender / stakeholder will have different responses. Current tuition fee shortfall has meant that debt service covenant is under pressure.	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Lobbying Universities Scotland (US), UUK, USS The USS members have recently accepted a short term settlement which has capped the Pension contributions by employers for the next three years, subject to the 2023 valuation, thereby reducing the largest recent risk in this area. Finance prepare modelling tests for compliance with covenants at least twice a year. If a breach was anticipated (and so far it has not) from such modelling, we would negotiate with lenders and other stakeholders (eg SFC and USS) to develop solutions. Investment Committee manages asset allocation using fund management experts to achieve a balanced risk profile. The current financial projection indicates the £1.9m projected deficit should be achieved for 2022/23. This will ensure covenant compliance. In June Court approved the 3 year financial plan which predicts a deficit in 2023/24 of £3.9m, largely to reflect the full REF cut. The Plan projects break-even in 2024/25 and a surplus of £3m in 2025/26. Each of these financial results will achieve covenant compliance. However, the financial plan includes both ambitious (but realistic) growth in student fee income, controlled cost reduction and an assumed level of additional income	In place	3	4	●	RED	12	Up
2	Surging inflation restricts our capacity to invest.	CFO	CFO	Inflation erodes our purchasing power and more resource is consumed with operating the estate (including energy, construction and repair materials). Market pressure pushes up recruitment and staff costs.	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat		In place	2	4	●	AMBER	8	Up
3	Geopolitical disruptions could cut off student income from one or more markets with little warning.	CFO	CFO	Outstanding income could be at risk of non payment (eg as happened with fees due from a government sponsoring agency in Ghana) or students are prevented from attending. This risk is relative to both govt agencies such as AFG, partners such as GSS and individual students.	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Debts have risen in 2022/23, largely due to increases in funds due from GSS. However, dialogue is on-going and a payment plan has been agreed. However, the risk rating has been increased to reflect the current level of debt and economic situation in Nigeria.	In place	4	3	●	RED	12	Up
4	Land sales (Rowett) unsuccessful or value reduced and asset sales fail to raise planned capital receipts.	SVP	CFO	Financial impact Future capital projects delayed Cash flow worsens	2	4	●	AMBER	8	Treat	Reduced investment in strategic priorities Estates Committee reviewing progression of UOA land sales and monitoring developments in the construction industry. Alternative asset sales identified	In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
5	Brexit has led to a loss of funding streams, particularly in student fee income. The risk relates to this shortfall not being made up by home students	SVP	CFO	Ability to meet minimum target to break-even and associated impact on investment Concern over loss of non controlled funded places due to not meeting this target for early statistics SFC return in 2022. Concern over high level of clawback of funding possible for 2022/23 and potential removal of funded places in future financial years.	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	EU fee structure agreed with scholarships in place Liaison with all areas of UoA re supply chain Research strategy to access Horizon funding Regular dialogue will be required with SFC re clawback of non controlled funded places, or potential removal of future years funded places. This includes the CFO meeting with the DOF at SFC regularly. Provision has been made in the 2022/23 year end position and within the 3 year financial plan approved by Court in June 2023.	In place	4	2	●	AMBER	8	Up
6	SFC funding declines in the medium to long term due to economic pressures	SVP	CFO	Financial impact Concern over removal of funded places due to pressures on SFC budget. Concern over cutting of Capital Maintenance Budget.	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Plan to reduce dependence on SFC funding streams through diversification to overseas student markets. Three year plan reviews demonstrate gradual reduction in SFC Income as share of total income. Regular dialogue will be required with SFC re clawback of non controlled funded places, or potential removal of future years funded places. The 3 year financial plan includes assumptions to develop and expand all sources of revenue. An Associate Director of Commercial services is being recruited, the fundraising campaign	In place	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
7	Failure to generate sufficient surpluses to fund strategic ambition (Inability to fund the 2040 plan & commitments).	SVP	CFO	Strategic plan implementation is delayed or downgraded. Reputational damage & associated implications for education & research Currently in significant deficit position. Level of income generation in 2023/24 unlikely to be sufficient to fund the original budgeted investment.	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	Improve transparency in the planning process. Increase challenge to budget holders to increase net income and reduce or redeploy cost to increase its positive impact. Review of Schools and service areas in deficit, review of courses and programmes being delivered and rationalising these.	In progress	3	4	●	RED	12	Up
8	Sustained loss of research income above sector average	SVP	CFO	Reduction in REG (b) and (c). The full £5m reduction will kick in in 2023/24.	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Greater focus on how Schools can increase Research Income with Directorate support. Increase transparency in regular performance monitoring of leading indicators for research success. Research income projected to increase. Increased staffing complement conducting research. The REG action plan has been drafted and approved by SMT and Court. £1m has been	In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
9	Tuition fee income drops below plans over a sustained period, particularly international students at PGT level	SVP	VP GE	Sustained loss of revenue Loss of new entrant tuition fee income Impact on School strategies and financial position Loss of income for existing students not returning	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	See risk 3.1 and 3.2 under Student Recruitment. This risk should remain at 16 pending Snapshot 1 in early October 2023.	See risk 3.1 and 3.2 under Student Recruitment	4	4	●	RED	16	Up

10	Business-critical projects not delivered which are required for revenue growth This risk now relates to the investments plans following the decision not to proceed with the new Business School and King's College.	SVP	VPR	Financial impact Reputational damage Student and staff experience Future student recruitment Cash position will become tighter if we generate deficits as less operating cash flow can be reinvested in the capital programme. Future staff recruitment	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Improved governance and project management is being put in place to manage strategic projects Business plan, timeline and risk register prepared for each project Cash flow plan updated at least annually to advise on whether capital projects can be delivered. Projects to be prioritised to ensure that available funds are earmarked for the most critical projects. Much of this mitigating action will rest with the Campus Masterplan which has just commenced.	In progress In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
11	Supply chain impacted for critical goods and financial stability of suppliers reduces	SVP	CFO	Inability to carry out research or key operational activities Potential for capital works to be significantly impacted by lack of availability of key building materials. This could impact programme and cost	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	APUC reviewing supply chain identification of key framework suppliers Additional credit checks on suppliers Importing and exporting guidelines issued to community following Brexit Identify contingencies for critical supply chains e.g. building materials Provide adequate contingencies in projects for time and cost overruns Selective use of building materials where supply chain is more stable Consideration of procurement methods that reduce the above risks	In progress In progress Complete In progress For future Estates Committee Project Boards to consider Project Boards to consider	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Up
13	Unable to deliver major fundraising campaign	SVP	DoDAR	Could have a significant and adverse impact across a range of areas, including inability to deliver major capital projects, loss of financial support for research projects and for students.	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	Ensure fundraising projects and appeals are attractive to donors, develop a case for support Ensure staffing and resource meets the needs of delivering a comprehensive campaign Expansion of prospect pool and diversification of income streams (individuals, corporates, Trusts & foundations, regular giving, legacy) Ensure appropriate marketing and communications including digital and personalised communications Effective leadership and governance Funding of an ongoing programme of alumni engagement and fundraising activity. The 3 year financial plan approved by Court in June 2023 includes £3m per annum targets from philanthropic sources. Hence the risk scoring has been increased.	In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change

Strategic Risk Area: Estates and Facilities

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	New risk added August 2023 Property Terrier Lack of comprehensive land, property, building, commercial and service information, data, digital systems to store, manage and report	SVP	DoEF	1) inability to manage efficiently or plan strategically 2) missing or unreliable sources of information to base decisions upon 3) basic property ownership and interest queries are very time consuming 4) income not being recovered correctly from external parties 5) potential risks associated with unknown property related liabilities 6) potential to miss income or value generating opportunities 7) reputational damage of note being accountable for heritable assets 8) the financial statements do not reflect the heritable assets	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	1) create and maintain a dynamic property terrier 2) fully resource an estate management function	Under consideration	4	3	●	RED	12	New Risk
2	New risk added August 2023 Strategic Alignment Lack of alignment of estates strategy and mangement with corporate priorities and strategy	SVP	DoEF	1) failure to anticipate and intepret future real estate requirements 2) failure to be able to deliver real estate solutions to meet operational requirements 3) failure to plan resources to be able to deliver real estate solutions 4) risk that future potential income streams will be put less likely to succeed	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	1) formulate manner in which to gather and articulate business strategies and priorities 2) formulate manner to become aware and be able to anticipate major funding and research income that will create requirement for real estate investment 3) create a portfolio of potential investment projects with corresponding funding opportunities to provide best opportunity to deliver timely property solutions	Under consideration	4	3	●	RED	12	New Risk
3	New risk added August 2023 Strategic role of Estates in corporate finance The management of the value and potential opportunities and risks of the heritable assets on the university's balance sheet and income statements is not managed or exploited	SVP	DoEF	1) the interests and values on the balance sheet do not fully represent the university's estate 2) opportunities to leverage the value of heritable assets could be missed 3) opportunity to recover outstanding payments may be missed 4) opportunity to effectively manage estates costs are missed 5) failure to fully represent property economics in property investment analysis	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	1) closer co-ordination between Finance and Estates to explore role of heritable assets in financial statements 2) Estates to be proactive participants in creating RAM charges 3) Estates to be proactive in supporting management of unpaid rental debt	1) in progress 2) under consideration 3) under consideration	4	3	●	RED	12	New Risk
4	Estates Strategy Failure to adequately manage future Estate development including lack of key strategic frameworks e.g. Estate Strategy, Masterplan, data analysis and effective Space Management procedures.	SVP	DoEF	Estate unable to support institutional strategy (Aberdeen 2040). Capital project planning and development portfolio disrupted or fails to deliver on time, budget or quality Estate poorly aligned to support onsite functions e.g research, teaching, accommodation, greenspace, sport, events, community access. Focus on buildings rather than people and activities Reputational impact, including EDI and H&S impacts Project governance processes not followed Project finance interrupted or lost	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Estates Committee oversight Consistent project management methodology and governance Effective Space Management processes (to be informed by the Masterplan and Strategy) (fully redeveloped and in place by 2024) Estate Strategy (to be informed by the Masterplan) consultation and development (developed and in place by 2024) Estate Masterplan consultation and development (SMT have agreed consultation plan Feb 23, full Masterplan developed and in place by late 2024) Estate Strategy / Masterplan consultation and development Regular review of capital planning Design Team structure adopted and applied consistently	In place In place In progress Under consideration In progress Under consideration Under consideration In place In place	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
5	Investment Management Failure to adequately appraise and manage the benefits realised by capital projects and the level of return	SVP	DoEF	Reputational impact Not delivering return on investment Not achieving outputs outlined in the Business Case High market volatility in respect of price increases in tender returns results in projects being put on hold	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Management of benefits is considered at each Project Board through Project Risk Register New Benefits Management Process under development, which will span full project lifecycle and benefits realisation post-project delivery. Early modelling of the Business Case to evaluate any changes in ROI calculation and benefits potentially impacting project viability	In place Under development via PMO Under consideration - this item directly influences the change in score after mitigation until resolved	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	New Risk

6	Estate Management Failure to ensure appropriate Estate functionality to support efficient utilisation	SVP	DoEF	Assets are under-utilised Space is poorly used Impact on delivery of services e.g. Security, Cleaning, H&S, maintenance, catering Lack of sufficient, accessible storage impacts service delivery and key activities e.g. exams, sport, engagement etc. User satisfaction Reputational Consequences of increased home working Lack of linkage between Estates, Timetabling, Event Management and Occupation by Third Parties	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Ongoing analysis of impacts of Homeworking Policy Effective Space Management processes (to be informed by the Masterplan and Strategy) (fully redeveloped and in place by 2024) Estate Strategy (to be informed by the Masterplan) consultation and development (developed and in place by 2024) Estate Masterplan consultation and development (SMT have agreed consultation plan Feb 23, full Masterplan developed and in place by late 2024) Space benchmarking data reviewed (ongoing) Recommencement of Space Management Group Development of Space Modelling plans for Schools (ongoing) Development of Space Modelling plans for Professional Services (ongoing) Ongoing monitoring of space requirements and student growth (ongoing) Appointment of Property and Asset Manager Further appointments of specialist staff	Under consideration In progress In progress Under consideration In progress In place In progress In progress In progress In place Under consideration	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
7	Building Maintenance Deterioration in material condition and/or functional obsolescence of the estate (including teaching, research and support functions)	SVP	DoEF	Inability to deliver core services and supporting activities Health & Safety risk Reputational damage Reducing attractiveness to students and staff Repeated failures in key buildings Some buildings in poor state of repair and/or inoperable Loss of relevant licences and permissions to operate Liability to users and adjoining landowners	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	10-year cash flow plan Estates Committee management, with consideration given to research, teaching and support facilities Regular review of capital programme to ensure adequate annual investment is maintained Regular review of maintenance spend and programme Regular review of relative performance against sector IRV metrics Ongoing programme of refurbishment and upgrade works (ongoing) Creation of works programme following condition surveys (ongoing) Increase in resources, including both financial and people Functionality survey of Estate to be scheduled for 2023/2024	In place In place In place In place In progress In progress Under consideration Under consideration	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
8	Business Continuity Systems fail to identify potential risks to assets or to ensure appropriate operational resilience of assets, systems or utilities <i>See also Environmental Sustainability Risks</i>	SVP	DoEF	Reputational impact Significant cost implications (regardless of insurance position) Disruption to aspects of campus activity e.g. teaching, research professional support Loss of an asset / assets resulting in significant business continuity problems e.g. due to fire, flood Loss of key systems e.g. K2, door entry Loss of utilities	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Business continuity processes Key business continuity risks identified as part of Business Continuity Plans Regular maintenance and servicing of key mitigation systems e.g. fire suppression Appropriate insurance in place Health & Safety practices e.g. lab safety measures Development of appropriate investment programme (including plans for replacement) for critical systems, assets & utilities, including CHP and District Heat Network (ongoing) Maintenance and development schedules for critical infrastructure e.g. CHP Programme Board to review campus heating options Long-term plans for replacement of key infrastructure e.g. CHP, District Heat Network	In place In place In place In place In progress In place In place In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
9	Net Zero Failure to manage energy consumption and carbon management including lack of structural investment required to drive down emissions baseline leads to uncontrolled energy costs. <i>See also Environmental Sustainability Risks</i>	SVP / US & COO	DoEF	Inability to manage utilities budgets Multiplier effect of cost of carbon Reputational damage Reduces capacity for investment to drive down emissions and costs Increased consumption and costs of ongoing COV D mitigations e.g. air filtration, exacerbate challenge Global energy price rises magnify other impacts Energy security issues affected by ongoing war in Ukraine	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Net-Zero Strategy (ongoing) Energy efficiency embedded in projects (ongoing) Consideration of micro-renewables (ongoing) Consideration of networked solutions e.g. local heat network (ongoing) Consideration of alternative fuels (ongoing) Controls measures including Monitoring & Targeting Advance purchasing through sector procurement routes Budgetary impacts of volatile global energy markets being monitored Programme Board reviewing campus heating options Effective space management Appropriate and timely collaboration with internal experts, including Dean for Green and other experts	In progress In progress In progress In progress In place In place In place In place Under consideration In place	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change

10	Commercial Income Failure to achieve targeted income from non-corporate, commercial and residential activities <i>See also Financial Sustainability Risks</i>	US & COO	DoEF	Financial impact Risk to subsidy of other business activity Reduced student numbers impact on residential and catering income Impact on third party and other site support e.g. shop, bus service Changes in legislation governing student tenancies gives ability to leave at short notice and/or University offers rent rebates (both COVID related) Recovery delayed by ongoing Covid restrictions, with reduced footfall/income and limiting scope to mitigate impact Limited/reduced commercial activities undermining revenue generating opportunities	3	3	 AMBER	9	Treat	Scenarios have been prepared under which financial impacts are budgeted Operating costs reviewed (ongoing) Working with other HE / FE providers to generate new accommodation business e.g. SRUC, NESCOL (ongoing) Extensive marketing activity and working with student recruitment to optimise offer e.g. virtual open days with student recruitment, incentives for students staying over summer etc (ongoing) Rolling programme of accommodation upgrades Extensive on-site support for students compared to private sector Plan to recruit to a Business Development Exec post to generate new income Weekly monitoring of transaction levels and income against resource to deliver activity Adequate investment strategy to enable effective facilities Creation of and recruitment to post of Associate Director Commercial Services	In place In progress In progress In progress In place In place On hold In place Under consideration In progress	2	3	 YELLOW	6	No Change
11	Supply Chain Multiple impacts of geopolitical unrest, Covid and Brexit continue to magnify problems within the supply chain (both cost and availability)	SVP	DoEF	Small and medium suppliers fail Key suppliers lost or staffing reduced Extensive re-tendering Delays in critical parts lead to equipment offline e.g. CPH engine Large contractor failure Contractors and supply chains disrupted and/or significant price increases on key materials Interruption to gas supply Specific effects on Aberdeen market given geographical remoteness, including lack of market competition leading to higher prices in both capital and operational activities	4	4	 RED	16	Treat	Government initiatives and mitigation Most operational suppliers are via APUC and as such are large/established entities although not always operating in Aberdeen Re-tendering would normally be by APUC CHP/ District main is a 'risk' but UoA can operate without it (at a cost). Contract in place for maintenance with some critical part help on campus and some held by maintenance company Payments are retrospective to works Parent Company Guarantee Horizon scanning e.g. of construction trade Review by Resilience Advisory Group Explore other procurement routes, including potential expansion of shared services with other large organisations in the area <i>Note: mitigations available to manage the geopolitical aspects of this risk are limited and impact is uncertain given the external variables in plac.</i>	Under consideration In place In place In place In place In place In place In place	3	4	 RED	12	No Change
12	Staffing Capacity Insufficient to deliver strategic functions of the Directorate	SVP	DoEF	Failure to implement recommendations of E&F Review Single points of failure Staff wellbeing and stress related issues for existing staff due to increased workloads Reduced capacity to support campus activity / events (one-off and routine) e.g. cleaning rosters Inability to maintain statutory compliance which allows the University to operate Harmonisation of terms and conditions leads to inability to deliver key functions	3	4	 RED	12	Treat	All required posts put forward for approval Review of structures following appointment of Director of Estates and Facilities Recruitment into key pinch-point areas	In progress Under consideration Under consideration	2	3	 YELLOW	6	New Risk

Strategic Risk Area **Student Recruitment** (UG, PGT, PGR)

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)	Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)	Risk Movement
1	Prospective student journey: Our systems, processes, and staffing capacity do not keep pace with increased enquiry and application volumes; changing market expectations; and increasing compliance issues with particular markets. This results in delays in applications processing and responses to prospective student enquiries as well as potential UKVI concerns around compliance.	VP GE	New Director of Student Recruitment & International Partnerships (D SR&IP) - COO in interim?	<p>Applicant expectations not met resulting in a poor prospective student experience.</p> <p>Loss of new entrant international and home tuition fee income</p> <p>Impact on staff workload and resulting wellbeing</p> <p>Risk of issuing CAS to non-credible applicants resulting in a risk to our UKVI Licence, including the risk to sponsor licence from visa refusal or non-completion of ICAS relating to Study Group students</p> <p>Loss of our status as a UKVI trusted sponsor and resulting in us being unable to recruit international students.</p> <p>Insufficient market knowledge to scrutinise and understand complex documentation</p>	4	4	● RED 16	Treat	<p>Review staffing requirements to match applicant volumes</p> <p>Admissions statistics regularly monitored to identify and address areas of lag and flex resources accordingly</p> <p>Enquiry statistics monitored to identify and address areas of lag</p> <p>Other Directorate staff trained and moved into enquiry support as and when required during peak pressure periods</p> <p>Continuously seek for opportunities to enhance processes through continual monitoring of workload pressures and seeking feedback from staff for improvement</p> <p>Programme of work to optimise existing admissions system to increase the efficiency of processing and applicant experience</p> <p>Contract with third party provider for one-year in first instance; re-tender progress underway</p> <p>Team-led project facilitated by external consultants to review the prospective student journey</p> <p>Active monitoring by the Student Recruitment Committee of our compliance with the requirements of our UKVI sponsor licence, and monitoring of market behaviours that may impact on compliance.</p> <p>Agree and transparently set out clear deadlines for University and applicant decision-making</p> <p>Close working between University's Admissions and Immigration Compliance Teams</p> <p>Contract in place for one year in the first instance to use third-party platform CAS-Shield to automate pre-CAS checks and documentation submissions (due to implemented in July 2023)</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p>	2	4	● AMBER 8	Down
2	Postgraduate research student recruitment levels continue to be out of line with competitor benchmark group	VP GE	Dean for Postgraduate Research	<p>Adverse impact on research capacity</p> <p>Adverse impact on the research culture and environment and resulting student experiences</p> <p>Impact on PGR metrics used to drive SFC research funding</p> <p>Continued loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild</p> <p>Impact on gross tuition fee income</p>	4	4	● RED 16		<p>Establishment of sector benchmarks to inform intake targets and allow performance to be monitored.</p> <p>Implementation of enhancements to PGR selection and admissions processes.</p> <p>Enhancement of staff research profiles and promotion of specific research topics on web pages</p> <p>Enhancement to PGR marketing campaigns and applicant conversion activity.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>	3	4	● RED 12	No Change
3	UK Postgraduate taught recruitment levels continue to be out of line with competitor set.	VP GE	Dean of Portfolio Development & Programme Engagement	<p>Negative impact on fee income</p> <p>Potential adverse impact on the student experience of international students seeking a UK university experience</p> <p>Loss of contribution to economic regeneration and upskilling</p> <p>Adverse impact on the balance of UG to PG numbers in the population</p> <p>Continued loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild.</p> <p>Potential loss of throughput to PGR study in those disciplines where this is the recognised progression path.</p>	4	3	● RED 12	Treat	<p>Establishment of sector benchmarks to inform intake targets and allow performance to be monitored.</p> <p>Launch of a new UK PGT campaign informed by latest market insights.</p> <p>New campaign to promote PGT study to existing undergraduates</p> <p>Promotion of scholarships targeted at UK PGT including alumni discount, and community discount</p>	<p>Under consideration</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	3	3	● AMBER 9	No Change
4	Failure to meet growth targets for international PGT and international UG student numbers, possibly as a result of changes in the external environment obstructing/interrupting recruitment of international students (geopolitics, international travel, changes to immigration policy global health)	VP GE	Dean for International Stakeholder Engagement (currently Vacant): Head of R in interim?	<p>Loss of tuition fee income and income shortfalls against budgets</p> <p>Adverse impact on the net fee income per student FTE</p> <p>Reduced ability to sustain other areas of activity that do not recover their full cost.</p> <p>In respect of PGT, adverse impact on the balance of UG to PG numbers in the population</p> <p>Loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild</p> <p>Over-reliance on a small number of key markets</p>	4	4	● RED 16	Treat	<p>Full review of conversion journey, identifying areas for enhancement, with an early priority being the conversion of acceptance to Student Visa supported by the implementation of CAS-Shield</p> <p>Use of market intelligence to drive awareness of market positional and applicant motivations.</p> <p>Brand review project, which will include messaging appropriate to each market in support of student recruitment.</p> <p>Targeted incentives and scholarships in response to the price-sensitivity of the individual market.</p> <p>Implementation of plan to enhance conversion rates in key markets.</p> <p>Ensuring brand promotion fully optimises ranking credentials in rank-sensitive markets.</p> <p>Task and finish groups established to review strategic approaches for international recruitment and market diversification</p> <p>Development of new programmes and employability focus to meet market demand</p> <p>Continue to deliver programme of in-person and virtual recruitment events for prospective students. targeted at key audiences and attending recruitment fairs domestically and internationally to support lead generation and to nurture potential applicants</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p>	4	4	● RED 16	Up

5	Failure to meet growth targets for RUK UG student numbers	VP GE	New D SR&IP (Vacant) COO in interim?	Loss of tuition fee income and income shortfalls against budgets Adverse impact on the net fee income per student FTE Reduced ability to sustain other areas of activity that do not recover their full cost. Loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild	3	3	● AMBER	9		Use of market intelligence to drive awareness of market positional and applicant motivations. Brand review project, which will include messaging appropriate to each market in support of student recruitment. Targeted incentives and scholarships Implementation of plan to enhance conversion rates Continue to deliver programme of in-person and virtual recruitment events for prospective students. For RUK UG planning our approach to Clearing and Confirmation, overseen by the Clearing and Confirmation TFG, to support growth in this area Maintain awareness of UK-wide discussions in relation to post qualification admissions for the undergraduate market, and the potential impact this could have on undergraduate recruitment.	In place In progress In place In place In place In progress In place	3	2	● YELLOW	6	No Change
6	Over-reliance on key markets increases exposure to international student recruitment risk.	VP GE	Head of International Recruitment	Exposure to the impact of geopolitical tensions, conflict, economic downturn and other global events. Loss of tuition fee income and income shortfalls against budgets Reduced ability to sustain other areas of activity which do not recover their full-costs Inability to respond to changing prioritisations of rank sensitive and price sensitive markets. Exposure to changes in market sentiment or affordability in individual markets. Adverse impact on the net fee income per student FTE Reduced ability to sustain other areas of activity that do not recover their full cost. Adverse impact on the balance of UG to PG numbers in the population Loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild Over-reliance on a small number of key markets	4	4	● RED	16		Use of market intelligence to drive awareness of market positional and applicant motivations. Targeted incentives and scholarships in response to the price-sensitivity of the individual market. Implementation of plan to enhance conversion rates in key markets. Ensuring brand promotion fully optimises ranking credentials in rank-sensitive markets. Task and finish groups established to review strategic approaches for international recruitment and market diversification Development of new programmes and employability focus to meet market demand Enhance in-country presence in key markets Continue to deliver programme of in-person and virtual recruitment events for prospective students.	In place In place In place In place In progress In place In place	3	3	● AMBER	9	No Change
7	Failure to satisfy SFC student number controls and Scottish Government priorities (widening access, STEM) in relation to the home fees population	VP GE	New Director of Student Recruitment & International Partnerships (D SR&IP) - COO in interim?	Financial penalties for over-recruiting or under-recruiting against SFC thresholds for the student population including: I) permanent lost of funded places result of under-recruitment in a) non-controlled subjects and/or b) against the specific allocations for the controlled subjects (Medicine, Dentistry, Initial Teacher Education; and/or II) a financial penalty for over recruitment against SFC consolidation thresholds Loss of market share which is challenging to rebuild Increase in intake required to fill funded places) increases the challenge of achieving those SFC targets expressed in percentage terms, such as S MD20, or STEM. SFC Outcome & Impact Framework targets relating to access, articulation and STEM are not met impacting on relationship with SFC and possible SFC sanctions and financial penalties. Reputational damage as a result of perceived failure to offer widening access opportunities. Inability to meet Aberdeen 2040 commitments on inclusivity.	4	3	● RED	12	Treat	Development of a portfolio of programmes appropriate to the market. Brand re-positioning project, which includes a focus on support for student recruitment. Continued engagement with prospective students at events (virtual and face-to-face) both on-campus and in school. Implementation of a comprehensive conversion plan Provision of materials for applicants and their influencers (guidance teachers, parents/guardians). Planning our approach to Clearing and Confirmation, overseen by the Clearing and Confirmation TFG, to support growth in this area Review budget assumptions for offset of any clawback anticipated to ensure it remains adequate for challenged recruitment areas e.g. PGDE Secondary. Model the intake required to achieve populations thresholds at an early point in the admissions cycle. Establishment of a comprehensive framework of metrics for widening access. Working with SFC and Commissioner for Fair Access to ensure that we can implement metrics appropriate to our regional context. Implement a transparent contextualised admissions policy. Continue to review entry qualifications to ensure these are attractive to prospective students but do not impact on overall standards Targeted incentives and scholarships, such as widening access scholarships in partnership with the Development Trust, and free accommodation offering for S MD20 students Maintaining existing FE College partnerships and seeking opportunities for new articulation pathways. Continued engagement with target school pupils at events (virtual and face-to-face) both on-campus and in school.	In place In progress In place In place In place In progress In place In place In place In place In place In place	4	3	● RED	12	Up

8	Potential growth opportunities for online student recruitment are not identified and/or fully realised.	VP GE	DoAS & OE	<p>Growth opportunities are not realised</p> <p>Recruitment diversification opportunities are not realised.</p> <p>Market share remains below potential.</p> <p>Restricted ability to address upskilling and economic regeneration needs.</p>	3	3		AMBER	9	Treat	<p>Develop clear strategy for developing online portfolio of courses and programmes.</p> <p>Enhancement to the Online Education Management System to improve the purchase of online courses and the learner experience</p> <p>Review opportunities to work with third party providers to help grow online student numbers</p> <p>Develop in-house capacity to further broaden the On-Demand platform provision of short courses and programmes.</p> <p>Respond proactively to upskilling/reskilling opportunities and identify potential for growth</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>In place progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p>	3	2		YELLOW	6	No Change
9	Inability to provide timely and informed student recruitment projections	VP GE	New Director of Student Recruitment & International Partnerships (D SR&IP) - COO in interim?	<p>Inability to project workload and plan staffing requirements</p> <p>Impact on projections for planning a budget purposes meaning that academic areas are not equipped of resources to support increased student numbers.</p> <p>Potential negative impact on the student experience.</p> <p>Potential negative impact on future student recruitment.</p>	4	4		RED	16	Treat	<p>Monitoring and regular updating of conversion rates of application/offer/acceptance to registered student</p> <p>Implementation of a methodology to develop range-based projections.</p> <p>Cross working between External Relations (new entrants); Planning (student population planning); and Finance (budgetary impact) to enhance robustness of projections available.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	3	3		AMBER	9	Up

Strategic Risk Area: Education (UG and PGT)

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Marking and assessment boycott (MAB) by UCU	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Inability to progress and graduate some students. (focus on resit students and PGT students) Impact on wellbeing of students. Impact on reputation of the University.	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	As part of the existing NSS institutional action plan for assessment and feedback, Schools will have ensured that all assessment is prepared for the second half-session. Provide guidance and the Senate-approved policy changes for the MAB with a focus on areas such as prioritising marking for student groups (e.g., graduating students). At the point of the final date for the hand-in of assessment (which will vary), assess the impact of the MAB on individual students. Put in place communications at School and university levels for students – to explain the overall situation and available support (university) and to inform students of particular circumstances and mitigations (School)	In place In place In progress In progress	4	3	●	RED	12	New Risk
2	Assessment and feedback on assessment is not of a high quality and / or provided within the required timeframes. Note the marking boycott as part of industrial action which is an additional issue that impacts on this existing risk [see risk 1 above for mitigations]	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Impact on student performance and progression NSS Assessment and Feedback results do not improve with impact on League Table rankings Unable to progress or graduate students due to impact of industrial action (e.g. marking boycott)	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Continue with the agreed approach to monitoring the timeliness of providing student feedback at School level so that Heads of School / Directors of Education can intervene where necessary Continue with the agreed approach that ensures that all students are provided with a information about assessment (including but not limited to: type of assessment, criteria for marking, timelines for submission and return of grades/feedback) Take forward actions at institutional level that support Schools to improve feedback (e.g., provision of training) Take forward a pilot of the use of TESTA (Transforming the experience of students through assessment) in one or more School Identify good practice in assessment at course, discipline and / or School levels and disseminate appropriately Each School will review the NSS results at discipline level and will put in place action plans at discipline level Quality assurance processes in place to ensure appropriate assessment is in place, including liaison with external examiners Guidance in place on assessment: development of assessment, inclusivity, integrity with continued work on matters of integrity (e.g., essay mills)	To be done for each half session (Schools) To be done for each half session (Schools) In place In progress In progress To be done for 2023 NSS (Schools) In place Ongoing	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
3	Non-continuation of students with some student groups being more at risk of non-continuation	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Impact on individual students Loss of tuition fee income Impact on completion rates, degree awarding gap, and League Table position Reputational impact	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Continued development of transition into university support, orientation and induction approaches to support the needs of students Analysis of non-continuation data that enables targeted initiatives to be developed as necessary at institutional, School and discipline levels Monthly review of withdrawal data to enable 'real-time' understanding of any trends or concerns Analysis of particular demographic groups to determine if there are issues associated with particular groups, and take action to address the issues Ongoing equality impact assessment of teaching, learning and assessment and take action where necessary	In place for 2HS In progress In progress In progress Ongoing	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
4	No increase in the level of student mobility / students' opportunity to engage with an international experience	VP E	Director of External Relations	Impact on student experience due to lack of opportunity to undertake international placements Impact on recruitment Impact on the achievement of the Aberdeen 2040 Commitment 11	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	International TFG is taking forward planning that aims to increase the number of opportunities for study abroad Take forward a pilot of COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) that aims to enable students to have an international experience without travel Communicate the existing opportunities appropriately Continue to work with networks (e.g., Aurora, Curtin) to progress increased opportunities for student mobility Continue to work at a national level to influence the approach to the funding for study abroad	In progress In progress In place In place In place	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

5	Quality assurance arrangements are not in place or not adhered to in our TNE (transnational education) partnerships in Qatar, the Joint Institute with South China Normal University, and other TNE provision	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Impact on the student experience Impact on our reputation Impact on our external quality assurance outcomes	3	3	● AMBER	9	Treat	Produce a quality assurance report annually for a specific partnership focused Quality Assurance Committee meeting for each partnership, identifying any risks or issues Utilise the robust committee structures that are in place to monitor and intervene as necessary Ensure that TNE partners have all necessary information and support to enable the implementation of our required quality assurance processes	In place In place In place	2	2	● YELLOW	4	No Change
6	Students are unable to access work placements or go on to employment after graduation Just to note that I didn't write this and am not sure whether it needs to stay	VP E	Head of Careers and Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship	Negative impact on graduate outcomes Negative impact on our graduates Impact on the achievement of Aberdeen 2040 Commitment 12	4	4	● RED	16	Treat	Analysis of graduate outcome data at School and discipline levels to identify areas that require targeted action with Schools putting in place action plans Progress the work of the Work Placement TFG to develop approaches, policy and actions that increase the opportunities for work placements (or alternatives) as part of an overall approach to support employability, including a consultancy exercise to support decision-making on next steps Work with the Development Trust to identify opportunities that will support the development of placement opportunities Upscale and widen co-curricular internship opportunities through new ABDNConnect Internship programme (Communications to include engagement with alumni) Encourage UG students to undertake appropriate PG study with the University of Aberdeen Complete the work of the Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills and develop an associated detailed implementation plan	In place In progress In place In progress In place In progress	3	3	● AMBER	9	No Change
7	Inability to complete the Aberdeen 2040 strategic work for Education relating to the following (some of this covered in sepeate risks): - Pastoral support - Monitoring, absence and engagement processes - Assessment and Feedback - Non-continuation and success - Education policy project - Enhancement-Led Institutional Review - Decolonising the Curriculum - Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills - Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education - The International student experience - Employability and graduate outcomes	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education and Director of People	Missed opportunity to enhance Education following the learning that has emerged from blended learning and the wider student experience during Covid-19 Negative impact on the League Tables	3	4	● RED	12	Treat	Action plan for Education, with associated workstreams in place Resource implications of the extensive work addressed Consultation approach embedded as part of all of the work (our colleagues, students wider stakeholders) Monitoring through the University Education Committee structure	In progress In progress In progress In place	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change
8	Failure to adhere to requirements of Professional & Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) leading to risk of loss of accreditation	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Reputation damage Negative impact on student employability Risk of litigation	2	4	● AMBER	8	Treat	Ensure close oversight by Schools of PSRB requirements QAC oversight of PSRB accreditation reports Put in place a more robust process of identifying and monitoring accreditation/PSRB requirements and ensure that Schools are alerted to the actions required at least 9 months ahead of time	In place In place In place	1	4	● YELLOW	4	No Change
9	Unable to improve the degree awarding gap for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, Widening Access students and mature-age students.	VP E	Director of Academic Services & Online Education	Negative impact on the individual students Student performance and progression is not where it should be Reputational damage	3	4	● RED	12		Implement a targeted action plan	In place	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change

Strategic Risk Area	Research and PGR
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Failure to grow research income (see also Financial Sustainability, risk No. 4 (Sustained loss of research income above sector average))	VP R	D of R&I	Reduced ICC income; Reduced ability to invest in research; Loss of track record impacts on ability to attract funding; Adverse impact on league tables; Reduction of REG year on year Impact on REF metrics	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Alignment of institutional research themes in Aberdeen 2040 to national funding priorities and the UN Sustainable Development Goals; - The team of Directors of interdisciplinary challenges, recruited to focus on excellent research and interdisciplinary education, supported by the Research Development Team/Grants Academy and the Impact and Knowledge Exchange Team in Research & Innovation; Review of the Grants Academy programmes; Develop the support approach focussed on large grant acquisition; - V-P for Regional Engagement, working with the Dean for Enterprise & Innovation and R&I for the delivery of contract research agenda. - Creation of a dedicated space to support the work within the interdisciplinary themes underway; - Provision of pump-priming opportunities as well as matched/co-funding for strategically important projects; - Increased and dedicated support of very high value bids through Research & Innovation; - Further improvements to pre- and post-award management system - Provision of research income information to schools to aid income planning through Power BI dashboards - Provisions of benchmarking and information through dashboards; - Development of a pricing policy to maximize cost recovery.	In place In place In progress In place In place Under consideration Under consideration In place In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
2	Reduced/insufficient quality of research	VP R	D of R&I	Decline in citations, number and percentage of highly cited papers; Reduced ability to attract funding; Reduced ability to publish in competitive journals or with competitive publishers; Adverse impact on league tables Reputational damage	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Continued peer support through interdisciplinary themes, Grants Academy and Schools ; Aberdeen 2040 promotes challenge based research through IDR themes, engagement with research users and partnership working to enable project proposals likely to attract competitive funding and to yield high quality outputs; - Staff development/training programmes for staff and PGRs available through the Researcher Development Unit; - In-School processes include mentorship and engagement/staff development through discipline and professional associations; - Membership of UK Research Integrity Office and UK Reproducibility Network commits us to working to nationally recognised standards of research integrity and reproducibility; - Increased and dedicated support for very high value bids likely to produce very high quality outputs - monitoring of rates of outputs and consideration of workload adjustment to academics if required - development of an institutional framework for the quality assessment of research throughout the REF cycle; - responsible use of metrics in developing research and publication strategies - review of workload allocations and provision of teaching buy out opportunities to research capacity is maintained against a background of increasing student numbers, particularly DCTs	In place In place In place In place In place Under consideration In progress In progress Policy approved; implementation in progress Workload review complete; institutional research leave policy in progress	3	2	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
3	Failure to address weaknesses in research environment/impact and output support identified in REF2021 feedback	VP R	D of R&I	Sustained decline in research quality Failure to attract/retain staff, leading to loss of capacity Reduced income, reduced capacity to attract income/become major partner in research collaborations nationally and internationally Inability to demonstrate strategic use of REG to support research and impact	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Continued reflection on outcomes in individual School meetings; provision of benchmarking and other indicators to inform discussions Identification of priority areas for investment in line with Aberdeen 2040 and in light of REF2021 benchmarking Review of institutional support structures for research - adding capacity to R&I to support grant acquisition and bid support, as well as for engagement and impact Development of institutional research assessment framework, compliant with the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) Participation in national networks informing the development of the next REF (probably 2028), early alignment of support and reporting structures to enable us to generate the correct metrics and indicators for assessment in 2028 Implementation of the recommendations of the Research Culture Task and Finish Group	In progress Under consideration In progress - additional support for impact approved In progress Ongoing through US RKEG, RDCC and Scottish REF Managers group In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	New Risk

4	Reduced/insufficient KE activity; failure to grow our portfolio of enterprise, entrepreneurship and spin outs	VP R and VP RE	D of R&I and Dean for Enterprise & Innovation	Reduced income from KE, contract research, licensing. Failure to generate impact to report to funders or REF Inability to contribute and attract funds that enable generation of further impact/KE activities Inability to develop a portfolio of new spin out and start up opportunities for the innovation hubs in the region Reputational damage	3	3	● AMBER	9	Treat	Work with regional partners on industry needs; Promote collaboration beyond academia and partnership working through interdisciplinary themes; Encourage work with non-academic partners on industry solutions Develop new strategy for entrepreneurship, programmes for generating new spin outs/start ups and an enhanced physical location; Review incentives and promotion opportunities relating to KE and innovation activity Review of relevant policies and procedures (e.g. IP and revenue sharing, consultancy); Engage with regional partners on strategic bids, eg Investment Zones; Increase capacity within R&I to support enterprise and innovation activity	In progress In place In progress In progress In place In progress In progress In progress	3	3	● AMBER	9	Up
5	Failure to attract PGR students; failure to retain, progress PGRs, low rates of completion; failure to provide a positive PGR experience (see also Student Recruitment risk register, risk No. 1 (Failure to meet Recruitment Targets) and risk No. 2 (International Students))	VP R and VP GE	Dean of Postgraduate Research	Reduction of research capacity Reduction of annual SFC PGR grant Impact on REF metrics Impact on PGR income where students fail to complete or fail to complete on time (non-compliance with UKRI 4-year rule) Reduced ability to recruit PGR students Reduced ability attract studentships and DTP funds and international applications	3	4	● RED	12	Treat	- Implement findings of the PGR Task and Finish Group -Increased student support via PGR School; - Specific guidance for supervisors and PGR School co-ordinators around engagement; - Provision of mandatory training for PGRs and supervisors, core and generic training online; - Promotion of 'Engage the World' of staff profile changes including PGR recruitment button and update of study here pages; - Continued engagement with International funders/partnerships; - Ensure DTP applications are promoted and supported by institutional commitment required to match/co-fund; - Introduce interdisciplinary PhDs to increase numbers and support the work of the interdisciplinary themes	In progress In place In place In place In place In place In place In progress	3	2	● YELLOW	6	No Change
6	Failure to attract and retain high quality T&R /R staff (see also: Staffing risk register, risk No. 1 (Recruitment) and risk No. 6 (Retention))	VP R	D of R&I and D of People	Reduced research capacity Reduced ability to attract external funding and PGR candidates Reduced ability to engage with industry/KE agenda Reduced visibility with adverse impacts on student and staff recruitment Longer term reduction of REG	3	4	● RED	12	Treat	- Implement findings from Research Culture Task and Finish Group - Ensure rolling programme of facilities review to main high quality research facilities - Close engagement with and support to researchers; - Enhanced support for commercialisation and enterprise; - Monitoring of research metrics by protected characteristic to ensure inclusive approach to support; - Ensure high visibility of and celebrate research success through Comms, PERU, web content and social media	In progress In place In place In progress In place In progress	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change

7	Failure to maintain high standards of ethics and governance; failure to comply with regulatory and statutory requirements	VP R	D of R&I	<p>Clawback or financial penalties</p> <p>Statutory obligations not met</p> <p>Regulatory or statutory penalties</p> <p>Reputational damage</p> <p>Funder(s) refusing to accept applications from individual researchers</p> <p>Funder(s) refusing to accept applications from institution</p> <p>Loss of research data (linked to Cybersecurity risk)</p> <p>Loss of P through espionage or unauthorised/harmful use of research outcomes</p>	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	Treat	<p>- Regular review and update of Research Governance Handbook to ensure compliance of processes and policies with funder requirements and integrity standards;</p> <p>- Mandatory online training introduced (for research integrity, fundamental ethics and research data management);</p> <p>- Mandatory in depth ethics training for ethics applicants and reviewers; Review and if necessary replace with updated provision</p> <p>- Continued membership and engagement with UK Research Integrity Office and UK Reproducibility Network;</p> <p>- Establishment of an institutional ethics group (as sub-group of the University Research Committee) to discuss and share good practice;</p> <p>- Implementation of a new University wide ethics system (Worktribe) to ensure consistency of ethics processes</p> <p>- Continued close partnership with NHS on clinical studies involving human participants;</p> <p>- Continued close scrutiny of Home Office regulated research involving animals to ensure compliance;</p> <p>- Develop guidance and process for registration of projects/partnerships under the National Security Investment Act 2021 (retrospective to 2020); - Training for researchers on P, appropriate protection of IP, monitoring of licences grant to third parties.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
8	Failure to comply with funders' t's and c's	VP R	D of R&I	<p>Clawback or financial penalties;</p> <p>Funder(s) refusing to accept applications from individual researchers;</p> <p>Funder(s) refusing to accept applications from institution;</p> <p>Depending on nature of breach, regulatory or statutory consequences;</p> <p>Reputational damage</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	<p>- Monitoring of funders' conditions and policy requirements (including funders' penalty policies);</p> <p>- Early engagement with funders and third parties with a view to mitigate potential claims where appropriate;</p> <p>- Ensure communication with partners via PIs and Research & Innovation;</p> <p>- Support compliance with relevant training for researchers and PGRs</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

Strategic Risk Area:	Digital & Information Services
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Cyber Security A failure, absence or compromise of IT Security procedures or controls results in loss, destruction or unauthorised access or modification of data and / or significant business interruption.	TS	BH	Data security breaches Disruption to business activities Financial impact Reputational damage	4	4	●	FALSE	16	Avoid	Monitoring of organisation by security team, including weekends where specific threat intelligence warrants (if volunteers available). Information champions group for staff / student education. MFA now rolled out across all alumni, staff, contractors and students. Microsoft 365, VDI and VPN are covered by MFA with MyHR and external and shared account work underway. Multi-layered technical controls in place and continually assessed and improved (vulnerability management, email auto-forwarding, mobile management) to reduce risk. Review and improve security tools (SIEM, MS tools) to ensure that security and performance are optimal in the changing working environment. Information Governance Committee, Information Risk Working Group and Operation Security Group in place to provide policy, governance, prioritise risk mitigation activities. Adherence to and reporting to senior management based on Scottish Governance Public Sector Action Plan and Cyber Resilience Framework. Audit proposal now received. Active participation in external networks and threat intelligence sharing groups and forums Regular audits, security assessments and penetration testing. Improvement of information security training and development for staff and students with the introduction of new mandatory training modules for staff. Incident Response retainer service to support local staff Active restriction of user account and access permissions use of least privilege principle DSC and IGC now approved extended detection & response service to provide 24/7 support. Budget and procurement work now underway. Policy, procedure and guidance framework in place, All published to all users on StaffNet where appropriate and subject to annual review	In place In place In place In place In place In place In progress In place In progress In place In place In progress In progress In place	4	3	●	RED	12	No change
2	Information Governance A failure, absence or compromise of Information Governance procedures or controls which results in the breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. As well as the inability to meet accountability and legal obligations.	TS	BH	Personal Data breaches Financial impact Reputational damage Damage or distress to individuals	4	4	●	RED	16	Avoid	Ensure significant proactive focus and staffing, including Data Protection Officer, in this area to identify and manage risk, and drive improvement. Information champions group for staff / student education Installation of immutable data store to help protect data from ransomware attack. Information Governance Committee and Information Risk Working Group in place to provide policy, governance and prioritise risk mitigation activities Regular audits and governance assessments via adherence to and reporting to senior management based on compliance with the ICO Accountability Framework. Active participation in external networks and information governance groups and forums Improvement of data protection training and development for staff through the roll out of new mandatory annual training module for staff Development and implementation of International data transfer framework to structure University information governance response / engagement with international partners including SCNU / China / Calgary / Cur in / Qatar; to assess new international data transfers and review existing arrangements Regular monitoring of external environment for legal / environmental change that is relevant to University Information Governance risk and processes Contractual due diligence in place via supplier cyber and data assessment / DPIA / data sharing agreements and data processing agreements Policy, procedure and guidance framework in place, subject to annual review, and published to all users on Staffnet/toolkit as appropriate and updates communicated via ezine Information and Records Management Plan (IRMP) to ensure data ownership is embedded within the University and retention schedules kept up to date and adhered to	In place In place In place In progress In place In place In place - framework In progress - assessment and review In place In place On-going process In progress	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No change

3	<p>Talent Management An inability to deliver and sustain service, including transformational project activity, due to a lack of appropriately skilled/knowledgeable staff and/or significant challenges with talent acquisition, progression and retention.</p> <p>This risk includes the loss of knowledge and adverse workload implications following the departure of key Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), a failure to attract replacement staff, and/or prolonged periods of vacant posts.</p>	TS	BH	<p>Delays & disruption to day-to-day activities</p> <p>Delays & disruption to transformational project activity (impacting staff, student & applicant experience)</p> <p>Degradation of regulatory compliance and security posture</p> <p>Staff burnout and increased absence levels</p> <p>Reputational risk in both service delivery and employer profile</p>	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	<p>Creation of Job Families with progression routes</p> <p>Priority cases for recruitment submitted to Senior Management</p> <p>Succession planning for key roles</p> <p>Use of market supplement pay awards for key, competitive skills areas</p> <p>Salary and benefits review for major risk areas</p> <p>Development & articulation of the Employee Value Proposition</p> <p>Skills forecasting and investment in Digital Skills</p> <p>Utilisation of contractor / agency routes for priority activity</p>	<p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Place</p> <p>Under Consideration</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Progress</p> <p>In Place</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Revised Risk
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7	Technology replacement programme TRP or capacity management stops for extended period due to supply / resource issues leading to failures and poor back office and user technology. This includes facilitation of institutional home working policy (HWP).	TS	BH	Impact on longer term business continuity Financial impact Reputational impact Disruption to business activities	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Ensure appropriate warranty packages are in place to maximise lifespan Utilisation of break / fix model and limited budget in the medium term. Utilise unspent budget allocations to ensure sustainability of operation Develop desktop replacement strategy to move to mobile provision Financial case for HWP technology provision submitted to DSC. Submission of orders in timely and bulked manner to try and ensure supply Lobbying of suppliers at local and national level	In place In place In place In place In place In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No change
8	Service Accessibility provision Inappropriate service provision to staff / students with particular & specific requirements (location / disability / accessibility / digital divide)	TS	BH	Student Experience undermined Financial impact Reputational impact	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Utilise technical solutions to overcome issues of location and access to information. Increased use of VDI (purchase of expanded computer/licence complete) and implementation of scalable and secure VPN for all remote/ home working Consider purchase of equipment and / or internet for students. SFC monies allocated to hardship fund for specific student technology requirements. Captioning service for lecture capture Digital Accessibility Workgroup continues to champion increased adherence to WCAG regs and specific disability areas, e.g. dyslexia Use of internal and external hardship funds, equipment and content to help reduce digital poverty Digital Accessibility Policy in place with clear roles & responsibilities for management and relevant staff roles. Review of study spaces to include accessibility and inclusion. Proposal for wide scale digital accessibility training and further training support.	In place In place In place In place In place Under consideration In progress	3	2	●	YELLOW	6	No change
9	Content Management Loss of digital content (corporate/research/heritage) due to lack of digital archiving and preservation service and systems	TS	BH	Regulatory claims Inability to comply with research funder policies Reputational damage Irrecoverable loss of unique materials	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	External review to inform plans Acquisition of digital curation and preservation systems via DSC bid Development of service and staffing to meet international standards Identify and implement archiving solution introducing resilience to existing infrastructure through cloud provision. Digital preservation consultancy work with JISC as part of Information Records Management Plan Project	In progress In progress Under consideration In progress In progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No change
10	Collections Management Failure to adequately manage the museum collections, special collections and the Library collections.	TS	BH	Irrecoverable loss or damage to unique materials Failure to retain museum Accreditation and Recognition status Loss or reduction of SFC Museums Galleries and Collections grant Reputational Impact	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	Ensure building maintenance, and security systems and protocols, including regular checking of onsite and offsite stores, effective disaster prevention procedures and business continuity plans, and risk assessments for relevant activities Fulfil expectations of Accreditation and Recognition schemes, including approval of policies and governance arrangements by Museums Galleries Scotland and annual reporting Fulfil deliverables set by SFC, including annual reporting; engage with SFC through University Museums in Scotland group Ensure robust research and a transparent and consultative approach underpins activity, particularly when addressing issues such as decolonisation, slavery and repatriation; adherence to Museums Association Code of Ethics; close liaison with External Affairs Consultant led exercise underway to understand space / security requirements to move collections from Marischal to more appropriate location. Digital first purchasing policy reduces the risk related to any loss of modern print titles	In place In place In place In place In progress In place	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No change

Strategic Risk Area	People
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Inability to recruit staff required to meet strategic priorities in Aberdeen 2040 and to deliver a positive staff and student experience, potentially exacerbated by skills shortages locally.	DoPeople	Head of HR Business Partnering	Staff shortages Critical shortage in some disciplines and impact on UG and PGT teaching Pause on recruitment due to financial challenges impacting on all business areas and particularly professional services delivery/support Impact on REF Resentment, following the need to review staffing complement and shift staff to business critical areas Inability to delivery in speciality areas as a consequence of economic environment and skills shortages.	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	Review of R&S Policy including Relocation Package to make more attractive Post of Senior HR Partner (Resourcing) to provide specialist recruitment support including for senior and hard to recruit to posts Development of proposals for market supplements and other incentives to attract staff where recruitment difficulties Review of reward practices (including promotion and career pathways, senior staff salary banding) Review of homeworking policy and hybrid working guidance following internal audit. Development of annual programme learning & development activity to support internal upskilling. Assessment from Financial Planning on risks of non-recruitment during recruitment pause ensuring business critical areas are supported.	Complete Complete In progress In progress In progress In progress Ongoing	4	3	●	RED	12	Up
2	Inability to retain the high quality staff required to lead, develop and implement key strategic and operational priorities	DoPeople	Head of HR Business Partnering	Staff shortages leading to excessive workloads for those remaining Drop in quality of education or research standards among academics Deterioration in ability to delivery support services across Directorates and Schools. Reputational damage.	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Staff Survey Review of Probation Procedures Comprehensive programme of staff development & leadership opportunities. Review of Contribution procedures and other Recognition practices Addition of home working/hybrid working to range of flexible working procedures. Retention of key academic staff guidance document.	Complete In progress In place In progress Complete Complete	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Up
3	Overseas working - risk of staff working overseas and not notifying the University. Risk of fines due to tax etc implications	DoPeople	Head of HR Business Partnering and Head of International Advice and Compliance	Reputational damage Financial impact	3	2	●	YELLOW	6	Treat	Guidance in place for staff and managers on the employment of staff overseas Global Mobility Policy to be implemented Working with external specialist to ensure country specific guidance and advice is in place as required.	In place Complete In place	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
4	Failure in adhering to legal compliance, especially in relation to immigration	DoPeople	Head of HR Business Partnering and Head of International Advice and Compliance	Reputational damage Inability to recruit international staff as a consequence of loss of UKVI license if legal breach occurs and license revoked.	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Continued subscription to UKVI premium service and continuing to seek their advice on a case by case basis where appropriate. Ensuring guidance issued by the UKVI is communicated and cascaded through HR and relevant University teams. PWC Audit being undertaken to identify any internal risks (July 2023)	In place In place In Progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
5	Deterioration in Employee Relations including potential of industrial dispute.	DoPeople	DoPeople and CFO	Adverse impact on student experience Detrimental impact on University's reputation Adverse impact on industrial relations/ partnership working with the Campus Trade Unions Inability to graduate students due to Marking & Assessment Boycott (MAB) Reputational damage	4	3	●	RED	12		Meetings of the Industrial Action Working Group to manage the impact Regular meetings between management and the Campus Trade Unions Guidance and FAQ for staff and managers Reward Consultation and Negotiation Group established Principals and Guidance to mitigate the impact of MAB on the student experience Establish Staff Experience Committee to oversee issues linked to staff experience and their feedback	Ongoing Ongoing Completed (regular review) In progress In progress Ongoing	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Up
6	Transition to hybrid working arrangements and return to campus impacting on staff performance/outputs, staff morale, staff engagement and student experience.	DoPeople	Head of HR Business Partnering and Head of Organisational Development	Loss of output Projects stall Staff satisfaction drops Increased stress for staff concerned about not being able to deliver all aspects of role Impact on service delivery and student experience	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Staff survey 2022 undertaken and action plans being taken forward. Workload Planning Review Group Homeworking Policy review undertaken and results being taken forward Ongoing consideration of adjusting priorities/delaying activity as appropriate Flexibility offered to staff (method and extent informed by survey results, sectoral and government advice) A range of wellbeing support available (Wellbeing Toolkit) Strategies to manage user expectations (staff, students, community) and/or to adapt (or buy in) services to suit availability of staff	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing In place In place In place In progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

7	Failure to comply with EDI legal and regulatory obligations, including Public Sector Equality Duty and related SFC requirements.	DoPeople	Head of Organisational Development	Increased risk of complaints and legal challenges Clawback of funding Staff and students feel less respected leading to lower effectiveness Negative impact on wellbeing issues.	2	2	 YELLOW	4	Treat	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee continues to meet ensuring progress against the Aberdeen 2040 action plan/inclusive theme and wider strategic matters relating to EDI. Produce Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Reports biannually - 2023 Interim Report approved by Court in March 2023 Athena SWAN awards, Race Equality Charter, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index BSL Policy Gender Pay Gap Reporting SFC iGAP - now not required by SFC E&D training (incl. Unconscious bias) and Antiracism training for all levels of staff including Court Embed E&D in all activities Protected Characteristics data collection and reporting Promote internal diversity networks Support AUSA Mental health and wellbeing Strategy implementation Achieving the EmilyTest Charter recognition Continual review of GBV Policy and work of the Strategy Group, including evolving Action Plan Dignity at Work and Study Toolkit Compliance with REF E&D requirements	In place In place In place In place In progress In progress In progress In progress In progress In progress In progress Ongoing Ongoing In place In progress	1	2	 GREEN	2	No Change
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Strategic Risk Area: Health, Safety, Wellbeing & Resilience (Staff and Students)

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Failure to progress day-to-day health and safety management (including fire safety)	US & COO	DoPeople	Non-compliance with potential for injury and/or loss plus enforcement action up to and including prosecution (unlimited fines).	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Estates and Facilities will continue to carry out statutory checks as far as possible (partially dependent on contractors)	In progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
2	Failure to complete or review fire risk assessments for all University-owned or occupied premises	US & COO	DoPeople	Non-compliance. Failure to mitigate the risk of fire, resulting in injury and/or loss. Enforcement action could result in removal of licence for student accommodation or prohibition on use of a building or part thereof.	3	3		AMBER	9	Treat	Health and Safety Adviser continues to carry out assessments to agreed priorities.	In progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	New Risk
3	Campus is not accessible for staff and students with a disability.	US & COO	VP E	Inability for students to fully engage with their studies. Impact on health and wellbeing of both staff and students.	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Survey to students has been issued Further survey to disabled students considered Funding available to students through Hardship Fund to purchase additional equipment Existing support and access to DSA is still available and has been enhanced with additional staffing in Dec.2020. Thriving at Work and Study Recommendations to be implemented. Accessibility working group	In place Under consideration In place In place Ongoing Ongoing	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
4	Significant Failure of Health and Safety Management leading to fatality, injury or illhealth arising from University activities on campus and elsewhere.	US & COO	DoPeople	Injury, work related illhealth, enforcement action, civil claims and reputational damage.	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Health and safety management overseen by quarterly H&S Committee meetings (and sub-committees) H&S Risk Register in place H&S Policy Review Programme Regular H&S communications to staff and students Mandatory induction and training undertaken Monitoring of accidents and incidents in place H&S audit programme	Ongoing In place In place In place In place In place In place	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
5	Insufficient business continuity and emergency response arrangements	US & COO	DoPeople	Failure to meet duty of care in an emergency Loss of income Reputational damage	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Resilience Advisory Group oversees arrangements Busines Impact Assessments carried out BC Plans in place Plans exercise to agreed programme	In place In place In place In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change

Strategic Risk Area	International Partnerships
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)	Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)	Risk Movement
1	Inadequate response to the management of international security risks, outside interference with research and academic discourse, and challenges to the protection of human rights and the University's core values.	VP GE	DDER (TNE P)	<p>Failure to protect intellectual property rights</p> <p>Exposure to the potential actions of politically or ideologically motivated individuals and state influence.</p> <p>Failure to safeguard the transfer of personal data in international partnerships</p> <p>Failure to recognise the need for the protection of the rights and privacy of staff and students in the use of their data.</p> <p>Failure to comply with anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures</p> <p>Failure to safeguard the academic freedom of the University and its staff</p> <p>Failure to protect the human rights of students and staff.</p> <p>Negative popular press and media coverage regarding challenges to forms of partnership association perceived to be influenced by foreign governments and agencies, and thereby to carry threat to civil liberty, academic freedoms, human rights and/or core values.</p>	4	4	16	Treat	<p>Establish TFG to scope immediate actions and project work to implement UUKI guidelines for the management of international security risk.</p> <p>Proactive management of cyber security attack risk</p> <p>Intellectual Property policies in place and incorporated into partnership agreements</p> <p>Policies in place on freedom of speech and academic freedom, for incorporation into partnership agreements</p> <p>Incorporation of international security issues including data transfer in transnational project approval and monitoring</p> <p>Develop guidance and process for registration of projects/partnerships under the National Security Investment Act 2021 (retrospective to 2020)</p> <p>Safeguards for international data transfers in agreements with partners and liaison with data protection professionals when formulating agreements. International data transfer framework to structure University information governance response / engagement with international partners including SCNU / China / Calgary / Curtin / Qatar; to assess new international data transfers and review existing arrangements</p> <p>Ensure all partnership agreements have sufficient termination clauses, that due diligence is required on their consideration for renewal, and that a dedicated exit strategy exists and is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Proactive strategy to respond to media interest or adverse UK political environment regarding some international partnerships e.g. regarding Confucius Institute, human rights matters in Qatar etc.</p> <p>R&I monitor for new/updated legislation.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Under consideration</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	2	4	8	No Change
2	Existing partnerships are impacted by changes in foreign government education policy as implemented by state bodies.	VP GE	Dean for International Student Pathways & Progression	<p>Obstruction to partnership operating models and business plans</p> <p>Inability to deliver or contribute to academic programmes</p> <p>Disruption to students, individually or collectively</p> <p>Damage to relationships with policy authorities, partner institutions and other stakeholders</p> <p>Damage to reputation and future relationships</p> <p>Loss of income</p>	4	4	16	Treat	<p>Maintain strong formal relationships with key government stakeholders, eg Ministries of Education and qualification/recognition bodies, via partners where appropriate.</p> <p>Work in partnership with other Scottish universities through Universities Scotland to strengthen relationships with international government organisations.</p> <p>Maintain strong communication links with partners eg SCNU, AFG College, SDNU, Wuhan etc.</p> <p>Continually review external environment informed by market intelligence</p> <p>Work with Universities Scotland and partners including SCNU to respond to specific changes in CSCSE policy regarding 'one third rule'.</p> <p>Ensure all partnership agreements have sufficient termination clauses, that due diligence is required on their consideration for renewal, and that a separate exit strategy exists and is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with UK bodies including British Council and other relevant organisation (UK JI Alliance)</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	3	3	9	No Change
3	Economic, geopolitical, military, or public health factors causing disruption to partnership activity in affected parts of the world.	VP GE	DDER (TNE P)	<p>Inability to undertake international travel for visits to international partners for partnership governance, recruitment and conversion purposes</p> <p>Disruption to political and business relationships in key markets, impacting on business continuity</p> <p>Obstructions to financial payments from partners due to financial or currency controls, and/or exchange rate fluctuations</p> <p>Loss of income and/or access to student recruitment in key markets</p> <p>Disruption to students, individually or collectively</p> <p>Adverse changes in taxation liabilities impacting on a partnership</p>	4	4	16	Treat	<p>Monitoring of international diplomatic, military and geopolitical tensions and their potential consequences</p> <p>Monitoring of the regional political, economic and socio-cultural conditions in areas of significant partnership activity</p> <p>Maintaining strong communication links with partners to provide early awareness of changes in their external environments.</p> <p>Monitoring of the external environment informed by market intelligence and liaison with FCDO, UUKI and other bodies including overseas agencies where appropriate.</p> <p>Ongoing diversification of international partnership activity by geographical region, geopolitical alignment, and economic interdependency.</p> <p>Ensure all partnership agreements have sufficient termination clauses, that due diligence is required on their consideration for renewal, and that a separate exit strategy exists and is regularly reviewed for each.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p>	3	4	12	Up

4	Objectives and projected growth for the AFG College with the University of Aberdeen partnership in Qatar are not fully realised and/or there are fundamental failings in the partnership relationship, or in delivery by the partner, which undermine the effective functioning of the University's operations in Qatar.	VP GE	DD ER (TNE/IP)	<p>Poential loss of income or disruption/delay to anticipated payments</p> <p>Failure to deliver student recruitment growth/income growth and broadening of academic portfolio</p> <p>Failure of PGT teaching transition to AFG/disruption to academic provision and deleterious impact on the student experience and student outcomes</p> <p>Disruption to the recruitment of potential future students.</p> <p>Reputational damage in-country with Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)</p> <p>Inability to approve or proceed with the potential Phase 2 expansion of activity.</p> <p>Unilateral actions by major stakeholders are destabilising or pose existential threat to the partnership</p> <p>Failure of AFG College/University staff to engage effectively to support the partnership</p> <p>Colleagues at all levels of the partnership do not deliver their responsibilities and/or act for the mutual benefit of the partnership.</p> <p>Reputational damage</p>	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	<p>Establishment of new governance structures that circumscribe the latitude for unilateral actions by either party and allow for effective progress monitoring.</p> <p>Establish Partnership Development Plan and associated KPIs, and close monitoring of student recruitment outturns and projections.</p> <p>Regular contact between senior representatives of the University and AFG College.</p> <p>Effective relations are maintained at all levels of the partnership through ongoing liaison to ensure a close collaborative working relationship. Inclusion of AFG colleagues in appropriate decision-making structures of the University</p> <p>Conclusion of new Academic Cooperation Agreement and updating of due diligence prior to signing. ACA ensures roles and responsibilities and lines of communication are clearly articulated in all aspects of operation (e.g. quality, financial, operational etc.)</p> <p>ACA stipulates issue resolution processes and grounds for the exercise of break clauses, which are clearly defined and clarify teaching out arrangements in the event of early termination.</p> <p>Create Portfolio Development Plan of market relevant programmes supported by market research and local intelligence for expansion of provision (subject to MOEHE approval) .</p> <p>Secure feasibility study and critical path timeline from AFG College for Phase Two New Premises construction and campus opening</p> <p>Refreshing of exit strategy, and careful attention to termination clauses in ACA, for enactment if required.</p> <p>Effective management of payments due to the University</p> <p>Use of agreed staff competency framework in managing an orderly transition of PGT teaching over time.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress (target Sep 22)</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress (overdue)</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress (target July 23)</p> <p>In place</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
5	Quality concerns in and/or failure to develop existing partnerships and deliver new partnerships for the recruitment of international undergraduate students particularly through articulation arrangements.	VP GE	Dean for International Student Pathways & Progression	<p>Loss of tuition fee income</p> <p>Failure to diversify articulation opportunities across academic disciplines and subject areas</p> <p>Increased exposure to dependence on articulation from a small number of partnerships</p> <p>Increasing exposure to shifts in geopolitical tensions, economic circumstances, and student demand</p> <p>Loss of goodwill with international partners and government stakeholders</p> <p>Negative impact on reputation and future relationships</p> <p>Damage to academic quality and/or student experience potentially resulting in partnership termination.</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	<p>Processes in place to ensure appropriate partnership governance and regular communication</p> <p>Engagement with articulation partner senior staff to maintain positive strategic relationships</p> <p>Liaising with partners to ensure appropriate information is available to partners and prospective students</p> <p>Partner engagement and student outreach to encourage conversion of students to transfer to Aberdeen for study</p> <p>Maintaining regular communication with articulation partners for the purposes of providing forward student number projections</p> <p>Explore new pathways and routes to study with existing partners through regular and open dialogue eg SCNU, SDNU, Wuhan.</p> <p>Work with third parties such as the British Council to explore new articulation markets and partners.</p> <p>Showcase successful articulation agreements to Schools to encourage new articulations.</p> <p>Effective oversight of quality and student experience matters by QAC with timeous intervention if required.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress (target Oct 2022)</p> <p>In progress (target Nov 2022)</p> <p>Under consideration</p> <p>Under consideration</p> <p>In place</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
6	Failure to deliver the full implementation of the Joint Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence with SCNU.	VP GE	Dean for International Student Pathways & Progression	<p>Loss of income under revenue sharing arrangements</p> <p>Loss of goodwill with partners and government stakeholders</p> <p>Compromised ability to further develop activity with the partner</p> <p>Damage to relationship with Chinese Ministry of Education and prospects of approval for future activity in China</p> <p>Reputational damage and negative impact on appetite for future collaborative opportunities</p> <p>Deleterious impact on the student experience.</p>	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	<p>Liaising with the partners to ensure appropriate information is available to support the recruitment and conversion of prospective students</p> <p>Effective governance arrangements in place with appropriate committee structure and regular monitoring of student numbers projections</p> <p>Relationship management involving direct engagement at a senior and distributed management level with counterparts across the partner institutions.</p> <p>Planning for the recruitment of academic and professional support staff at both SCNU and Aberdeen for the full delivery of the three programmes of study</p> <p>Membership of the UK-China Joint Institute Alliance for the sharing of experience and effective practice in the operation of JIs.</p> <p>Discussions regarding transition of JI students to UoA PGT programmes and development of a bespoke computer lab at SCNU to which UoA will contribute design ideas.</p> <p>2 SCNU delegations to UoA are expected in November 2023 and February 2024– a senior team will visit to meet with VPGE and HoS to discuss possibilities of furthering our strategic partnership. A second team of JI senior professional services and academic staff will, with UOA colleagues, conduct a scoping visit for possible future SCNU staff development activities.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress; recruitment aligned to intake and in place for Semester 1, 2023/24 subject to offers being accepted</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>Planned</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

7	Failure to secure maximum benefit from foundation study pathway arrangements with Study Group for the progression of international students.	VP GE	Dean for International Stakeholder Engagement	<p>Failure to deliver business case objectives for the relationship, particularly loss of potential tuition fee revenue from articulations to the University's full programmes</p> <p>Negative consequences for the working relationship with StudyGroup, up to existential threat to continuation of the relationship</p> <p>Lack of recovery on the University's investment to enable Study Group operations on campus</p> <p>Deleterious impact on the student experience from small cohort sizes</p>	3	4		RED	12	Treat	<p>International Study Centre in operation and supported by effective staffing and physical resources from both Study Group and the University</p> <p>Effective governance arrangements in place with appropriate committee structure and regular monitoring of student numbers projections, retention, completion and progression rates, etc</p> <p>Close liaison with regard to market conditions, horizon scanning, and new development opportunities.</p> <p>Establish new business development protocols to capitalise on arising opportunities arising from variation in the Study Group operational model and services offered</p> <p>Support embedding of new SG partnership director</p> <p>Identify reasons underpinning declining recruitment and comparable trends across partner network to identify a series of responses to regrow recruitment</p> <p>SG prepared draft Re-growth Strategy under review by UoA</p> <p>PC approval (May 2023) to renew partnership agreement with SG subject to key changes including more KPIs; 3-year term; change of pre-med Pathway to Medical Sciences pathway (all subject to negotiation with SG); Contractual review and negotiations commence July 2023(Re-growth Strategy will be integral to this process)-</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In Place</p> <p>In Place</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>In progress</p>	3	3		AMBER	9	Up
8	Failure to secure appropriate and effective bilateral agreements to support the international mobility of students.	VP E	US & COO	<p>Impairment of employability enhancing opportunities for current and future students</p> <p>Inability to deliver programme experience options as advertised, with potential regulatory and legal consequences.</p> <p>Loss of goodwill with partners and stakeholders impacting negatively on reputation and future relationships</p> <p>Mobility arrangements are not effectively governed leading to potential legal and insurance risk consequences.</p> <p>Deleterious impact on the student experience.</p> <p>Insufficient staffing (through absences and/or vacancies) effectively to manage ingoing and outgoing mobility and/or to manage existing agreements and secure appropriate new ones.</p>	3	3		AMBER	9		<p>Identify scale and scope of mobility arrangements previously governed by Erasmus+ arrangements that require to be replaced.</p> <p>Establish most efficient yet robust approach and timescales for replacing collective mobility agreements with bilateral agreements with partner institutions</p> <p>Commence renewal and updating of all mobility agreements prior to the first potential student mobility taking place in August 2023. Agreements with active mobilities planned will be prioritised for completion before that mobility takes place and no student will undertake mobility without an agreement in place albeit potentially one in the process of renewal.</p> <p>Mobility agreements set clear expectations (strategic intent) for the relationship, and review dates for agreement review and renewal. They reflect degree of exposure to risk, and provide for safe facilitation of matters such as data exchange - updated template approved by DPO, QAC and R&I March 2023.</p> <p>Maintain an effective and sustainable staffing complement.</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress (new starts commence September 2023)</p>	2	2		YELLOW	4	No Change
9	Failure to develop and maintain existing strategic alliances	VP GE	DDER (TNE P)	<p>Reputational impact</p> <p>Failure to benefit from income-generating partnerships that may arise from strategic alliances</p> <p>Poor communication/strained relationship between the partners</p> <p>Failure to demonstrate added value from strategic alliances</p> <p>Insufficient funding to meet partners' expectations for joint investment in activities</p>	2	3		YELLOW	6	Treat	<p>Maintaining high levels of communication between leadership teams. Senior leadership to meet regularly and in-person when possible.</p> <p>Proactive approach to partnership management and maintaining momentum in the relationship.</p> <p>Widening engagement in strategic relationships across the University</p> <p>Ensure all partnership agreements have sufficient termination clauses, that due diligence is required on their consideration for renewal, and that a separate exit strategy exists and is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Regular meetings of governance groups e.g. senior colleagues and steering committees</p> <p>Regular meetings of key staff e.g. Energy Directors</p> <p>UoA involvement in ACC Alliance events eg joint conferences and joint delivery of programmes and/or sharing of course provision.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>In progress</p>	1	2		GREEN	2	No Change

Strategic Risk Area: Reputation

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement
1	Lack of ownership and understanding of reputation at an institutional and School level	US & COO	Head of Marketing and Brand Development	Impact on league table performance Schools and Directorates do not recognise the challenge associated with reputation and do not embed it in decision making and planning. Lack of governance, ownership and co-ordination Lack baseline data to measure performance and understand the historical context	2	3	6	YELLOW	Treat	Data gathering and research to support understanding of reputation and provide evidence to support action planning Benchmarking of reputational data School and Directorate planning process Training and development to support understanding reputation management and brand messaging Increased visibility of External Relations team	In progress In progress In progress Under consideration In progress	1	1	1	GREEN	No Change
2	Failures to perform in League Tables	SVP	D of Planning and Governance	Impacts on the institutions ability to attract and retain the best staff and students Undermines strategic priorities of the institution, including financial sustainability and fundraising	2	3	6	YELLOW	Treat	Further review and proactive monitoring of HESA data from Planning Continue analytical work to understand research data more fully, with investigation of opportunities for international benchmarking. Planning will proactively engage with individual schools and will offer School meetings/presentations discuss league table results in greater detail, and open staff sessions. Further enhance league table reporting beyond what is provided in 2020/21 so as to provide as much insight as possible e.g. through Power BI. Continued consideration of Reputational scores through (i) maximising QS contact lists for academics and employers and (ii) engagement with ER re. external data analysis to be carried out on promotional activities relating to academic and research reputation. Planning to support Schools and Professional Services through providing context to the league table analytics appropriate to their area. Utilisation of additional insights, e.g. THE Data Points, to inform future strategies	Completed for AY 22/23. TO be repeated in AY 23/24. In progress. To be completed by September 2023. In progress. To be completed by October 23. In progress. UK league table BI dashboard to be finalised by August 23. (i) completed for AY 22/23, (ii) in progress to be completed by end of 2023. In place. In progress. Final insights from Data Points were presented to LTWG in June 2023. Consideration is also being given to further external insights and consultancy packages	1	1	1	GREEN	No Change
3	Reputational damage resulting from the behaviours or actions of a staff member, student, alumni or associated 3rd party (e.g. AUSA or AFG), single incident e.g. data breach or wider issue with non-compliance with good governance or legal requirements.	US & COO	Head of Communications	Refocuses narrative with key stakeholders, including the press and political stakeholders, impacting negatively on the perception of the institution's reputation Undermines wider institutional achievements Impacts the institutional ability to attract and retain the best staff and students, and potential partners Undermines strategic priorities of the institution, including financial sustainability and fundraising	3	3	9	AMBER	Treat	Encourage culture of openness and transparency such that staff / students / alumni to surface any issues early, and proactively develop strategy to respond to any reputational issues. Firefighting to support rapid response to issues which may arise Utilise social media listening tool to support horizon scanning. Consolidate and enhance relationships with media contacts	Ongoing Ongoing In place Ongoing	3	3	9	AMBER	No Change
4	External environmental factors impact on the HE sector, and reputational challenge at a sector level impacts on the specifically the University reputation (e.g. Brexit)	US & COO	Head of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement (PASE)	Impact on the ability to attract funding Negative impact on the policy environment	2	3	6	YELLOW		Ensure proactive horizon scanning to ensure the institution is live to sector wide issues and challenges Ensure proactive engagement with policy makers to ensure understanding of the impact and societal benefit the University supports Link across with the regional agenda and civic university agreement.	In progress In progress In progress	1	1	1	GREEN	New Risk
5	A gap develops between the institutional reputation i.e. how the University is perceived - either positively or negatively - by different stakeholder groups, and the underlying reality.	US & COO	Head of Marketing and Brand Development	Impact on league table performance Lack brand recognition and wider awareness Reputation does not positively reflect reality of institutional position, impacting reach, recognition, access to funding and ability to attract and retain both staff and students Financial sustainability	3	3	9	AMBER	Treat	Stakeholder map to understand our audiences Review ownership of Stakeholder map to ensure it proactively owned as a live document Build data to measure perception of reputation for different stakeholder groups to build understanding of gaps. This should include sentiment analysis Benchmark reputation data against peers to understand UoA reputational performance against that of benchmark group to inform decision making. Create engagement toolkit Review brand portal and assets to support effective and consistent use of the brand Roll out stakeholder engagement programme	In progress In progress In progress In progress In progress and ongoing In progress In progress and ongoing	3	3	9	AMBER	Up
6	Predominant culture and focus on crisis communications to protect reputation, rather than proactive management of reputational risk i.e. a reactive approach to reputational issues which have already surfaced rather than a proactive approach to protect or advance reputation.	US & COO	Head of Comms, Head of PASE, Head of Marketing & Brand Development	Short-termism, reducing focus on longer terms planning to support reputational management Lack of trust in UoA Reduces credibility of strategic vision and its deliverability Undermines strategic priorities of the institution, including financial sustainability and fundraising	3	3	9	AMBER	Treat	Directorate and School planning process Review of data sharing to understand impact of reputational management (or lack of) Training and development to build understanding of stakeholder holder engagement, reputational management and brand messaging	In progress Under consideration Under consideration	3	3	9	AMBER	Up

7	Lack of brand awareness and brand integrity	US & COO	Head of Marketing and Brand Development	<p>Reduced ability to amplify institutional voice</p> <p>Lack of differentiation and clear sense of University's purpose and benefits to different stakeholder groups</p> <p>Financial impact</p> <p>Inability to meet student recruitment targets</p>	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	<p>Review brand</p> <p>Consider approach to digital, including University website and social media</p> <p>Roll out updated brand portal including toolkit of assets which be used</p> <p>Maintain visibility range of different tools - both digital and in person</p>	<p>Under consideration</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
8	Failure to progress Aberdeen 2040, and to ensure appropriate and co-ordinated storytelling to demonstrate progress to both internal and external stakeholder groups.	US & COO	Head of Comms, Head of PASE, Head of Marketing & Brand Development	<p>Lack of trust in UoA</p> <p>Reduces credibility of strategic vision and its deliverability</p> <p>Reduces institutional buy into strategic vision, undermining is deliverability</p> <p>Undermines strategic priorities of the institution, including financial sustainability and fundraising</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	<p>Aberdeen 2040 5-year planning process</p> <p>Directorate and School planning process</p> <p>Internal training of brand training / messaging</p>	<p>In progress and ongoing</p> <p>In progress and ongoing</p> <p>Under consideration</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
9	Lack of understanding at an institutional and departmental level of the key stakeholder groups, and as a consequence, an impaired ability to manage their associated expectations.	US & COO	Head of PASE	<p>Inability to meet expectations of stakeholders as to role the University can play (e.g. regional stakeholders associated with regional economic regeneration)</p> <p>Reduced ability to leverage external funding</p> <p>Impact on place-making aspect of Aberdeen e.g. loss of key festivals which support message around Aberdeen as a good place to live, work and study</p>	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	Treat	<p>Complete Stakeholder map and role out across Schools and Directorates</p> <p>In conjunction with the VP Regional Engagement and Regional Recovery, ensure comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement. This will include the development and subsequent implementation of Civic University agreement.</p> <p>Ongoing commitment to events programme which supports Aberdeen 2040 and wider regional engagement and profile.</p> <p>Remain alert to funding and recovery packages made available and initiate early partnerships /collaborations.</p> <p>Training and development to build understanding of stakeholder holder engagement, reputational management and brand messaging</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Under consideration</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
10	Failure to engage with the regional stakeholders, NHS and businesses including through the Pathfinder implementation (SFC review of coherence and sustainability of the Scottish tertiary sector) (Please note that this risk is also included in the External Environment area)	VP RE	US & COO	<p>Loss of political and policy influence as well as reputation if SFC perceived to be not engaged.</p> <p>Relative disadvantage if funding mechanism adjusted as a consequence.</p> <p>Aberdeen 2040 commitments undermined if excluded from regional partnership relationships.</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	<p>Active engagement with Regional Stakeholders through NE Regional Pathfinder Delivery Board.</p> <p>Re-establishment of liaison group with NHS around Foresterhill</p> <p>Regular communication with SFC, US, Scottish Planners and other sector bodies;</p> <p>Co-creation of Civic University Agreement with regional partners</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Under consideration</p>	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	New Risk
11	Reputational damage by association with unsuitable funder	US & COO	DoDAR	Loss of trust in University	3	3	●	AMBER	9		<p>Ensure appropriate governance and due diligence of prospects and donors using existing structures – Compliance Committee, Board of Trustees, Gift Acceptance Policy, Ad hoc committee on gift acceptance, communication between Trust and University, and University's Governance and Nominations Committee and naming of assets policy</p>	<p>In place</p>	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

Strategic Risk Area:	External Environment
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Global geo-political or health disruptions	US & COO	DoPlanning and Governance	Potential for multi-dimensional impacts on the University - students unable to access financial resources, disruption to supply chains, limitations on mobility of staff and students	3	4	●	RED	12	Treat	Risk assessment of recruitment markets Increased contingency in project budgets. Development of framework for support for impacted individuals. Active monitoring of political trends.	Under consideration Under consideration In progress in place	2	4	●	AMBER	8	No Change
2	Major constitutional change	US & COO	DoPlanning and Governance	Potential for significant disruption to supply chains, mobility of students and distraction of policy makers or reprimatisation of public funding. Destructive impacts possible in run up to any referenda.	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	Treat	Active contingency planning in relation to supply chains and the potential for staffing and student recruitment impacts. Reinforced promotion of University profile.	In progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change
3	SG review of the purpose of Tertiary Education fails to recognise HE wider contributions	US & COO	DoPlanning and Governance	Potential impact on funding for the sector and consequentially for UoA. Potential for longer-term policy impacts if sector ambitions not seen to be aligned	2	4	●	AMBER	8	Treat	Regular communication with SFC, US, aiming to ensure sector engages institutional engagement with SG and SFC Scottish Planners and other sector bodies; Discussions with regional partners. Active public/political engagement by senior management.	In place In place in place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
4	Significant UK policy changes impacting on staff or student recruitment, fees, or research funding.	US & COO	DoPlanning and Governance	Impact on student numbers and/or ability to recruit staff Reduction in fee income per head Change in access to research funding	3	3	●	AMBER	9	Treat	Active engagement in relevant policy forums Active horizon scanning and contingency planning	In place In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change

Strategic Risk Area: Environmental Sustainability

No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	<p>Funding and Finance: Failure to make adequate capital and recurrent funding provision in long-term financial planning to support delivery of institutional net-zero targets, including failure to mitigate financial impact of the eventual cost of offsetting hard to tackle emissions e.g. procurement, business travel, and student travel to study.</p> <p><i>Links to Financial Sustainability risk as well as to Estates & Facilities capital programme and infrastructure resilience risks.</i></p> <p><i>Note: progress on the key mitigations (see *) should result in the mitigated risk score decreasing.</i></p>	SVP	Dir E&F	<p>Inability to make sufficiently rapid progress in tackling Scope 1 & 2 emissions e.g. through fabric improvement and heat decarbonisation</p> <p>Reputational impact if carbon reduction targets are not met</p> <p>Loss of credibility with external stakeholders, staff, students</p> <p>Associated energy, operational and lifecycle cost impacts, carbon taxes, and (eventually) off-setting charges</p> <p>New builds fail to attain sufficiently robust environmental & emissions standards</p> <p>Hard to treat old building stock is neglected</p> <p>Opportunities to participate in city-wide initiatives are missed e.g. district networks</p> <p>Reliance on fossil fuels into the longer term</p> <p>Inability to demonstrate the embedding of robust long-term financial planing for all aspects of net-zero</p> <p>Failure to make appropriate allowances for eventual offsetting of residual emissions (in particular related to Scope 3 categories)</p>	4	4	●	RED	16	Treat	<p>Development of a net-zero strategy and Implementation Plan *</p> <p>Development and active management of a long-term net-zero project register *</p> <p>Development of a Business Travel policy to target emissions reduction</p> <p>Identification of and investment in appropriate expertise to take forward net-zero planning and projects *</p> <p>Initial allocation of net-zero project funding identified</p> <p>Sustained investment over multiple years *</p> <p>Wider review of Estate Strategy to include sustainability and strategic energy issues</p> <p>Discussions with local partners about district heating and alternative heat sources e.g. hydrogen</p> <p>Sustainable Heating Programme Board established</p> <p>Heating & Energy strategies being reviewed *</p> <p>Development of Management Information to allow improvements works to be brought forward eg Condition Survey / Energy Survey</p> <p>Offsetting approach to be agreed institutionally *</p>	<p>In progress, (working group established early 2023, aiming for late summer 2023)</p> <p>In place (ongoing)</p> <p>In place (complete)</p> <p>In progress, initial appointments made</p> <p>In place, initial projects tendered early 2023</p> <p>In progress, initial allocations included in ten-year capital plan</p> <p>In progress (see Estates & Facilities Risk Register)</p> <p>In progress, long-term discussions</p> <p>In place</p> <p>In progress, heat target early 2024</p> <p>In progress, condition surveys complete and being analysed</p> <p>Under consideration (a paper to be drafted for a future SDC)</p>	4	3	●	RED	12	No Change
2	<p>Whole Institution Resourcing and Capacity: Failure to adequately resource sustainability commitments or to secure staff with required expertise across the institution</p> <p><i>Links to both the Staffing and Health, Safety & Wellbeing risks.</i></p>	SVP	Dir E&F	<p>Scale of sustainability challenges are underestimated</p> <p>Directorates and Schools unable to (or fail to) address necessary operational changes and challenges</p> <p>Inability to progress key projects</p> <p>Insufficient expertise to understand / address key technical challenges e.g. in areas such as the delivery of net-zero projects, or the embedding of supply-chain management measures necessary to tackle Scope 3 emissions.</p> <p>Impact on wellbeing and retention of existing staff</p> <p>Whole-institution approach is not adopted across Professional Services and Directorates, with sustainability seen as a specialist or niche area</p>	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	<p>Agreement to recruit posts to a new Sustainability team in Estates given with initial appointments made (Aug 2022)</p> <p>Identification of appropriate training for existing staff</p> <p>Embedding of sustainability as part of job descriptions and appraisal process (under review by HR)</p> <p>Consideration to be given to development of a 'network' approach e.g. staff champions and local sustainability groups to address issues material to individual teams (emerging organically in some areas e.g. labs, IT)</p> <p>Consideration to be given to areas where specialist support will be required to make operational progress e.g. capacity in Procurement to engage with our supply chain and encourage behaviour change among buyers</p>	<p>In place, ongoing</p> <p>In progress, target autumn 2023 (after update to SDC in early 2023)</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>Under consideration, will be next priority after staff training is developed</p> <p>Under consideration, e.g. Procurement post had been scoped but recruitment deferred.</p>	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change

3	Reputation: Inability to demonstrate meaningful commitment to sustainability and the twin climate and ecological emergencies <i>Links to Reputation, Education and Research risks</i>	SVP	Hd of SD	Impact on staff and student recruitment and retention Negative media commentary Damage to local, national & international partnerships Student protest and/or challenge Lack of a co-ordinated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals Impacts negatively on SFC Outcome Agreement Failure to capitalise on opportunities e.g. regional collaboration, student engagement etc Progress is slower than competitor institutions, negatively affecting reputation Inconsistency between operational imperative to tackle sustainability issues and our educational and research strategies e.g. failure to offer appropriate programmes or courses; failure to recruit academics with expertise in a range of sustainability relevant disciplines; failure to embed sustainability in graduate attributes. Focus more on the climate emergency rather than on the nature and ecological emergency	3	3	● AMBER	9	Treat	High visibility of senior leadership and key oversight role of Sustainable Development Committee + Dean appointment made Aberdeen 2040 implementation plan to 2025 in place and evolving Enhanced capacity for sustainability endorsed Consultation arrangements e.g. climate assembly, expert working groups e.g. business travel consultation done, net-zero ongoing, offsetting to follow Annual SDG Report published Commitment to THE Impact Ranking exercise Aberdeen 2040 implementation plan contains explicit curriculum (17) and research (18) actions. SDGs prominent in impact case studies and high-profile SDG related research showcased in annual Report and via research awards. Annual SDG Report covers all institutional activity (with content evolving year-on-year) Sustainability issues emerging as core strand of current review of graduate attributes Initial programme and course mapping took place as part of 2022 SDG Report exercise, with further discussion of curriculum mapping to follow. Development of a Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan	In place In place, ongoing In progress, ongoing In progress, first climate assembly on 15 March 2023 In place, ongoing (2nd report published Nov '22) In place, ongoing (2023 result very positive) In place, reviewed at SDC In place, SDG mapping of research now routine. In place, annual In progress (see Education Risk) In progress (see Education Risk) In progress, aim for end of 2023 (assembly on 15 March provided a forum for consultation on this issue)	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change
4	Reporting: Failure to meet statutory and/or voluntary sectoral reporting requirements.	SVP	Hd of SD	Censure e.g. by SFC re Outcome Agreements Missed deadlines or weak submission e.g. PBCCD Institutional response fails to keep pace with rapidly evolving guidance and expectations related to PBCCD reporting e.g. financial planning, Poor league table performance e.g. THE Impact Ranking University Court inadequately briefed on sustainability issues	3	3	● AMBER	9	Treat	Horizon scanning and membership of sector bodies e.g. EAUC Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) group established (covers THE Impact) Sustainability content embedded in Annual Reporting / SDG Report published Consideration being given to appropriate resourcing (addressing single points of failure) Annual Public Bodies Climate Change Duty report produced, responding to evolving criteria e.g. emissions categories reported extended to include Procurement in 2022 + work now done to assess student travel emissions Sustainability content for SFC Outcome Agreement Sustainable Development Committee established, with summary reports of issues shared through institutional governance channels. Risk Register scrutinised at every Sustainable Development Committee and routinely shared with Audit & Risk Committee	In place In place, reviewed annually (2023 result very positive) In place, reviewed annually In progress, initial appointments made in August 2022 In place (annual) In place (annual) In place (routine) In place (routine)	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change
5	Insufficient management of environmental standards <i>Links to Estates & Facilities compliance risks.</i>	SVP	Dir E&F	Inability to achieve emissions targets Risk of regulatory breaches e.g. pollution. SFC challenge Reputational damage	3	3	● AMBER	9	Treat	Sustainable Design Guide Infrastructure projects embed environmental sustainability e.g. via BREEAM Robust waste contracts Regular audits and external validation e.g. waste, energy	In progress (review to be taken forward over summer 2023) In place, ongoing In place, ongoing In place, ongoing	2	3	● YELLOW	6	No Change
6	Integration & Engagement: Failure to fully engage staff and student community in supporting institutional sustainability commitments. <i>Links to Education risk.</i>	SVP	H of SD	Unable to adopt a genuinely shared responsibility for sustainability initiatives Necessary behaviour change is not secured Staff and students feel left out of process Aberdeen 2040 commitments are not achieved	2	3	● YELLOW	6	Treat	Role of Sustainable Development Committee in ensuring shared responsibility Consultation and communication mechanisms launched (e.g. climate assemblies, occasional task and finish groups) Enhanced capacity for sustainability endorsed e.g. of behaviour change Review of baseline training opportunities Sustainability content in Management Programme	In place, ongoing In progress, first CA on 15 March 2023 In place, initial appointment made, ongoing In progress, paper to SDC on 9 March 2023 In place (since 2021/22)	2	2	● YELLOW	4	No Change

Strategic Risk Area:	Leadership and Governance
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)		Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)		Risk Movement		
1	Lack of effective engagement with Scottish Government and/or SFC results in poor relations on key matters: outcome agreement; widening access; funding; additional oversight	Principal	US & COO	Financial impact Additional regulatory oversight Reputational damage - staff and student recruitment	2	4	●	AMBER	8	Treat	Regular and meaningful engagement with the Scottish Government and SFC to deliver transparent 2-way communication at Court and SMT level. Constant horizon-scanning to identify changes in political priorities and regulatory oversight combined with proactive measures, as appropriate/required.	In place In place	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
2	Delivery of the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy delayed due to staff workload and time pressures, or disrupted by external environment factors.	Principal	SVP	Reputational damage Financial impact Staff satisfaction	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Institutional risk management and mitigations in place across the university to ensure that adequate resource is in place in all key areas to take forward delivery, and to facilitate effective management of staff workloads; ultimately reducing any potential impacts on the 20-year strategy. For external factors, the University is engaged in horizon scanning on an ongoing basis, and undertakes scenario planning as part of its wider planning arrangements. As shown with Covid, the University has proven agile and effective in responding to disruptive changes in the external environment. All mitigations associated with this risk will be kept under review to ensure effectiveness.	In place In place In place	3	3	●	AMBER	9	No Change
3	Membership of Court not sufficiently diverse to effectively reflect and govern the University community	US & COO	Head of Governance & Executive Support	Lack of informed and constructive challenge to strategy development from perspective of diverse community. Reputational Damage	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	Treat	Regular review of diversity of Court Membership via Governance and Nominations Committee. Prioritisation of greater diversity in Court recruitment has been agreed and commitments made in Court' Statement of Intent on Diversity. Revised approach to ensure recruitment and development is aligned to Aberdeen 2040 strategy and charitable purposes.	In place or in progress	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

Strategic Risk Area	AUSA and Other Third Parties
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No.	Risk (what could happen)	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Consequences (how would this affect the University)	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)			Response	Mitigations (what is being/has been done to control the risk)	Status (in place/in progress/under consideration)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)			Risk Movement
1	Rocking Horse Nursery suffers from extended closure, reduced occupancy levels or failure to maintain access to national childcare schemes.	US & COO	CFO	Financial impact (Inability to pay the University Service Charge) Reputational impact as Nursery, despite status as a SCIO, viewed as the University Nursery (University seen as defacto trustee). Staff and student satisfaction and impact on ability to work/study in the absence of alternative childcare arrangements	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	Treat	RHN to change legal form from Trust to SCIO Close liaison with Finance Directorate maintained Formalisation of lease arrangements for use of the nursery building	Complete In place In progress	1	2	●	GREEN	2	Down
2	ASV financial sustainability challenged following a prolonged period of lockdown and actions already taken e.g. restricted opening, reduced staffing, and other adaptations to recover from periods of closure during pandemic.	US & COO	CFO	Financial impact - as a result of increased funding requirements on the JV partners (ACC and UoA). Reputational impact on University if unable to maintain the operation of national standard sports facilities. Staff and student experience impacted through reduced access to facilities contributing to health and wellbeing. As well as undermining potential recruitment lever.	4	3	●	RED	12	Treat	Strategic discussion between shareholders required to reassess the future ownership and investment direction. Short term proposal to increase revenue grant from UoA to offset reduction from ACC and to investigate capital contribution options.	Ongoing In place	4	3	●	RED	12	Up
3	AUSA sustainability	US & COO	AUSA Chief Executive	Financial impact - requiring additional support from the University	2	3	●	YELLOW	6	Treat	Strategic review commissioned by AUSA Board Active engagement on planning with UoA.	In progress In progress	3	2	●	YELLOW	6	No Change
4	Long term sustainability of third-party catering and other providers on campus (e.g. Kilau, Food Story, Subway, Blackwells, Starbucks etc) threatened by lower footfall and less trade post-pandemic, with potential to adversely affect the staff and student experience.	US & COO	DoEF	Financial impact (rental income >£10k per month) Staff and student experience (risk of loss of key campus providers) Other independent traders (e.g. Shelter Coffee, Machar Bar, JG Ross, Newsagent) may close with impact on staff and student amenities	4	2	●	AMBER	8	Treat	Regular contact with Head of Commercial & Catering to identify risks to individual business. Development of commercial strategy and estates visioning exercise to include consideration of "sticky campus" and changing staff/student needs and attractiveness of Old Aberdeen to visiting families and tourists.	In place Under consideration	2	2	●	YELLOW	4	No Change

Appendix 1

KPI Performance Summary Table

No	Commitment	KPI	2020 Baseline	2021 Position	2022 Position	2023 Position	Target for 2025	KPI Direction	Likelihood of Meeting Target
N/A	Education	1. Overall Student Satisfaction (NSS)	86.7% - Rank 18th	84.5% - Rank 5th	85.6% - Rank 4th	83.7% - Rank 10th*	88% and Top UK 25		
		2. Graduate Outcomes (same as C12)	Ranking: 36 in the UK (79.8%)	Ranking: 31 in UK (77.3%)	Ranking: 33 in UK (79.9%)	Ranking: 45 in UK (79.2%)	Top 25 in UK		
		3. Student Continuation	94.3%	97.4%	TBC - HESA data not currently available; under review	TBC - February 2024	96%	TBC	
		4. Student achievement - degree awarding gap between white and BAME students for good honours	8.8%	7.6%	4.1%	TBC - February 2024	5%		
N/A	Research	Annual Research Income	£49.69m	£46.00m	£50.83m	£56.35m	Research Income: £65m		
		PGR Population (by HESA data)	PGRs: 864 FTE	PGRs: 823 FTE	PGRs: 801 FTE	TBC - February 2024	PGRs: 800 FTE		
N/A	Regional Engagement and Regional Recovery	Total commercial income from contract research, consultancy, facilities & services, CPD.	N/A	£23.04m	£23.03m	TBC	23.94m	TBC	
		Number of new companies created involving staff (spin-outs).	N/A	2	1	TBC	5	TBC	
		Number of companies created by students (student and graduate start-ups)	N/A	9	10	15	30		
1	We will care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential	Questions from Staff and Student Surveys	Staff - 84% Students - 81%	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	Staff - 81% Students - 80%**	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	90% staff and students		
2	We will encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualifications and providing a range of modes of delivery; our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background	SIMD20 Intake	8.6%	8.0%	7.9%	7.0% (provisional)	10.0%		
3	We will develop a research portfolio that promotes national and international collaboration with stakeholders, including companies, organisations and governments	Value and percentage of research grant awards involving non-academic partners	£30.2m of awards involving non-academic partners - 64%	£36.7m - 69%	£38.6m - 69%	£35.9m - 70%	70% of all research grant awards to involve non-academic partners		
4	We will secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion, achieving accreditation across multiple strands and characteristics	1. Race Equality Charter	1. Member status	1. Member status	1. Member status, application progressing	1. Application for Bronze award due for submission in March 2024	1) Bronze Award		
		2. Athena Swan Charter	2. Bronze at all levels	2. Bronze at all levels plus one Silver (Psychology).	2. University Bronze successfully renewed	2. Aim to gain institutional Silver award by 2026. Three Schools now have Silver.	2) All Schools to apply for silver by 2025		
		3. Stonewall	3. Stonewall - ranked 249/500+ for all sectors, and 36/54 for Education related sectors.	3. Stonewall - no data in 2021 due to pandemic	3. Stonewall - Silver awarded in 2022. Ranked 132/400 for all sectors, and 21st for Education related sectors.	3. No application made to the Workplace Equality Index in 2022. Application in 2024; result in 2025.	3) Bronze Award in the Stonewall WEI and to be a Top 100 employer by 2025.		
		4. University of Sanctuary	4. Sanctuary status not yet achieved	4. Sanctuary status not yet achieved	4. University of Sanctuary application submitted	4. University of Sanctuary application paused, pending discussions around leadership of the application and staff capacity.	4) Achieve University of Sanctuary status		
5	We will eliminate pay gaps across all protected characteristics	Gender Paygap - Median	20%	19%	16%	Data Available April 2024	17% or lower		
6	We will support a learning culture in which all our staff and students can exchange ideas and expertise across intellectual areas and organisational structures	Questions from Staff and Student Surveys	Staff - 79% UG / PGT Students - 88% PGR Students - not collected	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	Staff - 72% UG / PGT Students 73 %** PGR Students - 79%**	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	85% staff and students		
7	We will design new courses and programmes which encourage interdisciplinary learning, and ensure that all our students can experience innovative, challenge-led education involving external stakeholders.	Select Questions from NSS	Average Rank - 76	Average Rank - 30	Average Rank - 26	Average Rank - 16	Average Rank - 25		
8	We will build networks across our community to foster interdisciplinary interactions between our subject research strengths, using and sharing expertise to drive new understanding	Percentage of outputs assigned to multiple research areas	38.70%	34.40%	38.48%	Data available February 2024	40% (in line with benchmarks)		
9	We will listen to and work with external stakeholders regionally and globally to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal and industrial challenges	Times Higher Education Impact Ranking	73rd globally 16th in UK.	57th globally. 12th in the UK.	101st - 200th globally 21st - 40th in the UK.	70th globally. 18th in the UK.	Top 40 in the world Top 10 in the UK		
10	We will develop our digital systems and enhance our buildings to create virtual and physical spaces that enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation.	Questions from Staff and Student Surveys	Staff - 74% Students - 80%	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	Staff - 68% Students - 70%**	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	80% staff and students		

11	We will provide an international education to learners from all around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community.	Percentage of international students in population	3107 FTE = 21.8% of student population	3103 FTE = 21.9% of student population	4102 FTE = 27.4% of student population	4300 FTE = 29.2% of student population	25% of student population		
		Proportion of the student population from out with the three largest international source markets	UoA = 57.0% UK = 51.6%	UoA = 47.9% UK = 47.0%	UoA = 50.0% UK = 42.6%	Data available March 2024	Achieve higher than the sector benchmark for diversification of student population		
12	We will equip our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods.	Graduate Outcomes Survey - % of those in graduate level employment or further study	Ranking: 36 in the UK (79.8%)	Ranking: 31 in UK (77.3%)	Ranking: 33 in UK (79.9%)	Ranking: 45 in UK (79.2%)	Top 25 in UK		
13	We will harness our research expertise to form partnerships and networks around the world to meet the challenges of our age	Percentage of outputs with international co-authors. World and UK ranking.	67% of research outputs 80th in world. 11th in the UK.	68% of research outputs 80th in world. 11th in the UK.	69% of research outputs 86th in world. 11th in the UK.	Update available early 2024	70% of research outputs Top 60 in the world. Top 10 in UK.		
14	We will ensure all our students can have an international experience, by studying abroad or working collaboratively with international partners	Percentage of students who have international experience	2.64%	1.25%	1.66%	Data available September 2023	5.00%	TBC	
15	We will develop our campuses and processes to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences	Questions from Staff and Student Surveys	Staff - 87% Students - 94%	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	Staff - 84% Students - 82%**	N/A - measured biennially for each survey.	90% staff and students		
16	We will encourage everyone within our community to work and live sustainably, recognising the importance of our time, energy and resilience	Business Travel Emission by tCO2e	Business Travel Emission 18/19 – 4166 tCO2e	212.86 tCO2e	1,282 tCO2e** = 69% decrease on baseline.	Data available October 2023	40% reduction on 18/19 baseline		
17	We will educate all our students and staff to be leaders in protecting the environment	For students - select NSS questions For staff - sustainability training	Student baseline set in 2022; staff baseline TBC	Student baseline set in 2022; staff baseline TBC	Students - 55.2%; staff baseline TBC	Students - 58.3%; staff baseline TBC	Students - 60% Staff - TBC		
18	We will excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity	No. of research outputs linked to UN SDGs addressing climate change & biodiversity	333 outputs	385 outputs	691 outputs	Data available early 2024	400 outputs		
19	We will achieve net zero carbon emissions before 2040	Scope 1 & 2 Emissions (tCO2e)	Scope 1 - 10085 tCO2e Scope 2 - 7659 tCO2e	Scope 1 = 10,082 tCO2e = 0% change Scope 2 = 5,579 tCO2e = 27% reduction from 2020 baseline.	Scope 1 = 10,200 tCO2e = 1.1% increase from 2020 baseline Scope 2 = 3,595 tCO2e = 53% reduction from 2020 baseline.	Data available October 2023	25% reduction from 2020 baseline.		
20	We will generate resources for investment in education and research year on year, so that we can continue to develop the people, ideas and actions that help us to fulfil our purpose	Annual Revenue Growth Annual Underlying Surplus	Revenue Growth: 2.3% Underlying Surplus = £6.5M = 2.8% of turnover.	Revenue Growth: 0.9% Underlying surplus = £8.7M = 3.7% of turnover.	Revenue Growth: 11%* Underlying surplus = £6.97M = 2.7% of turnover.**	Revenue Growth: 2.8%* Underlying surplus = £0.4M = 0.0002% of turnover.****	To meet or exceed revenue growth and operating surplus of benchmark groups.****		
NA	Composite League Table Metric	UK ranking in each of the 5 main league tables (by academic year)	T&ST: 27 CUG: 26 Guardian: 20 QS (UK): 28 THE (UK): 25 (Edition Year - 2021)	T&ST: 20 CUG: 38 Guardian: 20 QS (UK): 28 THE (UK): 22 (Edition Year - 2022)	T&ST: 19 CUG: 37 Guardian: 13 QS (UK): 27 THE (UK): 25 (Edition Year - 2023)	T&ST: 19 CUG: 35 Guardian: 12 QS (UK): 29 THE (UK): TBC (Edition Year - 2024)*****	UoA consistently achieves a top 25 ranking in the UK in each of the 5 rankings.		

*NSS methodology has changed this year, meaning data not directly comparable to previous years. Metric now adopted shows the aggregated mean average of the positive responses percentage across the 25 questions that are asked of all institutions across the United Kingdom excluding the Student Union question.

** For Student Survey results, a number of figures are averages of identified questions. Note: from 2021, an option for "Neither Agree nor Disagree" was added, leading to lower levels of response under Strong Agree or Somewhat Agree.

***2021 figures significantly impacted by pandemic restrictions; 2022 reflects a gradual return to unrestricted travel

****Data subject to audit and final confirmation.

*****Updates to league tables highlighted red due later in the year

KPI RAG Ratings:

KPI Direction				
Increase	Slight Increase	Minimal Change	Slight Decrease	Decrease

Likelihood of Achieving Target				
Highly Likely	Likely	Feasible	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely

*all RAG ratings based on latest available data

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TO 2025: SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2022/23**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This report provides Court with an update on progress made over 2022/23 with the priority objectives set for the year under Aberdeen 2040, as well as a wider update on performance in delivering the Aberdeen 2040 Operational Plan for 2022/23 more broadly. The priority objectives were:

1. Continue to ensure that Court and the University community have confidence that the implementation of Aberdeen 2040 is effective given changing internal and external contexts.
2. Obtain Court approval for the target size and shape for the University in 2030.
3. Deliver the Court-approved budget plan, including the targeted £20m increase in teaching income.
4. Continue to rebuild research capacity and research quality.
5. Support student employability by taking actions to expand the range of opportunities for work experience.
6. Strengthen the University's connections to industry by increasing collaborative activity and economic impact.

Please also note that a separate report (*next agenda item*) sets out the proposed Operational Plan for 2023/24 and provides more information on areas identified for enhanced focus over the coming year.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously approved by	SMT	31 August 2023
Further approval required by	Court	26 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Court is invited to **note** the following report, discussing, and providing feedback as appropriate.

4. PRIORITY OBJECTIVES FOR 2022/23 – REVIEW

The following provides a summary level overview of progress made over 2022/23 in achieving the priority objectives set for the year, as part of broader Aberdeen 2040 implementation.

- **Objective 1: Continue to ensure that Court and the University community have confidence that the implementation of Aberdeen 2040 is effective given changing internal and external contexts.**

The University continues to review progress with implementation of Aberdeen 2040 twice per year as part of an agreed process; in February via the Senior Management Team, and again in September when reporting to Court. This process is designed to monitor progress against planned actions and key performance indicators (KPIs), giving confidence to key stakeholders on delivery, and helping to identify potential issues; taking remedial actions where possible. A communications plan has also been developed to more proactively highlight plans, progress, and performance on the implementation of Aberdeen 2040, to the entire University community on an ongoing basis. This will not only ensure that staff and students are kept informed, but it will also provide a mechanism for engagement and two-way dialogue going forward. The first communication will be issued to staff following Court's consideration of this report, at its formal meeting and at the strategy away day taking place thereafter in September. The University also uses the biennial staff survey to gauge confidence across the staff base in Aberdeen 2040. In 2020, shortly after Aberdeen 2040 was launched, 91% of staff who responded to the survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*I identify with the commitments set out in Aberdeen 2040*". In 2022, that figure was matched; again, 91% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Given the time elapsed, during which the Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted University operations, this is reassuring.

- **Objective 2: Obtain Court approval for the target size and shape for the University in 2030.**

Development of an updated plan for the future size and shape of the University has been paused while confidence in revenue growth is re-established. However, this will be taken forward over the short to medium term, and will be key to informing other major, strategic initiatives; for example, outputs and eventual plans that will arise from work being taken forward by Campuses Re-Imagining Project Board. Future education and research, and staff and student requirements, including the size and composition of respective staff and student populations, will be a key factor informing planning decisions.

- **Objective 3: Deliver the Court-approved budget plan, including the targeted £20m increase in teaching income.**

For 2022/23, the Three-Year Financial Plan set out an increase in tuition fee income of £20m. However, whilst the number of applications for study did increase, these were not converted into tuition fee income to the level anticipated. A range of external and internal factors affected performance. For example, externally, there were visa issues, travelling restrictions, including costs, and geo-political and economic issues in certain

key countries that all impacted conversion rates. Internal, delays in processing the increased volume of applications also had an impact. Consequently, income was £13.1m less than the original budget, due to a net shortfall in tuition fee income equating to £12.3m. To mitigate this, a range of measures were put in place after the January 2023 student intake to reduce costs – both staff and operational costs - and in addition, planned investments were scaled back or paused. As a result, there was a decrease in expenditure against budget of £15.4m, meaning the University was able to record a small surplus.

- **Objective 4: Continue to rebuild research capacity and research quality.**

Progress toward rebuilding both research capacity and research quality has been positive, with capacity measured at this point by Teaching and Research (T&R) academic staff numbers, and research income as an indicator of quality. In terms of **research capacity**, the University increased its T&R academic staff population by 39 FTE over the year, meaning 6.1% growth. In addition, work has taken place through various initiatives to increase the capacity of existing research staff; for example, initiatives like the *Pump Priming Grant Scheme* have had a positive impact in giving outstanding researchers added time and space to develop research grant applications which will have a higher likelihood of success. The Pump Priming Scheme has also impacted research grant income, the key indicator currently adopted for **research quality**. Research income has grown year-on-year, with a substantive increase of over £5m, equating to more than 10%, to the end of 2022/23. This has been underpinned by a marked increase in research grant and contract awards over the previous two years, to approximately £55m per annum, up from £37m the year immediately prior. This growth has been aided by the Grants Academy, which provides dedicated support throughout the grant application and awards process, and via more advanced systems, such as Worktribe. The institutional Research Leave Scheme, a key component of the REF action plan, will also help drive performance in this space, with the first tranche of 25 awards for 2023/24 having been made.

- **Objective 5: Support student employability by taking actions to expand the range of opportunities for work experience.**

A number of initiatives have been progressed to expand the range and number of opportunities available to students. For example, external consultancy work on placements was completed, with recommendations presented to SMT in February this year, following which a number of actions were and are being taken forward. These include initiation of a *Delivering Work-Based Learning at Scale* project, and factoring in associated reporting capabilities as an outcome from the *HESA Data Futures* project, both under Digital. In terms of performance, progress for this objective is measured via the number of work placements taken by students during their study over the academic year. The number of students taking a work placement over 2022/23 increased by 228 – or 14% - to 1878 compared to the previous year. Further information on forward plans for this objective are included under the next agenda item.

- **Objective 6: Strengthen the university's connections to industry by increasing collaborative activity and economic impact.**

The University made positive progress in this space during 2022/23, best evidenced by growth in research-related industry income, which increased by more than 8% to just over £13m by year end. More broadly, a range of actions have been progressed over the year under the Regional Engagement agenda which will further drive performance in this space. Key actions completed or ongoing include:

- Appointment of a Dean for Enterprise & Innovation who is working closely with Schools to promote industry engagement, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship activities.
- Progression of the strategic *Engagement CRM Project*, which has advanced to the planning and design phase under the University's Project Management Methodology; procurement of a supplier and a preferred system is complete, with development work now due to start.
- An Enterprise & Innovation Committee has been established, with a Task and Finish sub-group currently reviewing the University's 'Intellectual Property & Revenue Sharing' policy.
- A network of 12 School Enterprise & Innovation Champions is now established, and an initial programme of development activities has been delivered.
- Strategic KPIs and supporting metrics relating to enterprise and innovation activity have been agreed, and Schools are now using these to frame their activities and plans. Discussions are also ongoing with Planning & Governance about how best to capture School Enterprise & Innovation activity in future planning rounds.
- An 'Engagement, Innovation & Impact' pillar has been integrated into the new promotion framework criteria, applicable at varying career stages, for all four career tracks: Research, Education & Research, Education and Scholarship/Professional Practice, and Clinical Service.
- Terms of reference and composition for a new External Business Advisory Group have been agreed, with a first meeting due to take place in Autumn 2023.
- Preliminary work with regional partners to develop the strategic focus and implementation plan for the recently announced North East Scotland Investment Zone.

5. ABERDEEN 2040 OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2022/23: WIDER REVIEW

The following provides a short summary of progress against the wider Implementation Plan for 2022/23, with a focus on performance against the KPIs agreed for Aberdeen 2040; noting these cover each strategic priority area (Education, Research and Regional Engagement), the 20 commitments, and league table performance. Please cross-refer to the KPI performance summary attached as Appendix 1; this includes baseline figures, data by year, targets to 2025 and RAG ratings. A descriptor of each KPI is also attached as Appendix 2.

5.1. Education

Under Education, the University remains on track to achieve its targets for 2025 for two KPIs; *Overall Student Satisfaction* using the NSS, and *Student Achievement*; both RAG rated green after continued strong performance year-on-year, based on the latest available data. For *Graduate Outcomes*, approximately 79% of graduates entered graduate-level employment or continued with further study within 15 months of completion, in line with previous years. Going forward, the 2025 target to rank Top 25

in the UK will be challenging, particularly given the 15 month lag, which means actions taken now will not impact results for over two years. However, there is confidence that with measures in place or planned, the near to medium term outlook is positive. Data for student continuation, the remaining KPI, is not yet available; this is based on HESA data which is currently under review.

5.2. Research

For Research, performance is currently measured by *Research Income*, and the *PGR Student Population*. Under research income, the 2025 target of £65m remains feasible after a substantive increase of over 10%, from £50.8m in 2021/22, to £56.4m in 2022/23; referenced above under Objective 4. For the PGR population, the aim for 2025 is to stabilise numbers after a decline in recent years; while data for 2022/23 is not yet available from HESA, there is confidence that the provisional target now in place – set at 800 FTE, which was the 2021/22 population – will be delivered.

5.3. Regional Engagement

Under Regional Engagement, three new KPIs have been established, which are being reported on for the first time. They are *total commercial income*, the *number of new spin-out companies created involving staff*, and the *number of new start-up companies created by students or graduates*. Baseline data is provided for each measure using figures for 2020/21 and targets have been set for 2025; these were based on benchmark data against competitor groups, and were recently approved by the University's Commercialisation Committee. It should be noted that while the targets approved for the second and third KPIs are particularly challenging within a short-term context, they nonetheless establish a realistic level of ambition that the University will now work towards over the medium term. For the third KPI, there was significant improvement over the last year, with the number of student start-ups increasing by 50%.

5.4. Inclusive

For the Inclusive theme, Commitments 3, 4 and 5, remain on track to achieve the targets set for 2025. For Commitment 3, the KPI is based on *value and percentage of research grant awards involving non-academic partners*; the percentage level increased marginally year-on-year to fractionally under the 2025 target of 70%. For Commitment 4, which is focused on *equality, diversity and inclusion based accreditations*, progress was positive. For Commitment 5, which is based on the *median gender pay-gap*, this dropped to 16%, taking it inside the 2025 target. For Commitment 2, which is based on widening access and the Scottish Government metric for *SIMD20 recruitment* - meaning students from the 20% most deprived postcodes in Scotland – the outlook remains challenging, despite significant efforts to improve the position, such as the offer of free accommodation. This is a consequence of various factors, but particularly socioeconomic dynamics; students from this cohort are less likely to leave their local region for University, and there are fewer students from this cohort in the north-east relative to other parts of the country nationwide; an issue acknowledged by the Scottish Government Commissioner for Widening Access. For Commitment 1, which uses *staff and student surveys*, a change in methodology to the student survey means that the latest set of results, based on surveys

administered in 2022, are not directly comparable to the 2020 baseline figures. Consequently, an accurate, like-for-like gauge of progress will not be available until 2024.

5.5. Interdisciplinary

For the Interdisciplinary theme, KPI performance for Commitments 7, 8 and 9 was positive, with substantive improvement under each year-on-year, based on the latest available data. For Commitment 7 which uses select *NSS questions*, the University has an average rank of 16th UK wide, meaning it remains on track to achieve the 2025 target. Commitment 8, which is measured by the *percentage of research outputs assigned to multiple research areas*, now sits just below the 40% target, following a 4% increase to over 38%. For Commitment 9, which uses the *Times Higher Education Impact Ranking*, the University rose by over 30 places globally, to rank 70th; albeit the 2025 target of Top 40 remains ambitious. The remaining Commitments – 6 and 10 – both use *staff and student surveys*, meaning the point made above on Commitment 1 also applies here.

5.6. International

Under the International theme, progress for Commitment 11 was positive; the *proportion of PGT international students that comprise the wider student population* now sits at over 29%, exceeding the 2025 target. The second KPI for that Commitment, which measures the *proportion of the student population from outwith the three largest international source markets*, is also on track for 2025. For Commitments 13 and 14, the likelihood of achieving the 2025 targets is considered feasible; these focus on the *percentage of research outputs with international co-authors*, and the *percentage of students who have an international experience*. Commitment 12 uses the same *Graduate Outcomes* measure as Education, above; please cross-refer. For Commitment 15, this too is based on staff and student surveys, meaning again, direct comparison in like-for-like performance is not currently possible.

5.7. Sustainable

Under the Sustainable theme, all KPIs for Commitments 16 to 19 saw improved performance year-on-year, based on the latest available data. Each of these KPIs is likely to achieve target by 2025 if current trajectories are maintained. They include *business travel emissions*, *select NSS questions linked to sustainability*, the *number of research outputs produced linked to select UN SDGs* to which Aberdeen academics have contributed, and *Scope 1 and 2 emissions*, key measures linked to net zero ambitions.

5.8. Financial Sustainability

The University grew its revenue by 2.8% over the year, ultimately generating a small surplus of £0.4m. However, this was against a backdrop of significant challenges, summarised above under Objective 3; please cross refer.

5.9. League Table Performance

League Table Performance remains largely positive; the University currently sits on or under the 2025 target of Top 25 within the UK for the Times and Sunday Times, the Guardian, and the Times Higher Education rankings. For the Guardian, the University has risen to 12th in the UK, which is a record position, and for the Times and Sunday Times, it has maintained its ranking of 19th UK wide, while rising to 4th in Scotland. For the other two rankings in scope – the Complete University Guide, and the QS World Ranking – the University sits at 35th and 29th within the UK respectively; meaning targets here will be more challenging to achieve.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, karl.leydecker@abdn.ac.uk and Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning, hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk, or Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning and Head of Project Management Office, i.grant@abdn.ac.uk.

Confidentiality Status: Open

Aberdeen 2040 Key Performance Indicators - Descriptors

No	Commitment	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)
N/A	Education	1 - NSS, overall student satisfaction result 2 - Graduate Outcomes, % of leavers in further study or graduate level employment 15 months after completion 3 - Student continuation rate (HESA data) 4 - Student achievement - degree awarding gap between white and BAME students for good honours (HESA data)
N/A	Research	1 - Research grant income per year (internal data) 2 - PGR population (HESA data)
N/A	Regional Engagement	1 - Total commercial income University-wide from contract research, consultancy, facilities & services, CPD. 2 - Number of new companies created involving staff (spin-outs). 3 - Number of companies created by students (student and graduate start-ups).
1	We will care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential	Responses to relevant questions in staff and student surveys. 2020 Staff Survey Q3-2 "I am satisfied with my current level of learning and development" Q8-1 "I feel the University cares for my health and wellbeing, including my mental health." Q8-2 "I feel physically safe in my working environment on campus" 2020 Student Survey (Strongly Agree / Tend to Agree) *"I am satisfied with my current level of learning and development" *"I feel the University cares for my health and wellbeing, including my mental health" *"I feel physically safe in the study environment on campus"
2	We will encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualifications and providing a range of modes of delivery; our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background	Percentage of Scottish UG entrants from areas of multiple deprivation (SIMD20).
3	We will develop a research portfolio that promotes national and international collaboration with stakeholders, including companies, organisations and governments	Value of and percentage of research grants awarded with external partners (Non-HEI e.g., industry, NGOs, government partners). Source: Web of Science.
4	We will secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion, achieving accreditation across multiple strands and characteristics	High-quality accreditations of inclusiveness: Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, Stonewall, and University of Sanctuary status.
5	We will eliminate pay gaps across all protected characteristics	Standardised Gender Pay Gap report published by Scottish Government - using median figure.
6	We will support a learning culture in which all our staff and students can exchange ideas and expertise across intellectual areas and organisational structures	Responses to relevant questions in staff and student surveys, using average response figures. *2020 Staff Survey Q4-9 "The University's culture enables an exchange of ideas across intellectual areas and organisational structures" 79% responded positively 2020 Student Survey "The University's culture enables an exchange of ideas and expertise across subject areas, disciplines and Schools." 80% (Strongly Agree / Tend to Agree)

7	We will design new courses and programmes which encourage interdisciplinary learning, and ensure that all our students can experience innovative, challenge-led education involving external stakeholders.	Selected questions from sector-wide National Student Survey, using average response figures. Q3: the course is intellectually stimulating Q4: my course has challenged me to achieve my best work Q6: My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics Q7: my course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt
8	We will build networks across our community to foster interdisciplinary interactions between our subject research strengths, using and sharing expertise to drive new understanding	The proportion of research outputs with university author/co-author assigned to more than one broad research area (defined by Web of Science).
9	We will listen to and work with external stakeholders regionally and globally to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal and industrial challenges.	Times Higher Education Impact Ranking
10	We will develop our digital systems and enhance our buildings to create virtual and physical spaces that enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation.	Responses to relevant questions in staff and student surveys. *2020 Staff Survey *Q4-5 "Our physical spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation" *Q4-6 "Our virtual spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation " 2020 Student Survey *"Our physical spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation." *"Our virtual spaces enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation."
11	We will provide an international education to learners from all around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community.	a) Size and proportion of international student population. b) Diversity in the country of origin for the international population, based on "Proportion of the student population from out with the 3 largest international source markets."
12	We will equip our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods.	Graduate Outcomes Survey - % of those in graduate level employment or further study
13	We will harness our research expertise to form partnerships and networks around the world to meet the challenges of our age	Percentage of outputs with international co-authors. Source: InCites.
14	We will ensure all our students can have an international experience, by studying abroad or working collaboratively with international partners	Percentage of students undertaking international study abroad.
15	We will develop our campuses and processes to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences	Responses to relevant questions in staff and student surveys. *2020 Staff Survey Q4-7 "Our campuses create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences" Q4-8 "Our processes create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences" 2020 Student Survey "Our campuses create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences" "Our processes create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences"
16	We will encourage everyone within our community to work and live sustainably, recognising the importance of our time, energy and resilience.	Business Travel Emissions – tCO2e
17	We will educate all our students and staff to be leaders in protecting the environment	For measuring student progress , questions added to the NSS survey, using average response figures: B16: Environmental sustainability B16.1 My institution encourages good environmental practice B16.2 My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability B16.3 I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability For measuring staff progress , percentage of staff undertaking sustainability training – including online modules, carbon literacy and so forth; final details to be confirmed.
18	We will excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity	The combined number of outputs generated relating to UN Sustainable Development Goals addressing climate change and biodiversity.
19	We will achieve net zero carbon emissions before 2040	Net carbon emissions per year: Emissions (Scope 1 & 2) expressed in tCO2e.
20	We will generate resources for investment in education and research year on year, so that we can continue to develop the people, ideas and actions that help us to fulfil our purpose.	Annual revenue growth and underlying surplus as a percentage of turnover.
N/A	Composite League Table Metric.	UK ranking in each of the 5 league tables

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

UPDATE ON REIMAGINING THE CAMPUSES**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper is to provide Court with a progress update on the Re-imagining our Campuses project.

The paper is being provided to Court for information and discussion.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Estates Committee	4 September 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	n/a	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Court is invited to note the contents of the report.

4. DISCUSSION

This report is to provide Court with an update on the work being undertaken in the Reimagining the Campuses project, following on from the presentation in June 2023.

The Project Board was established in May 2023. It reports to Estates Committee. Its Sponsor is Professor Peter Edwards, Vice-Principal Regional Engagement. Its membership is cross-functional comprising representatives from schools, directorates and the student body, plus an external representative to provide Project Assurance. The Board has held 4 monthly meetings since being established in May. Consideration was taken of the lessons learned from creation of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy were taken in establishing the Board and its programme of work. A Risk Register has been created for the Board, which is reviewed at each Board meeting.

The remit of the Reimagining the Campuses Project Board is to lead, manage and oversee a comprehensive reimagining of the configuration and use of the Estate across all three Aberdeen campuses to ensure that our future investments: support the delivery of our Aberdeen 2040 ambitions; encourage interdisciplinarity; and meet our needs in the post-pandemic world. The Board is

charged with producing a report on its initial findings and recommendations to be presented to Court in June 2024.

The key activities of the Board fall into three categories:

- stakeholder engagement
- horizon scanning and
- technical & legal aspects of the estate

Working Groups have been established within the Board to ensure a sufficiently detailed level of consideration on specific themes underpinning the university's requirements. The composition of each group will be broad and representative of the Board membership. The Working Groups will be responsible for engaging with stakeholders, undertaking research and analysis to ensure that the needs and aspirations for the campuses are understood and considered within the group's allocated theme. Each group will work with a set of personas to increase awareness of a range of user needs and to ensure that these are considered and catered for.

The themes established for the Working Groups are:

- Education - including international and interdisciplinary;
- Research and Innovation - including international, interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial;
- Inclusivity, Accessibility and Well-being;
- Sustainability – including Net Zero.

Three supporting technical groups have been established:

- Estates Technical;
- Digital Technical;
- Communication and Marketing.

The technical groups will aid the activities of the Working Groups and the Project Board.

The groups will distil the information gathered to provide a prioritised list of objectives and recommendations to the Project Board to enable our campus needs and allocations within the allocated themes to be realised over time. The groups will be charged with critically appraising project outputs to ensure that needs and aspirations are met.

The initial tasks of the groups will be to:

- Creation of a consultation plan for review and proposal by the Board. It is to detail the stakeholders to be engaged with, the information sought, and the proposed consultation methods.
- To support the proposed stakeholder surveys, the Working Groups are tasked with providing a prioritised list of up to 5 questions relating to their theme for inclusion in the surveys.

An initial stakeholder engagement consultation took place with Senior Management Team in June 2023. The consultation covered all four themes, stimulating a wide range of ideas, which were summarised as three prioritised ideas per theme:

- Education
 1. Tech enabled and flexible spaces – including virtual labs, simulation and virtual spaces;
 2. Flexible learning spaces – flexible and reusable space;
 3. Practical learning spaces – eg maker spaces.

- Research and Innovation
 1. Enterprise and innovation hub / quarter;
 2. Research facilities clustering - eg science quarter;
 3. Tech enabled creative impact lab.

- Inclusivity, Accessibility and Wellbeing
 1. Accessible campus and buildings;
 2. Global campus – multi-cultural style, international centre for events;
 3. Campus as a place – sports venues, social interaction spaces.

- Sustainability
 1. Fitting size of estate to needs – space efficiencies;
 2. Power usage – heat generation, efficiencies;
 3. Outdoor realm – roads, parking, green spaces.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal Regional Engagement, p.edwards@abdn.ac.uk and Morag Beers, Director of Estates and Facilities, morag.beers@abdn.ac.uk.

13 September 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open