

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Thursday 23 June** at **1.35pm**, by way of **Microsoft Teams**.

Mrs Emma Tough, Assistant Registrar
(e-mail e.tough@abdn.ac.uk)

AGENDA

FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Approval of the minute of the meeting held on 13 April 2022** *(UEC/230622/001)*
2. **Matters Arising** *(UEC/230622/002)*
3. **Health, Safety and Wellbeing** *(Oral Item)*
4. **Update on the UEC and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)** *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will receive an update on the UEC and the QAC.

5. **Aberdeen 2040: Implementation Plan for Education** *(UEC/230622/003a)*

Members of the Committee are asked to **discuss** and **approve** the paper setting out the Aberdeen 2040: Plan for Education. In addition, members are asked to discuss the Education specific sections of the Aberdeen 2040 Institutional Plan (*attached as UEC/230622/003b*).

6. **Academic Year 2023/24** *(UEC/230622/004)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** and **approve** the proposals relating to the start date and structure for the 2023/24 academic year.

7. **National Student Survey Results: Dissemination and Next Steps** *(UEC/230622/005)*

Members of the Committee are asked to **consider** the plans for the dissemination of data relating the NSS 2021 results and the subsequent outline of the next steps.

8. **Full-time Undergraduate Non-Continuation Data** *(UEC/230622/006a)*
(UEC/230622/006b)

The Committee is asked to **discuss** the paper providing a comprehensive analysis of the 2020/21 full-time undergraduate non-continuation data as produced internally by the University, in addition to an update from the Student Support Committee (SSC) on actions regarding continuation and withdrawal.

9. **Delivery of Education Task and Finish Group (TFG) Final Report** *(UEC/230622/007)*

Members of the Committee is asked to **discuss** the final report of the Delivery of Education TFG.

10. Update from the Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG and Enhanced Transcript Working Group (UEC/230622/008)

The Committee is asked to **discuss** the joint update from the Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG and the Enhanced Transcript Working Group.

11. Enhancement Theme Annual Report (UEC/230622/009)

The Committee is asked to **discuss** the Enhancement Theme Annual Report, on which they will also receive a presentation from the Enhancement Theme Lead, Professor Steve Tucker.

12. Contract Cheating (UEC/230622/010)

Members of the UEC are asked to **discuss** the paper, providing an overview of the University's current approaches and key considerations related to enhancing academic integrity in assessments for academic year 2022/23 with a particular focus on contract cheating. In addition, members of the UEC are asked to note that a small group will convene over the summer, to look at the issue of contract cheating in more detail.

13. Aberdeen 2040 Commitments in the Catalogue of Courses (UEC/230622/011)

The Committee is asked to discuss the update to work being undertaken in regard to the Aberdeen 2040 Commitments in the Catalogue of Courses.

14. Deadlines for the Return of Results 2022/23 (UEC/230622/012)

Members of the Committee are asked to consider and approve the deadlines for the return of results for 2022/23.

15. Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (UEC/230622/013)

Members of the Committee are asked to **note** the attached paper. The Committee will receive an update following approval of the recommendation to adopt the declaration at Senate.

16. Dates of Next Meetings

Meetings of the UEC will take place in 2022/23 as follows:

Monday 10 October 2022 at 1.05pm

Monday 16 January 2023 at 1.05pm

Thursday 23 March 2023 at 1.05pm

Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 1.05pm

Thursday 15 June 2023 at 1.05pm

17. Items for Information – see overleaf

Any member of the Committee wishing an item for routine approval or for information to be brought forward for discussion may ask at the meeting for that to be done. Any such item will be taken after item 1.

Declaration of interests: Any member and individual in attendance (including Officers) who has a clear interest in a matter on the agenda should declare that interest at the relevant meeting, whether or not that interest is already recorded in the Registry of Member's interests.

17. FOR INFORMATION

17.1 Update Reports from the UEC sub-committees:

- | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------------|
| (i) | Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) | <i>(UEC/230622/014a)</i> |
| (ii) | Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) | <i>(UEC/230622/014b)</i> |
| (iii) | Student Support Committee (SSC) | <i>(UEC/230622/014c)</i> |

17.2 Education Committees in 2022/23 *(UEC/230622/015a)*

The Committee is invited to **note** the attached document containing the dates of the Education Committees in 2022/23 and the proposed timings of associated agenda items. This includes reference to data for the consideration of the Education Committees, further information on which is contained in *(UEC/150622/015b)*.

17.3 Risk Register *(UEC/230622/016)*

The Committee is invited to **note** the updated Risk Register, with regards to the specific risks associated with Education.

17.4 Learning and Teaching Equality Impact Assessment *(UEC/230622/017)*

The Committee is invited to **note** the updated Learning and Teaching Equality Impact Assessment.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 13 April 2022

Present: Ruth Taylor (Chair), John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Jason Bohan, Abbe Brown, Stuart Durkin, Ondrej Kucerak, David Mercieca, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Susan Stokeld, and Anne-Michelle Slater with Julie Bray, Nick Edwards, Rhona Gibson, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Gillian Mackintosh, Kate Smith, Louisa Stratton and Emma Tough (Clerk) in attendance

Apologies: Euan Bain, Harminder Battu, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Bill Harrison, Gerry Hough, Richard Hepworth, Alison Jenkinson, Kirsty Kiezebrink, David McCausland, Graeme Nixon, Steve Tucker, Russell Williams, Joshua Wright, Simon Bains, Rachael Bernard, Scott Carle, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Fiona Ritchie, and Patricia Spence

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2022*(copy filed as UEC/130422/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING*(copy filed as UEC/130422/002)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 24 February 2022. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress. The Committee noted the following:
- With regard to *minute point 8.3* of the meeting held on 18 January, regarding the circulation of information in regard to feedback to students, members of the Committee received an update that a communication in this regard would be issued to students following the Spring break. **Action: Clerk**
 - With regard to *minute point 8.3* of the meeting held on 24 February, regarding the paper on the 2023/23 Academic Year, members of the Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would follow to the first meeting of the UEC in academic year 2022/23. **Action: AMS**
 - With regard to *minute point 11.1* of the meeting held on 24 February, regarding Generic Degrees, the Committee noted work on handling regulations in this regard was underway and that an update would follow to the UEC in due course. The Committee agreed that the action should be marked as complete.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 3.1 Members of the Committee noted the Campus Planning Group (CPG) papers and minutes of meetings, available [here](#). Members of the Committee noted that it was not yet known for how long the CPG would continue to meet but that 'Health, Safety and Wellbeing' would remain as a standing item on the UEC agenda, for Committee members to raise any issues arising in the regard.

RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/130422/003)

- 4.1 Members of the Committee received the updated Risk Register for Education, available as *UEC/130422/003*. The Committee noted no further comments. **Action: Clerk**

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORT OF THE PASTORAL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/004)

- 5.1 Members of the Committee received an update from Abbe Brown on the work of the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG). The Committee noted the vision of the TFG and were supportive of it. The Committee noted that the draft report and associated recommendations would be further consulted upon and would return to a future meeting of the Committee for approval, prior to onward consideration and approval at Senate.
- 5.2 Overall, the Committee were supportive of the recommendations of the TFG. Some queries were raised, however, specifically regarding:
- Resource, workload, and the logistics of ensuring each Postgraduate Taught (PGT) student could be assigned a personal tutor. The Committee were informed that discussions in this regard were ongoing.
 - Ensuring personal tutors are able to make contact with incoming first year students, to ensure support in regard to academic decision making can be provided prior to a student undertaking their course choices in MyAberdeen.
 - Whether there is a conflict in members of staff such as Heads of School or Directors of Education acting as personal tutors.
 - The importance of ensuring both the defined identities of personal tutors and course coordinators can be maintained.
- 5.3 Members of the Committee agreed the importance of providing resources for personal tutors (such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)) and of ensuring Professional Services teams are also engaged in supporting students where appropriate.
- 5.4 Members of the Committee were thanked for their contribution to discussion and asked to send any further comments on the TFG report and associated recommendations directly to Abbe Brown. The Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would return to a future meeting of the UEC.

Action: Clerk/Committee

DRAFT PRINCIPLES OF THE MONITORING, ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/005)

- 6.1 Members of the Committee received an update from Abbe Brown on the work of the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG. Members of the Committee were, overall, supportive of the draft principles presented. The Committee agreed with the proposed changes to the monitoring procedures and, in particular, the change in name to reflect a more supportive approach to managing non-engagement. Members of the Committee did note, however, that while supporting students as far as possible, they must also be made aware of their position (for example where their non-engagement may have implications for their visa) at as early a juncture as possible to ensure they are both supported and informed.

- 6.2 Members of the Committee were thanked for their contribution to discussion and asked to send any further comments on the TFG report draft principles directly to Abbe Brown. The Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would return to a future meeting of the UEC and prior to further consideration at Senate.

Action: Clerk/Committee

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REMITS

(copy filed as UEC/130422/006)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee received the paper on changes to the Education Committee remits, proposed following the outcome of the Senate Effectiveness Review and agreed changes to the Education Committee structure. Members of the Committee noted the key change arising as the redesignation of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) as a sub-committee of the Senate.
- 7.2 Members of the Committee noted proposed membership changes to the QAC, reflecting a distinction between the membership of the QAC and that of the UEC. The Committee further acknowledged proposed changes to the QAC remit to reflect its quality assurance focus and an increased role in the development and review of policy. In this regard, the Committee were informed of the proposed creation of a sub-group of the QAC, the Academic Regulations and Policy Group (ARPG). Members of the Committee were informed that in order to reduce the workload burden on QAC members, the Academic Services team would increase the level of support provided including in the consideration of quality assurance documentation, such as External Examiners reports and Annual Programme Review (APR) forms.
- 7.3 Members noted changes to the UEC remit, reflecting its strategic role in the oversight of education provision and Aberdeen2040 in respect of education matters. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of maintaining a close working relationship between the Committees, particularly as some issues, such as policy matters, would remain a focus of both.
- 7.4 The Committee noted the change in the Student Support Committee (SSC) to reflect the student experience and therefore the proposed creation of a new Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC). The Committee further noted that the remit and composition of the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) would remain as published.
- 7.5 Overall, the Committee were supportive of the changes outlined in the paper. Members noted, however, the importance of ensuring the recognition of the workload associated with committee membership and the wider delivery of education. The Committee noted that the paper would now proceed to the Senate for consideration and approval.

Action: Clerk

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23

(copy filed as UEC/130422/007a and UEC/130422/007b)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee received paper *UEC/130422/007a* setting out proposals for the delivery of education in academic year 2022/23. The Committee specifically noted the principles outlined, drafted to support the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in 2022/23. Members of the Committee were supportive of the paper and content to approve its progression to the Senate for consideration and approval.

- 8.2 In approving the paper, members of the Committee raised queries as follows:
- In regard to recorded lectures, whether these could be used as a means of delivering teaching going forward. Responding, the Chair noted that a range of different approaches to teaching were in place across Schools. It was noted that while contact hours must remain, the use of recorded material may be appropriate in supplementing this and as part of an overall approach to nurturing active learning (e.g., flipped classroom approach).
 - In regard captioning and the workload associated with this task, members of the Committee sought clarity as to whether a budget remained for Schools to access to ensure resource could be allocated to it. Responding, the Chair confirmed that she would provide further guidance on this following consultation with colleagues.

Action: Chair

8.2 Members of the Committee received paper *UEC/130422/007b* setting out a proposed adjustment to the structure of the thirteen-week half-session model in 2022/23 to provide for a dedicated two-week assessment period following an eleven-week teaching and assessment period for most undergraduate programmes.

8.3 Members of the Committee discussed the paper. The main tenets of discussion were as follows:

- Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal as outlined in the paper. Support for the change was specifically noted from representatives of Schools seeking to deliver examinations.
- A member of the Committee expressed concern around the deadlines associated with the return of exam results (*minute point 15.4 further refers*). Responding, the Chair committed to look again at this issue and report back to the UEC.
- A member of the Committee noted concern regarding the lack of a defined revision week prior to the weeks designated as being for assessment. Concern was noted in regard to the potential for a scenario to occur where teaching delivered in the final week assigned to teaching is then assessed in the week which follows. Members of the Committee agreed the importance of Schools considering the appropriateness of how they deliver teaching and subsequently assess.

8.4 Members of the Committee agreed to approve the paper and to forward it to the Senate. The Committee noted that papers UEC/130422/007a and UEC/130422/007b would be combined, to present an overall position in regard to academic year 2022/23, prior to consideration at Senate.

Action: Chair/GM

QATAR: CHANGES TO DELIVERY OF EDUCATION DUE TO THE WORLD CUP

(copy filed as UEC/130422/008)

9.1 The Committee received the paper on changes to the delivery of Education in Qatar during the first half session of the 2022/23 academic year, as a consequence of the football World Cup. Members of the Committee noted that the paper had been considered and approved by the QAC in respect of the delivery of Education, with UEC approval required for the proposed changes to term dates.

9.2 Members of the Committee were content to approve the revised term dates as outlined in the paper.

Action: Clerk/GM

DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS

(copy filed as UEC/130422/009)

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper providing an analysis of degree classifications for first degree UG qualifiers at the University who have graduated with a 'good honours' degree (i.e., a First Class or Upper Second-Class honours classification). The Committee noted that the analysis was derived from data for academic year 2020/21 published by HESA (the Higher Education Statistical Agency) in March 2022.
- 10.2 Overall, the Committee noted an increase in the award of good honours degree outcomes and, in particular, the award of first-class classifications. In noting this increase, however, the Committee were informed that while the sector average of firsts awarded is lower than that of the University, comparisons can be made to degrees awarded by Russell Group Universities. In addition, the Committee agreed the correlation between entry tariff and degree outcome, noting the University's entry tariff as being the eighth highest in the UK and degree classification is 12th.
- 10.3 Members of the Committee noted that an analysis of degree outcomes by ethnicity, sex, domicile, age, disability and SIMD20 had also been undertaken. The Committee were informed that awarding gaps had been identified in these areas although in the majority of cases these gaps had decreased in recent years. The Committee noted, however, that significant gaps, above the sector average, remained between White graduates and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME), and SIMD20 graduates and all other students. Members of the Committee were informed that the Race Equality Strategy group were aware of the gap identified for BAME and were considering how improvement in this area could be enabled. The Student Support Committee would be asked to review the data and consider actions to address all awarding gaps for consideration by UEC.
- 10.4 Members of the Committee noted that staff, such as Directors of Education, were currently unable to access Power BI. It was noted that while this may be as a direct result of the number of software licences that the University has access to, that the Chair would further investigate the issue. **Action: Chair**
- 10.5 A member of the Committee noted the importance of recognising the introduction of the University's Common Grading Scale (CGS) as a factor in the award of higher degree outcomes, noting that the previous revisions to the grading scheme had aimed to support staff to utilise the entire scale.
- 10.6 While understanding that the impact of Covid mitigation measures would continue for at least a further academic year, a member of the Committee noted that some External Examiners were seeking feedback on the University's response to grade inflation.
- 10.7 Members of the Committee noted that the paper would now proceed to meetings of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Senate for discussion. It was further noted that the following key actions were underway:
- The report and associated Power BI dashboard would be shared with all Schools for review through their School Education Committees.
 - Further analysis would be carried out on historical trends with regard to awarding gaps for First Class and Second-Class degrees.

- An annual review of degree classifications data will be carried out in March every year to identify future trends. Future analysis will enable comparisons between the University's previous approach to degree classification (use of Grade Spectrum) and the current Grade Point Average (GPA) which is implemented in this academic year (2021/22).

Action: Chair

QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY SCOTLAND (QAAS) INSTITUTIONAL VISIT UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/130422/010)

- 11.1 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) and its Institutional visits to the University.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) 2018 UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/130422/011)

- 12.1 The Committee received the paper providing an update on the outcome of Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2018 and the actions arising from it. Members of the Committee were asked to return any feedback on the update to the Clerk.

Action: Committee

UPDATE ON TRANSFORMING THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS THROUGH ASSESSMENT (TESTA)

(copy filed as UEC/130422/012)

- 13.1 Members of the Committee received the paper providing an update on the TESTA pilot. The Committee noted the work ongoing in this regard, including the engagement of the Schools of Social Science and Natural and Computing Science (NCS) in the pilot exercise. Members noted the setup of a steering group and that further updates would follow to future meetings of the UEC.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC, to focus on Aberdeen 2040, would take place on Tuesday 10 May 2022 at 10.05pm. Members of the Committee noted that the dates on which UEC would take place in 2022/23 would follow in due course.

CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

(copy filed as UEC/130422/013)

- 15.1 The Committee, for its part, approved the draft Resolution Changes in 'Regulations for Various Degrees'. The Resolution enacts changes in degree regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

FITNESS TO PRACTISE (EDUCATION)

(copy filed as UEC/130422/014)

- 15.2 The Committee, for its part, approved changes to the Policy on Fitness to Practise and the associated Guidance Notes applicable to students' undertaking degrees in Education or Counselling.

REVISIONS TO ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

(copy filed as UEC/130422/015)

- 15.3 The Committee approved, for its part, changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) and the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Plagiarism against Graduates of the University.

DEADLINES FOR THE RETURN OF RESULTS 2022/23

- 15.4 The Committee noted the proposed deadlines for the return of results for academic year 2022/23 as follows. A member of the Committee raised a concern with regard to the deadlines outlined in (a) below. The Chair agreed to look at the proposed deadlines again, prior to a further communication to the Committee in this regard.

Action: Chair/Clerk

- (a) January 2023 Assessments
(i) All undergraduate courses by Friday 20 January 2023
(ii) Postgraduate taught courses by Friday 27 January 2023
(iii) January Start Postgraduate Taught programmes, for candidates commencing January 2022, by Friday 27 January 2023
- (b) May 2023 Assessments
(i) All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 courses and undergraduate programmes by Friday 9 June 2023
(ii) Postgraduate taught course and programme results, for those candidates eligible to graduate in June 2023, by Friday 9 June 2023
(iii) All other postgraduate taught courses by Friday 30 June 2023
- (c) Resit Assessments
All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 resit assessments by Friday 11 August 2023
- (d) Postgraduate Taught programmes eligible to graduate in November 2023
Postgraduate Taught summer courses and programme results Friday 3 November 2023.

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

- 16.1 Members of the Committee noted update reports from the UEC sub-committees as follows:
- (i) Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017a)*
(ii) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017b)*
(iii) Student Support Committee (SSC) *(copy filed as UEC/130422/017c)*

ADVANCEHE ACCREDITATION

(copy filed as UEC/240222/018)

- 16.2 Members of the Committee noted the outcome of the University's recent application for AdvanceHE Accreditation.

FIELDWORK OR RELATED ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING

(copy filed as UEC/240222/019)

- 16.3 Members of the Committee noted the update on fieldwork and related activities.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2022

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
2.1	With regard to <i>minute point 8.3</i> of the meeting held on <i>18 January</i> , regarding the circulation of information in regard to feedback to students, members of the Committee received an update that a communication in this regard would be issued to students following the Spring break.	Clerk	Complete. An email in regard to feedback has now been issued to students.
2.1	With regard to <i>minute point 8.3</i> of the meeting held on 24 February, regarding the paper on the 2022/23 Academic Year, members of the Committee noted that an updated version of the paper would follow to the first meeting of the UEC in academic year 2022/23.	Anne Michelle Slater	Ongoing. Item 6 on the agenda refers.
4.1	Return of the updated Risk Register (paper <i>UEC/130422/003</i> refers) to the <i>Strategic Planning Team</i> .	Clerk	Complete. Updated Risk Register returned to Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning.
5.4	Return of comments on the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG) report to be sent to Abbe Brown.	Clerk/Committee	Complete. Request issued to the Committee on 25 April, providing a deadline for feedback of 10 May.
6.2	Return of comments on the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG report to be sent to Abbe Brown.	Clerk/Committee	Complete. Request issued to the Committee on 25 April, providing a deadline for feedback of 10 May.
7.5	Education Committee Remits paper to proceed to the meeting of the Senate taking place on 11 May.	Clerk/GM	Complete. Paper considered by the Senate at the meeting held on 10 May.
8.2	Clarification on the availability of resource for captioning to be provided to the UEC.	Chair	Ongoing. Communication to DoEs to follow in due course.
8.4	Papers UEC/130422/007a and UEC/130422/007b to be combined and to proceed to the meeting of the Senate taking place on 11 May.	Clerk/GM	Complete. Paper considered by the Senate at the meeting held on 10 May.
9.2	Agreement of the amended Qatar term dates to be communicated to Qatar staff and students and made	Clerk/GM	Complete.

	available on the University webpages.		
10.4	Clarification on the availability of Power BI licences and access for staff to be provided to the UEC.	Chair	Complete. The University has a universal licence in place. UEC members who need a licence should contact chris.soutar@abdn.ac.uk (Planning) who will advise on how to apply for a licence. The costs (around £10-20 per year) are covered by the School.
12.1	With regard to the ELIR update report, feedback to be returned to the Clerk.	Committee	Complete. Request issued to the Committee on 25 April, providing a deadline for feedback of 10 May.
15.4	With regard to Exam Result deadlines, the feasibility of providing longer turnaround times to be investigated.	Clerk/Chair	Complete. Item 14 on the agenda refers.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
Aberdeen 2040: Plan for Education
University Education Committee

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of the paper is to provide a proposed approach to taking forward the further development of our Education strategy. In particular, the paper seeks to pull together all of the current strands of activity, alongside the additional areas that require work. The aim is to have a coherent approach that ensures all aspects of the workstreams are considered in the wider Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work.

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

The University Education Committee is asked to discuss and approve the proposed approach.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 A paper was presented to UEC in October 2021 with an [updated version](#) being presented in December 2021. This paper outlined our overarching approach to the development of key areas of activity as part of our overall approach to our Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum.
- 4.2 As a reminder, the workstreams or initiatives that are currently being taken forward are:
- 4.2.1 [Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group](#)
 - 4.2.2 [The Delivery of Education Task and Finish Group \(completing in June 2022\)](#)
 - 4.2.3 [Work Placements Task and Finish Group](#)
 - 4.2.4 [International Student Experience Task and Finish Group](#)
 - 4.2.5 [Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills](#)
 - 4.2.6 [Pastoral Support Review](#)
 - 4.2.7 [Monitoring and Absence Review](#)
 - 4.2.8 Assessment and Feedback Institutional Theme (as well as pilots of TESTA¹)
 - 4.2.9 Enhancement Theme: Resilient Learning Communities
 - 4.2.10 Quality Assurance Policy Review
 - 4.2.11 Badging of our course choices under the four Aberdeen 2040 themes (Sustainable, Interdisciplinary, International, Inclusive)
 - 4.2.12 The [Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework](#)
- 4.3 There are likely to be a number of implications from the work of these groups, as well as interactions between the groups, or further areas for exploration and decision-making relating to aspects which may include:

¹ Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment

- 4.3.1 The academic year structure for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, including the structure of the terms.
 - 4.3.2 The course choices that students can make with possibilities such as reducing the amount of elective course choice, developing 'pathways' of choice that enable the building of knowledge around a (for example) Aberdeen 2040 theme, and revisiting our Sixth Century courses as part of an overall review of course choice.
 - 4.3.3 The learning outcomes for courses and programmes.
 - 4.3.4 The embedding of the Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills (and employability) into the curriculum (and subsequent impact on learning outcomes).
 - 4.3.5 Taking forward the outcomes from the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group as an institution.
 - 4.3.6 The further development of how we deliver our Education, building on the Principles for Delivery in AY2022/23 with subsequent impact on programme structure, contact time, staff training, timetable, estates and digital learning spaces, digital tools to support learning, amongst other things.
 - 4.3.7 Discussion around the needs of disabled students and students' support needs more widely, and the mode of delivery in relation to opportunities for increased online / blended delivery.
 - 4.3.8 Opportunities for non-mobility international learning and its embedding within courses and the wider curriculum.
 - 4.3.9 The embedding of mobility opportunities such that any student can apply for such an opportunity (unless PSRB requirements prevent).
 - 4.3.10 The embedding of work placements in the Curriculum such that any programme has the structure that enables these opportunities to be available to students.
 - 4.3.11 The further development of our resilient learning communities as an embedded approach to both learning and the wider student experience, with possible impact on decisions about the delivery of our Education.
 - 4.3.12 Orientation and transition into university, and into subsequent years of study.
 - 4.3.13 Recruitment of students and the associated information that is needed to clearly articulate the student learning and wider experience (marketing, course catalogue).
 - 4.3.14 Students as partners in our work.
 - 4.3.15 Student non-continuation and awarding gap findings and their impact on the Curriculum.
 - 4.3.16 Ensuring we give consideration to the specific needs of our different cohorts (UG, PGT, on campus, TNE and fully online) in designing our future approach to the future delivery of education.
- 4.4 In addition to the work of these Groups, temporary changes have been made to the term dates to accommodate the impact on recruitment of the Covid-19 circumstances and to bring the University more in line with others in a recruitment context. The adjustment to the academic year is in place for [AY2022/23](#) and proposals for a continuation of this interim model for 2023/24 to provide time for the work outlined in the paper to be undertaken to inform a future structure of the academic year (see 4.5 below) are being taken forward through relevant committees.
- 4.5 Related to 4.4, further work is required to agree the structure of the academic year. Any changes to the academic year structure will be impacted by the outcomes from the workstreams identified in 4.2 (amongst other areas identified in 4.3).
- 4.6 Each of the workstreams has been working independently, coming together for updates and discussion at additional 'Aberdeen 2040 UEC' meetings. Whilst this worked well as the early work developed, there is now a need to bring together the discussions, outputs and issues from these Groups. Building on the Blended Learning Implementation Task and Finish Group (BLITFG) model that worked so well as we put in place arrangements for Education during the pandemic, it is therefore proposed that a new group will be created as follows:
- 4.6.1 An overarching Aberdeen 2040 Education Steering Group (A40ESG) which will be a sub-group of the University Education Committee. A draft remit and composition for the group is appended in Annex A. A40ESG will do the following:
 - a) Develop a workplan for the completion of all its activities.
 - b) Receive reports from the individual workstreams on a regular basis

- c) Develop a communication plan for the work to ensure staff and students are kept abreast of the work and are able to contribute through consultation. This will include:
 - Putting in place open sessions for staff to report on, and discuss, the ongoing work to both raise awareness and gain feedback from the wider community.
 - Putting in place open sessions for students, via AUSA, to gain feedback on the proposals as they are developed.
- d) Through UEC, take forward proposals for the academic view of Senate prior to approval.
- e) Oversee implementation of the proposals.
- f) Ensure plans are put in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the proposed changes.

4.6.2 In terms of timescale, it is expected that a number of the TFGs will report during the next academic year, for example the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group will bring forward a suite of resources to support work in Schools to decolonise the curriculum, and the Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG will bring forward recommendations. It is however recognised that this is a large piece of work and as such it is acknowledged that the Aberdeen 2040 Education Steering Group's work will extend beyond this coming academic year to enable recommendations relating to all strands of activity to be brought forward and for these to be fully implemented.

4.7 UEC is asked to discuss and approve the proposal.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) and Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services and Online Education (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk)

31 May 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

ABERDEEN 2040 EDUCATION STEERING GROUP

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

1. STEERING GROUP TITLE

Aberdeen 2040 Education Steering Group (A40ESG)

2. DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT

15 June 2022

3. CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA

Chair: Vice-Principal (Education)

Clerk: Academic Services and Online Education (Registry)

4. PURPOSE

A Steering Group to draw together and provide oversight and guidance to the workstreams and associated initiatives underpinning Aberdeen 2040 Education.

5. REMIT

The Aberdeen 2040 Education Steering Group lead the work on curriculum structure and associated pedagogic approaches for our future delivery of education and will also have responsibility for:

- (i) Developing a workplan and associated timeline for the various strands of activity underpinning A40CSG including the various TFGs and associated initiatives;
- (ii) Monitoring and reviewing the progress of the individual workstreams and initiatives to ensure their progress aligns with the timeline and that areas of cross-over are identified, discussed and aligned.
- (iii) Putting in place a communication strategy to enable appropriate consultation, collaboration and dissemination from staff and students and where relevant external stakeholders.
- (iv) Ensuring appropriate consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- (v) Bringing forward proposals to UEC for initial consideration prior to their consideration by Senate for an academic view prior to approval.
- (vi) Evaluating the progress of the work on an ongoing basis and develop approaches to assess its impact.

Members' Responsibilities:

Each member of the committee will contribute to discussions and feedback on these to their respective areas for comment and further input. School Directors of Education ensure that they use their School Education Committees and other School forums to inform feedback into A40ESG.

6. COMPOSITION AND QUORUM

Chair: Vice-Principal (Education)

Membership: Student President of the Students' Association (or nominee)
 Vice-President for Education of the Students' Association
 School Directors of Education
 Director of Studies (Qatar)
 Dean for Student Support
 Dean for Educational Innovation
 Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship
 Dean for Postgraduate Research School
 Dean for International Student Pathways
 Dean for Widening Access, Articulation and Outreach
 Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion
 QAA Enhancement Theme Lead

Academic Representative of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee
Three PGT School leads
Interdisciplinary Director

In attendance: Director of Academic Services and Online Education
Head of Quality
Head of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD)
Head of the Careers and Employability Service
Head of the Language Centre
Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee)
School Administration Manager
Go Abroad Manager
Students' Association staff member

Quorum: 50%

ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP

7. MEMBERSHIP

TBC

8. REPORTING LINE / PARENT COMMITTEE AND INTERFACE WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Formal reporting line: UEC

Steering Groups and Task and Finish Groups: Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group,
Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG
Work Placement TFG
International Student Experience TFG
Pastoral Support Review Group
Monitoring and Absence Review Group

9. FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

The group will meet monthly.
Meetings between 10am – 4pm in accordance with University Policy.

10. PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The agenda and meeting papers will be made available on web pages/StaffNet at least one week prior to the meeting to give time for discussion to take place in Schools and other areas. Where these papers are draft, this will be clearly identified.

11. DATE ESTABLISHMENT OF STEERING GROUP

APPROVED/RECORDED:

TBC

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ACADEMIC YEAR ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

To set out proposals for the continuation of the 2022/23 academic year arrangements into academic year 2023/24 to allow sufficient time for the future structure of the academic year from 2024/25 to be informed by the work of the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work and relevant student recruitment requirements.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED BY

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	UEC SRC	24 February 2022 9 March 2022
Further consideration/ approval required by	SRC Qatar Academic Planning Sub-Group Senate (for academic view)	TBC TBC 14 September 2022
	UEC SRC Senate (for approval)	10 October 2022 TBC 2 November 2022

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

To consider and discuss the continuation of the 2022/23 academic year arrangements into 2023/24 to provide sufficient time for the work of the Aberdeen 2040 Education Curriculum work to be undertaken to inform any changes to the future structure of the academic year from 2024/25 onwards together with consideration of relevant student recruitment requirements.

4. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

- 4.1 The uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a review, in Spring 2020, of the planned start of the imminent academic year, 2020/21. It was clear that the original September 2020 date placed us amongst a group of UK institutions with the earliest start dates, two or three weeks ahead of some of our key competitor institutions. It was acknowledged that this had the potential to be a competitive disadvantage and impacted adversely on international students planning travel to the UK.
- 4.2 During the pandemic, Senate therefore approved a series of interim academic year arrangements for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. These arrangements differed slightly between years, but in general terms they enabled a later commencement of teaching and additional time for the return of assessment marks, by reducing the length of the half-session. While during the pandemic all half-session weeks were used for 'teaching and assessment' in 2022/23 the thirteen week half-session will be split, for most UG provision, into 11 weeks of teaching/assessment followed by a two week assessment period to allow for return of some in-person examinations (see 6.3 below).
- 4.2 We are now looking to set dates for 2023/24 as the recruitment cycle is such that clarity around the 2023/24 academic year structure is required to be confirmed by the start of the coming academic year (timing is to ensure that offers made to new students can include their start date, as well as for other planning purposes).

5. STUDENT RECRUITMENT CONTEXT

- 5.1 The continuation of recent term start date arrangements into 2023/24 will continue to facilitate later, and continuing delays in, applicant decision-making, and afford some time and flexibility for our prospective students. As previously, commencing teaching on the same pattern (with slight variations between years) as the last three intake cycles will benefit nearly all new UG and PGT students.
- 5.2 Post-pandemic in the UK, we are in a changed student recruitment context, and avoiding the return to an early September start date would maintain the progress made and ensure our new students have the best opportunity to begin their studies.
- 5.3 It should also be recognised that the pandemic continues to be highly disruptive in other parts of the world, including some of our key student recruitment markets, most notably China. Logistical obstacles also persist, including visa centre closures and processing delays, which are not expected to abate for some time to come, and disruption to travel and escalation of travel costs will also complicate and delay the logistics of travel to undertake international study. Other impacts include restrictions in access to the TB testing required for visas in some markets, and the possibility of delayed exam results in India
- 5.4 International students are increasingly applying to university and deciding on offers later in the cycle. This reflects both a global change in practice and the University diversifying its intake to countries where students receive their final qualifications later than countries where we have traditionally recruited. Changes in our recruitment pattern have also increased the complexity of admissions processes, extending turnaround times for processing applications and results. In addition, there is a need to recognise the role played by UK Visas & Immigration and the need to ensure students have adequate time to complete both the University application process and the subsequent visa application process, before then booking travel. An earlier start date would make the University less attractive to international students, which would have a significant impact on both the cultural diversity and the financial sustainability of the University. An earlier start date also risks more students arriving on campus after the start of teaching, which can be disruptive.
- 5.5 Domestically, UK students are increasingly relying on Clearing in August each year; more than 70,000 students were placed in Clearing in 2022 and it is expected that this figure will be higher in 2023. Success in Clearing has been a significant recent factor in the University substituting reduced EU numbers (who are now international fee rather than home fee students), with greater numbers of Scottish-domiciled students. Moreover, with a return to exams rather than School assessed grades, school leavers across all of the UK will not know their final results until mid-August, which means an earlier September start would give them little time to consider their Clearing options.

6. EDUCATION CONTEXT

- 6.1 The continuation of interim arrangements for 2022/23 were approved by Senate in the context of the work being undertaken by the Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education Task & Finish Group as one of the strands of activity under the Aberdeen 2040 Education activity. The TFG has delivered a set of Principles to inform delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in 2022/23. These Principles were approved by Senate at its meeting on 11 May 2022.
- 6.2 It had originally been intended that the Delivery of Education TFG would bring forward longer-term recommendations for the future delivery of education which would have informed the structure of academic year from 2023/24 onwards. However, in the light of there being a number of inter-related ongoing TFGs carrying forward activity as part of the overall approach to our Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum, the work of these groups is being brought together under an overarching Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum Steering Group which will report to UEC.
- 6.3 This wider piece of work, which will be undertaken over academic year 2023/24 and beyond, will include consideration of the future academic year structure for UG and PGT. The academic year structure will be considered during academic year 2022/23 so that a revised structure can be agreed to support recruitment activities and other planning. As such, the continuation of the interim academic year structure for a further year will enable this work to be completed. This extension of the interim arrangements will include the structure agreed for 2022/23, namely that the thirteen week half-session will be structured into an eleven-week teaching period followed by a two-week

assessment period for most undergraduate programmes (except Medicine, Dentistry and Education which have different structures due to the professional nature of the programmes, have less cross-School flexibility of course choice, and in some cases involve placement provision), and not to postgraduate taught programmes which would continue to have a thirteen-week teaching and assessment period. Where exams are required for postgraduate delivery, these should be held in the designated assessment period using the 'eleven plus two' model to avoid any conflict with teaching.

7. A FURTHER YEAR OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 As noted above, the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work will be undertaken during academic year 2022/23 and it will be essential that this work is able to inform the longer-term structure of the academic year.
- 7.2 The recruitment cycle is such that clarity around the 2023/24 academic year structure is required to be confirmed by the start of the coming academic year (to ensure that offers made to new students can include their start date, as well as for other planning purposes. It is therefore proposed that the arrangements for 2022/23 be continued for 2023/24 to give time for longer-term recommendations which take account of the output of the work of the TFG and also wider student recruitment requirements to be fully considered.
- 7.3 For ease of reference, the relevant dates for the academic year arrangements in 2023/24 are set out in Annex B.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 UEC is asked to endorse the continuation of the 2022/23 academic year arrangements into 2023/24 to provide sufficient time for the work of the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work to be undertaken to inform any changes to the future structure of the academic year from 2024/25 onwards.
- 8.2 If these proposals are approved, the paper will continue to Senate for an academic view, prior to any further consideration by UEC before a formal recommendation is made to Senate.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 9.1 Further information can be had from Alan Speight, Vice Principal for Global Student Recruitment (alan.speight@abdn.ac.uk); Ruth Taylor, Vice Principal for Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk); Adelyn Wilson, Dean for International Stakeholder Engagement (adelyn.wilson@abdn.ac.uk) and Anne-Michelle Slater, Dean for Portfolio Development & Programme Promotion (a.m.slater@abdn.ac.uk) and Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services & Online Education (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk).

[17 June 2022]

FOI Status: Strictly Confidential (commercially sensitive and policy in development)

ANNEX A

COMPARATOR INSTITUTION'S START DATES¹ 2022/23

University	Start date of welcome/arrival HS1
Bath	26 September
Dundee	19 September
Glasgow	12 September
Leicester	26 September
Liverpool	26 September
Loughborough	28 September
QUB	19 September
Reading	26 September
Strathclyde	12 September
Sussex	19 September

¹ Selected on the basis of QS rankings

ANNEX B

ACADEMIC YEAR ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24

2023 (w/c Monday) ²	Week Number	Arrangements proposed for UG and PGT teaching	Weeks available for PGT Summer Teaching ³	School term dates Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire
07-Aug	2	Post-resits marking/Examiners' meetings 2 Results deadline:11 Aug	Week 10	
14-Aug	3		Week 11	
21-Aug	4		Week 12	Start 22 Aug
28-Aug	5			
04-Sep	6			
11-Sep	7	Induction 23/24		
18-Sep	8	Teaching/Assessment 1.1		
25-Sep	9	Teaching/Assessment 1.2		
02 Oct	10	Teaching/Assessment 1.3		
09 Oct	11	Teaching/Assessment 1.4		
16 Oct	12	Teaching/Assessment 1.5		School holidays
23 Oct	13	Teaching/Assessment 1.6		School holidays
30-Oct	14	Teaching/Assessment 1.7		
06-Nov	15	Teaching/Assessment 1.8		
13-Nov	16	Teaching/Assessment 1.9		
20-Nov	17	Teaching/Assessment 1.10		
27-Nov	18	Teaching/Assessment 1.11		
04-Dec	19	Teaching/Assessment 1.12		
11-Dec	20	Teaching/Assessment 1.13		
18-Dec	21	Post-assessment marking/Examiners' meetings 1		End 22
25-Dec	22	Winter Break		Holiday
01-Jan	23	Winter Break		Holiday
08-Jan	24	Post-assessment marking/Examiners' meetings 2		
15-Jan	25	Post-assessment marking//Examiners' meetings 3 Results deadline: 19 Jan Induction Week		
22-Jan	26	Teaching/Assessment 2.1		
29-Jan	27	Teaching/Assessment 2.2		
05-Feb	28	Teaching/Assessment 2.3		
12-Feb	29	Teaching /Assessment 2.4		
19-Feb	30	Teaching/Assessment 2.5		
26-Feb	31	Teaching/Assessment 2.6		
04-Mar	32	Teaching/Assessment 2.7		
11-Mar	33	Teaching/Assessment 2.8		
18-Mar	34	Teaching/Assessment 2.9		
25-Mar	35	Teaching/Assessment 2.10		End 28 March
01-Apr	36	Spring Break		Holiday
08-Apr	37	Spring Break		Holiday
15-Apr	38	Spring Break		

Commented [MDG1]: The Spring Break could be brought forward by one week to address feedback from Senate regarding the issue of an 'orphan teaching week' after the Spring break.

² Qatar teaching would be in the same weeks, but begin the day before, on the Sunday.

³ The table includes illustrative information on PGT summer teaching. At present precise dates vary by School.

22-Apr	39	Teaching/Assessment 2.11		
29-Apr	40	Teaching/Assessment 2.12		
06-May	41	Teaching/Assessment 2.13		
13-May	42	Post-assessment marking/Examiners' meetings 1		
20-May	43	Post-assessment marking/Examiners' meetings 2		
27-May	44	Post-assessment marking/Examiners' meetings 3 Results deadline: 31 May	Week 1	
03-Jun	45		Week 2	
10-Jun	46		Week 3	
17-Jun	47	Graduations	Week 4	
24-Jun	48		Week 5	
01-Jul	49	UG Resits ⁴	Week 6	End 5 July
08-Jul	50	UG Resits	Week 7	
15-Jul	51	Post-resits marking/Examiners' meetings 1	Week 8	
22-Jul	52	Post-resits marking/Examiners' meetings 2 Results deadline: 26 Jul	Week 9	
29-Jul	1		Week 10	
05-Aug	2		Week 11	
12-Aug	3		Week 12	
19-Aug	4			Start 20-Aug

Commented [MDG2]: Eid Al-Fitr falls on 21-22 April

Commented [MDG3]: Eid Al-Adha falls on 28-29 June

⁴ The timing of resit examinations for PGT programmes is determined by individual Schools

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

NSS STEERING GROUP

NSS RESULTS – DISSEMINATION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The paper outlines a plan for the dissemination of the NSS 2022 results once they are released on Wednesday 6 th July 2022 as well as the subsequent next steps following the results being released.
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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

The NSS Steering Group is invited to consider the plans for the dissemination of data relating the NSS 2022 results and the subsequent outline of the next steps.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The NSS 2022 results are expected to be released to the NSS Results Portal at 0930 on Wednesday 6th July 2022. Staff from the Data Team within the Directorate of Planning will provide immediate confirmation of the headline results for the University of Aberdeen and will produce reports to analyse the data at various levels to be discussed at various appropriate committees in a timely fashion.

5. NSS RESULTS DISSEMINATION AND NEXT STEPS PLAN

Date	Action	Responsible
6 th July 2022	<p>Receive and Communicate NSS results (0930) Immediate HEADLINE results to be communicated by Planning to RT/AB/HS/KL & ER Comms team. Headline items to include Overall Satisfaction percentage and rank, including change from previous year for both.</p> <p>ER Comms team to draft message for appropriate media channels.</p>	Planning and External Relations
7 th July 2022	<p>Initial Analytical Report (draft) A draft analytical report on the initial NSS results to be made available to RT/AB for review and comment. The initial analytical report will include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall Satisfaction Headlines (5-year) - Score and Rank by NSS Scale (5-year) - Score/Rank/Quartile by NSS Scale & Question (current year) 	Planning and RT/AB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Score by NSS Scale & Question against Benchmark (current year) - Overall Satisfaction score by subject (CAH Level 1) against sector (current year) - Overall Satisfaction score by UOA School (current year) - Response Rates (5-year) 	
8 th July 2022	Initial Analytical Report (circulated) SMT (14/07/22), NSS Steering Group (13/07/22), Schools to receive analytical report by circulation (SMT will be a presented paper)	Planning
8 th July 2022	NSS Power BI Dashboard A Power BI dashboard updated with 2022 results to be made available to users.	Planning
13 th July 2022	Initial Analytical Report (discussion) Analytical report discussed at NSS Steering Group on 13 th July 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Themes identified for institutional action (no more than 2 and probably assessment ongoing) - Schools sent the template for action planning - Report to be also discussed at SSEC (date to be confirmed) 	Planning and NSS-SG / SSEC
By 31 st July 2022	Expanded Analytical Report (completion) An expanded version of the NSS Analytical Report to be made available. This will contain the elements listed for the initial version of the NSS Analytical Report plus the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic analyses: Age, Disability, Ethnicity, Gender, IMD - Qualitative analyses of students' comments - Optional bank questions - COVID questions 	Planning
By 8 th August 2022	Expanded Analytical Report (review) The expanded version of the NSS Analytical Report to be reviewed by RT prior to consideration by the NSS Steering Group. Once reviewed, the report will be then circulated to the NSS Steering Group, SMT and Schools.	RT
9 th August 2022	Expanded Analytical Report (discussion) The expanded analytical report discussed at NSS Steering Group on 13 th July 2022. Report will then be passed to SSEC and UEC for discussion in September.	Planning and NSS-SG
Date TBC (September 2022)	Schools complete action planning	Schools

		School Education Committees To SSEC
Date TBC (October 2022)	Directors of Education Forum to discuss results and good practice	AB (RT)
Date TBC (November 2022, January 2022)	Updates on progress with School action plans	School Education Committees (standing agenda)
Date TBC (November 2022, January 2022)	Updates on progress on institutional action plan	SSEC (feeding up to UEC) (standing agenda)
Nov/Dec	ASES results received and analytical report completed	Student Experience
End December	Update NSS action plan to include any additional actions from ASES	Schools School Education Committees

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) and Chris Souter, Head of Data and Business Intelligence (chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk).

25 May 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE NON-CONTINUATION INTERNAL DATA

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of the paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the 2020/21 full-time undergraduate non-continuation data as produced internally by the University.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	SSC UEC	TBC 23 June 2022

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

This paper is for information, discussion, and action planning for the Student Support Committee. Following the initial review and early consideration of actions, the updated paper will be presented to UEC for further consideration and comment.

The Student Support Committee will take responsibility for the development of an overall action plan for AY2022/23, identifying:

- Issues arising from the data
- Current practice that aims to address the issues
- Additional actions that aim to address the issues
- Responsible person(s) for each action
- Timelines
- Measurement of impact

It will be important to ensure full consideration of the different demographics as part of this work, ensuring that any overall actions are supported with targeted interventions where appropriate.

The paper will be circulated to Schools for discussion and action planning through their Education Committees, with reporting on actions and progress to the Student Support Committee.

4. DISCUSSION

This paper details and analyses the internal data for non-continuation throughout the full-time undergraduate student population at the University. The data is considered at University level and at School level for 2020/21 with reference to historical data where appropriate.

In addition to the overall position at University and School level, the non-continuation rate is considered for the following categories:

- by year of programme
- by domicile
- by gender

- by ethnicity
- by disability status

The key findings (outlined in detail within the paper that follows here) are:

Full-time undergraduate

- Overall non-continuation rate is 3.2%, up from 2.6% in 2019/20
- Highest non-continuation rates by School are:
 - Engineering (7.1%)
 - Natural and Computing Sciences (5.1%)
- Lowest non-continuation rates by School are:
 - Business School (1.6%)
 - Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (1.3%)
- Non-continuation rates are highest for year 1 of study compared to subsequent years
- Students from the rest of the UK (domicile) have the highest non-continuation rates
- There is a 1.6% gap between female and male students in favour of female students
- There is a 0.5% gap between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and White students in favour of BAME students (although differing picture across individual Schools)
- There is a 1.6% gap between non-disabled and students who identify with a disability in favour of non-disabled students

6. NEXT STEPS

The following steps will be taken:

- Meeting of SSC to consider the outcomes and propose actions as follows:
 - Identify issues arising from the data
 - Identify current practice that aims to address the issues
 - Identify additional actions that aim to address the issues
 - Identify responsible person(s) for each action
 - Identify timelines
 - Identify measurement of impact
- Take initial proposal to UEC for input (at this stage a verbal update on the discussion at SSC, along with the paper will enable the action plan to move forward).
- Take finalised action plan to the first SSC and UEC of the AY 2022/23.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor (Vice-Principal Education), ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk, and Chris Souter (Head of Data & Business Intelligence), chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk.

11 May 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation (internal data) 2022 Report

Analysis by the Directorate of Planning

5th May 2022

Background & Summary Methodology

Non-continuation is a retention measure used in higher education to monitor whether or not an undergraduate student qualifies or remains active in HE in the following academic year.

The data in this report is internal data that covers the full-time undergraduate population across all years of programmes and includes students from all domiciles – but excludes offshore provision and non-graduating / access pathways. A lower non-continuation rate is more desirable.

Specifically, “non-continuation” in this report refers to the actual percentage of undergraduate students registered in any academic year not:

- 1) successfully completing their studies; or
- 2) transferring to another institution; or
- 3) registering in the next academic year.

The approach in this report differs from the non-continuation (“T3”) measure as utilised by HESA as a performance indicator, which only considers UK-domiciled first degree entrants. A further difference from HESA-generated data is that HESA data has the capability to include all students who have enrolled at another UK HE institution in the following year whereas internal data on non-continuation is restricted to those who have formally transferred and notified the University. HESA data is used as the basis (in aggregated form) for the Continuation metric in the Guardian University Guide, which is also used for the School data files.

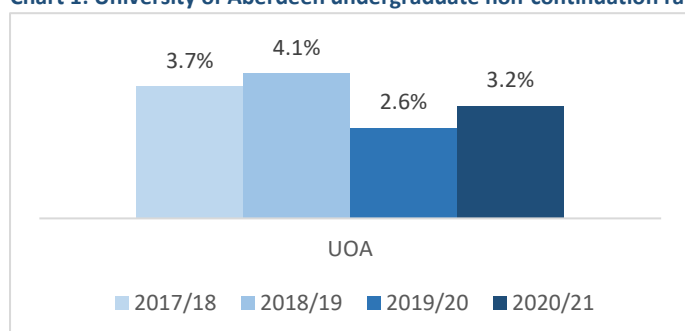
Please note that the academic year refers to the later academic year of comparison (e.g. 2020/21 data measures the proportion of 2019/20 undergraduates who are flagged as non-continuing in 2020/21).

University of Aberdeen: Headline Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation

Undergraduate Non-Continuation 2020/21

3.2%  (up from 2.6%)

Chart 1: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21

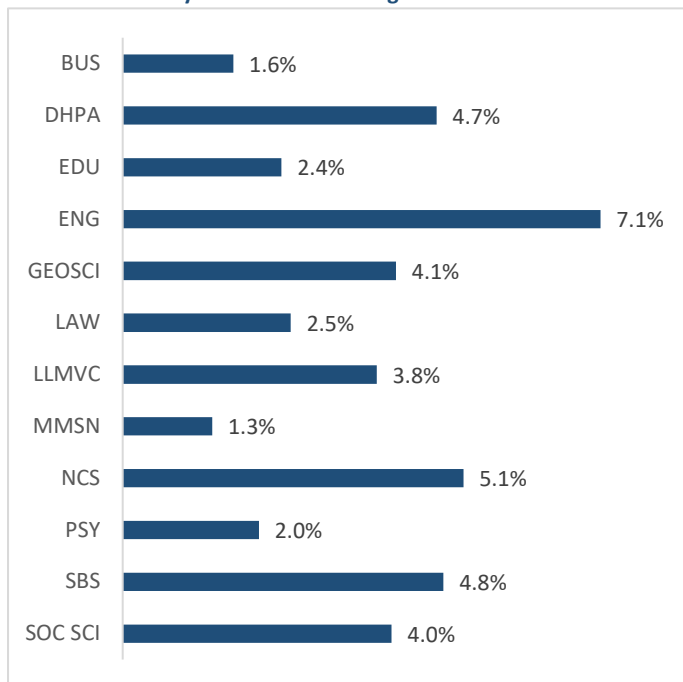


The University of Aberdeen non-continuation rate for 2020/21 is 3.2%, which represents a rise of 0.6% from 2019/20’s position of 2.6%.

However, this non-continuation rate is lower than the rate observed in 2017/18 and 2018/19, where the non-continuation rate was around 4%.

University of Aberdeen overall performance by School

Chart 2: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by School



At a School level the highest undergraduate non-continuation rate for 2020/21 is observed to be in Engineering at 7.1%, followed by Natural & Computing Sciences at 5.1%. All other Schools had a non-continuation rate less than 5%, with the Business School (1.6%) and Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition (1.3%) enjoying the lowest non-continuation rates in 2020/21.

When considering patterns across the four-year period as per Chart 3 below we can observe that the lowest non-continuation rates are to be found in MMSN, followed by the Business School – the latter enjoying significant improvement in non-continuation rate after 2018/19.

We can additionally observe that Engineering’s current rate of 7.1% is juxtaposed against what had previously been a much lower and improving non-continuation rate.

In addition to the rise in Engineering, there have also been slight rises in 2020/21 for the following Schools: DHPA, Geosciences, Law, MMSN, NCS and Social Science.

It can also be seen that there has been significant improvement in non-continuation rates in NCS after 2018/19 when a non-continuation rate of 10.1% was recorded for that School.

Chart 3: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by School

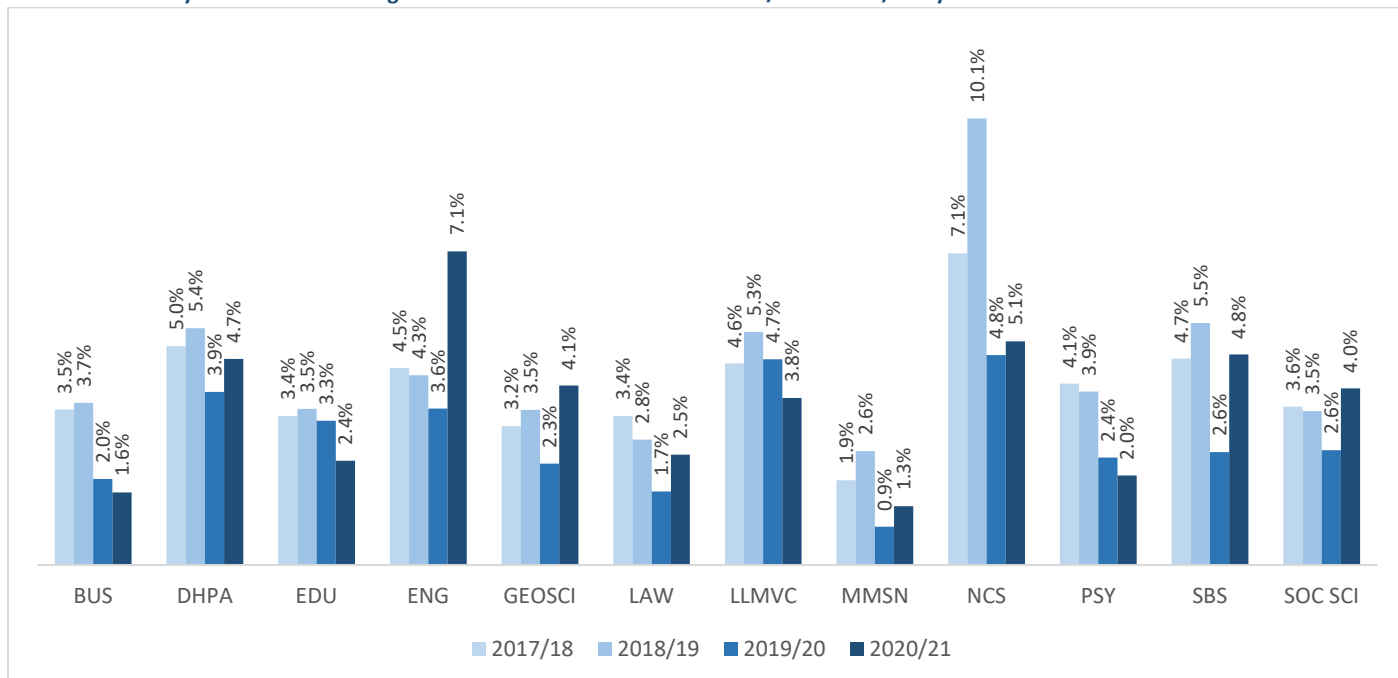
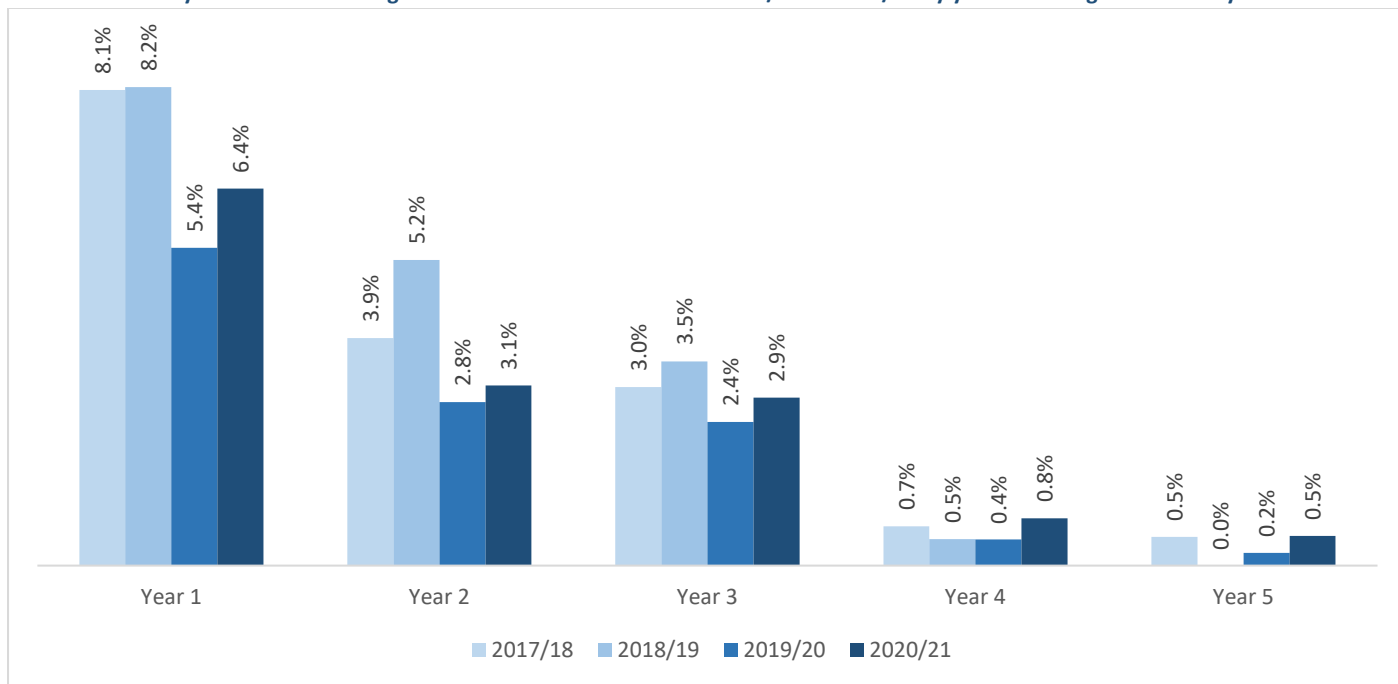


Chart 4: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by year of undergraduate study #1



Charts 4 (above) and 5 (below) demonstrate the difference in non-continuation rates by year of programme for undergraduate study, with the clear inference that non-continuation rates improve with each subsequent programme year. In 2017/18 and 2018/19 the undergraduate non-continuation rates for Year 1 of a programme was typically over 8% for the institution and that contrasts sharply with a non-continuation rate of around 0.5% for Year 4. There has been an improvement in Year 1 non-continuation rates thereafter to 5.4% in 2019/20 and 6.4% in 2020/21.

Chart 5: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by year of undergraduate study #2

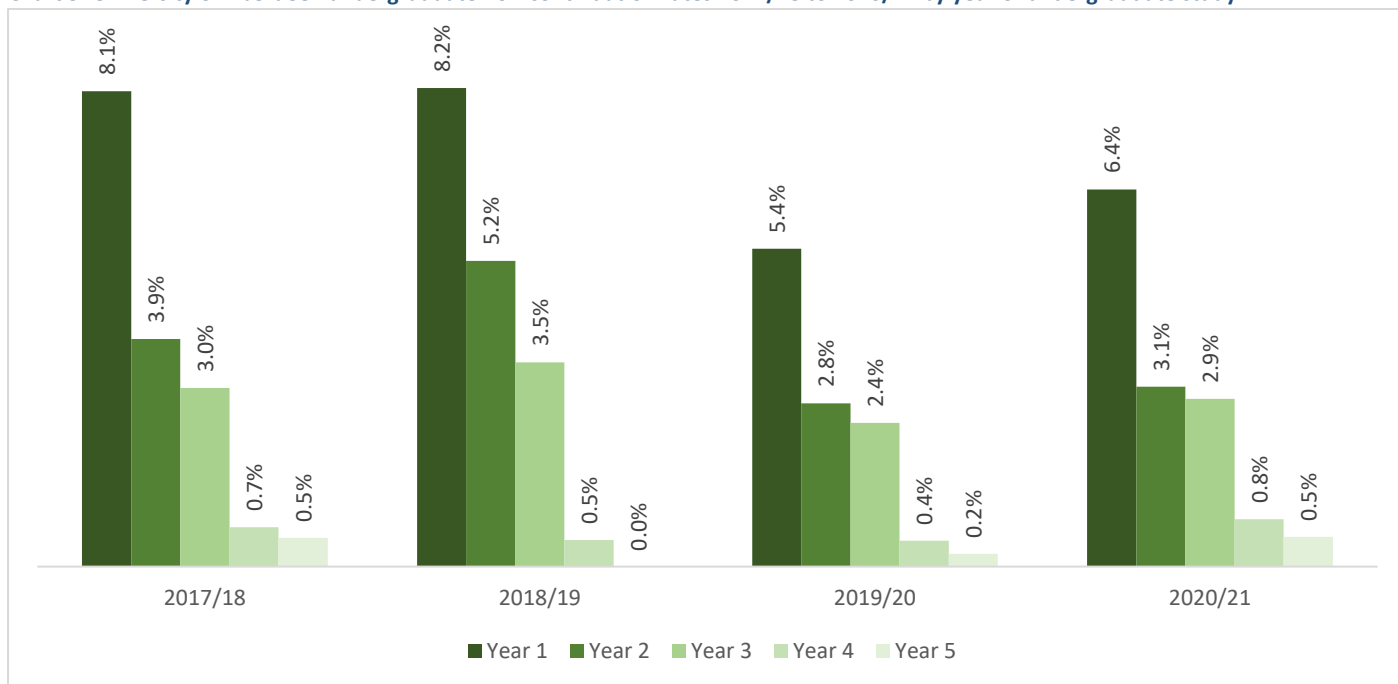


Chart 6: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by year of undergraduate study by School

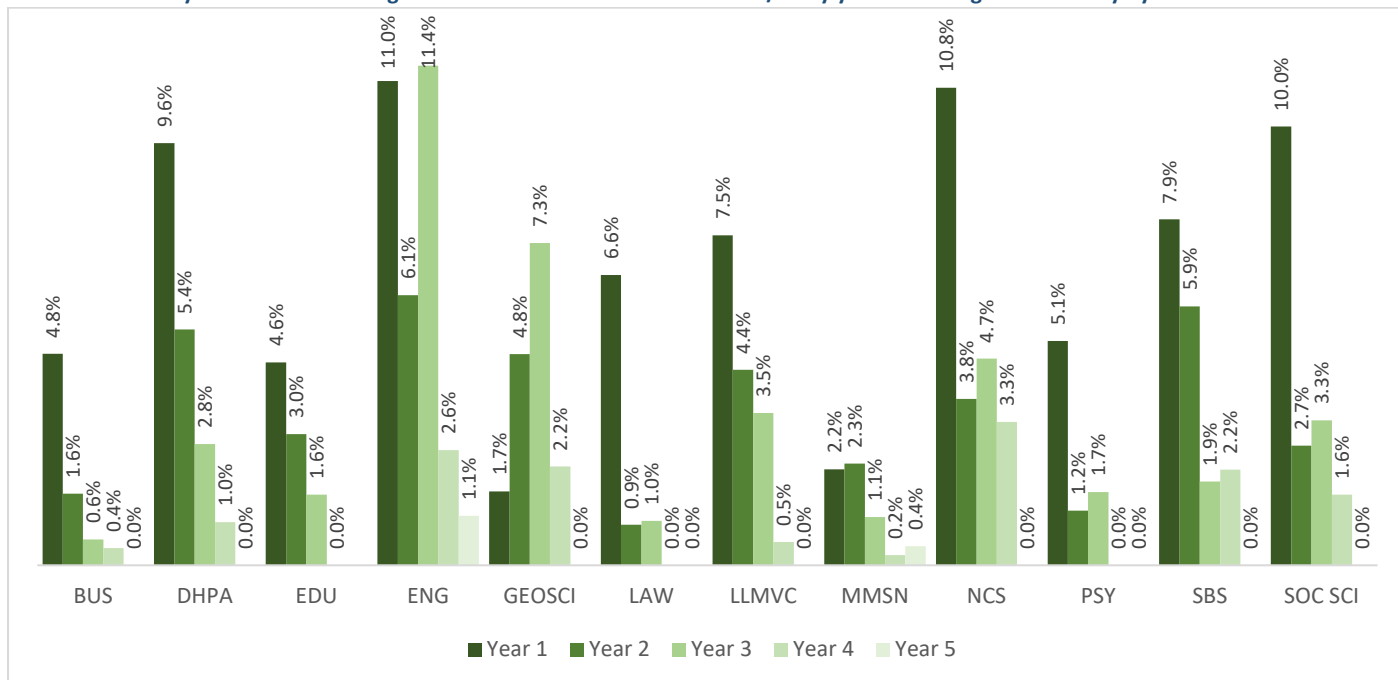
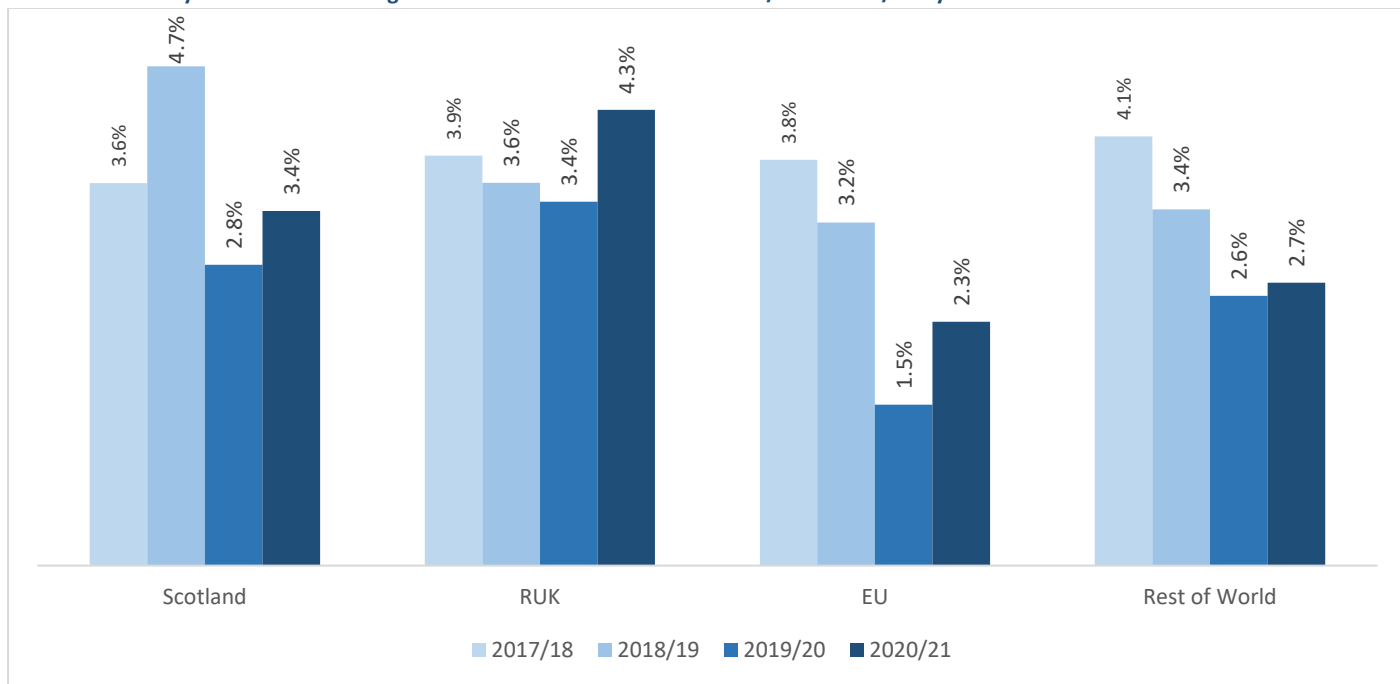


Chart 6, above, breaks down the 2020/21 non-continuation rates for year of undergraduate programme by School, and it can be seen that the highest non-continuation rates for Year 1 students are found in DHPA, Engineering, NCS and Social Science – where the non-continuation rates near or exceed 10%.

In sharp contrast, the lowest Year 1 non-continuation rate can be found in Geosciences at only 1.7%. However, the non-continuation rates for Years 2 and 3 rise significantly in Geosciences in a reverse of the pattern observed in most Schools and across the institution as a whole.

Chart 7: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student domicile #1



As can be seen in Charts 7 (above) and 8 (below), the non-continuation rates by domicile present a mixed picture, although for more recent years the non-continuation rate for students outwith the UK have generally lower non-continuation rates than their UK counterparts.

In 2019/20 and 2020/21, students from the rest of the UK have had the highest non-continuation rates among the four categories of students, having risen to 4.3% in 2020/21.

Chart 8: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student domicile #2

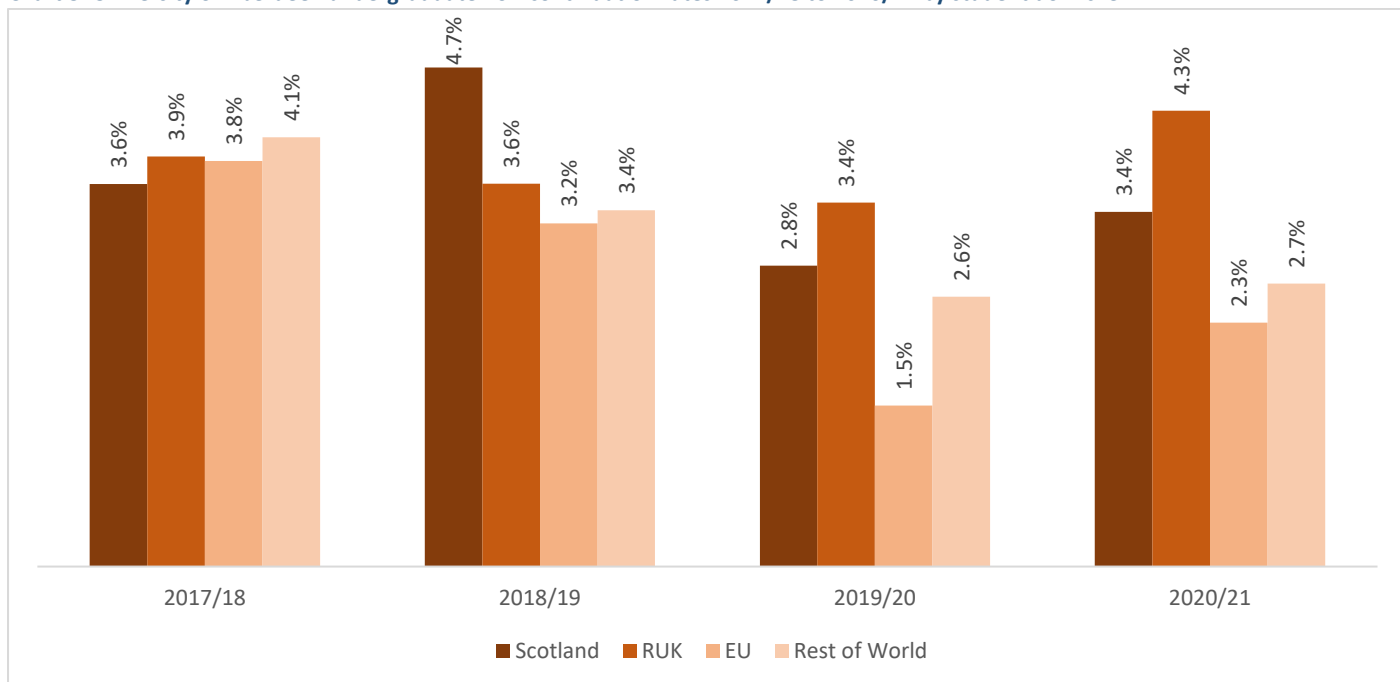


Chart 9: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by student domicile by School

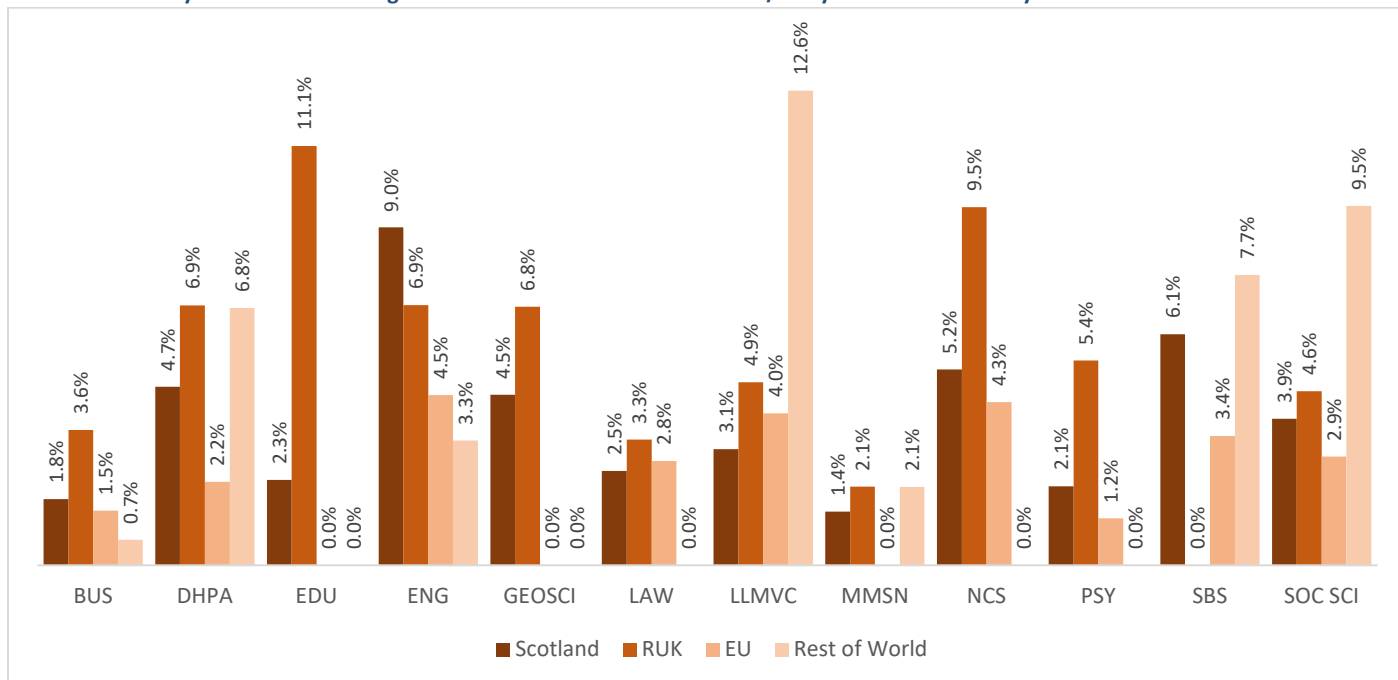
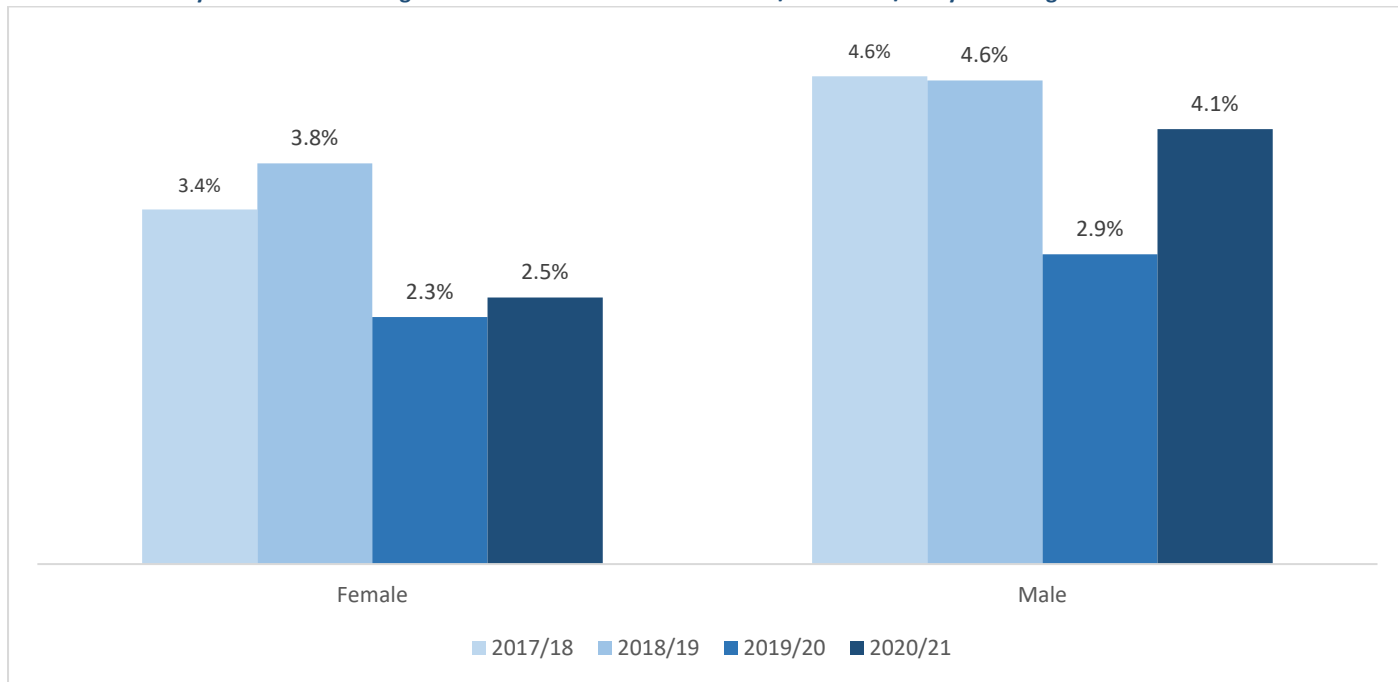


Chart 9, above, shows the variation between non-continuation rates with very low non-continuation rates for Scottish-domiciled students in MMSN (1.4%) and the Business School (1.8%). This contrasts with the very high non-continuation rate for Scottish-domiciled students in Engineering at 9.0%. Cross-referencing this against historical data for Engineering shows that this rate is an outlier, however, compared to the previous three years.

The high non-continuation rate observed for rest of the world students in LLMVC is also an outlier when compared to previous years.

A high non-continuation rate can also be observed for RUK students in Education, but this is due to low numbers of students in this category in the School (one student from a population of nine).

Chart 10: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student gender #1



Charts 10 (above) and 11 (below) show that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among male undergraduates than their female counterparts, with the 2020/21 gap of 1.6% the largest gap observed over the four years considered.

Chart 11: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student gender #2

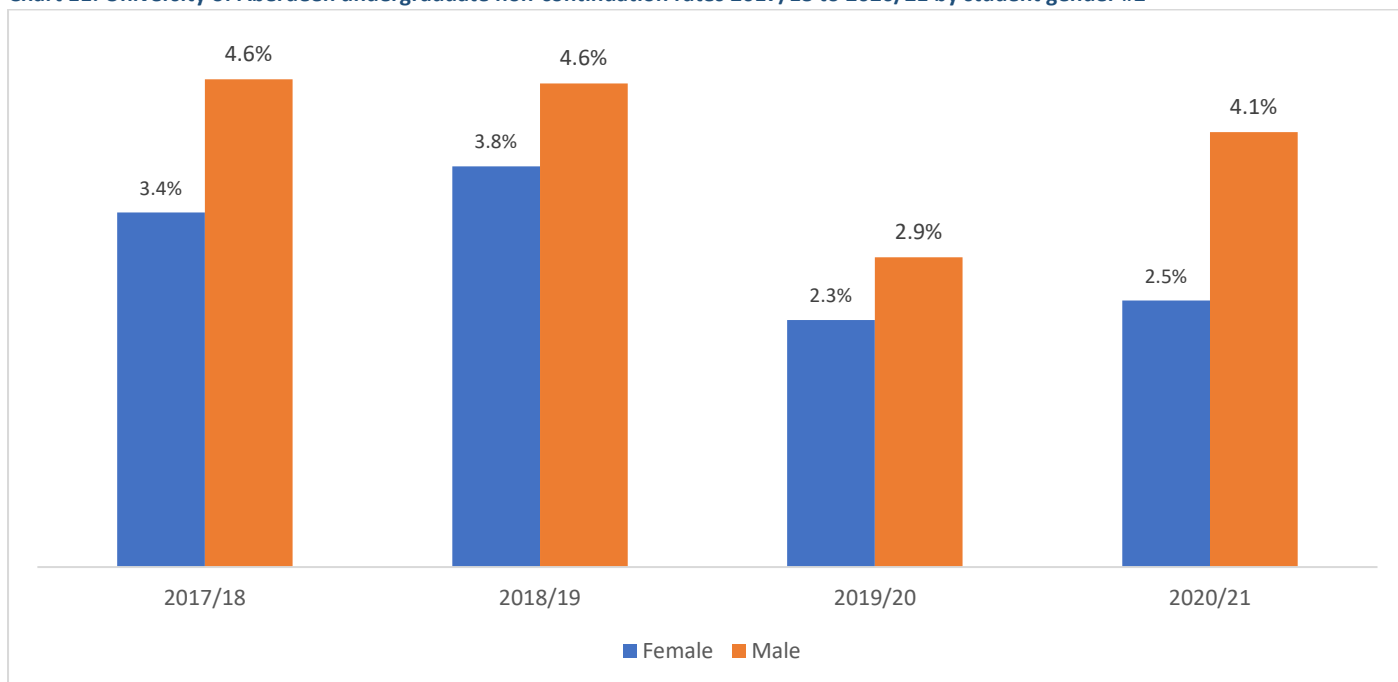


Chart 12: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by student gender by School

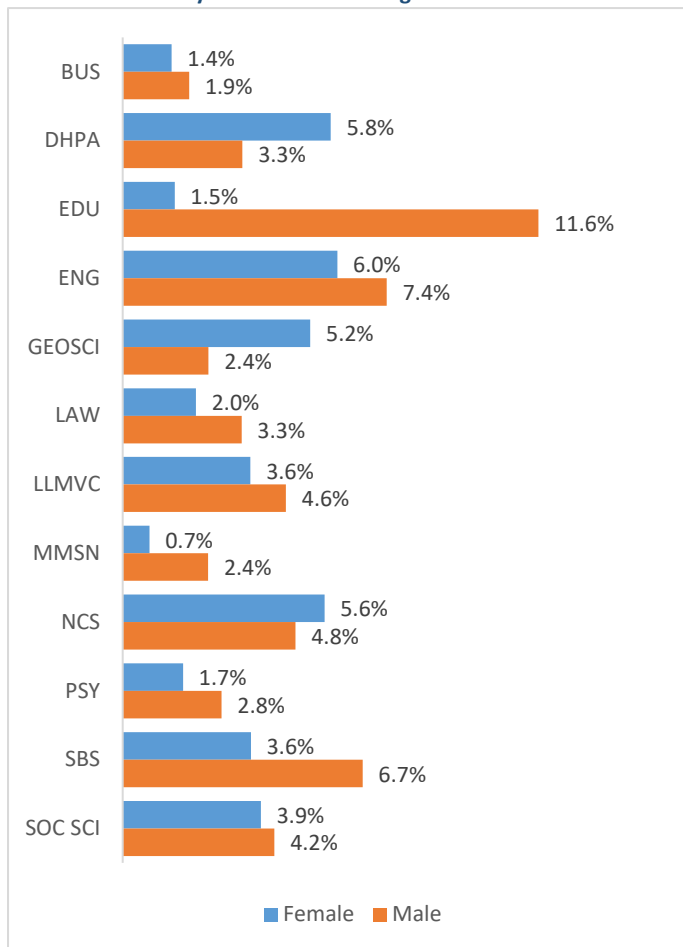
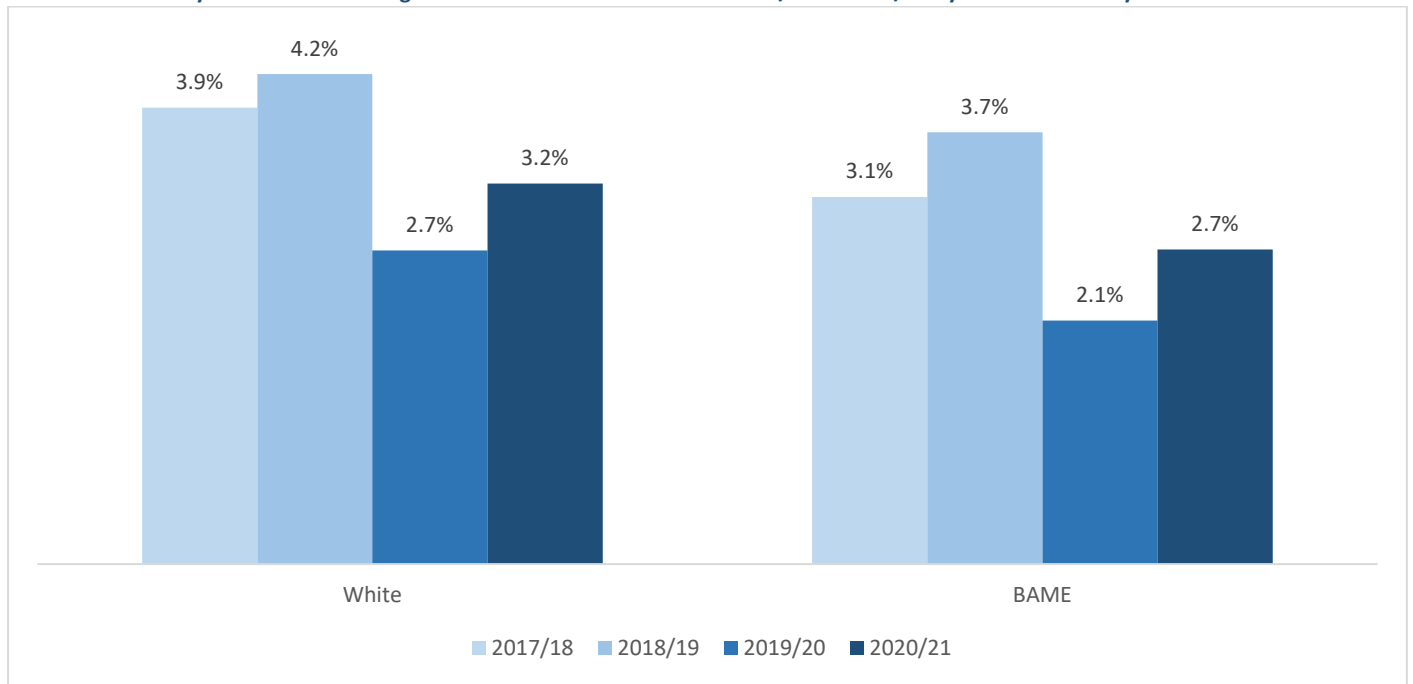


Chart 12 shows that the institutional pattern of female undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than male students is repeated across nine of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in Education where female undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 1.5% compared with a non-continuation rate of 11.6% for males – although it should be noted that the population of male undergraduates is much lower than female undergraduates in Education.

Three Schools reverse the institutional picture – with DHPA, Geosciences and NCS all showing higher rates of female non-continuation.

Historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance can be mixed over a number of years and not indicative of any defined pattern.

Chart 13: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student ethnicity #1



Charts 13 (above) and 14 (below) show that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among White undergraduates than their BAME counterparts, with gaps typically around 0.5% in each year.

Chart 14: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student ethnicity #2

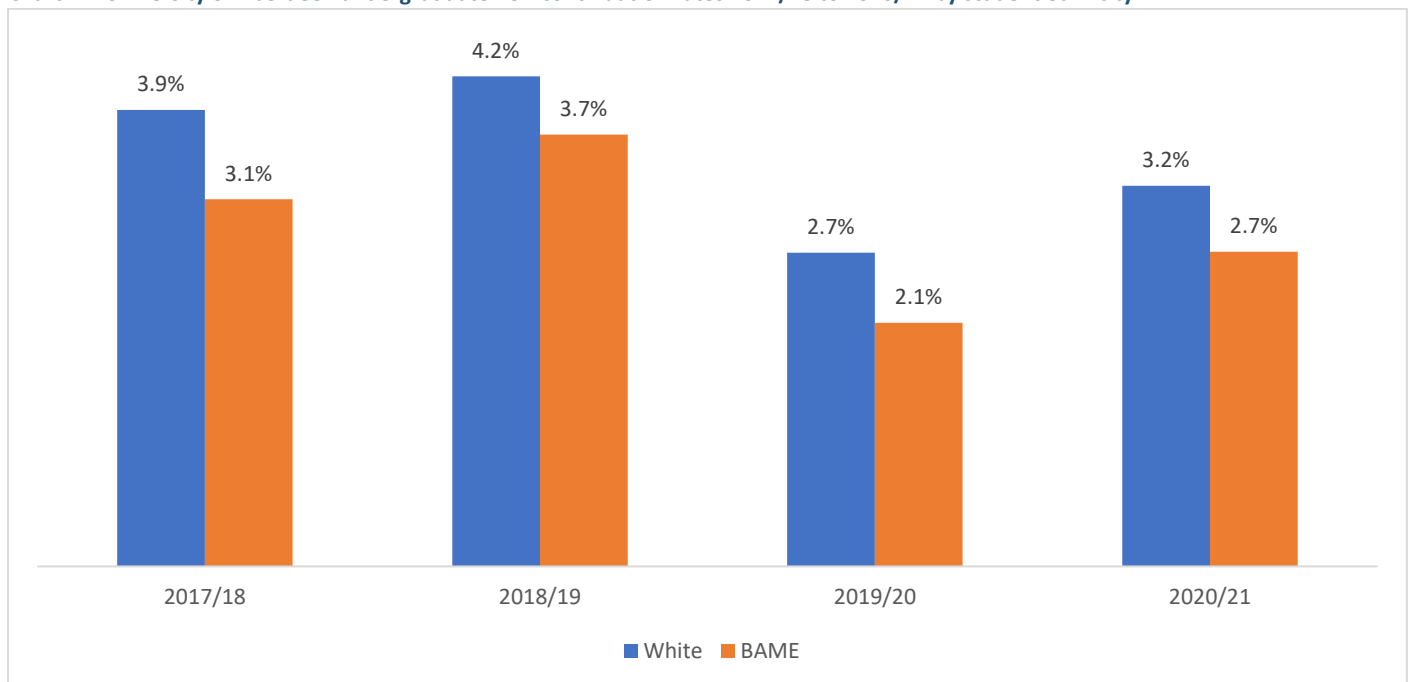


Chart 15: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by student ethnicity

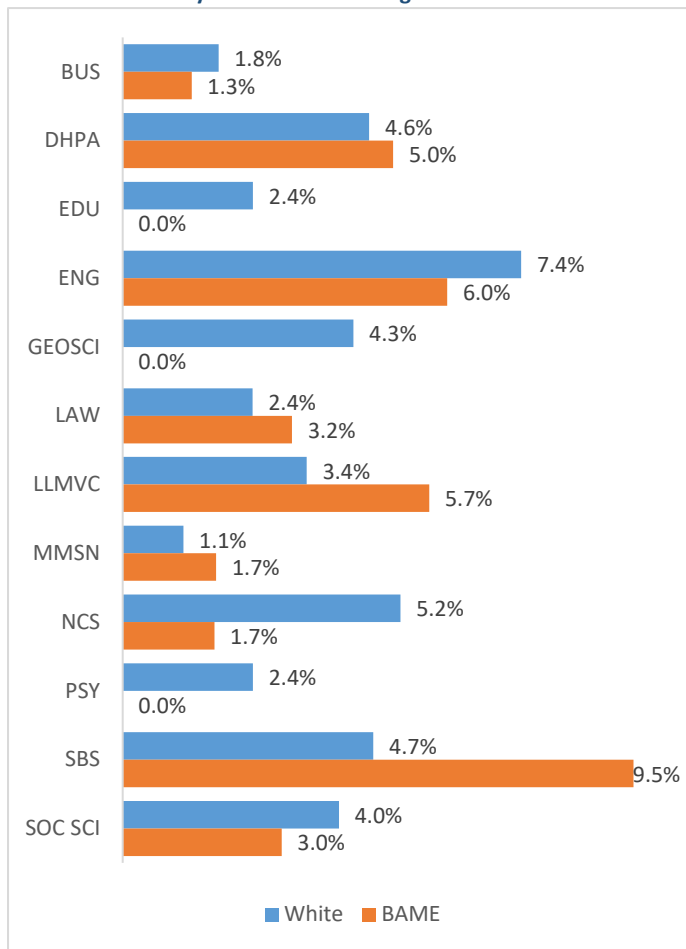
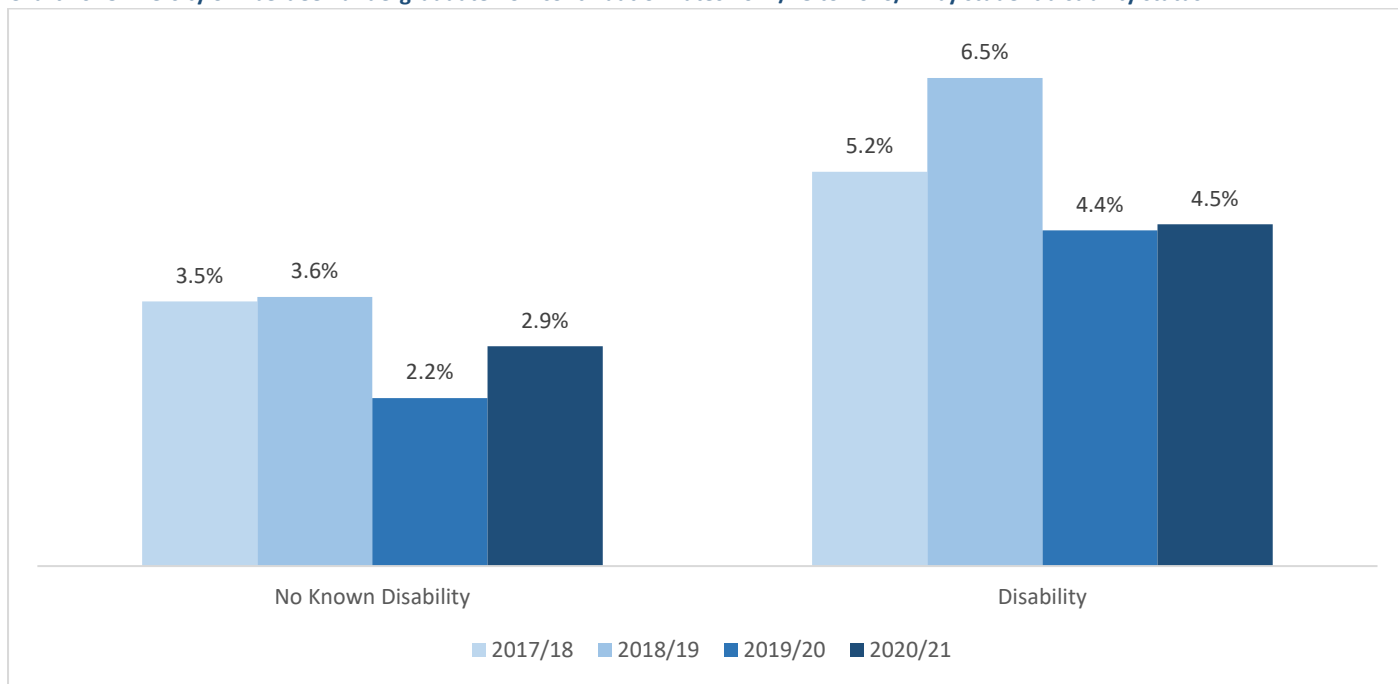


Chart 15 shows that the institutional pattern of BAME undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than White students is repeated across seven of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in NCS where BAME undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 1.7% compared with a non-continuation rate of 5.2% for White undergraduates.

Five Schools reverse the institutional picture – with DHPA, Law, LLMVC, MMSN and SBS all showing higher rates of BAME non-continuation. The high non-continuation rate in SBS is due to a small population in the BAME category in that School (two students from 21)

However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance can be mixed over a number of years and not indicative of any defined pattern.

Chart 16: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student disability status #1



Charts 16 (above) and 17 (below) show that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among undergraduates who indicate that they have a disability than their counterparts who do not declare any known disability, with gaps varying from year to year – but far greater than 1% in each case.

Chart 17: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2020/21 by student disability status #2

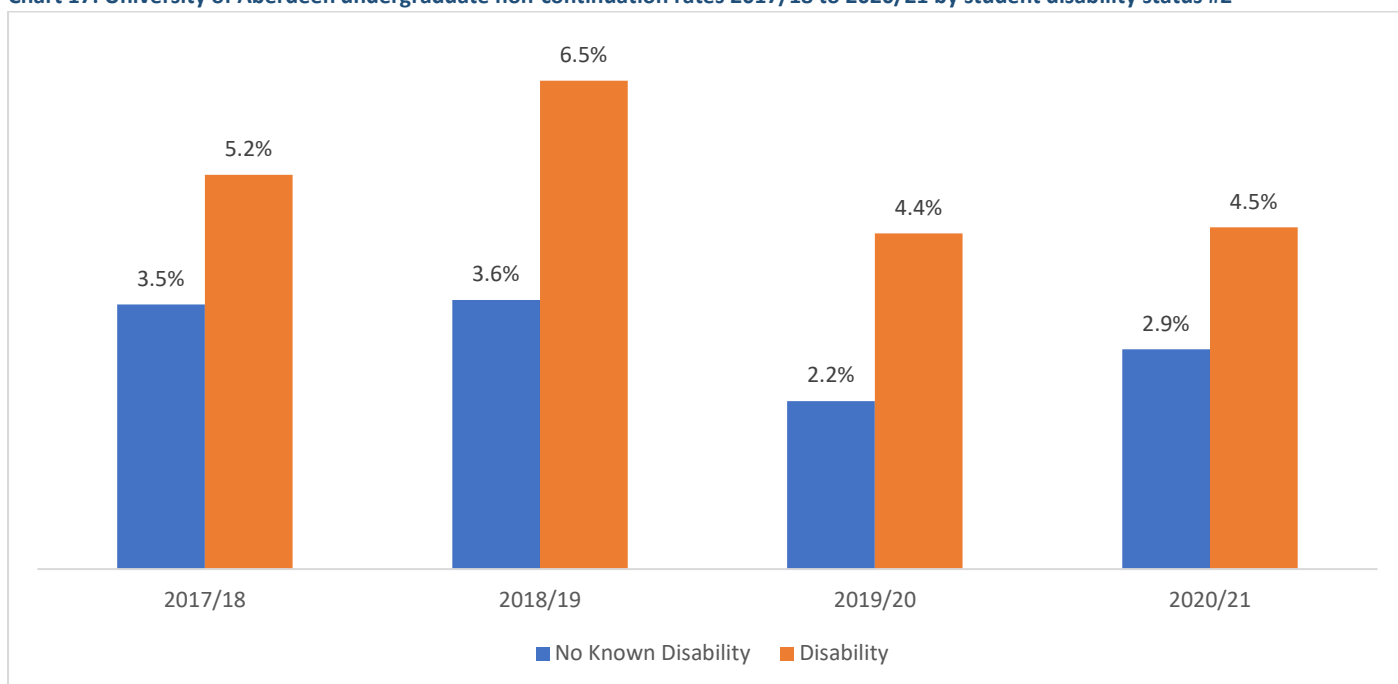


Chart 18: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2020/21 by student disability status

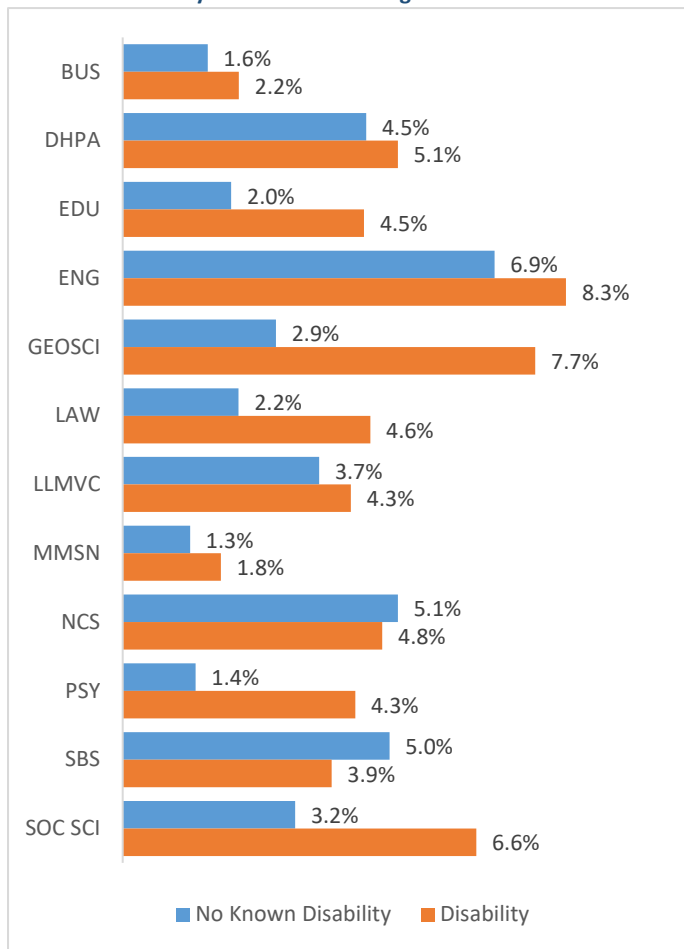


Chart 18 shows that the institutional pattern of non-disabled undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than disabled students is repeated across ten of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in Geosciences where non-disabled undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 2.9% compared with a non-continuation rate of 7.7% for disabled undergraduates.

Two Schools reverse the institutional picture – with NCS and SBS all showing higher rates of non-disabled undergraduate non-continuation.

However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance can be mixed over a number of years and not indicative of any defined pattern.

Chris Souter
 Head of Data and Business Intelligence
 Directorate of Planning

Full-time Undergraduate Retention 2020/21
data supplied by Student Records

	TOTAL	Year of Programme					Domicile				Gender			Ethnicity			Disability Status			
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Scotland	RUK	EU	Rest of World	Female	Male	Other	White	BAME	Unknown	No Known Disability	Disability	Not Known	
UoA	Continuing or Qualifying	8777	2068	2086	2140	2090	393	5239	998	1777	763	5140	3610	27	7073	1525	182	7267	1497	13
	Non-continuing	290	142	66	63	17	2	182	45	42	21	133	155	2	237	42	11	218	71	0
	% NC	3.2%	6.4%	3.1%	2.9%	0.8%	0.5%	3.4%	4.3%	2.3%	2.7%	2.5%	4.1%	6.9%	3.2%	2.7%	5.7%	2.9%	4.5%	0.0%
BUS	Continuing or Qualifying	1014	208	211	337	255	3	531	94	170	219	433	581	0	687	307	20	900	113	1
	Non-continuing	17	11	4	2	1	0	10	4	3	2	6	11	0	13	4	1	15	3	0
	% NC	1.6%	4.8%	1.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.0%	1.8%	3.6%	1.5%	0.7%	1.4%	1.9%	-	1.8%	1.3%	2.4%	1.6%	2.2%	0.0%
DHP	Continuing or Qualifying	489	104	141	141	101	1	312	61	89	27	267	217	5	457	19	12	358	130	2
	Non-continuing	24	11	8	4	1	0	16	5	2	2	17	8	0	22	1	1	17	7	0
	% NC	4.7%	9.6%	5.4%	2.8%	1.0%	0.0%	4.7%	6.9%	2.2%	6.8%	5.8%	3.3%	0.0%	4.6%	5.0%	7.7%	4.5%	5.1%	0.0%
EDU	Continuing or Qualifying	467	117	108	143	99	0	446	8	11	2	429	38	0	455	10	2	403	64	0
	Non-continuing	24	6	3	2	0	0	10	1	0	0	6	5	0	11	0	0	8	3	0
	% NC	2.4%	4.6%	3.0%	1.6%	0.0%	-	2.3%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	11.6%	0.0%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	4.5%	-
ENG	Continuing or Qualifying	769	178	153	164	186	88	417	108	127	117	141	627	1	511	233	25	658	111	25
	Non-continuing	59	22	10	21	5	1	41	8	6	4	9	50	0	41	15	3	49	10	3
	% NC	7.1%	11.0%	6.1%	11.4%	2.6%	1.1%	9.0%	6.9%	4.5%	3.3%	6.0%	7.4%	0.0%	7.4%	6.0%	10.7%	6.9%	8.3%	10.7%
GEOSCI	Continuing or Qualifying	247	59	60	63	65	1	169	34	36	9	145	102	1	234	11	3	187	60	3
	Non-continuing	11	1	3	5	2	0	8	3	0	0	8	3	0	11	0	0	6	5	0
	% NC	4.1%	1.7%	4.8%	7.3%	2.2%	0.0%	4.5%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	2.4%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	7.7%	0.0%
LAW	Continuing or Qualifying	894	262	269	196	153	15	625	131	88	51	575	320	0	726	153	16	770	124	0
	Non-continuing	23	19	3	2	0	0	16	5	3	0	12	11	0	18	5	0	17	6	0
	% NC	2.5%	6.6%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	3.3%	2.8%	0.0%	2.0%	3.3%	-	2.4%	3.2%	0.0%	2.2%	4.6%	-
LLMVC	Continuing or Qualifying	728	169	162	181	189	28	478	59	167	24	526	192	10	666	50	12	570	158	0
	Non-continuing	29	14	8	7	1	0	15	3	7	4	20	9	0	24	3	2	22	7	0
	% NC	3.8%	7.5%	4.4%	3.5%	0.5%	0.0%	3.1%	4.9%	4.0%	12.6%	3.6%	4.6%	0.0%	3.4%	5.7%	14.1%	3.7%	4.3%	-
MMSN	Continuing or Qualifying	1849	404	423	361	433	228	1042	281	337	188	1191	654	4	1312	507	33	1573	268	33
	Non-continuing	25	9	10	4	1	1	15	6	0	4	9	16	0	15	9	0	20	5	0
	% NC	1.3%	2.2%	2.3%	1.1%	0.2%	0.4%	1.4%	2.1%	0.0%	2.1%	0.7%	2.4%	0.0%	1.1%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%	1.8%	0.0%
NCS	Continuing or Qualifying	476	123	115	102	119	18	219	48	188	22	151	325	1	403	58	16	398	79	16
	Non-continuing	26	15	5	5	4	0	12	5	9	0	9	17	0	22	1	3	22	4	3
	% NC	5.1%	10.8%	3.8%	4.7%	3.3%	0.0%	5.2%	9.5%	4.3%	0.0%	5.6%	4.8%	0.0%	5.2%	1.7%	13.5%	5.1%	4.8%	13.5%
PSY	Continuing or Qualifying	700	180	172	158	185	4	351	70	239	41	564	135	1	583	93	23	544	155	23
	Non-continuing	15	10	2	3	0	0	8	4	3	0	10	4	1	15	0	0	8	7	0
	% NC	2.0%	5.1%	1.2%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	5.4%	1.2%	0.0%	1.7%	2.8%	42.9%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	4.3%	0.0%
SBS	Continuing or Qualifying	438	129	112	103	90	4	230	43	141	24	296	139	3	408	19	11	363	74	1
	Non-continuing	22	11	7	2	2	0	15	0	5	2	11	10	1	20	2	0	19	3	0
	% NC	4.8%	7.9%	5.9%	1.9%	2.2%	0.0%	6.1%	0.0%	3.4%	7.7%	3.6%	6.7%	25.0%	4.7%	9.5%	0.0%	5.0%	3.9%	0.0%
SOC SCI	Continuing or Qualifying	706	136	161	191	215	4	421	62	186	38	423	282	1	631	66	10	542	163	1
	Non-continuing	30	15	5	7	4	0	17	3	6	4	17	13	0	27	2	1	18	12	0
	% NC	4.0%	10.0%	2.7%	3.3%	1.6%	0.0%	3.9%	4.6%	2.9%	9.5%	3.9%	4.2%	0.0%	4.0%	3.0%	9.5%	3.2%	6.6%	0.0%

NOTE: Student data is rounded to whole numbers for clarity of display, although percentages are calculated using the underlying full value.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

INITIAL UPDATE FROM STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE ON ACTIONS REGARDING CONTINUATION AND WITHDRAWAL**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper shares the responses and plans of Student Support Committee (SSC) to

- a paper on Non-Continuation Internal Data (considered by SSC in May 22)
- a paper on Student Withdrawals Report (considered by SSC in February and March 22)
- University of Aberdeen’s Widening Access Audit Report (PwC, 2022, considered by SSC in 19 May 22).

University Education Committee is invited to **note** this paper and **to provide comment**.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 Supporting to students to fulfil their potential and make the most of their time at the University of Aberdeen is a priority for the University. The best path for each student can be different, however it is essential that the University takes steps to remove barriers which restrict the students in continuing with their studies and that it provides support to reduce, and if possible remove, the prospects of students considering that leaving the University is the best path for them.

3.2 Two key data sets and an external Audit report provide a valuable base to consider further action. These were analysed and recommended actions are set out in them and in respect of them, at meetings of SSC. These are now summarised for completeness.

3.2.1 “Full Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation Internal Data” SSC/190522/007 considered by SSC on 19 May 22. This considered students who have withdrawn *and* what happens to them after, i.e. whether they completed their studies, whether they came back to University in the following year, whether they moved to another university.

3.2.1.1 SSC noted that the paper provides that SSC is to be responsible for developing an overall action plan for AY2022/3, identifying issues which arise from the data, current practice that aims to address the, and additional actions which aim to address them. Regard is to

be had to particular characteristics, demographics and Schools which seem to warrant targeting and specific interventions will be considered.

3.2.2 “Student Withdrawals Report” (SSC/030222/008/ SSC/210322/004 considered by SSC on 3 February and 21 March 22, minutes at SSC/210322/002 and SSC/190522/002). This analysed UG and PGT withdrawals on a monthly basis from September to December 21 compared to the same time period in 2020/21 and 2019/20. It is presented as both an absolute full person equivalent and as a percentage of the registered student population for that category by School and by reason for withdrawal provided on the withdrawal form. This report does not include data available on whether or not students return to the University.

3.2.2.1 The paper notes that there is to be Monthly monitoring with 3 monthly reports to the Student Support Committee to inform institutional and School action planning and with the Institutional action plan to be developed in the second half-session. The paper notes that the Student Support Committee will explore ways in which the ‘ambiguous’ reasons for leaving can be explored with students to more fully understand their reasons for leaving. This paper noted that other areas that may be included in the institutional action plan include (but are not limited to): exploration of early warning signs (e.g. through learning analytics); enhanced approach to the personal tutor system arising from the review of the personal tutor role; review of communications on support for students. Future areas of consideration for monitoring will be around protected characteristics related to gender, ethnicity and disability. The paper notes that it is anticipated that this will be available later in this academic year, and that this will also support other initiatives such as the Race Equality Charter application. The paper notes that there will be Access to PowerBI for Schools so that they can monitor student withdrawals on a monthly basis.

3.2.2.2 SSC discussed the withdrawals paper on 3 February regarding follow up on issues for a particular PGT cohort, the Resilient Learning Communities Community of Practice, ongoing work of Task and Finish Groups regarding Monitoring, Absence and Engagement and peer TEAM groups. On 21 March SSC discussed, in addition to the points previously made increasing awareness of the suspension/taking a break process, the extent of availability of support over the summer, work to make students aware of different paths, the value of reminding students of School contact points, support through SRAs, how continue to raise awareness of forms of support (such as Student Support and Student Experience) and the possibility of a full mapping of the student journey, support around the readmission process Task and Finish Groups regarding Monitoring, Absence and Engagement and peer TEAM groups.

3.2.3 University of Aberdeen Widening Access Audit Report (PwC, 2022), considered by SSC on 19 May 22. The report scope included support for students in their journey towards University and also the first 5 weeks of term and student withdrawal.

3.2.3.1 The Widening Access Audit report, which had a focus on withdrawals in the first five weeks of study, noted the detailed consideration at SSC of the withdrawals data. The Audit report notes that the University has not yet developed a documented action plan, including mapping of the existing key activities to support students who may withdraw and arising new actions in response to the data. It considers that the action plan should include actions at an institutional level and that as the results differ at a School level, good practice would be to also develop an approach to direct school level consideration with a mechanism to determine a threshold for schools to also provide action plans.

3.2.3.2 The Widening Access Audit report notes that the University intends that there will be more data in protected characteristics in withdrawal reports from May 22, (action by Director of Planning and the Director of Academic Services/Student Registry). The Widening Access Audit notes that University's annual planning process requires Schools to reflect on data and currently includes non-continuation and that this could be expanded to include direct response to the withdrawal data and the annual non-continuation report in institutional and School action plans and a possible 'Student Journey' approach in AY 22/23, with leadership by the VP Education/ Director of Academic Services by December 22.

4. SSC ACTION

- 4.1 Building on the points made in 3.2.1.1, SSC has established a working group with colleagues from Schools (academics and professional services), Qatar and central professional services to lead SSC's the responses to the Continuation paper. We will invite an AUSA colleague to join. Reflecting 3.2.3.1 and 2, this group is also considering the Withdrawal paper. This Working Group met on 30 May and 15 June 2022 and a channel has been set up on the SSC TEAM site.
- 4.2 The data and reports do not engage with AFG/Qatar however it is important to have regard to the experience of these students and to the support provided.
- 4.3 Reflecting the data in the continuation paper, the focus will be on disabled students, BAME students (with some variety across schools), RUK students, some schools (with lower continuation in Engineering and NCS – although there is valuable nuance in the data and higher in MMSN and Business – both of which have designed student progress roles), gender (with some variety across schools) and to students in their first year of study. We are in discussions with Planning colleagues regarding the possibly of establishing intersectionality/overlap between sets of characteristics to enable more specific responses to be considered.
- 4.4 Reflecting the continuation paper, this Working Group has considered issues, current practice, the need for new plans (including building on and drawing together the documents discussed above) and responsible persons. This is to continue and there is to be regard to timelines and measurement of impact.
- 4.5 The SSC working group noted some possible future action points, complementing those set up in 3.2.2.1, 3.2.2.2, 3.2.3.1 and 3.2.3.2. These are set out in Annex 1, very much as an initial suggestion. From this base, the working group considered that the most appropriate path forward was for there to be:
 - 4.5.1 An enhanced drawing together of the existing good practice across the University (Schools and professional services), including through School Education Committees
 - 4.5.2 A collaborative approach to developing and sharing new practice as needed across the University (Schools and central professional services), including through School Education Committees
 - 4.5.3 A collaborative approach to developing an institutional action plan (with some sections to be delivered by Schools and some by central professional services), including regarding evaluation and measurement of impact, with this to be finalised by SSEC

- 4.5.4 An increased role of the Resilient Learning Communities Community of Practice (which in the past was the University's Retention Task Force) in sharing good practice, in collaboration with their School Education Committees
- 4.5.5 A biannual reporting on action and progress to SSEC for all relevant groups (Schools, central professional services, Qatar/AFG)
- 4.5.6 An annual allocated meeting of the UEC at its UEC 2040 meetings for all relevant groups (Schools, central professional services, Qatar/AFG) to share details on progress made and to share practice).
- 4.6 The initial comments of UEC on 4.5 and Annex 1 are most welcome. Informal dialogue regarding draft plans building on the underlying data will then begin with Schools and other relevant communities, notably, in addition to those mentioned, the informal Inclusion and Readmission TEAMS. The working group will share its progress with the full SSC in late July.
- 4.7 Reflecting the continuation paper, the finalised action plan, making clear action to be taken in School and at institutional level, will be considered at SSEC on 22 September 22 and UEC on 10 October 22. This work will also intersect with the Widening Access Vision led out of Student Recruitment Committee, Access and Articulation Committee, UEC and SSE. This work could also intersect with a planned data informed action plan in relation to progression, degree classification and employability in relation to particular student groups led out of UEC, SSEC and Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee. This builds in part on a paper on Degree Classification (SSC/190522/006, notably 6.1), a fuller version of which was considered at Senate on 11 May 2022 (SEN 21:40, notably 5.3 and 6.1).

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Abbe Brown, Dean for Student Support (abbe.brown@abdn.ac.uk).

June 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Annex 1

Activity	Responsible	Timing	Link with other document if relevant	Measure impact/Comment
Existing				
Encouraging student seek support early on, website, messaging about meanings of success				
Script to provide support				
Transition/Bridging				

SRA support				
Qatar?				
MMSN practices				
Business practices				
CoP/RTF				
Readmission team – mapping process, school and central				Recent focus on PGT and medical leave
Hardship fund				
Student Support and disability and resources on how this is provided				
Mentoring opportunities				
Peer support (TEAM, s4s)				
Evidence base work with specific WA groups				
Orientation, Schools and central, making clear expectations, exploring different languages				
Stressing need to check Uni email account - at the root of lots of issues				
Targeted contact points included careers for specific student groups and new internship opportunities				
Equality and Diversity events and contact with students re support over break				
New systems in place about arrival deadlines				
Will be more data in protected characteristics in withdrawal reports	Director of Planning and the Director of Academic Services/Student Registry.	From May 22	Widening Access report	
Future				
Consider live dashboard/ interim button to raise concern for non academic matters?				
Mapping full student journey?	VP Education/Director of Academic Services	Dec 22	Noted in Widening Access report	
Engagement with BAME Forum, RESG, student peer groups				
Continue to remind students of support				

available including through breaks – we don't close				
Outputs of Pastoral Review TFG				
Outputs of Monitoring, Absence, Engagement TFG				
Enhanced student support for specific groups [??]				
"parent" volunteers for estranged and care experienced				
Continue to grow student led groups				
Enhance transition/bridging/targeted focus				
Enhanced hardship fund				
Reflect on targeting academic support for particular groups, how and should it be				
School plans for academic writing support (also is SLS course) to provide support and to identify signs of lack of engagement				
Monitoring lack of engagement with Professional Skills course - levels are high, so lack of completion could be a sign for concern. Same also for central orientation?				
Encourage record keeping by staff to ensure support for students				
Encourage greater tracking of VLE engagement as sign support could be offered – without seeming punitive				
Follow up students who leave/take a break				
Greater emphasis on school escalation process				
Be even clearer on expectations before arrive - uni email, go to class				
Monthly monitoring with 3 monthly reports to the Student Support Committee			SWR (Student Withdrawals)	
Monthly monitoring to inform School action planning Access to PowerBI for Schools so can monitor			SWR (Student Withdrawals)	

student withdrawals on monthly basis.				
Student Support Committee will explore ways in which the 'ambiguous' reasons for leaving (can be explored with students to more fully understand their reasons for leaving.			SWR (Student Withdrawals)	"health, other, personal"
Set up institutional action plan to be informed by monthly monitoring and (but are not limited to): exploration of early warning signs (e.g. through learning analytics); enhanced approach to the personal tutor system arising from the review of the personal tutor role; review of communications on support for students. Future areas of consideration for monitoring will be around protected characteristics related to gender, ethnicity and disability. The paper notes that it is anticipated that this will be available later in this academic year, and that this will also support other initiatives such as the Race Equality Charter application			SWR (Student Withdrawals)	
Institutional action plan on withdrawals - develop an approach to direct school level consideration with a mechanism to determine a threshold for schools to provide action plan			Widening Access re withdrawal	
University's annual planning process requires Schools to reflect on data including continuation, could include direct response to the withdrawal data and the annual non-continuation report in institutional and School action plans	VP Education/ Director of Academic Services	December 22	Widening Access re withdrawal	
Establish overlap between sets of characteristics to enable more specific responses to be considered				Building on Continuation
Qatar?				

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

University Education Committee

Update on Task and Finish Group / Steering Group

Task And Finish Group:	Delivery of Education
TFG Lead(s):	Chris Collins / Kirsty Kiezebrink
Date:	23 June 2022

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

*This report provides an update on progress made by the **Delivery of Education** TFG since the last meeting of the Aberdeen 2040 University Education Committee. The report is the final report of the TFG who have now completed the tasks and have included a final report on a proposed strategy for taking forward the delivery of education work. Members of the Committee is asked to **discuss** the final report of the Delivery of Education TFG.*

2. GENERAL PROGRESS - ACTIVITY UPDATE

The TFG has:

- i. Developed and disseminated the principles for delivery of education for AY 22/23 and these have now moved into implementation and evaluation phase
- ii. Completed a sector wide review and internal consultation on the development of a framework to support the ongoing delivery of education within the context of Aberdeen 2040 strategy

3. ISSUES / CONSTRAINTS / AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

See attached final report of TFG

4. AREAS IMPACTING ON PROGRESS (IF ANY) AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS

none

5. NEXT STEPS FOR THE TFG

- i. This report concludes the work of this TFG

6. CONSULTATION PROCESS

N/A

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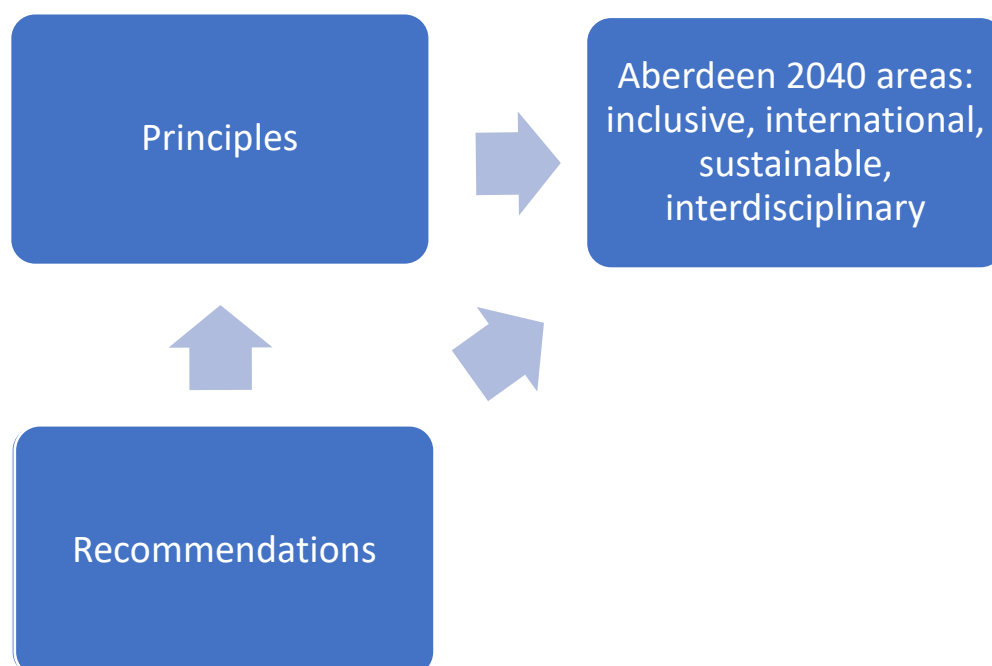
Introduction

Over the last 2 years we have seen an unprecedented focus on teaching, learning and assessment across the sector. We have experienced a rapid transition whilst living with the additional challenges we faced with dealing with a global pandemic, both at individual and societal levels. However, there have been many gains from these experiences and it is essential that we capitalise on these gains. We now have an opportunity to consider the next steps for both the short and longer terms. This report aims to solidify good practices used and lessons learnt throughout the pandemic. Linking to other ongoing university initiatives, such as Decolonising the Curriculum and the development of Graduate Attributes, the report also outlines the principles for education delivery at the University of Aberdeen for academic year 2022/23. The paper also makes recommendations for furthering not only the implementation of the principles but also the commitments of Aberdeen 2040.

The development of the principles and the recommendations is based on a review of internal and external evidence. The internal evidence comprises the Blended Learning Evaluation and the 2020/2021 ASES report. The external evidence may be grouped into two categories:

- the education strategies of a selected range of higher education institutions;
- reports published by sector bodies, such as Jisc and AdvanceHE, between 2020 and 2022.

Themes relating to the delivery of education were identified and followed up as necessary, through a wider literature review.



This paper is in two parts. Part 1 presents the agreed 2022/23 Principles for the Development of Education and sets out recommendations for future consideration. Part 2 comprises a fuller report on how educational delivery can meet the commitments of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy. It is structured around the strategy's four thematic areas: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable. Reflecting Aberdeen 2040, these are preceded in the report by a section titled Our Education.

Glossary of terms

ASES: Aberdeen Student Experience Survey which is used by the University to gather student feedback relating to a range of University services, facilities and activities every year.

Authentic assessment: testing knowledge and skills in realistic/contextualised ways.

Blended learning: the thoughtful integration of classroom onsite learning experiences with online learning experiences. provides a combination of face-to-face learning and digital activities and content that facilitate any time/any place learning.

Engagement: meaningful student participation in learning activities (synchronous or asynchronous; onsite or online).

Flexibility: in accessing learning material and providing multiple learning activities.

Mode of delivery: the place or space of learning (online, onsite or a mix of these).

NSS: National Student Survey is a high-profile annual survey of nearly half a million students across the UK. Through 27 core question, the NSS measures teaching on the course, learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources, learning community, student voice and overall satisfaction. Not all of these areas are relevant for the work of the Delivery of Education TFG,

Sticky campuses: digitally enabled spaces where students want to spend time even when they do not have formal learning sessions to attend.

Part 1

Principles for the Delivery of Education (AY 2022/23)

The Principles are intended to communicate our staff and students a vision of education delivery informed by Aberdeen 2040. The Principles both reflect and ensure the distinctiveness of education delivery at the University of Aberdeen, which is due to the promotion of an inclusive, sustainable, interdisciplinary and international learning community. The principles recognise that education at Aberdeen comprises much more than teaching materials and the imparting of knowledge; in addition, it has an essential role in providing students with authentic experiences.

The Principles' effectiveness and implementation must be monitored. In relation to their effectiveness, future work should consider defining appropriate performance indicators, such as student opinion on relevancy, assessment, and other factors, as evidenced in the NSS and/or ASES. In terms of monitoring implementation, potential indicators may be sought in annual course/programme reviews as well as relevant sections of NSS and ASES.

Principle 1: Nurture active learning

Active learning should involve both guided and independent learning and should be designed with the achievement of learning outcomes as a focus. Make the most effective use of in-person teaching, both in small groups and in the use of large spaces (e.g. lecture theatres) to bring groups together for active learning, community-building and to support student retention. Where appropriate, asynchronous delivery should be designed to enable students to gain the maximum benefit from the active learning opportunities offered in person.

Possible approaches:

- release of some content ahead of time (e.g. as bite-size recordings, preparatory readings);
- use of a flipped classroom approach to allow more interactive, problem-based learning;
- use of student-led teaching (e.g. allowing students to research a topic, and share it with peers);
- use of practical activities (labs / creative practice / field trips / real world explorations);
- ensuring that all teaching, learning and assessment expectations are communicated clearly to students, to support them to manage their learning journey.

Principle 2: Design in opportunities for community building

Provide opportunities for students to create connections with other students, with staff, and with others (e.g. employers, international partners) on campus and in the virtual learning environment.

Possible approaches:

- use of supported discussions;
- ensuring sufficient time is provided for students to interact with one another (e.g. icebreakers, think-pair-share activities);

- use of group work;
- active peer-to-peer and student-staff interactions;
- exploring opportunities for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL);
- use of the Virtual Learning Environment to promote interaction and collaborative learning outside the classroom;
- full class engagement in large spaces to promote sense of community.

Principle 3: Assessment should be authentic, building in integrity, and be efficient

Provide assessment that tests learning outcomes, is 'authentic' wherever appropriate (reflecting or recreating real-life situations and/or enabling students to demonstrate the applicability of their learning to various discipline contexts and scenarios), tests skills and thinking (rather than solely based on fact recall), and is streamlined to avoid over-assessment.

Possible approaches:

- use a variety of assessment approaches that allow application of knowledge (e.g. graded debates, creating resources for the public, preparing research proposals, creative outputs, reviews and summaries);
- working with employers or other stakeholders to design authentic assessments;
- digital submission as the preferred approach to submission where suitable to the format of the assessment;
- assessing each learning outcome once only to avoid over-assessment;
- embedding formative assessment to support student learning.

Principle 4: Provide timely and meaningful feedback

Provide feedback at an appropriate time for students to benefit from it, in accordance with the 3-week timeframe, focusing on developmental next steps that can be actioned by the student.

Possible approaches:

- use of peer feedback;
- use of automated feedback;
- use of individual or group feedback;
- use of alternative modes of feedback (e.g. audio, rubrics, annotation);
- use of feed-forward approaches to help aid development

Principle 5: Ensure accessibility and inclusivity

Provide teaching, learning and assessment that ensures that students are not disadvantaged or directly/indirectly discriminated against, with the aim of providing students with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Possible approaches:

- clear communication of all course expectations (e.g. assessment requirements, modes of delivery) at the outset;

- development of accessible and inclusive online content (with captioning);
- presenting information in multiple ways where appropriate;
- ensuring responsiveness to student needs as part of an approach that emphasises the student voice

Recommendations for further consideration

The following recommendations, reflecting effective existing practices and suggesting new ones, outline approaches that may enable both educators and students to achieve and maintain the Principles and benefit from them. It is important to note here that inclusion is a fundamental consideration within all of the recommendations below.

Recommendations in relation to students

1. Build student capacity for understanding authentic assessments as well as the feedback they receive.
2. Build capacity in students' digital skills (including the use of VLEs) as needed.
3. Make greater and more timely use of student feedback.
4. Be guided by the student voice to ensure the provision of appropriate support.
5. Support in-person and virtual exchange initiatives to support international student experiences.
6. Support students to develop good academic practices alongside a clear understanding of academic integrity.
7. Support international students to maximise opportunities and gains from their experience at Aberdeen University.
8. Alignment of assessment, learning outcomes, and employability skills/knowledge.

Recommendations in relation to staff

9. Develop teaching teams to promote Aberdeen 2040 commitments.
10. Develop initiatives, forums, projects and groups that enable staff to share effective education delivery practices.
11. Consider ways of sharing experiences with and learning from the wider sector.
12. Develop policies, projects and initiatives that provide time, training, funding and support for staff transitioning to an active learning and authentic assessment.
13. Consider ways of acknowledging and celebrating good education delivery practices.
14. Build capacity in staff pedagogical and digital skills, including the design of authentic assessment and feedback.

Recommendations in relation to students and staff

15. Curation of a safe environment where students and staff feel they can approach each other.

Recommendations in relation to physical campus

16. Consider accessibility, pedagogical needs, technology and learning outcomes in planning physical campus developments and strategies, to meet the demands of the increasing number and diversity of our student populations across campuses.
17. Consider how to enhance 'sticky' campus environments which include social spaces.
18. Consider effective and flexible use of campus space to promote inclusion and interdisciplinarity.

Recommendations in relation to digital

19. Ensure that the use of technology in learning is driven by pedagogy. Consider best use of the VLE to deliver student-centred, active pedagogies.
20. Consider ways of boosting engagement in blended and online learning environments through course design processes.
21. Develop the VLE beyond being a repository of learning content to become an essential and equal part of the student experience.
22. Develop the VLE to enable students to engage with their studies, their peers and their teachers further.
23. Ensure that the VLE is simple, streamlined and consistent across programmes and courses.

Part 2

1. Our education

*Our Education aims to be among the very best in the world, enabling our students to grow as independent learners, to achieve their full potential and succeed whatever their personal and social background, their mode of delivery and location, and to be equipped for global employment.
(Aberdeen 2040)*

1.1. Active pedagogical approaches

The employment of active and student-centred approaches promotes inclusivity in education because it recognises the diversity of students (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021). In addition, the pandemic further pulled these approaches and corresponding pedagogical practices into research focus (Salmi, 2020). The resultant body of literature further reinforced pre-pandemic research results testifying about the positive impact active and student-centred approaches can have on student engagement, attainment, satisfaction and retention (Delgado Kloos and Gutierrez, 2022; Dumulescu et al., 2021; Leijon et al., 2021; Rossi et al., 2021). The university's internal evidence also suggests that both staff and students recognise the benefits and are in favour of the employment of active and student-centred pedagogical practices such as flipped classroom, problem-based learning, collaborative, self-learning etc. (ASES, 2021; Kiezebrink, 2021). The employment of such pedagogical approaches also aligns with Aberdeen 2040 vision of our education.

a. Flipped classroom:

In a flipped classroom model, instructors do not teach the curriculum as such, but guide the students on their own learning path. It combines self-learning, peer learning and group learning. Students are required to independently review, through readings, videos, podcasts and simulations new material *before* attending class (asynchronously). However, the students are not expected to fully understand and assimilate the material through self-learning. Instead, they are introduced to new content prior class which provides teachers the opportunity to spend contact-time (be that online or onsite) on facilitating deeper student engagement by discussions, answering student questions, apply the knowledge via problem solving or any other interactive way.

b. Problem based learning:

This is a pedagogical method in which students learn about a topic and acquire competences by working in groups to solve open-ended problems. As they are confronted with a problem, students must take stock of the information, knowledge, and tools they must learn to be able to find a solution. During synchronous online or onsite teaching learners can work through problems together in real time, be provided with opportunities to apply concepts, collaborate, and get immediate feedback or answers to questions, all of which help to deepen learning (Price and Murnan, 2004).

c. Collaborative learning:

Collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach is composed of four practical elements: (i) strategically formed, permanent teams; (ii) readiness assurance through immediate feedback; (ii) application activities that promote critical thinking and team development; and (iv) peer evaluation (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021). Students work in small collaborative groups of 2-10 on (virtual) tables that coexist within larger class settings. They are able to collaborate and interact organically with each other, and to discuss work among themselves simultaneously as the class takes place. The tutor can see everyone and can join individual tables to facilitate discussions, answer questions or provide feedback. Students should also be provided with opportunities to interact out of the classroom. This approach can facilitate greater student engagement and interaction, individual accountability in a group learning setting and deep learning.

d. Self-learning:

Self-learning can be utilised in many ways, as a complement to online or onsite teaching or as a self-standing mode of learning. It can involve the use of (digital) resources available at the institution or on the internet to enhance their educational experience.

e. Community of Inquiry (CoI):

The CoI is a pedagogical approach that facilitates learning through cognitive, social and teaching presence (Fiock, 2020). Based on these elements, the following techniques have been recommended: encourage sharing experiences amongst students, inclusion of synchronous ways of communication, employment of social software such as wikis and blogs, and explicitly address the importance of peer interaction (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021).

f. Experiential:

Experiential learning, connecting theory to practice, increasing interest and engagement, and fostering specific skills (Owens et al., 2015), is one of the most powerful ways of learning and its consistent use is fundamental in certain disciplines. Indeed, the limited amount of exposure to practicals and laboratory sessions has been argued to negatively impact the consolidation of learning (Bashir et al., 2021). Likewise, since the gradual reopening of universities, interactive experiential learning has been perceived positively by students and staff alike (Jeffery et al., 2021).

1.2. Delivery mode: online, onsite or blended

The outlined pedagogical approaches and practices, on their own or in combination, can be facilitated via multiple modes of delivery, including face-to-face, online and blended. Evidence shows that each of these has a range of benefits (Barosevcic et al., 2021; Scottish Funding Council (SFC), 2021). In the post-pandemic and post-digital educational era, where the divide between digital and non-digital is no longer useful, blended learning emerged to be one the most useful mode of education delivery. This is because it offers the flexibility (in terms of accessing asynchronous sessions or other learning

resources) sought after by students and fosters the digital skills so key in future employment (Anthony et al., 2020; Future Learn, 2022). Similarly, the blended learning modality provided by our University in later stages of the pandemic was positively perceived by most students and staff (ASES, 2021; Kiezebrink, 2021).

Garrison and Kanuka (2004, p. 96) define blended learning as “the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences”. Blended learning seems to exist on a continuum in terms of the ratio of online and onsite elements. On one end of this scale can be the use of online resources in class. In the middle there may be a flipped classroom scenario where the dissemination of knowledge is done via pre-recorded lectures, videos, etc. which followed up by an onsite or online synchronous Q&A or practical session. On the other end of this continuum may be a scenario where online and onsite teaching is parallel and students onsite can seamlessly transition between the physical and the virtual learning environments whilst students online can also participate fully (Maguire et al., 2020). Whilst the latter scenario may be a vision to strive for as education technology develops, it is probably more helpful to focus on the thoughtfulness and meaningfulness of the blending which should be considered during the design process. Blended learning, much like any learning, must be aligned with learning outcomes and pedagogies (Loon, 2021).

1.3. Assessment and feedback

The pandemic provided an opportunity to look beyond traditional invigilated exams and essays. External evidence (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2020; Garrad-Cole et al., 2021; Future Learn, 2022) and internal evidence (ASES, 2021; Kiezebrink, 2021) suggest that the move towards authentic, continuous low-stakes or formative assessments were welcomed by students and staff alike. In particular, a report commissioned by the Office for Students (Maguire et al., 2020) recommends the dissection of learning elements into small, manageable chunks that can be continuously formatively assessed with a view towards summative assessment. The need for the use a wide variety of assessment methods (e.g., portfolios, collaborative assessments, open-book assessments) has also been noted (Salmi, 2020).

Additionally, using low stakes and formative assessment can provide opportunities for meaningful feedback so important for student learning. Evidence suggests (Barosevcic et al., 2021; Garrad-Cole et al., 2021) that useful feedback takes place early and frequently and requires actions from learners based on the outlined developmental and feed-forward comments. Additionally, it can take the form of self-evaluation, peer-led feedback, and automated feedback by the use of exemplars and rubrics complemented or moderated by lecturers. Overall, it is possible to “share the responsibility of feedback and use formative assessment with automatic feedback, self and peer evaluation to build towards authentic summative assessment” (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021, p. 9). Alongside this, capacity building in feedback literacy may be needed.

The move towards flexible assessment approaches, however, cannot be discussed without addressing the issue of integrity. There is a general sense of concern, both in relating literature and within the university, regarding the integrity of non-invigilated despite lack of evidence suggesting increases in cheating behaviour (e.g., grade inflation). Whilst traditional methods of assessment may still have a place in higher education, according to Jisc (Barosevcic et al., 2021, p. 33), the answer to these

concerns potentially lies in the “constructive alignment of assessment with learning outcomes and employability agendas, with a focus on supporting students in developing good academic practice and promoting clear understanding of academic integrity”.

The suggestion of streamlining, clarifying and clearly communicating not just assessments but also learning activities, whole programmes and university visions and strategies is further supported by recent reports (Salmi, 2020; Garrad-Cole et al., 2021) and the University’s Student Experience Survey results (ASES, 2021). One potential way to achieve this is through the employment of ‘backwards design’ with embedded assessment (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021). The promotion of academic integrity may be possible by initiatives, projects or activities employing the nudging theory (Warm and Vettori,2022).

2. Inclusive

1. Care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential (Aberdeen 2040 Commitment)

2.1. Design for diverse student population

The student body at Aberdeen University has been growing and diversifying over the last decades. Aligning with Aberdeen 2040 strategy and extant literature (Maguire et al., 2020; Barber et al., 2021), inclusivity and accessibility need to be foundational considerations during student support (including transitioning into our programmes) and course design. The pandemic has seen higher education institutions adopt some adjustments, such as captioning and lecture capture, which proved to be effective and well-received by students, particularly those living with learning disabilities (ASES, 2021); however, these type of adjustments can be characterised as ‘bolt-on’. Indeed, it often argued that inclusivity should take a fundamental and integral role in course design.

This can be done by the critical adoption of an approach called Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which aims to show information in different ways, includes a variety of learning tasks that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge in various ways and incorporates multiple ways of engaging students (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021; Kim and Maloney, 2021). A recent AdvanceHE literature review (Loon, 2021) brings an example of this where students are allocated individual bundles or buckets of various learning activities to be used completed throughout the course, at their preferred pace and order; the teacher in this example manages the individual learning bundles and can also integrate bundles together. This way, according to the authors, it possible to provide flexibility for students whilst maintaining lecturer control and achieving learning outcomes.

Of course, providing this kind of flexibility, whilst becoming ever more important, can bring challenges and disadvantages. In particular, it has been argued that too much flexibility can lead to inequalities as well as confusion (Houlden and Veletsianos, 2019). To combat this, clarity and explicitness regarding course aims, expectations, value and deadlines were recommended (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021). Turner and colleagues (2017), for example, advocated for the use of structured timetables that include all teaching and learning activities including independent and collaborative study (particularly in flipped classroom designs), workshops, deadlines and other relating activities. At one university this was done through compulsory start-of-year micro credential courses outlining not just course structure and design, but also modality, links to learning and graduate outcomes, and expectations in relation to engagement and participation in learning activities.

2.2. Community building

Another key area in relation to inclusivity in learning design is the need to facilitate community building for the diverse student population. During the pandemic the importance of these aspects of learning became apparent (Maguire et al., 2020). Moreover, social presence and sense of belonging has been linked to mental health (WonkHE, 2022). This area has also been highlighted by our internal

evaluation of blended learning (Kiezebrink, 2021). Aligning with this, Gravity Assists (Barber, 2021) report recommended for building communities to become a fundamental consideration in course and programme design.

There are multiple ways of According to an AdvanceHE report (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021), engagement and a sense of community is dependent on interaction with course material, students and academic staff. Likewise, students often find it helpful for academic staff to encourage and facilitate social interaction between students (Jisc, 2021). In addition to this, elements of the approach called 'community of inquiry' may be utilised (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020).

2.3. Estates

a. Physical estate

During the pandemic, virtual university estates have come to the forefront with some predicting the end of campus-based learning and higher education. Indeed, there are some arguments (e.g., Bashir et al., 2021) that emphasise the role of the physical estate to enable hyflex learning (where online and onsite learning are simultaneous and parallel). However, evidence suggesting the importance of the physical campus has emerged (e.g., Scherman and Snow, 2021; Scottish Funding Council (SFC), 2021). According to Deshmukh (2021), even the digital-native generation acknowledges (and admittedly missed) the inherent value of shared experience and interpersonal engagement that happens naturally onsite. Physical estates play an important role not just in supporting student learning but also building a sense of community. Campus buildings, such as libraries, can offer a quiet place to study as well as places for peer interaction coupled with learning (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2020).

In relation to the delivery of formal education, literature highlights the need that pedagogy and learning outcomes should be the purposes driving campus environments. According to a Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA, 2016) report, campus should be accessible, flexible, adaptable, sustainable, comfortable and full of power and wireless capabilities; as well as designed in partnership with students. Considerations of accessibility are of vital importance is space design given the fundamental nature of inclusiveness. In addition to these purposes, designers, management and educators should work together to harness the next generation of technology to create transparent, accessible and effective formal and informal learning environments (Pieprz et al., 2021). A relating example is the not-so-new idea of sticky campuses or “digitally enabled spaces where students want to spend time even when they do not have formal learning sessions to attend” (Jisc and Emerge Education, 2022). These promote collaborative learning and community building; however, they typically rely on sensors and real-time data being collected which is often not supported by students (Cormack, 2020).

Another, perhaps more accepted proposal in this area focuses on the flexible and efficient use of space. According to Deshmukh (2021), some of the initiative in this area aims to learn from museums and libraries that managed to reposition themselves as physical and virtual places where knowledge and community are constructed. Other initiatives argue for innovative use of space in terms of planning and timetabling. These envision the delinking of schools from specific buildings or spaces. Instead, campus becomes an amalgam of hybrid buildings used in various, flexible ways across semesters.

b. Digital estate

The digital estate also exists to support active and student-centred pedagogies as well as the interdisciplinary pledges of the Aberdeen 2040. In this area, the pandemic escalated and drove innovations (Salmi, 2020). In particular, virtual learning environments (VLEs) play a significant role in student learning given that they bring potential for flexibility, sustainability and personalisation (Scottish Funding Council, 2021). Likewise, it has been found that students expect some degree of online learning in their courses because it affords them some flexibility (Loon, 2021).

However, literature advises to avoid using technology for technology's sake; the use of VLEs should be driven by pedagogic needs (Barber et al., 2021). A recent report by Hamer and Smith (2021) concluded that learning design, particularly in terms of accessibility, pedagogy and consideration of student needs, was one of the most important determinant of student engagement within VLEs. Moreover, the pair argued that the effective use of VLEs "requires pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content" (Hamer and Smith, 2021, p. 24).

Aligning with being pedagogy driven, VLEs need to move beyond their current function of repository for programme documentation. Instead, they should be essential part of and connected to the overall learning experience: they should enable students to engage with their studies, their peers and their teachers further (Maguire et al., 2020). Aligning with this, institutions have been experimenting with inclusive mobile-first and low-bandwidth VLEs inspired by social media platforms where users land in the learning community and newsfeed, they can browse, share and comment on learning materials; as well as create working groups and send messages to peers and academic staff alike (Barosevcic et al., 2021).

Additionally, whilst avoiding attempts at mimicking synchronous student-staff session, VLEs do require teacher presence to guide learning and facilitate social interaction. Discussion boards can be helpful in this area. An AdvanceHE report (Garrad-Cole et al., 2021) noted that discussion boards are pivotal in fostering social discourse leading to knowledge construction, critical thinking skills and sense of community. Further, it is posited that the most effective discussion boards are scaffolded by teacher presence whereby academic staff monitor, moderate, encourage and keep discussions focussed by regular and short contribution (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2020).

VLEs and all other technologies, much like learning and education, need to be simple, streamlined and consistent so far as possible to ensure seamless use by students and staff alike (UCISA, 2016). Their effective use, by students and staff alike, can be ensured by crash courses at the beginning of academic years, as noted in an earlier section.

3. Interdisciplinary

- 6. Support a learning culture in which all our staff and students can exchange ideas and expertise across intellectual areas and organisational structures*
- 8. Build networks across our community to foster interdisciplinary interactions between our subject research strengths, using and sharing expertise to drive new understanding*
- 10. Develop our digital systems and enhance our buildings to create virtual and physical spaces that enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation*

(Aberdeen 2040 Commitments)

3.1. Interdisciplinary teaching teams

There is potential to nurture our ambitions around supporting interdisciplinary learning culture through the delivery of education. It is important to note that interdisciplinarity, both within courses and their delivery, needs to be justified given that disciplinary knowledge and student identity are fundamental to interdisciplinarity. Whilst it seems imperative to provide opportunities for students to interact with peers from other schools and disciplines, perhaps greater interdisciplinarity amongst academic staff may contribute to fostering the culture by modelling behaviours. Indeed, Hannon et al (2018) argued that staff working across disciplines has profound effects on institutional culture.

Interdisciplinary teaching teams are said to facilitate a range positive outcomes for both students and staff. In terms of the former, in his recent literature review, Loon (2021) concluded that interdisciplinary teaching teams can contribute to the development of education that includes multiple perspectives. Behrends et al (2021) demonstrated the benefits of interdisciplinary teaching teams on the digital skills of undergraduate medical students. For academic staff, benefits included enhanced self-efficacy and self-reflexivity (Chen and John, 2020) as well as innovation and creativity in learning design (Stewart, 2018).

Of course, these benefits can only materialise if the teams operate effectively. Literature tells us that effective teaching teams are fully integrated, characterised by intensive and open communication between individuals and have established roles and rules as well as shared values, goals and leadership (Loon, 2021). Shared knowledge objectives and dedication to the employment of active, student-centred pedagogies are particularly important (Kodkanon et al., 2018; Meeuwissen et al., 2020). In terms of shared leadership, equality amongst team members is key, and it is often represented by equally divided courses credits and the development of learning activities and assessment that includes all the disciplines of the team. According to Stewart (2018), the development of effective interdisciplinary teaching teams can be supported by (i) the forming of well-matched teams in terms of personality, experience and collegiality, (ii) workshops facilitated by experts (both within and outwith the institution) as well as workshops addressing emerging challenges, and (iv) sharing good practice.

3.2. Encourage cross-disciplinary working relationships

A potential way to support staff and encourage the envisioned education delivery is the facilitation of working relationships both within and across disciplines. A report by Jisc (Barosevcic et al. 2021) suggests that finding effective learning designs is dependent on collaborative effort between academics across and within disciplines as well as pedagogical advisers and other support staff. Likewise, according to Gravity Assists (Barber et al. 2021), the sharing of effective practice is a key area of opportunity for universities in the post-pandemic higher education scene. There is also emerging evidence, both external and internal, indicating the effectiveness of peer learning (Nunez et al.,2022; *Resilient Learning Communities: End of Year 1 report for the University of Aberdeen, 2021*).

4. International

12. Equip our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods

14. Ensure all our students can have an international experience, by studying abroad or working collaboratively with international partners

(Aberdeen 2040 Commitments)

4.1. International exchange programs

Internationalisation has been on the agenda for decades now (Wit and Altbach, 2020), which includes the recruitment of students internationally. The pandemic, with its restrictions on international travel, considerably impacted students' international experiences (Salmi, 2020; Watermeyer et al., 2020). Alongside the internationalisation of the student body, it is becoming increasingly important to support international students in making the most of arising opportunities; this support, starting from recruitment to aid seamless transition, may include counselling, language and other academic areas (Salmi, 2020).

Gaining international experience is also important for local and national students. Virtual exchange programs, or student participation in online intercultural interactions and collaboration with peers from different cultures or locations were developed or enhanced to provide opportunities for international experiences (Garcés and O'Dowd, 2020). Salmi (2020), for example, reported various initiatives spanning the Americas, Asia and Australasia; one of the most known European schemes is the Erasmus+.

With the easing of travel restrictions in-person exchange programmes are likely to become the preferred source of international experience, their virtual form also provides a range of benefits. Virtual exchange programs have been argued to contribute to the achievement of educational outcomes, intercultural understanding, and interdisciplinary transfer of skills and knowledge (Otieno, 2021). For example, Jones et al (2021) found that a virtual international exchange program that included a three-week collaborative, interdisciplinary online course serves as an effective model for transformative learning focussing on sustainability. Likewise, an 8-week collaborative online international learning programme in the field of engineering found that the performance of participating students was better than their peers (Appiah-Kubi and Annan, 2020). Similar findings emerged from the discipline of nursing (Jung et al., 2022) and humanities (Jiang, 2022). Moreover, these type of initiatives are not resource intensive, unlike their "real life" counterparts (Otieno, 2021; Jiang, 2022). Therefore, it seems advisable to continue with virtual exchange programmes.

5. Sustainable

16. Encourage everyone within our community to work and live sustainably, recognising the importance of our time, energy and resilience.

20. 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

(Aberdeen 2040 Commitments)

5.1. Student voice and partnership

Taking care of one of our resources, students, in the context of education delivery may relate to ensuring appropriate workloads and assessments. However, a powerful way of ensuring the provision of appropriate support is to incorporate student voices in the delivery of education. Indeed, many of the reviewed reports published by sector bodies (Barber et al., 2021; Barosevcic et al., 2021) argued for the greater use of student feedback with Salmi (2020) noting that “higher education leaders would be well served to rely more frequently and systematically on such feedback mechanisms.” This also aligns with the Scottish Funding Council’s (2021) recent report which argued that in order to make Scotland the very best place in which to be a higher education student requires the establishment and maintenance of clear and purposeful partnerships with students.

5.2. Supporting engagement in blended and online learning

An area of challenge that emerged from the Blended Learning Evaluation (Kiezebrink, 2021) related to engagement in blended and online learning. This is certainly an important consideration in course design given that emerged to be one of the most challenging areas of blended and fully online learning during the pandemic. Indeed, it has been argued that very few approaches have been developed to support students’ transition to blended and online learning, particularly in relation to the development and maintenance of effective learning behaviours (Neuwirth et al., 2021). Additionally, the use of blended and active pedagogical approaches that rely on strong self-management and academic skills may risk leaving disengaged students (who are often from less advantaged backgrounds) behind (Valcke, 2022). Likewise, feelings of teaching into the ‘void’ during synchronous online sessions was often highlighted by academic staff (Kiezebrink, 2021). Evidently, engagement does not automatically happen in online (and often onsite) environments which has negative impacts on students and staff alike.

Multiple strategies have been recommended to address this challenge. Some universities explicitly require active engagement and participation from their student population which is often included grade calculations (Eden et al., 2022). Others, however, advocated for the employment of the so-called ‘nudging theory’ (Warm and Vettori, 2022) in encouraging engagement. Yet others argued that incentivising pre-class engagement in flipped learning design can contribute to greater engagement in synchronous sessions (Howell, 2021). Evidently, there are multiple ways to combat the challenge of

disengagement in online and onsite learning sessions; these should be considered during the course design.

5.3. Supporting staff

Designing courses that employ active blended pedagogies, authentic and continuous assessment alongside summative assessments is resource intensive, particularly in term of staff time and effort. Approximately half of a teacher population surveyed by Jisc (2021) admitted to not having enough time or support to consider and modify the delivery of courses. Furthermore, according to a recent report by Lotus (Zhang, 2022), many higher education institutions' academic staff seem to experience 'teaching fatigue' referring to the intense effort that went into teaching since the pandemic began. Likewise, a recent report by University and College Union (UCU, 2022) found that two third of the UK higher education teaching force is contemplating leaving the profession in the next five years partially due to increasing workloads. This area of challenge has also been highlighted in surveys and focus groups examining the Covid education delivery within the University (Kiezebrink, 2021). Staff should be supported.

Various incentives and projects may be developed to encourage the redesign of courses to employ active pedagogies, effective feedback and authentic assessments. It has been argued that academic staff should be supported when considering the redesign of courses, including selecting the most appropriate active approaches, outcome-focused learning activities and feedback forms (Barosevcic et al., 2021; Hamer and Smith, 2021). Additionally, Jisc (2022) recommended that staff should be provided with ample time to design every aspect of their courses. An exemplary initiative is a Finnish university's project encouraging flipped learning by the allocation of time (2 months), additional funding for faculty, and support (experienced teacher or flipped learning expert) for teachers to redesign their courses in a 'flipped' manner (Kivimaki and Pajarre, 2022). Another example from Spain (Nunez et al., 2022) was the development of interdisciplinary teacher groups (including a dedicated expert) working to implement problem-based learning across their various courses.

Good education delivery practice should not only be encouraged, but it should also be institutionally acknowledged and celebrated. This seems particularly important in the light of recent evidence suggesting that teaching often remains undervalued (Zhang, 2022). Indeed, internal evidence also suggest that one of the major benefits of the pandemic was that academic staff felt 'allowed' to prioritise considering their teaching practices (Kiezebrink, 2021). It seems imperative that the effort our staff exercise to achieve the type of learning envisioned by our principles gets acknowledged or rewarded. A report by Jisc and Emerge Education (2022) suggested that that recognising and rewarding good practice and innovation can make significant contributions to their spreading as well as the organisational culture.

Another key source of support is training, particularly in relation to pedagogical and digital skills. In terms of the former, the need to develop learning and teaching capacity has been emerging from external evidence (Barosevcic et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022). Levels of pedagogical capacity at our University is unclear given that we do not currently collect relating data; however, the drive towards the deployment of university-wide active learning may bring about need to build teaching skills further.

In terms of academic staff's digital skills, surveys looking at Covid education experiences suggested that academic staff's digital skills were pivotal during periods of online delivery (Jisc, 2021). The University's student experience survey (ASES, 2021) also suggested that insufficiencies in digital skills were a source of frustration for many students. Accordingly, Jisc (2022) recently recommended that higher education institutions should invest in digitally capable staff at all levels. Recognising this, multiple reports recommended for institutions to look at their training provision for academic staff both on and beyond digital skills (e.g., Barber et al., 2021; Scottish Funding Council, 2021). Some sector evidence noted the potential of crash courses for digital fluency and the effective use of institutional digital estates (Salmi, 2020).

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UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

ABERDEEN 2040 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES & SKILLS WORKING GROUP**&****ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT WORKING GROUP**

Joint Findings and Recommendations

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Background & Purpose

1. This report outlines the findings from both the **Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes & Skills Working Group** and the **Enhanced Transcript Working Group**. It also provides a set of recommendations for the second phase of activity that link both areas on two fronts: 1) the creation of a skills framework and 2) the recognition of these skills for students at all levels of study.

Graduate Attributes and Skills

2. The [Aberdeen Graduate Attributes](#) were one output from a wider Curriculum Reform project that was linked to the University Strategic Plan 2007-10. Since their inception in 2010, they have been part of any new programme or course development as staff are required to align teaching to these Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.
3. The existing Aberdeen Graduate Attributes also underpin the learning outcomes of some core co-curricular programmes including the [STAR Award](#) and [Leadership Academy](#).
4. [Aberdeen 2040](#) is the University's new strategy. As part of the process of taking forward Education at the University of Aberdeen, it is timely to review what it means to be a student at the University and what attributes and skills students will acquire throughout their studies. Aberdeen 2040 provides a focus on our Education in the context of preparing "our graduates to thrive in the diverse workplaces of the future" with commitments that need to be embedded in the experience of all our students.
5. Furthermore, other external factors have influenced educational practice over recent years, such as the QAA's guidance on Education for Sustainable Development ([ESD](#)) and Advance HE's [Student Success Framework Series](#). Many other higher education institutions have taken these frameworks and used them directly, or incorporated parts of them into their own strategy.
6. More recently, Graduate Outcomes ([GO](#)) data has shown a relative fall for the University in percentage terms for those in employment or further study, and a fall in those who consider their employment activity to be 'on track' with their future plans. The GO data is a direct KPI for Aberdeen 2040 Commitment 12 (equipping students for global employment) and feeds into multiple university ranking tables (e.g., Graduate Prospects metric in the Complete University Guide / Career Prospects metric in the Guardian University Guide).
7. As part of an agreed approach to taking forward our Education strategy in light of Aberdeen 2040, a scoping exercise is required to identify areas of good practice and benchmark the use of Graduate Attributes across the University. It is felt that embedding Graduate Attributes in a meaningful way for students to reflect on their studies would be one way to enhance ranking performance in the GO survey and potentially other surveys (e.g., National Student Survey).

Enhanced Transcript

8. Since July 2014, students at the University of Aberdeen have received an Enhanced Transcript (ET) at graduation together with their degree certificate.
9. The Enhanced Transcript includes not only details of a student's courses and grades, but also any approved co-curricular activities undertaken whilst at the University. Students can share their Enhanced Transcript with employers and postgraduate recruiters to evidence their wider university learning and achievements.
10. It is the University approach to the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). The HEAR enables institutions to provide a detailed picture of student achievement throughout a students' time at university, including academic work, extra-curricular activities, prizes and employability awards, voluntary work and offices held in student union clubs and societies that have been verified by the institution.
11. The Enhanced Transcript Verification Panel is responsible for managing, reviewing and quality assuring Enhanced Transcript co-curricular entries. The Panel reports to the EEC (Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee). The Panel is also responsible for making recommendations to EEC (Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee) for new roles to be recognised.
12. Criteria for roles to be included on the Enhanced Transcript are currently described on our website for staff as shown below:
 - Provide an opportunity for students to develop Aberdeen Graduate Attributes and to:
 - Broaden their knowledge outside the academic curriculum
 - Enhance their career development learning and where possible contribute to the University community
 - Must be an established University co-curricular role/activity which has been running for at least 1 year.
 - Involve sustained and regular commitment (at least 10 hours) over one or both half-sessions.
 - Not be part of the taught academic credit-bearing curriculum.
 - Not overlap with an activity or role that is already recognised¹ via the STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award or Enhanced Transcript.
 - Involve developing undergraduate or taught postgraduate employability.
13. There are two levels of activity recorded, accredited activities and recognised activities. Examples of those currently recorded include:
 - Accredited Activities: STAR Award; Aberdeen Internship; InternPlus; Leadership Academy; Santander Mobility Award
 - Recognised Activities: Career Mentoring Programme; BP Student Tutoring; Athena SWAN; AUSA Student Council Member; AUSA Sports, Societies and Groups Committee Member or President; QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Institutional Student Representative; Class Representative; Student Support Adviser; Music Interview Support Assistant; University Museum Volunteer; Careers Ambassador; AUSA Blues Award Half or Full; AUSA Kings Award with Merit or Distinction; AUSA Colours Award with Merit or Distinction; Student Content Creator; S4S Mentor; International Centre Volunteer or Ambassador; ABDNConnect Experience Programme.

¹ There are now a number of examples of recognised roles approved for inclusion on the Enhanced Transcript, such as Class Reps, which are also recognised via the STAR Award.

14. As new activities have been approved for inclusion on the Enhanced Transcript, some inconsistencies have emerged and the distinction between accredited and recognised activities has blurred. The complexity and lack of consistency is leading to student confusion and frustration about which activities will be included.
15. The management of engagement data across the activities and programmes included on the Enhanced Transcript is currently dispersed across the Institution using a multitude of approaches and systems. In addition, recording of Enhanced Transcript activities in the Student Records System is currently manual. Growth in activity types recognised (1094 entries in 2020) creates increasingly heavy administrative workloads and introduces the risk of human error.
16. Recorded activities are currently included on the Student Record Card. Whilst this is accessible to students, the activities are listed in amongst their education history and it doesn't provide a very user-friendly document to share with others such as prospective employers. It would be ideal if students could download transcripts mid-way through their studies in a user-friendly format.

Methodology

17. The work of both the Graduate Attributes & Skills and the Enhanced Transcript Review were supported by the formation of two working groups made up of appropriate academic and professional services staff, and student representatives.

Graduate Attributes and Skills

18. The Graduate Attributes & Skills Working Group met on six occasions from December 2021 to May 2022. Regular updates and an action log were used to track progress and meet key milestones throughout the work of the group.
19. It was agreed that a survey would be developed to gather diverse viewpoints on the effectiveness of graduate attributes and skills development for university students and we would also run several focus groups to capture further feedback on development ideas and possible future directions of travel for a new approach to the Graduate Attributes & Skills at the University.
20. The survey was developed for students, staff, and external stakeholders (alumni and employers) to gauge the usefulness of graduate attributes and skills development during a student's time at university. This survey was created using SNAP and was checked and authorized for dissemination via the University Information Governance Team and their Data Protection Officer. The survey was completed online via a URL and disseminated via staff e-zines and members of the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC). The survey attracted 319 responses constituting 152 staff, 139 students, 20 alumni/graduates and 8 external organisations. The survey also had some questions relating to the Enhanced Transcript linked to recognition of the graduate attributes and skills developed during a student's studies.
21. Three focus groups were created from survey participants who volunteered to take part: one made up entirely of staff, one with mainly staff and one postgraduate student, and one with only students. Focus groups were run using Microsoft Teams, recordings taken and transcribed, then transcripts used for thematic analysis. Focus groups were designed to cover three themes: 1) Usefulness of developing skills while at university; 2) Opportunities/processes around developing skills; 3) Facilitators/barriers to developing skills; and 4) What might a skills framework look and feel like.

Enhanced Transcript

22. Kate Robertson (Enhanced Transcript Institution Lead) worked with the Business Improvement Team, who applied Lean methodology (using the DMAIC tool – Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control) and they worked in conjunction with). This review concluded that the process currently takes approx. 15 hours encompassing 31 process steps, and made recommendations made to reduce the process to approx. 9.5 hours with 22 steps.
23. To develop an understanding of what students think/want and the perceived value, benefit and role of the ET (aim 3), students were surveyed in summer 2021 as part of an Aberdeen Internship project. There were 187 survey respondents. Of those 187, 95 were students in their 1st and 2nd year undergraduate; 85 were in their 3rd and 4th year undergraduate; 9 were in their 5th year or postgraduate taught. Of the 187 students who responded, 185 were based on the Aberdeen campus and 2 on the Qatar campus.
24. Following on from the above work, the Enhanced Transcript Review Group met on five occasions from January to May 2022. The group kept an action log of all activities to keep on track with key milestones throughout the time the group had met.
25. A review of how other institutions utilise HEAR or equivalents was carried out, as and relevant research and publications were sourced.
26. Employer/staff perspectives of ET recognition was captured via the Graduate Attributes survey. Student feedback was circulated from AUSA.
27. At a focus group for activity leads, a review of the current approach to the inclusion of activities and programmes on the Enhanced Transcript was conducted, including a review of the processes in place for proposing, approving, monitoring and assuring quality of Enhanced Transcript activities.
28. Coupled with the above review, the processes involved in reporting Enhanced Transcript activities were reviewed to scope a project proposal for identifying possibilities for a future digital reporting solution.
29. Furthermore, a consideration of how engagement in activities can be utilised by students during and after their studies as presently they only receive a record of their activity via the Enhanced Transcript following completion of their studies.

Findings & Recommendations

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Merging of the two working groups to take the learnings from both forward into Phase 2 of this project when creating both the skills framework and recognition processes.
Recommendation 2	Make any skills that are included in programme and course approvals visible and explicitly stated within the course catalogue and co-curricular programmes.
Recommendation 3	Create a system that can formally record and recognise student skills in all areas of their curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
Recommendation 4	The University should design a personalised skills development, recognition, and reflection framework.

Finding 1 – Recognition of skills and opportunities for skills development are intrinsically linked

30. Currently the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes are used during curriculum design of courses² using a tick box list of the four areas of Academic Excellence, Active Citizenship, Critical Thinking & Effective Communication, and Learning & Personal Development.
31. At a programme level³ the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes are not a requirement but instead a description of learning and teaching approaches are asked for to help students achieve a range of skills in the areas of *Practical Skills (Subject Specific)*, *Intellectual Skills*, and *Transferrable Skills*.
32. The co-curricular programmes developed largely via the Careers and Employability Service also aim to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate and showcase their various attributes and skills. These activities must be able to demonstrate how they provide students with the opportunity to develop their Aberdeen Graduate Attributes and then allow them to showcase these via the Enhanced Transcript.
33. The Enhanced Transcript Working Group was formed to review the operational aspects of creating and managing the Enhanced Transcript process as well as scoping out opportunities for changing this system to enhance what students can formally record. The Graduate Attributes & Skills Working Group was formed to undertake a review of the opinions and viewpoint of staff, students and external stakeholders to inform the next phase of activity in implementing a new approach to graduate attributes.
34. Toward the end of each working group's life, it was agreed by each group that the Chairs of the two groups would work jointly as the types of skills we wish students to develop, and their formal recognition are intertwined and effectively two sides of the same coin. Therefore, both groups decided that any new approach to the graduate attributes and skills and their formal recognition by the University must be carried out jointly and it is recommended that the next phase of this work be a new task and finish group to deliver both a skills framework and a system that can recognise and record an individualised and student-centred portfolio of skills.

Recommendation 1 – Merging of the two working groups to take the learnings from both forward into Phase 2 of this project when creating both the skills framework and recognition processes.

Finding 2 – Students have limited awareness and understanding of the concept of graduate attributes and skills

35. From the Graduate Attributes & Skills Group survey, over half (55%) of staff respondents rate graduate attributes and skills as useful for students in contrast to 31% of students, and 61% of students also having a neutral response to this question. The overwhelming majority (84%) of external stakeholders viewed graduate attributes and skills as useful and there were no negative responses in this cohort. Taken together, this highlights an opportunity to raise awareness of the graduate attributes amongst students and the importance that external organisations place on skills developed whilst at university (see Figure 1).

² New courses and course changes require this – see [here](#) for the New Course requirements and [here](#) for the Course Change requirements.

³ New programmes require this – see [here](#) for the New Programme requirements.

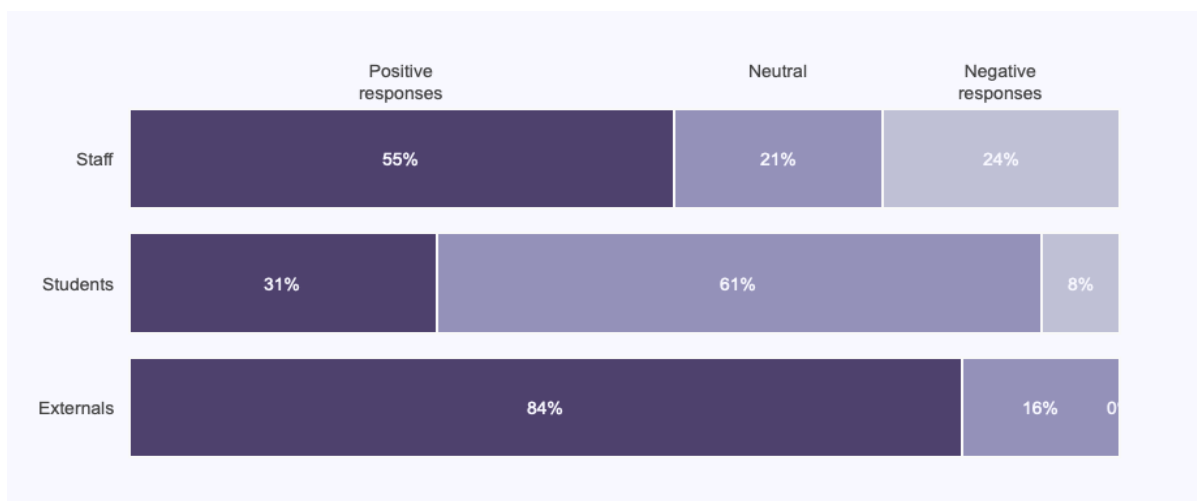


Figure 1: Responses to the question “How would you rate the usefulness of graduate attributes and skills for students at university?”

36. Whilst all new courses and course amendments require inclusion of the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes in order to be approved, from the 1426 undergraduate courses available in AY 2022-23 only 10 make direct reference to the Graduate Attributes in their Course Overview information and no postgraduate taught course or online learning course makes reference to them. This further highlights the need to raise awareness of the graduate attributes within the curriculum as all courses have a requirement for attributes to be included but these are not then made visible to the students when they are selecting courses to build their curriculum.
37. The Graduate Attributes & Skills Working Group survey also reinforced this with the group noting that students did not have a good understanding of what graduate attributes are with comments such as “Not really sure what the graduate attributes are or how they can help undergraduates” and “I put neutral because I’m not very sure how they link to my studies and haven’t come across them before so I can’t judge they’re usefulness.”
38. The Graduate Attributes & Skills focus groups also highlighted this lack of awareness and suggested that one reason was a lack of visibility of skills that are being developed within the curriculum.
39. Furthermore, the Enhanced Transcript Working Group student survey highlighted the same neutral response to skills and attributes being captured during their co-curricular activities as there was an even split on students knowing they could record their activities via the current Enhanced Transcript (see Figure 2).

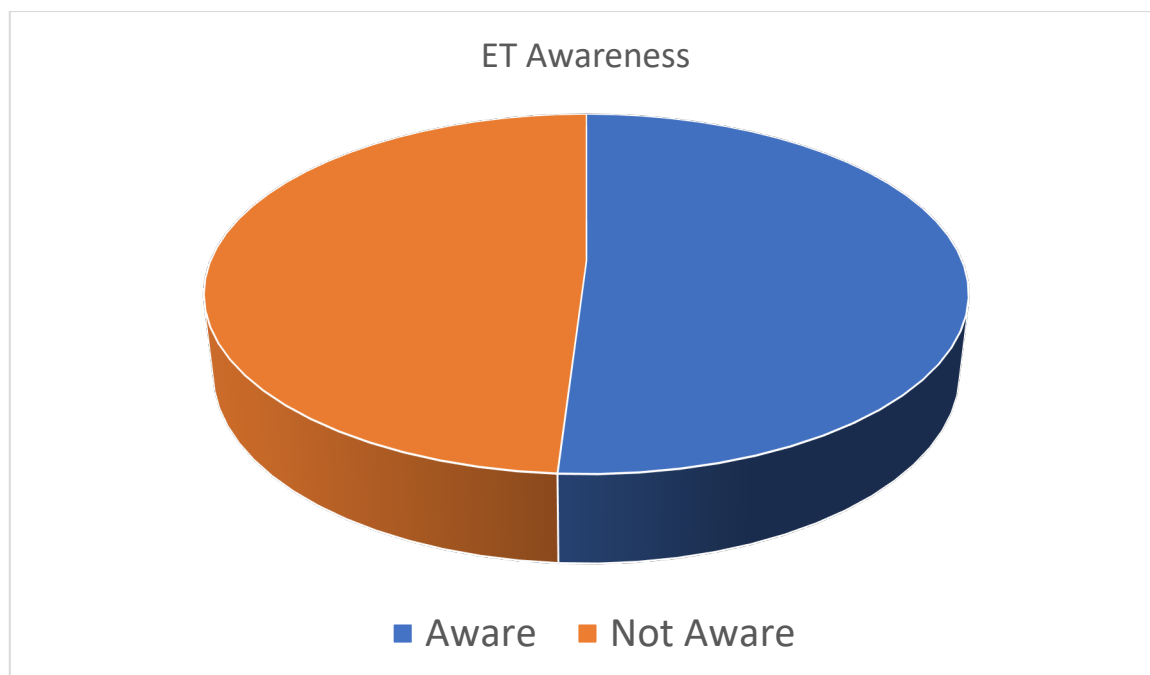


Figure 2: Responses to the question “Were you aware of the possibility to have your activities/roles recorded on the Enhanced Transcript?”

Recommendation 2 – Make any skills that are included in programme and course approvals visible and explicitly stated within the course catalogue and co-curricular programmes.

Finding 3 – Students want recognition of their skills from across their student experience

40. The Graduate Attributes & Skills Group found that the overwhelming majority of both staff and especially students were in favour of formally recognising graduate attributes and skills, with 70% of staff and 86% of students saying this recognition was important (see Figures 3 and 4 respectively). External organisations would also concur with this view (Figure 5).

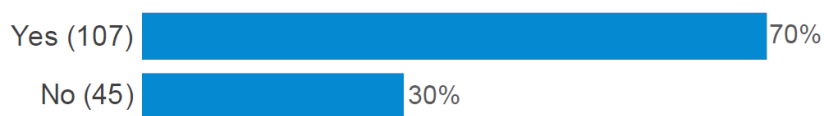


Figure 3: Staff responses to the question “Is it important that the activities that students take part in to develop their graduate attributes are formally recognised by the university?”



Figure 4: Student responses to the question “Is it important that the activities that students take part in to develop their graduate attributes are formally recognised by the university?”

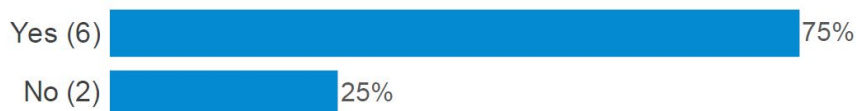


Figure 5: *External organisation* responses to the question “Is it important that the activities that students take part in to develop their graduate attributes are formally recognised by the university?”

41. The Enhanced Transcript Working Group student survey highlighted a similar response with the vast majority of students (88%) stating the recording of their co-curricular activities is *very important* or *important* (Figure 6).

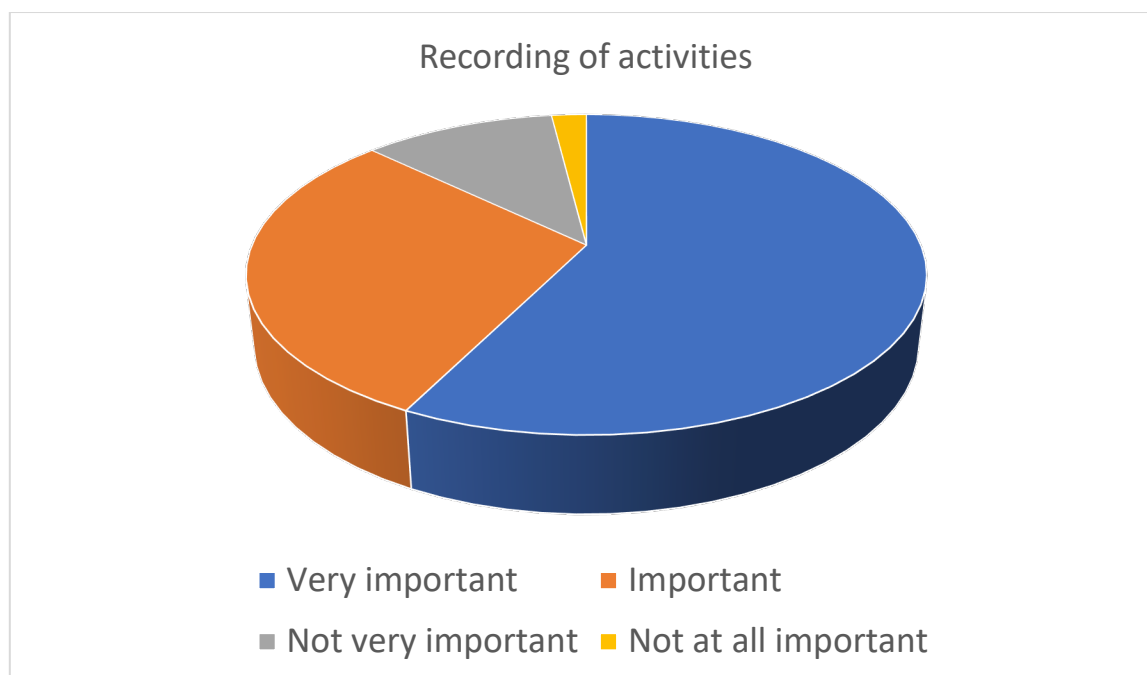


Figure 6: Student responses to the question “How important was it for you that your involvement in co-curricular activities was recorded on your Enhanced Transcript?”

42. From the Enhanced Transcript Working Group student survey, the main reasons students highlighted which led them to have activities recorded on the Enhanced Transcript related to enhancing employability (39%), getting formal recognition (22%), and validating the amount of time and the commitment they dedicated to the role or activity (15%) by having it displayed on an official document. It should be noted that this could be in part due to messaging and the high importance placed on activities being recognised on the Enhanced Transcript (i.e. students think they need formal recognition because we tell them they do).

Recommendation 3 – Create a system that can formally record and recognise student skills in all areas of their curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Finding 4 – Staff and students believe a personalised, student-centred, and reflective skills framework will be an effective and holistic approach for students to highlight their skills and personal development

43. The Graduate Attributes & Skills Working Group focus groups took the previous work discussed above and extended it to incorporate discussions on what approach would work for development of a new approach to skills development. These discussions have identified evidence that staff and students wish to have a framework approach to skills development and a self-reflective approach to students recording these skills throughout their student journey. Three focus groups were organised, two with staff and one with students:

Staff

44. Staff acknowledged that having a graduate attributes model is important and offered insights into their ideas about what they should include without reference to the labels in the current Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.
45. Language was considered limiting in terms of what any skills or attributes should be called, but the group discussed a move to a language of qualities, attitudes and aptitudes and the need for awareness of external terminology to allow ‘translation’ outside of the University. There are many overlaps and nuances, but the following concepts and examples were articulated within and across both staff focus groups, with the structure and organisation being shown in no order of importance. It was deemed necessary overall to avoid making a list, as is used currently, and perhaps instead use a framework approach, bringing in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities to enable all components of an educational journey to be recognised so that students can articulate their skills in an all-inclusive way.
- a) Resilience and recognition of individuality** – *recognition that students should be supported to survive and thrive at university, but diverse views as some staff felt that people need to be able to respond to life’s personal challenges.*
- **Self-awareness and self-exploration** – *recognition of independent individuality and ownership of their educational journey.*
 - **Competition** – *between students was perceived as negative, but mindful of employers and a competitive job market demanding this to some degree.*
- b) Willingness to learn** – *curiosity, inquisitiveness, and not just academically, confidence as learners, being comfortable in a learning environment were all emphasised by the groups.*
- **Problem solving and decision making** – *opportunities to fail and make ‘mistakes’ to learn from (especially in early years of degree), and trying things out, are considered valuable in the process of studying while at university.*
 - **Engaging with and reflecting on feedback** (vs. obsession with grades) – *this was referred to in terms of a previous scheme suggested some years ago and in relation to embedding such opportunities within courses, e.g., via assessments.*
- c) Being open minded and having a social attitude** – *confidence as citizens, tolerance, ability to discuss difficult topics and attention to equality diversity and inclusion were discussed as important.*
- d) Communication skills** – *written communication was emphasised, but also ability to perform well in interviews, especially the need to be clear, concise, and engaging in spoken communications to articulate qualities.*

- **Confidence** – (cf. professional modesty and culture in self-presentation), trying things out, opportunities to show initiative (e.g., volunteer to lead sessions/share resources) – being encouraged and allowed to ‘lead’ was highlighted
- e) **Adaptability** – what employers are looking for, discipline changes and updates re knowledge, pivoting between tasks and interactions were discussed and this was identified as something that employers are really concerned with.
 - Use of tech during the pandemic and learning online: use of cameras, mics and chat was mixed and there was a need to encourage students to use these functions to build trust in engaging/have confidence – this may be important going forward in terms of supporting students to move between different models confidently.
- f) **High academic success**
 - **Research skills** – critical analysis, navigating complex data and making sense of it are deemed essential.
 - **Technical skills** – essential to develop knowledge and apply skills (noting above that should be able to adapt).
 - **Safety, professional requirements and risk management** – being able to identify, articulate and mitigate are considered important.
- g) **Working with other people** – teamwork/groups, learning how to rely on other people/give and receive, and collaboration were considered crucial.
 - **Empathy and caring** – being able to incorporate these qualities is seen to be important (potential links with self-awareness).
 - **Networking** – informal discussions with other students in person or via other media (e.g. social media), mentoring opportunities, etc. are valued (i.e. ‘outside the classroom’).
- h) **Outreach opportunities** – doing things with or for the local community was raised as an important aspect of student life or a consideration for students.
- i) **Career management** – engagement from beginning, e.g., through skills audits, was identified as something that students should be supported in doing.
 - **Time management and planning**
 - **Potential/capacity**
 - **Entrepreneurship/bridging academic and professional practice gap**

46. The recording of the above skills was also discussed, but also the need for students to be involved in deciding how this might happen. Examples were given, like transcripts, but, like the focus on graduation for students, these document outcomes, not the process of development. Likewise with a CV, which is retrospectively prepared for a specific purpose (e.g., job application or to support staff preparing a reference).
47. As an alternative, journaling (to be able to reflect on progress over a period), video footage and LinkedIn were identified as means of capturing the journey more actively, as was the STAR award. The Royal Society of Chemistry was identified as having an example of best practice in their online tracker that can lead to professional recognition.
48. It was agreed that whatever the platform, it should not be too clunky or cumbersome and might incorporate a visual element. A flexible and agile system that can show what students want to/have been able to do (non-prescriptive) was considered necessary. Problems with approaches like quantifying attributes (using star ratings) vs language of qualities (e.g., What energises you? When do you feel like you are doing really well?) on documentation were emphasised. It was suggested that more nuanced SWOT analyses might benefit.

49. Some considerations that were noted are that there are so many channels, resources, extracurricular activities, etc. for skills development. More internships could be offered. It can be confusing, multi-layered, disparate, and difficult for students to navigate. It was suggested that every student should have a careers adviser (vs. personal tutor) or a personal tutor for academic advice and a 'life coach' to support with other aspects. The value of a well-resourced careers service was emphasised. The difference between UG and PG study was highlighted – and the different requirements, career journeys to date, what needs to be captured, etc. in terms of professional development.

Students

50. Postgraduate taught – one year is not enough time to realise potential, transition from UG to PG is massive. Staff-student dynamics differ by culture, but interactions with staff (especially informal) are valued. Group challenges with students to develop aspects of personality are valued. International student mixing is valued, using body language and skills identification tools.
51. Recording is not something students appear to feel confident with doing. But participation in the Leadership Academy can help. Career mentoring was discussed as valuable. Having a generic and other versions of a CV was considered the main way to articulate profile/pivot disciplines/emphases.
52. Emphasis on industry needs and being able to develop industry-relevant skills and generic skills (e.g., management, admin) were identified as important. Being able to 'gel' with other students aside from academic activities was highlighted and the lack of opportunity in curriculum to do this.
53. Potential for e.g., 360 feedback from fellow students was raised as a potentially valuable exercise in personality development. It was felt that social interaction and interpersonal skills need more attention. Being out of one's comfort zone in international study is valued, and opportunities to further language skills.
54. Students discussed the idea of gamified badges to record skills/attributes within a personal plan.
55. Internship opportunities are valued. Time can be a barrier.
56. Process vs. outcomes and also the wealth of cultural diversity were highlighted as important, but how to capture engagement? Consciousness of skills/attributes is considered an issue – reflection, yes, but can students always see their own? Online recording could be helpful. Flexibility and choice would be valued.
57. Quests and treasure type approaches, with social aspects, would be popular. The concept of 'upgrading' was considered in relation to where this could go.
58. Sessions with employers, mental health and bullying training, financial literacy were identified as important aspects of this kind of framework.

Additional feedback from the Aberdeen 2040 University Education Committee (UEC)

59. Feedback from the Aberdeen 2040 UEC (10/05/2022) highlighted universal support for the framework approach to recording student skills with a single skills development platform for students to seamlessly recognise and track their activities and record, reflect on and evidence their skills.
60. Some feedback from discussions at the UEC meeting highlighted multiple considerations as shown in the table below.

Feedback	Response
Who will be helping students navigate the new system and reflect on all their activities? Will it be a burden on Personal Tutors?	A single approach and place for students to record their activity will likely reduce the burden on Personal Tutors as the completion of activity is on the student but Personal Tutors can use meetings as an opportunity to discuss development opportunities (akin to staff annual review).
We need to teach students how to reflect.	The system and the framework will be a self-reflective and student-centric model
We need to make sure we are not losing formal university recognition. Link in with her re digital badges project.	Digital badges could be formal uni recognition built into the skills portfolio. The overarching award would also be formally accredited or recognised on the Enhanced Transcript.
Students and employers want this – a place to formalise all skills and have everything in one place.	The working group agrees.
Quite excited by the proposal, just be aware of students (medicine and education) who already complete portfolios, how does this link and we don't want to overburden those students?	Something to investigate and consider further, but solutions exist to combine professional recognition and other skills portfolios/systems (e.g. PebblePad).
Some students (e.g. geosciences and biological sciences) need to track their demonstration and field trip work so could they do this as part of this proposal.	This could work if any system allows flexibility to include fieldwork activity such as ability to record via mobile devices or a variety of media.
Good that the model is student centred. Does there need to be a control on what students add?	Not really an issue because students can add anything they like to LinkedIn / their CV. But digital badges could be the control of formally recognised activities.
Validation critical (as above) – [mentioned that students will be adding their own activities to the ET].	As above but also reiterate that this is not students adding things to their own Enhanced Transcript but creating their own portfolio of skills development activities.
How can curricular activity be automatically added to the skills passport? How will students know what skills they need to develop – unknown unknowns	Can we link the curricular MyAberdeen digital badge project and the skills passport to solve this? Students don't know this now, but with a portfolio tool, plus more visible skills and attributes, career readiness surveys and targeted support, they will be much more aware than they are at the moment.

Recommendation 4 – The University should design a personalised skills development, recognition and reflection framework.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

RESILIENT LEARNING COMMUNITIES ENHANCEMENT THEME YEAR 2 REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper updates UEC on the work being undertaken by the University as part of the Resilient Learning Communities (RLC) QAA (Scotland) Enhancement Theme. It presents the year 2 report, which is due for submission to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on June 30th 2022 and provides information and evaluation of initiatives aligned with the Theme, as we approach the final year of this current theme.

The paper is provided **for comment and to seek approval for submission to QAA (Scotland)**.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

*Clearly state the recommendation for approval or **actions required, including any critical dates**.*

The **University Education Committee** is invited to comment on the paper and approve it for submission to QAA Scotland.

4. DISCUSSION

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Enhancement Theme (ET) was announced in August 2020 and is entitled, "Resilient Learning Communities". This theme runs for 3 academic years, and the University has received annual grant funding to support and develop work aligned to this Enhancement Theme (agreement no. 3040/008/2020-23), which has been generously matched by the University.

This paper presents the Enhancement Theme Year 2 report which is due for submission to QAA (Scotland) by June 30th. It provides an update on activities, research projects, and initiatives taking place within the University and in collaboration with other Institutions. It evaluates selected projects in terms of their impact and details aspects of dissemination, collaboration, and developmental changes that have resulted from the first 2 years of the Theme.

End of Year 2 Report for University of Aberdeen

Institutional team

Identify any changes in Theme leadership, TLG and institutional team membership since details were reported in the institutional plan developed at the start of the academic year.

We have a stable and committed Institutional Team with consistent staff and student representation on the Theme Leaders Group. Our Student Representative, Ondrej Kucerak, was replaced in Year 2 of the Theme with David Mercieca, a 3rd year, BSc (Hons) Neuroscience with Psychology student and the Students' Association Undergraduate Education Committee Vice-Chair. Ondrej is now the Student Theme Leader in the Enhancement Theme Leadership Team. We are in the process of identifying further postgraduate student representation for our Year 3 Enhancement Themes Institutional Steering Group.

Evaluation of activities/outcomes

Please report each activity/intervention against the following questions in the Evaluation part of the template. N.B. You may have already realised some of your objectives and/or these might be ongoing, so please delineate each question according to whether activities or interventions have been completed already in this reporting year or are in process. (Easiest way is to delete **either/or** options highlighted in **red** in questions below):

The initiatives described below are a diverse range of projects that form part of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP), which funds projects related to the Resilient Learning Communities (RLC) Enhancement Theme. At present [13 funded projects](#) are underway at various stages of progress, which address our Year 2 plans to expand our theme-related projects. Three examples are detailed below.

Title of project/activity
<i>Investigating Solutions to Make Mathematical Teaching Content Accessible</i>
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
In Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) disciplines, course material often requires the use of LaTeX. LaTeX is a system which enables high-quality maths notation to be included in a document which can then enable it to be made available digitally (in PDF format) through eg. a Virtual Learning Environment. The project's aim is to improve the accessibility of the teaching materials which use LaTeX and to produce guidance for staff on how to achieve this.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
To comply with the University's legal obligations in respect of accessibility and inclusion, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, requires universities to make all new learning material published on Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) accessible. PDFs, generated by LaTeX, are not fully accessible as they are not compatible by text-to-speech software.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
This is a known, sector-wide issue with no established solution or timeframe for resolution. The University of Aberdeen aims to train staff to convert all existing course material to and write new course material in, an accessible HTML format as soon as there is a process in place. It is hoped this will be within the next two years. In the meantime, there is in-house support for staff where an accessible format is requested by a student.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
Measurement of the conversion of LaTeX materials to accessible HTML format across selected courses. In addition, new funding from the Council of Heads and Professional in Computing for the next phase 'Evaluating LaTeX Accessibly Solutions' project, will support the rollout of training and guidance provided to staff who will be trying to convert materials themselves. The training and guidance will be evaluated through staff survey.

5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTEP Project Team undertaking this research, which includes the Academic Skills Adviser (Maths) and staff from the School of Natural and Computing Sciences. • Three student interns, employed for the second phase project, will be involved in the evaluation of the guidance provided to staff. • The external UK-wide SIGMA Mathematics and Statistics Support Network who advised that HTML was a suitable alternative file format for STEM documents containing maths.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Having investigated four existing conversion software technologies (Pandoc, LaTeXML, Coursebuilder and Tex4ht), LaTeXML and Coursebuilder have been identified as the most suitable software approaches for HTML conversion.
7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
The project stopped working with Pandoc and Tex4ht because of the poorer HTML output they produced.

Title of project/activity
<i>Understanding, Developing and Demonstrating Resilience in the Context of Employability</i>
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
A toolkit resource has been created for all levels of students on the topic of resilience in the context of employability. A research informed video introducing the key concepts around the topic, including what resilience is, what it means in the context of the workplace, why it is important and how students can develop and evidence it. This will be complemented by a mini online interactive careers course for the student to extend their understanding of resilience.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
Resilience is one of the top skills required by graduate employers for their future workforce. Whilst students are relatively confident that they are developing resilience, which will benefit their career, they are less confident about demonstrating this in applications and at interviews. Students are also less confident about the resilience when facing career setbacks. This toolkit resource is designed to bring the topic of resilience in the context of employability to life for students, giving practical resources to help students recognise, develop and evidence their own resilience.
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
The intention is that students will build their understanding of resilience in employability and be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise examples of their resilience. • Plan further development of their resilience. • Showcase their resilience to employers via CVs, applications LinkedIn profiles and at interview. This should contribute to increased success throughout the recruitment and selection process, and in better onboarding to a work placement or graduate job opportunity.
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
Engagement with the course will be measured using access data. In addition, the mini career course will include a confidence checker designed against the intended course learning outcomes to show distance travelled. Feedback will also be gathered from students to evaluate the usefulness of the video for student learning, and to make any amendments as needed.
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
The LTEP Project Team undertaking the project and the wider LTEP network have been involved in all stages of the project.
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
Our student intern has been critical to the success of this project, offering their perspectives and providing dedicated resource through their time and enthusiasm for the project. A lesson learned is around providing student interns with the opportunity to lead and take responsibility for a project whilst ensuring they are given enough support throughout a project of this scale.
7. Any things you have stopped doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)
No.

Title of project/activity
<i>Building Student Resilience through Course Development – Moving from Surviving to Thriving</i>
1. What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)
<p>The aim of this project is to create an online, micro-credential short course (zero-credits), which is designed to promote, support, and enhance student resilience. The course will encompass the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 1: Introduction to resilience. This will cover models of resilience, resilience self-assessment, and signpost students to sources of University support. • Week 2: Adversity impacts everyone. Shared student experiences of dealing with adversity, models of mental health, recognising symptoms of mental distress. • Week 3: Building resilience. This will include metacognition strategies, and tips for maintaining mental and physical health. • Week 4: Social connections. Interactive activities with peers, shared tasks, resilience walks – all designed to help build a learning community. • Week 5: Reflection. Looking back on the resilience journey, assessing which activities were most useful, comparative self-assessment of resilience.
2. Why are we making it? (Rationale for the change)
<p>The aim of the course is to introduce resilience as part of the curriculum and provide students with the resources, and strategies, to build and maintain their resilience over their years of study. Resilience is considered a dynamic factor, meaning resilience levels can be increased through appropriate interventions and activities. As such, it is vital that core resilience strategies are highlighted to students early on, to equip them with the tools they need to deal with the ups and downs of academic life.</p>
3. What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)
<p>This elective course will be launched in September 2022 to undergraduate students and will help to enhance their resilience levels. The course aims to enable students to manage adversity, both academic and personal, using a variety of key strategies. Helping students to understand resilience and why it is important will facilitate students with their wellbeing, progression through university, and support their academic achievements.</p>
4. How will we know? (How is the change measured)
<p>The course includes several methods of self-assessment (scales designed to measure resilience, mental health, stress, mood, areas of concern). Students will be asked to complete these at the start and end of the course, both to help them plot their journey through the course (which includes a range of options for activities depending on what a student wants to know more about / needs the most support with). Statistical analysis of the scale scores will enable us to determine if there have been any changes in ratings over the duration of the course. Students will also be asked to provide feedback, as part of their self-reflection in week 5, on which activities were the most useful / interesting and the extent to which they feel these activities will help them build / maintain resilience. Student feedback forms will also be gathered for the course.</p>
5. Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LTEP Project Team undertaking the research, the team comprises three Psychology academics, an Educational Developer and 2 student interns. • Students from across the University at all levels within 5 separate, consultative focus groups. • Individuals from the Careers & Employability Service, the BeWell team, and those within the University's Enhancement Themes Steering Group and Community of Practice • Resilience Course Management Team / University's Quality Assurance Committee
6. Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)
<p>The key lesson was the importance of co-creating the course with students, to ensure the content is accessible, meaningful, and engaging. Student-developed content will feature throughout all five weeks of the course, in a variety of formats, and peer-to-peer engagement will also be encouraged. In addition, there were lessons learnt in terms of understanding the resilience course literature, including the balance between content and activities.</p>

7. Any things you **have stopped** doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

Given the scope of this project, we have decided to target the pilot micro-credential course with undergraduate students only, so we have stopped trying to accommodate taught postgraduate students at this initial stage.

Dissemination of work

Which mechanisms have been most effective in disseminating outcomes and resources internally, and to the sector? Please provide examples. If there are materials and resources you can share with the sector, please provide details below.

Internal Dissemination

- *Annual Academic Development Symposium:* This year, entitled '[Global Communities: Building Communities and Improving Collaboration](#)', the Symposium was the most measurably effective way of disseminating Theme-related outcomes, as it was attended by around 130 delegates, both in person and online, who were then asked for feedback, which confirmed the success of the event. The Symposium was an opportunity to showcase the LTEP project work, and cross-sector Theme work. For example, the keynote presentation addressing 'Decolonising the Curriculum across disciplines – what can we do?', was delivered by Professor Catriona Cunningham, co-lead of the Collaborative Cluster on Decolonising the Curriculum in the Time of Pandemic, and Jasmine Millington, Student Intern project.
- *Symposium poster competition:* This provided staff (or groups of staff) with the opportunity to share their practice *and* receive feedback on their research from symposium delegates. The 21 posters submitted can be found on the [Symposium poster webpages](#), along with the [Best Judged](#) and [Highly Commended](#) posters.
- *LTEP Project Group:* Year 2 project teams have joined Year 1 project teams to meet regularly and share ideas, evaluation plans and any concerns, proving a further effective mechanism for dissemination.
- *Community of Practice:* With representation from across the University, this Group continues to be a useful forum for engaging others with the work of the RLC Theme, including a channel to promote events, such as the internal LTEP webinar. This online Community has grown in Year 2, and also includes the Year 2 LTEP project teams.
- *Staff eZine:* LTEP projects are being individually showcased in our weekly, University-wide staff ezine, providing information about the projects and raising awareness about the current Theme.
- *Celebrating Diversity events:* Under the umbrella of the University's Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework, a number of [discussion panels](#) involving staff and students have been hosted, which strongly relate to the Theme.
- *Toolbox of Resources:* Our Year 2 plans to curate resources for staff including case studies and other examples of effective practice, which relate to the RLC Theme now will be launched in 2022/23.

External sector dissemination

- *Theme leaders' group event:* In April 2022, the '[Building Student Resilience Through Course Development – Moving from Surviving to Thriving](#)' LTEP project presented at one of the informal Theme leaders' group events, sharing practice across the sector.
- *Enhancement Conference 2022:* At this year's Enhancement Themes Conference in June several of the LTEP projects presented their project journey and disseminated their key findings and resources generated.
- *Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience:* Several case studies were submitted as part of this student-led project (more below).

Collaboration outwith your institution

How have you collaborated with other institutions? This could be informally by growing networks or contacts, or more formally for example, through collaborative clusters or sector work. If you have been collaborating with others, briefly explain what this has involved and what have been the benefits and challenges.

Collaborative Clusters: During the first year of the RLC Enhancement Theme, the University was part of the collaborative cluster project, *Exploring the Potential of Micro-credentials and Digital Badges*. This project aimed to explore stakeholder (academic, student, employer, and alumni) awareness and use of micro-credentials. The findings and outcomes from the Year 1 cluster project

are now informing the work of the new, QAA-led sector-wide micro-credential project and the newly established, Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials. The University continues to be a member of this QAA sector-wide project and the complementary project, *Valuing and Recognising Prior Learning and Experience*. Benefits from collaborating with others on these projects include, enabling the University to build expertise in this area for our own on-demand short courses, and helping to agree a common micro-credential terminology across stakeholders for these small units of learning.

Student-led Collaborative Project: This year's Enhancement Theme cross-sector student-led project has been focusing on the theme of *Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience*. The project is exploring how students and staff can support equity for diverse student communities, to enable student parity in their learning opportunities. University of Aberdeen staff responded enthusiastically to the call for short case studies under the three project sub-themes: Pedagogy, Accessibility and Digital Technologies. At least 8 case studies from the University have been submitted for curating and wider dissemination by the RGU student-led project team. Case study titles include: 'Improving Equity through Virtual Project Learning' and the 'Equity of Infographics in Accessible Learning'. Benefits from contributing to this project, include the ability for a wider range of staff from across the University to contribute to, and engage with the RLC Theme. Having discussed this topic with individuals across the University, this project has also helped academics to think more about equity-minded teaching and how to cultivate a sense of belonging in their own student cohorts.

Student Mental Wellbeing: Initial conversations have occurred between our QAA Quality & Enhancement Specialist, UHI and the University of Aberdeen regarding the notion of staff and student transitions back to campus. We aim to re-group and re-think how to approach this area in Year 3 of the RLC Theme. This will enable us to further build upon our Year 2 RLC priorities, and to engage in additional sector-wide activities through becoming involved in other Collaborative Clusters.

Anti-Racist Curriculum (ARC): The Vice-Principal (Education) continues to be Deputy Chair of the national Anti-Racist Curriculum project, which is now in its second phase. The outputs from phase 1 of the ARC feature in our Year 2 RCL plans, and as intended are being used as part of the University's own strategic workstream on Decolonising the Curriculum.

Supporting staff and student engagement

How have staff and students been supported to engage in Theme activities? Please provide examples.

The [Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme](#) projects have been very successful in engaging staff and students in Theme-related activities, with 13 projects currently active and more planned for Year 3. This number of projects has been made possible by the University providing matched project funding. Every project has at least one student intern involved, and the work is focused on elements of practice related to Resilient Learning Communities. Through regular University-wide updates and establishing an LTEP project group that meets every 6 weeks, these initiatives have succeeded in engaging the University's Community of Practice, which includes representation and participation from all 12 academic Schools.

The [Annual Academic Development Symposium](#), aligned with the Resilient Learning Communities Theme, ran in May 2022 and was attended by around 130 delegates including staff and students from across and beyond the University. It focussed on showcasing topics, LTEP projects and activities relating to the Enhancement Theme offering the opportunity to discuss key issues and challenges in developing staff and student communities of learning. It also offered opportunities for networking and establishing collaboration and advertised the call for new LTEP project applications.

More generally, since the beginning of the Theme, staff and students have been kept updated with relevant work through a variety of channels that have also served as a means of encouraging and supporting engagement. These include staff and student ezines, interactive webinars, committee updates and communications with Directors of Education within each School. In addition, the Resilient Learning Community of Practice has served as a forum for discussing ongoing initiatives and establishing collaborative partnerships between staff and students from across the University.

Processes

What are you learning from the processes, approaches and structures you are using to support this Theme? How will this report be used/distributed within your institution?

Students as partners in teaching and learning has been a key feature in all of our enhancement approaches and initiatives during the current RLC Theme. Students have contributed to a wide range of activities, events, and research projects, including but not limited to: RLC committee membership, LTEP project internships, symposium sessions, and internal dissemination activities. During the Theme, so far, we have adopted different forms of student engagement from gathering student ideas, experiences, and concerns (e.g., through focus groups), to more collaborative working and co-ownership during the LTEP project internships. The benefits are clear for both stakeholders, as students build their confidence, develop their skills, and enhance their employability. For staff these student engagement initiatives have helped to develop their ideas about teaching and supporting learning, to enhance educational practice and the student learning experience. During Year 2 of this Theme, we have further raised the profile and importance to a range of stakeholders of a student partnership approach for effecting enhancement and change. We are extremely grateful to receive QAA funding to provide these paid student internships, which have driven developmental change at the University. We would be keen to follow up initial discussions with QAA Scotland about forming a sector-wide network for student interns in Year 3 to further encourage student engagement with the RLC Theme.

This report will be distributed via the following key channels:

The University's committee structure which includes the University-level Education Committee and its three sub-committees (Quality Assurance, Employability and Entrepreneurship, and Student Support) for information and discussion, and to inform plans for the remaining final year of the Theme.

The Community of Practice for the Theme, which has representation from all 12 academic Schools and Professional Service Directorates at the University of Aberdeen (current membership ~35) will review and discuss this report, before wider dissemination to individual School Education Committees. In addition, the report will be considered at the Institutional RLC Steering Group and will be used to reflect on the progress, achievements, and challenges of the RLC Theme in order to help plan and to identify our next steps for Year 3.

Looking ahead

In session 2022-23 we will be starting to consider what the next Enhancement Theme might focus on. We are interested to know about the discussions, hot topics and issues that are emerging in your practice and gaining increasing attention. Please share your thoughts and views below.

Following consultation with our wider Enhancement Themes community, the following emergent areas are proposed for possible future themes:

- Assessment & Feedback in a Digital Age
- Interdisciplinary approaches to learning and assessment
- Education for sustainable development
- Student partnerships into, through and beyond university
- Authentic experiences
- Enhancing employability and skills development

Report Author:	Professor Steve Tucker, Institutional Lead and Chair of Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group
Date:	30/05/22

Resilient Learning Communities

End of Year Report for: University of Aberdeen

Financial Annex Year 2

Please provide an overview of actual spend against planned expenditure, based on the information in the Institutional Work Plan Year 2 financial annex.

If you have obtained funding from a third party for your delivery of part of the Institutional Work, please include the amount of such funding in this report together with details of what that funding has been used for.

Please note that this information remains confidential and will not be made available on the web.

Activity	Estimated cost	Actual Spend
University's Annual Academic Development Symposium (May 2022) – (hybrid/in person conference, costs for catering, Key note speaker travel & accommodation and gifts for presenters).	£1800	£1298
Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme funds	£12000	£12000
Enhancement Themes Conference (travel & accommodation)	£200	£1612
Total	£14000	£14901

*Additional £8000 spend sourced from internal budget.

Author:	Professor Steve Tucker, Institutional Lead and Chair of Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group
Date:	30/05/2022

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Steve Tucker (s.j.tucker@abdn.ac.uk) Institutional Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme Lead.

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ADDRESSING CONTRACT CHEATING IN ASSESSMENTS**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper provides the University Education Committee with an overview of our current approaches and key considerations related to enhancing academic integrity in assessments for the academic year 22/23 with a particular focus on contract cheating. University Education Committee is invited to **note** this paper and **comment** on recommendations.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	Not required	

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. We can broadly group academic misconduct in assessment into three forms 1) Plagiarism, 2) Collusion and 3) Contract Cheating. Research has shown that both staff and students perceive online assessments to offer more cheating opportunities than unseen, time constrained, in- person, invigilated assessments.¹ This leads to some staff and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) requiring invigilated exams to ensure the academic integrity of assessments. To address these concerns, we need to:
- Design assessments that minimise the risk for academic misconduct, including plagiarism, collusion, and contract cheating.
 - Engender a culture of academic integrity in our student population.
 - Provide a range of tools to support staff with the detection of academic misconduct.
- 3.2. The term “Contract Cheating” was first used in 2006.² While acknowledging that this type of misconduct is not new, there appears to be a global rise in contract cheating across all disciplines. There are some novel features related to the commercialisation aspect of contract cheating, the more deliberate form of misconduct compared to plagiarism, which may be accidental, for example. There is a need, therefore, to consider our approaches to address contract cheating.
- 3.3. Definition: “Contract cheating” is an umbrella term to denote the submission of work by a student where some or all has been produced by someone other than that student with the

¹ Beckman T, Lam H, Khare A (2017), Learning Assessment Must Change in a World of Digital “Cheats”. [In: Khare A, Stewart B, Schatz R \(eds\) Phantom Ex Machina. Springer, ChamFootnote:](#)

² Clarke, R. & Lancaster, T. (June 2006). Eliminating the successor to plagiarism? Identifying the usage of contract cheating sites, [In Proceedings of 2nd International Plagiarism: Prevention, Practice and Policy Conference Newcastle, UK.](#)

intention to deceive. This can be achieved through having another person, or commercial service, produce work that is subsequently submitted for an assessment, whether that person/commercial service is paid or not”.³

- 3.4. As part of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill (England), it is now illegal to produce written work for students to be submitted for assessment purposes in exchange for payment, in England. Within Scotland, The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), has established an [Academic Integrity Charter for UK Higher Education](#) and produced the [Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education](#) resource to guide Universities in combating the use of “essay mills”.
- 3.5. Engaging with the commercial contract cheating industry puts students in a vulnerable position. The potential risk of being threatened with exposure is present from the first enquiry, even if the student later decides not to pay for any services or does not submit any work that has been commissioned. The threat of exposure is often linked to extortion practices⁴ and is not limited to exposure at university but can continue into future employment referred to as “legacy for life” blackmail.
- 3.6. Sector level data on contract cheating:
There are challenges in gathering accurate data on the extent of contract cheating and whether the levels of contract cheating are changing with time. The most common methodological approach is through self-reporting and survey based, which has obvious potential problems of measuring of “undesirable” behaviours. Relying only on detection of contract cheating will always result in an underestimate of the actual cases, and to date there is no accurate way of estimating the difference between detection and actual occurrence. A systematic review of studies investigating students use of contract cheating estimates that as of 2018 there was an historical average of 3.52% of students who self-reported engaging with contract cheating⁵. Furthermore, the review demonstrated a significant positive relationship between ad time and percentage of students self-reporting contract cheating.
- 3.7. University of Aberdeen data on contract cheating:
To date we appear to have a very low rate of contract cheating at the University (with between 1-3 cases per year for the past 4 years, which reflects approximately 0.02% of the student population). This is unlikely to reflect the actual level of contract cheating.

³ [University Of Aberdeen, Academic Quality Handbook, Code Of Practice On Student Discipline \(Academic\)](#)

⁴ Draper, M., Lancaster, T., Dann, S. et al. Essay mills and other contract cheating services: to buy or not to buy and the consequences of students changing their minds. *Int J Educ Integr* 17, 13 (2021).

⁵ Newton, PM. How Common Is Commercial Contract Cheating in Higher Education and Is It Increasing? A Systematic Review. *Front. Educ.*, 30 August 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00067>

Table 1: Detected cases of contract cheating at the University of Aberdeen

Schools	2021/22		2020/21		2019/20		2018/19		2017/18	
	UG	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG	UG	PG
Biological Sciences		1								
Business	1				1			1		
Business (Qatar)			1							
DHPA										
Education										
Engineering			1							
Geosciences										
Law						1				
Law (Qatar)										
LLM&VC										
MMS&N										
NCS		1				1				
Psychology										
Social Science										
Total	1	2	2	0	1	2	0	1	0	0

*Red denotes students that have been expelled

- 3.8. Aberdeen University has signed up to the [QAA academic Integrity charter](#) pledging to implement its principles and commitments, which include working with staff and students and, in collaboration across the sector, to protect and promote academic integrity, and act against academic misconduct. Understanding the causes of academic misconduct is essential to help promote academic integrity and therefore reduce the need for detection and subsequent application of penalties.
- 3.9. Engaging with academic misconduct can have a significant impact on students' mental wellbeing including self-respect, feelings of guilt and perceptions of academic ability. In addition, students can be subjected to blackmail with all the additional mental health concerns that such a situation can bring. The pressure of undergoing a disciplinary process can also put immense strain on students. It is, therefore, important that any process has at its core, a focus on student wellbeing.
- 3.10. The QAA have produced guidance on "[Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education](#)" which outlines four main areas to focus on tackling contract cheating: Education (for students and staff), reducing opportunities to cheat, detection and regulations/policies. The following section of the paper maps our approaches to the QAA recommendations.

4. WHAT ARE WE DOING TO MINIMISE CONTRACT CHEATING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

4.1. Education (for students and staff)

- 4.1.1. QAA recommendation "Use information and support for students to place a positive focus on academic integrity. Early information, verbal and in writing, to students is crucial. Provide support for students that enables them to develop skills in studying, academic writing, the use of academic sources, appropriate paraphrasing and research. Thinking about how essay mills find their customers, and how students find them, can help you in developing the most appropriate information"

4.1.2. Support for students

All students are made aware of the importance of academic integrity, and the consequences of cheating, through the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) [Academic Quality Handbook](#) (3.4 Contract Cheating to be amended for AY22/23).

A range of resources, training and support are available to students.

These include:

- [Academic Integrity](#) webpages, which address the main areas of academic misconduct
- Guides on academic integrity, such as:
 - [Academic Integrity: a guide for students](#)
 - [Academic Integrity Infographic](#)
- Academic Integrity advice in the Academic Writing sections on Achieve (UG) and Achieve+ (PGT) in MyAberdeen
- Compulsory Online Academic Writing Courses for Level 1 students (which include a video and Test on Academic Integrity) Engagement in the activities is monitored and students are contacted and offered additional support if they are not engaging:
 - AW1003 Business School
 - AW1006 School of Social Science
 - AW1007 School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History
 - AW1008 School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture
- PGT Academic Integrity materials, which include a suite of videos and an Academic Integrity Test, which can form part of courses such as PD5006 and PD5506 (under development for AY 2022-23)
- There are additional school specific approaches to communication of academic integrity which is covered in various ways including training on professional behaviours and ethical practice.

A review is underway of the current Academic Integrity Guide for students and will include more detail on contract cheating risks, and advice on assessment support.

4.2. Support for staff

4.2.1. QAA recommendation “Providers should support staff, so they feel confident in pursuing suspected cases of cheating. Ensure that staff are kept up to date with academic regulations on assessment, and their responsibility to uphold academic standards and integrity. Ensure that staff are aware of the problem of contract cheating, and the procedures to be followed when it is suspected.”

4.2.2. There is a range of online resources, professional development events, and support available to staff to inform, raise awareness, offer opportunities for discussion, and facilitate dissemination of effective practice.

Resources:

- [Staff-facing academic integrity web pages](#) covering - plagiarism, collusion and contract cheating
- [Case study series on assessment design](#): strategies and approaches to help academics design out plagiarism opportunities for students in assessments
- [Academic Integrity Infographic](#) for staff to add to course areas in MyAberdeen and other locations.

Professional development opportunities:

- Academic Integrity & Assessment Design sessions
Delivered and/or facilitated by the Centre for Academic Development (7 general and tailored sessions delivered over the course of a year).

- PGCert in Higher Education Teaching & Learning
- Academic Integrity covered in the 15-credit course, ED50HR Approaches to Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

4.3. Reducing Opportunities to cheat:

4.3.1. QAA recommendation “Identifying assessment that makes it more difficult to rely on contract cheating such as ‘authentic assessment’, which is more reflective of the ways in which students will use the knowledge, along with a mixture of assessment methods where possible. Think about how to reduce cheating opportunities when designing and reviewing courses and setting assignments. Be aware that assessment design alone can only have a limited impact on cheating. Consider using regular low stakes assessments to develop student confidence as opposed to single summative high stakes assessments. Consider blocking essay mill websites from your IT equipment or use ‘pop ups’ to guide students to support if they click on a particular link. Be alert to advertising methods such as posters, flyers and social media, and take steps to minimise/counter them when detected.”

4.3.2. Designing in assessment integrity

We currently promote the use of a wide range of assessment approaches including use of ‘authentic assessment’, different modes of assessment, personalised / application-led assessments all of which aim to enhance learning, demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes, increase employability skills and, in this context, embed academic integrity into the assessment process.^{6,7}

A set of [resources](#) were made available to staff July 2020. The resources provide information on the design and review of courses and assessment as part of an overall approach to enhancing assessment practice, additional resources will be provided focusing on academic integrity and assessment design.

4.3.3. Dealing with the commercial organisations

The rising market in commercial contract cheating means that there is an increased opportunity for students to engage with these practices. A key area for decreasing opportunity is to minimise the opportunities for companies to advertise their services to our students through our digital infrastructure

New websites are created and categorised every day. Using a global web filtering company, the University reports such sites and blocks individual sites locally. We are alert to advertising methods such as posters, flyers, social media and emails and take steps to minimise/counter them when detected. However, we are dependent on staff and or students to report these instances. Email addresses of the organisation are blocked following a confirmed report, but different email addresses quickly replace those that have been blocked.

4.4. Detection of cases:

4.4.1. QAA recommendation “The single most important step that providers can take is ensuring appropriate resource and support is provided to staff with academic integrity responsibilities. Develop organisation-wide detection methods, bringing together the

⁶ [Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education: How to Address Essay Mills and Contract Cheating](#) (2020), 2nd Edition, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

⁷ Sutherland-Smith, W. (2008). *Plagiarism, the internet, and student learning: Improving academic integrity*. New York: Routledge

best elements of local approaches. Consider tools to complement text-matching software, including new-generation tools designed to assist in the detection of contract cheating, for example: software that uses linguistic analysis to ‘learn’ a student’s typical written style. Get to know your students’ styles and capabilities, and be alert to unexpected changes in a student’s assessment performance.”

4.4.2. Digital solutions to enhance detection

The University does not currently provide staff with a digital tool to support the detection of contract cheating. Gathering evidence of contract cheating is challenging as it currently relies on staff noticing unusual use of language or different “voices” across a particular student’s work, which is not always possible when anonymous marking is used. Once staff are concerned that a particular student’s submission appears to have been produced by someone else, the School start an in-depth investigation of the document the student submitted. This involves looking for clues in the metadata around document creation and analysing the reference list, as this should correspond with sources available through the University’s library, all of which is time-consuming. The lack of a standardised approach to detection may contribute to a lower than expected detection rate.

The University currently provides staff with two text-matching tools, which are complimentary and detect plagiarism and collusion. However, additional software tools such as [Turnitin’s Authorship tool](#) could enable the University to implement a more rigorous approach to detecting contract cheating.

4.5. Regulations/Polices:

4.5.1. QAA recommendation” A strong commitment to academic integrity can be signalled through institutional values or mission statement. Ensure staff are resourced and supported to address suspicion of academic misconduct. Dedicate a designated strategic lead and/or staffing resource to the protection of academic integrity. Use designated and specifically trained single decision makers when appropriate. Make regulations and guidance clear and accessible, available in a range of formats and languages. Have an explicit procedure to follow to report a suspicion of academic misconduct, determining who to report to and how to report it. Keep records and collect data for cheating cases in sufficient detail to allow effective analysis, and feed analysis back to reporting academic staff. Following positive detection, consider formal processes for alerting PSRBs of misconduct by students where courses are part of, or are likely to lead to, professional qualification.”

4.5.2. The University’s [Academic Quality Handbook - Code of Practice on Student Discipline \(Academic\) section 4.3](#) sets out our process for dealing with alleged contract cheating

Section 6.4 outlines the Standard outcome for students found guilty of contract cheating “Students who are found guilty of submitting work that has been written by someone other than themselves (“contract cheating”, as defined in Section 3.4) shall be awarded an overall CGS G3 for the assessment in question and will be expelled from the University.”

4.6. Penalty application: Our current policy allows for mitigation to be taken into account when deciding on the penalty by Investigating Officer where it is thought appropriate to do so, having reviewed the evidence. However, for mitigation to be considered a student must admit to the offence. It may be that students who are aware that the potential penalty for this misconduct is expulsion from the university, may be discouraged from admitting the behaviour and therefore enabling them to demonstrate any remorse or share any

compelling personal circumstances that affected their judgment. The only remaining mitigation available is where the offence is a first-time offence. However, whereas with both plagiarism and collusion this is commonly considered when deciding on the penalty, contract cheating may not be given the same weighting. As can be seen from the nine cases of detected contract cheating over the last four years, three of these have resulted in the student being expelled from the university.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1. Summary of approaches to reduce contract cheating

Our approach to reducing contract cheating is multifaceted to address the factors which may be driving the behaviours. There is a focus on promoting and encouraging academic integrity, alongside deterring students from engaging in misconduct, but there should also be a robust approach to detect misconduct when it happens and clear policies to ensure every detected case is dealt with fairly and transparently.

5.2. Our approach is informed by the QAA guidance on contract cheating in Higher Education. From these, the following 10 steps are identified as priority areas for attention over the next academic year

Priority tasks	Responsibility
1 Continue to work closely with AUSA to provide support and guidance to students that clearly communicates our ethos and values of academic integrity.	AUSA VP Education
2 Enhance our communication to students the risk of engaging with companies offering this service, and provide support for students who have explored this option.	AUSA VP Education / Student experience team
3 Further enhance our support for students to enable the development of skills and confidence in academic writing at all stages of the student journey.	Senior Academic Skills Adviser
4 Review the timing and content of student support activities related to academic integrity and ensure that they are scheduled to have maximum impact.	Senior Academic Skills Adviser
5 Continue to engage with sector wide developments in technology to disrupt advertising of commercial contract cheating providers.	Director of Digital & Information Services
6 Explore author verification tools for digital submission of assessments including piloting the use of Turnitin Authorship tool	E-learning
7 Build in approaches to the consideration of academic integrity as part of the approval process for new assessment approaches.	Director of QAC
8 Explore how the implementation of the TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) programme could be used to enhance assessment integrity in the upcoming pilot in the two Schools (NCS and Social Science).	Dean for Educational innovation
9 Identify and share examples of good practice of embedding the ethos of enhancing academic integrity rather than focusing on specific forms of misconduct (i.e. plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating).	Centre for Academic Development
10 Review of our policy to take account of the factors identified in section 4.5	Academic Services

- 5.3. It is proposed that a Task and Finish Group is set up to take forward this work over the next 2-3 months with the aim of bringing proposals to UEC and QAC in the first meetings of academic year 2022/23.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean for Educational Innovation, (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk) and Patricia Spence, Centre Manager, Centre for Academic Development (p.spence@abdn.ac.uk).

16 June 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN 2040 COMMITMENTS IN THE CATALOGUE OF COURSES**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

As part of the ongoing implementation of Aberdeen 2040, it is proposed that taught courses within the University which align with the four commitments within the 2040 strategy are identified as such in the Catalogue of Courses.

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

UEC is asked to note the work underway to incorporate the Aberdeen 2040 commitments into the Catalogue where appropriate.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The identification of the four commitments within Aberdeen 2040 (to be an inclusive, interdisciplinary, international and sustainable university) provides the opportunity for taught courses within the University to be 'badged' to highlight where the course is considered to align with one or more 2040 commitments. Introducing a system to do this will permit staff and students to recognise courses contributing directly to education associated with those Themes. This will allow students who, for example, have a particular interest in sustainable development to easily determine which courses suit their interest.

4.2 Currently the Catalogue of Courses labels courses which form part of one of the Sustained Study routes established as part of Curriculum Reform (a defined group of four 15 credit courses which taken together lead to a specified endorsement on the transcript). Using this existing functionality, and expanding it, will make it possible to increase the number of labels in use to include the 2040 themes of Inclusive, International, Interdisciplinary and Sustainable. This will permit the Catalogue to be structured and searchable in ways which align clearly to the Aberdeen 2040 Themes.

4.3 Eventually it is anticipated that gathering this information for new courses will be possible through the Curriculum Management System (CMS). To make a change in the fields gathered as part of CMS will not be a quick change and so it is proposed that in the short term these data are input to the Catalogue directly by the Curriculum Team.

4.4 Included below are the definitions, approved by UEC in February 2022, which are being used to enable judgements to be made about the labelling of courses. Clearly some courses will straddle more than one theme and so will appear under more than one category.

4.5 Badging courses in this way will enable course content to be monitored to ensure that coverage of all four themes is being achieved. It is not expected that all courses will fit within one or more of the themes. Courses will need to meet criteria to ensure alignments are appropriate, and that subject matter is genuinely contributing to the theme.

4.6 The first step in the process is seeking submissions through Schools requesting alignment for current courses. At this stage it is anticipated that this functionality and data gathering can be completed for courses to be delivered in 2022/23. The current proposal is a

'basic' starting point for next year with further work to come subsequently to refine the information/icons. This initial model enables basic functionality for 2022/23. In addition to the information returned by schools, it is the intention to give all 6th century courses the interdisciplinary label.

4.7 The Curriculum Team will be sending a request to schools to identify courses to be badged during the week commencing 13 June, with a return date of 15 July.

4.7 As part of taking this work forward the following definitions are being used. The Committee is asked to note provide feedback on the initial screen display included in Figure 1 below.

Inclusive

It is expected that all courses are inclusive in their approach to delivery and therefore the focus is not on this aspect of inclusivity but on:

- The subject of the course relates to inclusive issues, for example exploring equality, diversity or human rights

International

- Delivered in another country as part of an exchange programme
- Delivered with another country through an approach such as Collaborative Online International Learning
- The subject of the course relates to international issues and explores international perspectives

Interdisciplinary

- Delivered from a number of disciplinary perspectives giving students the opportunity to learn about a given subject area from a number of perspectives
- Delivered by a number of discipline experts with different student disciplines sitting alongside each other in the (virtual or physical) classroom – learning with and from each other

Sustainable

- The subject of the course relates to sustainability issues

Figure 1: Example of Modified Catalogue Layout

GH1007: GAELIC FOR BEGINNERS 1A

🎓 15 credits 🌐 Level 1 📅 First Sub Session

Sustained Study

This is an 11-week course in the modern Scottish Gaelic language for students who have little or no prior experience of the language, or for students with no formal qualifications in Gaelic.

You will learn Gaelic through a mixture of interactive language classes, a class which focuses on conversational skills, and a programme of homework exercises, together with self-directed learning.

By the end of the course, you will be able to speak, read, write and understand Gaelic at a basic level and you will have mastered a large working vocabulary.

Interdisciplinary **Sustainable** [More Information](#)

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk or Rachael Bernard, Academic Registrar r.bernard@abdn.ac.uk

8 June 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DEADLINES FOR THE RETURN OF RESULTS 2022/23**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is to seek the **approval** of the University Education Committee (UEC) for the deadlines for the return of results in academic year 2022/23.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/ approved by:	University Education Committee (UEC)	13 April 2022
Further consideration/ approval required by:	University Education Committee (UEC)	23 June 2022

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The UEC is asked to **approve** the proposed deadlines for the return of results in academic year 2022/23.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 At the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC) held on 13 April 2022, members of the Committee were asked to approve deadlines for the return of results in academic year 2022/23 as follows:

(a) January 2023 Assessments

All undergraduate courses **by Friday 20 January 2023**

Postgraduate taught courses **by Friday 27 January 2023**

January Start Postgraduate Taught programmes, for candidates commencing January 2022, **by Friday 27 January 2023**

(b) May 2023 Assessments

All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 courses and undergraduate programmes **by Friday 9 June 2023**

Postgraduate taught course and programme results, for those candidates eligible to graduate in June 2023, **by Friday 9 June 2023**

All other postgraduate taught courses **by Friday 30 June 2023**

(c) Resit Assessments

All Level 1 to 4 and undergraduate Level 5 resit assessments **by Friday 11 August 2023**

(d) Postgraduate Taught programmes eligible to graduate in November 2023

Postgraduate Taught summer courses and programme results **by Friday 3 November 2023**.

4.2 At the meeting, however, a member of the Committee raised concerns regarding the dates and whether they provided enough time for staff to undertake marking and for Examiners' meetings to take place. As such, it was agreed that a further review of the dates would be undertaken and the UEC asked to reconsider the proposal at a later date.

4.3 The review of the proposed dates has now been undertaken, the outcome of which can be seen in detail in the table below. The table provides the proposed dates for 2022/23 alongside those approved in 2021/22 and 2020/21 and, where appropriate, a commentary on why the date listed is appropriate. In summary, however:

- Results deadlines have already been extended, as far as possible, to enable staff to undertake marking.
- Results deadlines are set to ensure:
 - The University can meet its commitment to students that feedback will be provided *'in a timely manner and normally within a maximum of three working weeks'*.
 - Results are returned in advance of students moving to the next stage of their studies, enabling this feedback to impact upon their studies and (where appropriate) course choice.
- Where possible, the decision to extend deadlines has already been agreed, in breach of our commitment to students. This is permitted to ease the burden on staff as much as possible and in instances with the least student impact (e.g., PGT students who have no course choice).
- The change to the structure of the 2022/23 academic year (the 11+2 model) will help Schools to manage marking. With a designated assessment period, Schools can opt to schedule assessment in a way that is suitable for them and for the student experience (e.g., scheduling a marking intensive exam early in this window, to optimise marking time).

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Points of Note
Start of Term	21 Sep 2020	20 Sep 2021	12 Sep 2022	Term in 2022/23 will start a week earlier, exam result deadlines reflect this.
1HS UG Results	29 Jan 2021	28 Jan 2022	20 Jan 2023	UG results are currently due 3 weeks after the conclusion of the 1HS. This is in line with our commitment to students that they will receive feedback 'in a timely manner and normally within a maximum of three working weeks'. Teaching for the 2HS begins on 23 January and although the deadline of 20 January does provide some time for students to be informed of 1HS results and to change courses, the window is very tight and could not be further shortened.
1HS PGT Results (course)	5 Feb 2021	4 Feb 2022	27 Jan 2023	PGT results are currently due 4 weeks after the conclusion of the 1HS. This is out of step with our commitment to students that they will receive feedback 'in a timely manner and normally within a maximum of three working weeks', however, is exceptionally permitted to in recognition of the very busy period for staff. To extend marking periods further would take us further from this commitment. Teaching for the 2HS begins on 23 January and although PGTs are unlikely to be changing courses, this existing deadline provides very little time for students to be informed of 1HS results and to change courses. The deadline cannot

				be further extended without breaching our commitments further. NB students will require to be informed of the timings of the return of assessment feedback.
January Start PGT Results (programme)	5 Feb 2021	4 Feb 2022	27 Jan 2023	As above, in terms of the fulfillment of our commitment that feedback will be received within a 3-week window.
2HS UG results (course & programme)	18 Jun 2021	17 Jun 2022	9 Jun 2023	This deadline allows for 4 weeks for the return of results following the conclusion of the 2HS in excess of the 3-week window we stipulate to students. This is the latest deadline by which results can be returned to allow for preparation for graduation and to enable students required to undertake resit assessments to apply to do so.
2HS PGT results (course & programme)	18 Jun 2021	17 Jun 2022	9 Jun 2023	As above, this deadline allows for 4 weeks for the return of results following the conclusion of the 2HS. In excess of the 3-week window we stipulate to students. This is the latest deadline by which results can be returned to allow for preparation for graduation and to enable students required to undertake resit assessments to apply to do so.
2HS PGT results (non-graduating)	18 Jun 2021	17 Jun 2022	16 Jun 2023	This deadline allows a very extended period of 5 weeks for the return of results in this regard.
Summer Graduation Ceremonies (w/c)	28 Jun 2021	4 Jul 2022	26 Jun 2023	
Resit Results (all levels)	20 Aug 2021	12 Aug 2022	11 Aug 2023	
PGTs Graduating in November	5 Nov 2021	4 Nov 2022	3 Nov 2023	

4.4 Overall, for the reasons stated in section 4.3 above, it is not possible to further amend the proposed dates for the return of results in academic year 2022/23. While noting the concerns raised by a member of the Committee, to ensure students can receive results in a timely way and in line with the University's commitment to its students in this regard, it will not be possible to further extend these.

4.5 Members of the UEC are therefore asked to approve the dates as listed in sections 4.1/4.3 above.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) or Emma Tough, Assistant Registrar (e.tough@abdn.ac.uk).

27 April 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ADOPTION OF THE JERUSALEM DECLARATION ON ANTISEMITISM**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is to set out the deliberations of the Race Definitions Task and Finish Group considering the feedback from a prior Senate meeting on the Group's previous proposal that the University adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Antisemitism. The paper provides an overview of the further options which were considered by the Group. The paper notes that the Group recommends that the University adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. It is noted that Senate members were invited to discuss this paper and its recommendation with colleagues in their areas in advance of the Senate meeting to inform the discussion.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Race Definitions Task and Finish Group SMT Race Equality Strategy Group	24 November 2021 and 26 January 2022 3 March 2022 7 April 2022 (via e-mail)
Further consideration/ approval required by	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee University Education Committee Court	23 May 2022 15 June 2022 28 June 2022

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Senate is invited to:

- Approve the recommendation that the University adopts the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.
- Note that, taking all consultation into account, Court will be presented with the final recommendation in June 2022.

4. DISCUSSION**4.1 OPTIONS CONSIDERED BY THE RACE DEFINITIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The [Race Definitions Task and Finish Group](#) (hereinafter referred to as the Group) had an initial remit to develop a set of definitions to be used in the University related to race and to consider and recommend whether or not the University should adopt the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) Definition of Antisemitism](#). This work was underpinned by Aberdeen 2040 and was required to support the rapid and important work undertaken by the University to address microaggressions and racist incidents highlighted through race listening activities. It was noted that the accounts shared as part of those activities indicated that while numbers of formal complaints of racism in the University were low, and none had been recorded related to antisemitism, there was a clear need to take action, particularly as sector reports produced by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) and [Universities UK](#) indicated that racism was pervasive in the Higher Education sector. It can be noted that a 2021 [report](#) by the Community Security Trust (CST) indicated an overall increase in antisemitic incidents in the UK

in the reporting period, with 84 of the reported incidents affecting Jewish students, academics or student unions (a 200% increase on the same period in the previous year). 16 of those events occurred on a UK campus or university property. The University's Antiracism Strategy, which was approved by Court in March 2022, applies to all forms of racism and its launch and implementation will seek to create environments which support staff and students to feel safe on campus.

The Group recommended in May 2021 that the University should adopt the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism, and this was supported by explanatory FAQs (which can be seen on [this page](#)) which were drafted and agreed by the Group.

Although this initial recommendation had been endorsed by SMT, Race Equality Strategy Group and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, further consultation indicated that there were concerns related to this recommendation.

Senate (at an informal meeting of Senate in September 2021 where a paper (found [here](#)) was discussed) and thereafter the Race Equality Network, identified a number of concerns associated with the proposed adoption of the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism, stating that, even with the explanatory FAQs it impinged too heavily on academic freedom and the work of academics. Senate requested that the Group review its recommendation to adopt the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism and Senate provided further helpful options for consideration by the Group.

It should be noted the University upholds academic freedom and freedom of speech in accordance with the relevant legislation. Constructive discussions at Senate and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee have resulted in further work on this being undertaken to enhance and articulate the University's commitment.

Given the feedback received, the Group reconvened in November 2021 and January 2022 to consider the options recommended by Senate and the Race Equality Network and these are outlined below. Discussions were informed by the useful discussion at Senate and a paper produced by the Race Equality Network, noting that the Network is represented on the Group by its co-chairs. It can be noted that the Group fully agreed that its principal purpose in holding these discussions was to reach agreement which would lead to enhanced feelings of safety for Jewish staff and students.

Option 1: Reaffirm the Group's initial recommendation to adopt the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

The Group had initially focused their discussion on antisemitism on the IHRA definition. This work was undertaken in response to representations from students and staff (both endorsing and opposing the IHRA definition) and was mandated by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

At its more recent meetings, the Group noted that the Jewish Students Society remained supportive of the IHRA definition and that the Group's previous work on debating the IHRA definition should not be negated. However, it was also noted that this approach had not been well-received by Senate and latterly by the Race Equality Network.

The principal concerns of Senate and the Race Equality Network related to the IHRA definition included:

- It is too vague to add meaning to the discussion on antisemitism
- It is narrow in scope and therefore does not serve to tackle discrimination against Jewish people
- It poses a threat to academic freedom and the examples contained in the definition do not mitigate this.

The Group revisited the IHRA definition and reflected that the work of academics in the University could be impacted if the IHRA definition was adopted.

It was noted that 100 UK universities had adopted the definition, however it was also noted that there had been recent high-profile cases which had resulted in academics losing their jobs, leading the Group to discuss whether the definition had become 'weaponised' in the sector. The Group considered the negative reputational impacts of such scenarios. Having reviewed external commentary and the views of Senate and the Race Equality Network, the Group concluded that, given the concerns raised, it would not be further recommending that the IHRA definition be adopted by the University.

Option 2: Develop a University of Aberdeen definition of antisemitism

The Group considered whether the University should develop its own definition of antisemitism, taking external definitions into account but aligning a definition with the University's particular preferences.

This approach could lead to a tailored definition which sought to meet the specific needs of internal stakeholders.

The challenges of this approach included the timescales involved in developing this and consulting on it, a potential difficulty in accessing the appropriate expertise and the potential misalignment with the sector and other public sector organisations. The definition would also require to be consistent with existing policies.

The Group overall concluded that it was not appropriate to 'cherry pick' aspects of external definitions nor to embark on establishing a University-specific definition which would create confusion and would not be helpful in tackling the core issue – ensuring that Jewish staff and students were safe on campus. The Group therefore rejected this option.

Option 3: Do not adopt a definition of antisemitism and continue to rely on the University's existing policies and procedures to handle complaints of antisemitism.

The Group debated whether a definition of antisemitism was required in the University. The University already has policies and procedures in place to handle complaints of racism and the launch of the forthcoming Antiracism Strategy would also promote the University's approach to handling racist incidents and creating racially inclusive environments.

The adoption of an external definition of antisemitism would not change existing policy and it would not change the process by which complaints of racism would be handled. It was not a legal requirement to adopt a definition of antisemitism and doing so would not be legally binding nor affect the University's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, the Group noted that it could be argued that a definition of antisemitism would not add substantively to the University's commitments and practices in this area.

However, it should be noted, as previously discussed by the Group, that the University did receive representations from staff and students and others (e.g., Jewish Students Society and Union of Jewish Students) who were urging the University to adopt the IHRA definition (as well as representations from individuals who were opposed to the definition such as the Stop the Wall Campaign, UCU, staff and students). This interest led the Group to affirm its position that the adoption of a definition of antisemitism would support Jewish staff and students and provide a coherent platform for addressing antisemitism. The Group agreed that it was critical that the voices of Jewish staff and students were heard, and their original concerns addressed. The Group therefore rejected this option.

Option 4: Adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism

The Group discussed the [Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism \(JDA\)](#), noting that it had not done so in initial deliberations. The Group noted that Senate and the Race Equality Network had both highlighted the benefits of the JDA in comparison to the IHRA definition. The JDA was published on 25 March 2021 and was developed largely as a response to the IHRA definition and to counteract what some saw as the failings of the IHRA definition, namely that it is said to hamper free speech and focusses on the Israeli/Palestine political issues. The JDA states that it is not intended to replace the IHRA definition and that it could be read in conjunction with it.

The JDA provides a definition of antisemitism as below:

Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish Institutions as Jewish).

The JDA also includes fifteen guidelines which are intended to support the identification of antisemitism and provide examples of antisemitic speech or conduct, particularly in relation to Israel and Palestine.

The Group noted that the JDA was perceived as providing a fairer and clearer definition and set of guidelines than those presented in the IHRA definition. The Group noted the view of the Race Equality Network that the JDA is an effective tool for opposing antisemitism and that it protects open debate about Israel and Palestine by separating the political question from the racial question. The Group noted that, in comparison, the IHRA is unclear on this point. Overall, the Group were of the view that the JDA does not prevent politically contested discussion, debate or teaching and therefore provided reassurance to academic colleagues while also raising awareness of the injustices faced by Jewish people.

Taking the views of the Race Equality Network, Senate and representations made to Race Equality Champions into account, the favoured option of the Group was the adoption of the JDA. It should be noted that the Jewish Students Society, while initially reticent to approve a recommendation that the JDA be adopted, did agree with the Group's final recommendation, noting that it was the principle of adopting a recognised definition which would help to support Jewish students to feel safe on campus. The Student Palestinian Society was supportive of the adoption of the JDA.

There are 200 signatories to the JDA, mainly comprised of the academics who developed it. The University is not aware of any universities or public-sector organisation having adopted the JDA. The Group noted therefore that its recommendation to adopt the JDA may be perceived as inconsistent with the HE sector. However, the Group noted that the University's position would be based on full consultation and therefore would reflect the views of the staff and students at the University. It was also noted that the JDA is a relatively recent development and would not have been an option for universities, largely in England, who had implemented a definition in recent years.

4.2 SENATE CONSULTATION

Senate's input to the initial discussions on a definition of antisemitism for the University was helpful and supported the further discussions of the Race Definitions Task and Finish Group as outlined in the detail above.

As part of the consultation process on the adoption of the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, Senate members were invited, by way of e-mail on 21 March 2022, to engage with colleagues in their areas on this paper. This was a critical aspect of the consultation process and would help to inform the discussion on this item at the Senate meeting on 11 May 2022.

It can be noted that wider consultation, for example with Race Equality Strategy Group and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is also being undertaken and that Court will be presented with the final recommendation in June 2022.

Senate is invited to approve the recommendation that the University adopts the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk or Janine Chalmers janine.chalmers@abdn.ac.uk

22 April 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
(TBC)

Report from the Quality Assurance Committee
(4 May 2022)

1. Presentation on Accreditations in the Business School

- 1.1 The Committee heard a presentation by Professor Stephanie Morgan on the ongoing accreditation process within the Business School. Some questions related to the associated timelines and the curriculum management processes involving Business School courses.

2. Update from the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group

- 2.1 The Committee discussed the update from the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG, noting the developed principles for consultation. Members welcomed reopening the discussions on a learning analytics dashboard and automation of the associated processes. Members sought clarity on the impacts of the monitoring processes on other factors, such as immigration compliance as well as the implications of operationalisation. The nomenclature of the new process was queried.
- 2.2 Some members discussed the rationale for good cause, and some members expressed support for retaining this. However, some members sought clarity on the use and application of good cause.

3. Transnational Education & Partnerships

(i) Partnerships and Collaborative Provision Agreements and Renewal Processes

- 3.1 The Committee approved the proposal for amendments to the International Partnerships Agreements and Renewals Processes. Members sought clarity on the extent to which this process applied to UK-based partnerships, to which it was noted a further paper will follow in this regard.

(ii) Annual Report for Persona for 2020/21

- 3.2 The Committee approved the annual report for Persona for 2020/21.

(iii) Aberdeen International Study Centre (ISC) Annual Monitoring Report for 2020/21

- 3.3 The Annual Monitoring Report for the Aberdeen International Study Centre (ISC) was discussed. Some concerns were raised regarding the lack of data and analysis of academic standards and the follow-up actions are not all represented in the action plan. Members agreed that further information would be sought, and the report considered again by circulation.

(iv) South Western University of Finance and Economics Annual Report (2020/21)

- 3.4 The Committee discussed the South Western University of Finance and Economics annual report, noting the agreement is likely to be terminated in due course due to a lack of students. Some concerns were raised regarding tracking students within the partnership. Discussions would be held with the Deputy Academic Registrar responsible for Student Information

Systems in this regard. Members agreed that further information would be sought, and the report considered again by circulation.

(v) Chongqing Nanfang Translator's College Annual Report (2020/21)

- 3.5 The Committee discussed the Chongqing Nanfang Translators' College annual report, noting some concerns regarding the reporting of data. Members agreed the reporting template would be updated to include a tabular summary of data. Members also raised concerns with regard to the lack of consistency between report authors and the means by which achievement of students is discussed. Members agreed that further information would be sought and the report considered again by circulation.

(vi) South China Normal University Articulation Partnership Report 2020/21

- 3.6 The Committee approved the report, noting some concerns pertaining to the percentage of first-class degrees awarded. Members agreed to include the previous three year's degree classifications in the updated report template to ensure oversight of trends.

- 3.7 The Committee noted the work ongoing with the Business School related to the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (or CSCSE) requirements.

(vii) TML Education Ltd. Shanghai Partnership Report 2020/21

- 3.7 The Committee approved the report for TML Education Ltd., Shanghai, noting the issue of infrastructure was detailed in the report and will be followed up with the School.

(viii) Qatar Campus Annual Report for 2020/21

- 3.8 The Committee discussed the Qatar Campus annual report, noting a lack of data pertaining to pass rates and degree outcomes. Members suggested comparisons between 'Aberdeen' and 'Qatar' students would be useful. In relation to consultation with respective Schools, members suggested that all Schools involved in the delivery of education in Qatar should be consulted, ensuring the report is collectively owned. Members agreed that further information would be sought and the report considered again by circulation.

4. Revisions to Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 The Revisions to Academic Misconduct Policies and Procedures were approved.

5. Update to Institutional Guidance on Data Handling for Examiners' Meetings

- 5.1 The Committee approved the updated guidance on Data Handling for Examiners' Meetings within the Academic Quality Handbook.

6. Academic Year 2022/23

- 6.1 The Committee noted the paper on Academic Year 2022/23, while some clarity was sought on the assessment period and the perception that there was not a dedicated PGT assessment window.

7. QAA Subject Benchmark Statements

- 7.1 The Committee noted the update on the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements.

8. Operation of Examiners' Meetings

8.1 The Committee noted the updated guidance on the Operation of Examiners' Meetings.

9. Action required

9.1 The UEC is asked to note items 1 to 8 above.

10. Further information

10.1 Further information may be obtained from Ruth Taylor, Interim Convenor of QAC (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) or Liam Dyker, Clerk to QAC (liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk).

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Report from the EMPLOYABILITY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE

25th May 2022**1. Minutes, Matters Arising and Review of Action Log**

1.1: Minutes Approved

1.2: No outstanding actions

2. Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills

John gave verbal update on Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills progression. Initial data analysis has taken place and shared via circulation with committee. Going forward John Barrow to work closely with Kate Robertson (lead of the Enhanced Transcript Review TFG) as both parties are seeing overlaps in their work.

3. Careers Readiness

Career Readiness form is in its final stages of revision. Showcased the 169 responses so far and discussed initial ways that the data will be used to inform decisions taken both in terms of Careers and Employability Service provision and individual school responses. (Power BI type dashboard to present all the data for schools to interact with). It is still the decision that the current form will only go out to UG students.

4. Adding Value through Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education Collaborative Project

John gave verbal update on this collaborative project. One of the goals of this project is to give students the tools and skills required to be “entrepreneurial”, not necessarily to make all students “entrepreneurs”. Request for anyone with case studies relating to entrepreneurial or enterprise to be sent to John.

5. Work Placement Task and Finish Group

Tracey gave verbal update on the status of the group who have recently submitted a paper to SMT with recommendations based on the work completed. The paper seeks to understand what level of ambition the University has regarding work-based learning which will help inform the resource requirement to help with upscaling.

6. School of Law (internal) EEC

Alisdair MacPherson shared with the committee that the School of Law have created an Employability and Entrepreneurship Co-Curriculum Committee (EECC) which in some ways is a replacement of what was the longstanding employer liaison committee. The committee have their own focused remit which will include the dissemination of information from EEC and allow them to consider action school specific implementations.

7. Graduate Outcome (GO) Data Leads

John shared the overview and requirements of the GO Data Leads for School Representatives taking on the role.

8. Careers & Employability Service Co-curriculum

Due to time constraints this will be discussed via circulation/TEAMS channel.

9. AOB

Three-year partnership with the Wood Foundation secured for Social Justice Internships (£50,000 per year for 3 years). Once the formal paperwork is completed Tracey will bring this item back to the committee for wider discussions.

23 June 2022

UEC/230622/014b

Further information may be obtained from Tracey Innes (t.innes@abdn.ac.uk), John Barrow (j.barrow@abdn.ac.uk) or Alisdair McKibben (amckibben@abdn.ac.uk).

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
(23 June 2022)

**Report from the Student Support
Committee**
(19 May 2022)

1. Welcome and Chairs' Update

- 1.1 Nick Edwards (NE) opened the meeting and welcomed members to the seventh meeting of the Student Support Committee (SSC). Abbe Brown (AB) noted that a meeting took place earlier in the day looking at reviewing the Carers policy. The current Student Carers policy was scheduled for review in 2018 but this has been delayed. The review will incorporate a policy for staff carers. AB advised that in collaboration with John Barrow an action plan is being developed in relation to widening access, race, and mature students around progression, attainment, and outcomes. AB and NE noted that this is the last meeting of the SSC at which the current AUSA sabbatical vice-presidents will attend; AB and NE thanked Ondrej Kucerak (OK) and Ivana Drdakova (ID) on behalf of the Committee for their work and contributions.
- 1.2 NE highlighted additional posts within Student Support which will be advertised soon. There will be two new Graduate Trainee roles. More information will be provided on the revised structure of the Student Support team in advance of the new academic year and details will be provided as to how staff can sign post students to access support from the team. These new roles will provide welcome additional resource to the team.

2. Approval of the minute of the SSC held on 21 March 2022

- 2.1 Members of the Committee approved the Minute of the fifth meeting of the SSC held on 21 March 2022.

3. Approval of the minute of the SSC held on 07 April 2022

- 3.1 Members of the Committee approved the Minute of the extraordinary meeting of the SSC held on 07 Apr 2022.

4. Neurodiversity Policy

- 4.1 Janine Chalmers (JC) provided members of the Committee with an overview of the policy which has been developed to raise awareness of neurodiversity and the experience of staff and students who are neurodiverse. It offers support to staff working with staff and students who are neurodiverse. The policy will be implemented through an awareness raising campaign, including social media campaigns, and training (online and in-person). The policy will also be promoted on neurodiversity awareness days. The policy has been through a number of groups, including the Staff Disability Network and the Disabled Students' Forum to ensure that we take into consideration the lived experience view as much as possible. JC welcomed comments from members of the Committee and noted that the policy will be discussed at the PARC meeting the following week.
- 4.2 Members of the Committee welcomed and endorsed the policy and provided feedback aimed to provide clarity for students and staff. It is hoped that the policy will ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities to support neurodiverse students and implement reasonable adjustment appropriately.
- 4.3 NE added that clarity will be provided when promoting the policy that the disability specialists within the Student Support team are professional experts in assessing the study-related needs

of disabled students in collaboration with colleagues in the sector such as Educational Psychologists and academic colleagues, where required. Mary Pryor (MP) noted that the Student Learning Service (in CAD) has expertise in working with neuro-diverse students on academic skills

- 4.4 Members of the Committee discussed the positive tone of the policy and the nature of the use of the term disability. It was noted that a number of neurodiverse people will recognise that they are disabled and will find the term empowering. The University has a role in removing the stigma around the term disability. Legislation is restrictive in the use of terminology, and we need to get to the point of balance where everyone who wants/needs to access support feels comfortable doing so whether they consider themselves to be disabled or not.
- 4.5 Members of the Committee agreed to share further specific feedback on language and the statistics referenced to JC.

5. Reflections on Widening Access Internal Audit report

- 5.1 Alison Jenkinson (AJ) introduced the internal audit report which was recently conducted by an external organisation. There were five findings which were classed as low risk. A number of areas of good practice were highlighted. AJ summarised the key findings and those that are relevant to the SSC.
- 5.2 In addition to the audit being undertaken, a review of widening access processes is being undertaken. Approval was recently granted for a widening access positioning paper reviewing the metrics that we have been using to look at widening access, with a view to broaden SIMD20 being a key metric, to using free school meals, which is much more applicable and appropriate for our local, regional challenges. We are in the early stages of developing our widening access strategy which is recognised in the audit report.
- 5.3 The key message in the first finding is that we are being asked to put a timeline to developing our strategy, which sits under the Aberdeen 2040 strategy and is clearly interlinked with the strategy. It is hoped that a draft of the strategy will be produced over the next month. This will be circulated for feedback and comment. The governance of where the strategy will go is being considered.
- 5.4 The second low risk finding is in relation to linking in with our outcome agreement information. Consideration is being given to the impact and evaluation of our activities. We are viewing this as the stage after the strategy development, focussing on action and implementation, and will link this in with the outcome agreement requirements.
- 5.5 The third finding is around data; there are significant data challenges around widening access data which impacts not just on the number of students coming in, but also on data such as retention and degree outcomes etc. There are areas flagged for various parts of the University to try to enhance our effective data collection.
- 5.6 The fourth finding is around updating the website and some paperwork; these actions have been completed.
- 5.7 The fifth finding is the most relevant to SSC; the actions sit with the VP for Education and the Director of Academic Services and Online Education and focuses on early withdrawals. The audit criteria covers widening access recruitment and the first few weeks of retention or non-continuation of students who enter the University. There are some actions in relation to this which have been started and are part of the ongoing discussion about data collection and analysis of the data around non-continuation. The hope is to expand the information to have more detail on widening access students and their progress.

- 5.8 There was a SFC publication released yesterday on national widening access data and this information will be circulated to committees in due course. The key headline to flag to SSC, is that the University of Aberdeen is second in Scotland for the retention of SIMD20 students from year 1 to year 2 and we are third for overall retention. The data is therefore looking very strong; this matches our own data and shows that we are performing very well nationally in our ability to retain students, and particularly to retain SIMD20 widening access students, which is a key metric used by the Scottish Government.
- 5.9 Members of the Committee commented that it is great to see a report which highlights low risk findings and actions required.
- 5.10 Members of the Committee asked if the agenda of the review incorporates consideration to the accommodation of refugees and migrants as students within the University. AJ noted that refugee status and asylum seekers are considered under the contextualised admissions process. The University takes our responsibility to be open to all very seriously and we are including all the contextualised admissions criteria in our work but when it comes to the institution and how we are monitored externally, it is a much narrower criteria as detailed in the information identified as targets.
- 5.11 SM added that the outcome agreement was narrowed over the last 2 years to ensure that Universities could meet these and that the reporting of progress could be completed effectively due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The criteria were wider previously.

6. Code of Practice on Student Discipline

- 6.1 NE introduced the paper which provides an update on the work of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline TFG. The paper outlines the main comments received on the first draft which was shared in the March meeting of the SSC.
- 6.2 One small amendment which will be made to the draft, is clarity on the link between the University's halls of residence and the accommodation contracts, and some of things that may be regarded as misconduct under the terms of our accommodation contract. Clarity will be provided to reflect that we may be able to deal with some situations without going through the formal conduct process.
- 6.3 The next steps for the work of the TFG will be to share the updated draft with members of the Senior Management Team, external members will be consulted, and the information will be shared with colleagues in Student Services including the Student Support Leads group at other institutions to allow for benchmarking. The code will then progress through the governance structure at the next available opportunity, and it will hopefully be considered for formal approval at Court shortly in the new academic year.
- 6.4 Members of the Committee noted that in the Code there is helpful detail on who can be involved at the disciplinary level but there does not seem to be information about who can undertake the role of Case Manager and Investigator. NE highlighted information is provided about the level of staff who can undertake the role of an Investigator; the idea being that it is based on staff grade and the severity of the offence, but it could be any staff member both within the School environment and Professional Services. The key thing that will be offered going forward is training to those who are involved. These training opportunities may be advertised. The Case Manager role will be covered initially by the Directorate of People and will be an administrative role.
- 6.5 Members of the Committee discussed whether there was a clear policy around how we manage the long-term implications of the decisions made under the code, such as in the provision of references for students. This will be reflected on further. In most cases we would

not reference a situation handled under the Code unless the student had been expelled from the University.

- 6.6 Members of the Committee noted that shadowing cases can be a useful approach to support training and NE noted that the support provided to the Investigating Officer team will be different to the way it is currently offered, to ensure that we achieve consistency in relation to decisions made. Similarly, those who are involved in a panel will be provided with the opportunity to observe a panel before they are present on a panel. The training and support for individuals involved in the process is being considered.
- 6.7 NE advised that members of the Committee were welcome to email him after the meeting with any further comments or questions.

7. Degree Classifications report

- 7.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the Degree Classifications report. AB advised that the report has been considered at UEC, SMT and Senate. It sets out which students at UG level have achieved a good honours degree. Further analysis will be carried out and there will be ongoing annual results. SSC will have a key role in the progression of this work. AB asked for members to reflect on this information and to provide comment.
- 7.2 NE asked for ideas from members of the Committee on what more the University can be doing in relation to this area. Members were asked to provide comment over the summer.
- 7.3 Members of the Committee asked about the School breakdowns and whether the information is fully disaggregated and available. NE highlighted that the University has a significant amount of data available, which is not hidden, but it can be challenging to communicate the information effectively. NE noted that if staff feel it would be helpful to have data broken down at a local level, this can be highlighted to the SSC and can then be raised with the planning team. NE noted that it may already exist at a local level in Power BI. Members of the Committee to provide comments to NE/AB/Clerk,
- 7.4 AB suggested that a light summer work group could be convened to explore this area further.

8. Non-continuation report

- 8.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the non-continuation report. The predecessors of this report were the papers referred to in the widening access audit.
- 8.2 SSC will take responsibility to develop an overall action plan for the next academic year, identifying issues arising, current practice, additional actions, responsible persons, timelines, and measures for impact. A significant amount of informal work has already been undertaken in this area. There is a readmissions group, which is working informally and collaboratively to look at how we effectively support students who are withdrawing from their studies and how we can support them to return. There is potentially a gap in the decision-making process around how we permit students to return and the formal support available. This ultimately stretches into everything that we do to enable students to feel comfortable, to belong at the University, and to effectively engage with their studies. There is wider work noted in the audit paper in relation to the possibility of a cross University focus on the student journey, the particular vulnerabilities, the support offered, and the support that we may wish to enhance. More information will be provided to SSC as this progresses.
- 8.3 Of particular importance and priority for SSC is to consider specific groups of students, building on the widening access work that AB and John Barrow are leading, focussing on mature, race

and widening access students. We should consider why students in these groups choose not to continue, why they are not achieving as well as they might, and if there are particular references to certain Schools with higher and lower non-continuation. SSC should consider what action should be taken in this area. AB noted that a working group should be established to focus on this area, to progress this vital work. AB asked members of the Committee for their thoughts and comments.

- 8.4 NE suggested that as a first step an oral update is provided to UEC in relation to the proposed subgroup and if the Committee agrees, SSC can undertake an in-depth review of this area. NE asked whether comparator data across the sector is available. There was discussion that this is potentially commercially sensitive and therefore it is not widely shared. AJ advised SFC published a report yesterday looking at retention rates across the country which was focussed on SIMD 20. The SFC publishes the institutional overall retention rates but only for Scottish students, however this may provide a comparator.
- 8.5 AB commented that data is recorded for certain purposes by the University, such as for HESA and SFC, but we are also trying to record other forms data. A report from SSC may lead to the capturing of other forms of valuable data to evidence our recommendations.
- 8.6 Chairs to set up a working group to consider this area in more detail, including common themes and trends and where this interacts with different processes and policies. A report will then be provided to UEC at the start of the next Committee cycle in September.

9. Class Representative Review

- 9.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from Ondrej Kucerak (OK) on the Class Representative review. OK provided a phase one update to the SSC in a previous meeting. Following this discussion, a number of outstanding topics, recommendations and questions were highlighted. The review group have explored these areas with student and staff focus groups. Areas explored were around recruitment, role and purpose, communication, training, and development.
- 9.2 The review group has been speaking to students about their experiences of being a class representatives and how the system works overall. The feedback received highlighted issues with clarity of the role across the institution, whether the representatives are per course or per year; this has implications for the timing of elections and selection. This has also led to challenges around representatives having time to effectively gather feedback and carry out their duties. Difficulties were also highlighted in relation to accessing training and the level of usefulness of the training; recommendations have been made in relation to improving this. Students also mentioned that contacting their own classmates can be a barrier to obtaining effective feedback; this has been raised with staff and students to explore solutions.
- 9.3 The diversity of programmes and how these are delivered has posed challenges. The review group are still looking to provide recommendations on the system as a whole and they hope in many instances to only have one recommendation per area, but the group have recognised that there will likely be instances where they will be required to make two different recommendations and ask Schools to choose the recommendation which would work most effectively for their context. The hope is for Schools to achieve some consistency across the UG and PG programmes.
- 9.4 The aim is to implement changes in time for the new academic year; due to the current timeframes, it is not possible for one-to-one conversations to take place with all of the Schools to explore what would work best for them and therefore it is likely that the review and the recommendations will be finalised in the first half session of the new academic year. The outcomes will therefore be implemented in the following academic year (2023/24). It is hoped this will provide Schools with ample time to prepare for the recommended changes. The next

step is for AB and OK (or OK's successor) to speak with the Schools, to map out what would work in each Schools' context.

- 9.5 AB noted a point raised at the Global Accessibility Day in relation to class representatives highlighting accessibility and inclusion needs to the Course Coordinators; perhaps this area could be enhanced in the training offered to representatives. OK is developing a workshop for the Enhancement Theme conference focussing on issues of equity, which may progress this area.

10 NSS Response Rates

- 10.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the NSS Response Rates. AB noted that the paper provided was strictly confidential. The paper sets out where we are so far in relation to the NSS survey which has recently been completed. The University is keen to ensure that as many students as possible participate in the survey. The Student Experience Team and other colleagues have undertaken a great deal of work to encourage students to complete the survey. The final institutional response rate was 67.8% which is 3.25% higher than the previous year's response rate, which is positive.
- 10.2 Plans for encouraging participation in next years' NSS will be underway soon. This will be discussed at the NSS Steering Group and will be discussed at the SSC.
- 10.3 An important point to note is that the results of the survey will be published on 6th July 2022. Committee meetings for the NSS have been set for July to disseminate results and to start to consider responses in the short and longer term.
- 10.4 OK suggested that for the courses which have less than 15 students, whether it would be possible for them to be joined up with another course in the School, with similar numbers. With small numbers, the response rate needs to be very high (90-100%) for the feedback to be reported. These targets are unrealistic and will lead to valuable data being lost. AB advised that she would follow up on this with relevant colleagues.
- 10.5 AB advised that substantive work would take place over the summer reflecting on the results and how we respond to these. This will be considered at the SSC meeting scheduled for the start of the new academic year.

11. School and Directorate ASES and NSS Actions

- 11.1 Prior to the meeting, members of the Committee were asked to provide reflections or key learnings from their School/Directorates from either surveys, and to share any examples of good practice in the actions undertaken in response to the survey feedback, with the Committee.
- 11.2 AB noted that there is a template which is being used by some Schools to respond to feedback received in the NSS which may be employed further in the new academic year for the ASES and NSS actions.
- 11.3 AB highlighted that the University had received feedback about the role of Personal Tutors and students being unclear about this. Through orientation, support for PTs and enhanced resources, the School has worked to ensure that everyone knows about the role of PTs. This has also informed the wider, pastoral review which is being undertaken. This is an ongoing journey. The feedback from the survey has provided a valuable prompt to address this issue.
- 11.4 Jemma Murdoch (JM) highlighted that there is work to be done in relation to Student Support about the questions we are asking in the surveys. One piece of feedback received was around appointment wait times which the team has reflected on; much of this will have been affected

by resource issues and new resource has been approved for the Student Advice & Support Team; new Advisers have recently been employed, which will reduce waiting times for appointments. The team have also enhanced their duty advice service and cross training has been undertaken so that all team members across the different specialisms within the team, can answer urgent questions from students so that they do not need to wait for an answer from a specialist adviser in an appointment, thus reducing the waiting time for the query to be answered. Feedback was also received around the hardship application process and the team are in the process of developing an online application which will make the process much quicker and more straightforward for students and staff. The online application will also be more accessible. JM added that when reading the survey comments, it is clear that students are not always sure of the services offered by Student Support and therefore it has been identified that work is required around clarity of what the team does, including online biographies for team members. A journey map is being considered to detail what students can expect when accessing support from the team. It seems that many students do not understand what happens when accessing support and who information is shared with. Clarity around the specialist services provided will be helpful.

- 11.5 Members of the Committee noted that the approval of appointing more colleagues as part of the Student Support team is extremely promising and noted strong agreement with the provision of more clarity for what to expect from Student Support. Members of the Committee noted their thanks for the support provided to students and staff.
- 11.6 NE advised that he is keen to ensure that members of the Student Support team can visit the Qatar campus to meet with staff, so that they are able to manage situations locally in a more confident way. More clarity will be provided on the breadth of professional services available.
- 11.7 NE added that this discussion was helpful and may be revisited at future SSC meetings. Members of the Committee are welcome to bring points forward to the Chairs and Clerk.

Application made for University of Aberdeen to become a University of Sanctuary

- 12.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB in relation to the application made for the University to become a University of Sanctuary. The application has been submitted, which reflects a significant amount of work, and we are now awaiting feedback on the application. Once feedback has been provided, the group will visit the University to determine whether the work we are currently undertaking ensures that we are supporting individuals seeking sanctuary for whatever reason. This will require us to demonstrate that we have the needs of these individuals embedded in our work, including in our admissions, funding, and scholarships processes, and that we have a learning culture. The work that we do in relation to peer support and the approaches we take in teaching, such as the aim to decolonise the curriculum, have been noted in our application. The current offering of support in relation to the war in Ukraine and Afghanistan have been detailed in the application.
- 12.2 AB asked for questions or comments from members of the Committee. She noted that if anyone would like to become involved there are projects being undertaken to support people affected by war on a more social basis in the forthcoming weeks. The group are looking to set up a student-led STAR award. They have been in touch with all the Schools and are looking to meet with Directorates. If anyone would like to know more about the work being undertaken, please contact AB.
- 12.3 Members of the Committee noted that their support for this initiative and agreed that this is not merely about scholarships but that this should be one of the key areas for consideration.
- 12.4 Members of the Committee asked if the Admissions team at central and School levels, are aware of the work being undertaken as they are at the frontline making admissions decisions

and receiving enquiries about the support available.

12.5 AB confirmed that scholarships are available. Fine tuning is taking place on the information which will be added to the University website in relation to this. Two scholarships per year across the University at UG or PG will be available, which will include a full fee waiver and funds for maintenance, but this needs to be considered in terms of benefits available to students and the impact a scholarship award may have on these payments. Consideration is also being given to other forms of funding available such as the University's discretionary fund. Accommodation for students and their family members may also be provided.

12.6 AB advised that the work was started by the UG Admissions Team working with the Development Trust who have funds available to support initiatives. International Admissions colleagues are now involved in the work being undertaken as individuals may still be out with the UK. Centrally at the Admissions level there is a significant awareness and a tremendous amount of expertise. One of the reasons the group are speaking with Schools is to raise awareness as queries can be received by anyone; it is therefore essential that all staff aware of the work being undertaken in this area and what is available.

13. AOCB

13.1 No items were raised by Members of the Committee.

14. Reflection on this meetings' discussion regarding equality, diversity, inclusion, health, safety, and wellbeing.

14.1 Members of the Committee noted the positive discussion around neurodiversity. No other comments were received from SSC members.

15. Reflection on Aberdeen 2040 Updates on Operational Plan

15.1 NE noted that much of the work highlighted in the meeting today is factored into the discussion of the meetings with UEC which focus on Aberdeen 2040.

16. Reflection on SSC Task and Finish Groups

16.1 AB advised that the work of the Monitoring and Pastoral Review TFGs is ongoing, and the groups will meet again in the coming days with a view to provide information to Senate at the start of the new academic year, and then coming back for a more formal journey through the Committees.

17. Action required

17.1 The UEC is asked to note items 1 to 12 and 14 to 16 above.

18. Further Information

18.1 Further information may be obtained from Abbe Brown (abbe.brown@abdn.ac.uk), Nick Edwards (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk) or Lesley Muirhead (l.muirhead@abdn.ac.uk).

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

EDUCATION DATA REPORT CALENDAR 2022/23

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The paper outlines a plan for the dissemination of data reports relating to internal and external education data for the 2022/23 academic year cycle.

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

The UEC is invited to note the proposed cycle of data reports on education data for 2022/23.
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4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Throughout the academic year cycle there are numerous releases on education data. This paper outlines the timeline for such data releases and when analytical reports can be produced by the Data & Business Intelligence team in the Directorate of Planning. This will help inform when analytical reports can be expected to be considered by all appropriate groups and committees. Dates may be subject to change should external agencies alter their timetables.

5. CALENDAR: EDUCATION DATA RELEASE DATES AND INTENDED LATEST REPORT DATES

Data releases	Report dates
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GO – Graduate Outcomes, NSS – National Student Survey, Wd – Withdrawals,
DC – Degree Classifications, NC – Non-Completions

Date	Area	Action	Notes
30 th June 2022	GO	Graduate Outcomes 2022 (2019/20 cohort) Sector data release by HESA	Latest date for HESA release of sector GO data to HeidiPlus platform
6 th July 2022	NSS	NSS 2022 Results data release by NSS	Confirmed date
8 th July 2022	NSS	NSS 2022 Initial Analytical Report (circulated)	Intended latest circulation date for the initial NSS analysis.
31 st July 2022	GO	Graduate Outcomes 2022 (2019/20 cohort) Report	Intended latest circulation date for the GO analysis.
8 th August 2022	NSS	NSS 2022 Expanded Analytical Report	Intended latest circulation date for the expanded NSS analysis.
31 st August 2023	Wd	End-of-Year 2021/22 Withdrawals Report	Intended latest circulation date for the withdrawals analysis to cover whole academic year to 31 st Jul 2022.

13 th January 2023	Wd	In-Year 2022/23 Withdrawals Report	Intended latest circulation date for the withdrawals analysis to cover the first half of the academic year to 31 st Dec 2022.
12 th February 2023	DC	Degree Classifications 2021/22 data release by HESA	Date based on last year's release of data to the HeidiPlus platform.
28 th February 2023	DC	Degree Classifications 2021/22 Report	Intended latest circulation date for the Degree Classifications analysis.
28 th February 2023	NC	Non-Continuation 2021/22 (Internal Data) Report	Intended latest circulation date for the Non-Continuation analysis for previous year.
31 st August 2023	Wd	End-of-Year 2022/23 Withdrawals Report	Intended latest circulation date for the withdrawals analysis to cover whole academic year to 31 st Jul 2023.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) and Chris Souter, Head of Data and Business Intelligence (chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk).

27 May 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ASSESSMENT in respect of “Delivery of Teaching and Learning in Academic Year 22/3”**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

The purpose of the paper is to share with UEC the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Assessment in respect of “Delivery of Teaching and Learning in Academic Year 22/3”.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by		
Further consideration/ approval required by	EDIC	29 August 22

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

This paper is provided for information and UEC is invited to note the EQIA.
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4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been prepared in respect of “Delivery of Teaching and Learning in Academic Year 22/3”. The EQIA is attached as Annex A.
- 4.2 An advanced draft of the EQIA was shared by the Equality and Disability Adviser with the Leads of the University staff and student equality networks, and their feedback has been incorporated.
- 4.3 **In summary, some equality, diversity and inclusion issues** were identified of a return to campus without an accompanying online path, alongside the benefits which have also been identified of the return to campus which have been stressed, including by the Scottish Government. Steps are being taken to manage these issues, particularly through Principle 5 of the Principles for delivery of Education 22/3. This reflects the University’s commitment to avoiding a loss of the benefits gained from blended learning and to inclusion.
- 4.4 The EQIA will be reviewed in December 2022 and UEC will be updated.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Abbe Brown (Dean, Student Support), abbe.brown@abdn.ac.uk.

20 June 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment

Title of Policy, Procedure, or Function: Delivery of Teaching and Learning in Academic Year 22/3	
School/Directorate: University wide	
Author/Position: Professor Abbe E. L. Brown, Dean for Student Support, member of University Education Committee	Date created: May-June 22

1. Aims and purpose of Policy, Procedure, or Function:

University Education Committee preparation for AY 2022-3 as the University, with the rest of society and in line with Scottish Government decisions, embraces a return to on campus teaching (save for our on-demand students).

This work builds on that of the Blended Learning Task and Finish Group (BLITFG) with this work becoming embedded from November 2020 in the University Committee for Teaching and Learning (UCTL) (BLITFG/171120/003).

The BLITFG papers include the EQIA of February 2021. Since May 2021 the UCTL [has been replaced by the University Education Committee](#) (UEC). The EQIA of August 2021 and January 22 can be accessed via the UEC webpages UEC 180122 010a and b.

Previous EQIAs have been noted by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Discussions are ongoing regarding the sharing on these EQIA's on the University's [EQIA page](#).

2. Stakeholders:

All staff involved in developing and delivering across the Education remit, all undergraduate and postgraduate students (present and prospective), external partners, all professional services colleagues, Senior Management Team, University Court

3. Additional Consultation/Involvement

Organisation/person consulted or involved	Date, method, and by whom	Location of consultation records
Fortnightly meetings between Vice-Principal for Education and School Education Leads (moving to weekly when circumstances require)	On Teams, exploring delivery of teaching and learning for academic year 22/3 in the light of ongoing health and policy developments and Scottish Government decisions.	Working notes of colleagues who attended.

Staff	<p>Evaluation of blended learning data and reflection on how good practice and experiences from blended learning can be more embedded into future teaching and learning</p> <p>Communications sent by University to staff, including through email and ezine regarding ongoing delivery of Education during 22/3: 7</p>	<p>Surveys, focus groups, UCTL 9 March 2021 (UCTL/030321/003) UEC 25 May 2021 (UEC/250521/006) UEC 23 June 2021 (UEC/230621/014) and UEC 10 Dec 2021 (UEC101221/010)</p> <p>https://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/coronavirus/news/index.php</p>
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	<p>April (message sent to students)</p> <p>stating “for the new academic year all students registered for on-campus programmes will be expected to return to campus and there will no longer be an alternative study online option”, the Principles of delivery was teaching were being developed and would be shared with Senate and that work was</p>	
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	<p>ongoing regarding ventilation of teaching spaces and timetabling, and that arrangements for staff or student absence should be managed through our existing procedures.</p>	
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<p>Delivery of Education Task and Finish Group consideration of AY22/3 and Principles for delivery</p>	<p>Remit to develop a framework for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment for the University of Aberdeen which aims to enhance the student learning experience through educational approaches that capitalise on the best assets of campus-based, digital, workplace-based, international and other forms of learning.</p>	<p>Interim Report UEC/170222/008 considered at Aberdeen 2040 UEC 17 February 2022</p> <p>Principles presented to Senate for academic view on 16 March 22</p> <p>Plans for Delivery of Education for Academic Year 22/3 UEC/1304222.007a and Annex A considered at Campus Planning Group 30 March 22, Quality Assurance Committee 30 March 22, Senior Management Team 31 March 22, Aberdeen 2040 UEC 13 April 2022 and Senate 11 May 22.</p> <p>First phase delivered principles for 22/3 including 'Assessment should be authentic and efficient'; and 'Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity.'</p> <p>Principle 5</p> <p>Provide teaching, learning and assessment that ensures that students are not disadvantaged or directly/indirectly discriminated against, with the aim of providing students with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear communication of all course expectations (e.g. assessment requirements, modes of delivery) at the outset; • development of accessible and inclusive online content (with captioning); • present information in multiple ways where appropriate • ensure responsiveness to student needs as part of an approach that emphasises the student
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Welcome Week Team	Regular meetings	Notes of attendees and minutes

Students	<p>Coms to students notably 7 April 22 (see summary above in staff box).</p> <p>Providing also that Schools will provide students over the summer with more information of what to expect for teaching and learning experience and opportunities for peer assisted learning and socialising</p>	<p>https://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/coronavirus/news/index.php</p>
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Inclusive Practitioners group	Monthly meetings exploring captioning, assessment timing, library support, accessibility information, prearrival coms and videos, wellbeing, student creation of accessible documents and accessibility for students, Accessibility and Inclusive Framework for Education	Minutes of meeting held by colleagues and circulated through TEAM chat from meeting
Centre for Academic Development and School Directors of Education	2-3 monthly meetings including discussion of captioning, content advice, inclusion, timing and nature of assessments, Accessibility and Inclusive Framework for Education	Informal records of colleagues

Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum	<p>Quarterly meetings</p> <p>Peer support checkins for pastoral leads every 2 weeks</p> <p>Counselling session once a term</p>	Minutes and papers of Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum TEAM, emails and posts between colleagues
Inclusion TEAM	<p>Ongoing informal group of colleagues with interest in this, including all School Disability Coordinators and meeting to share practice and experience</p> <p>30 March 2022</p>	MS TEAM posts including follow up from meeting

<p>Involvement in/reflecting on sector discussion</p>	<p>Vice-Principal for Education meets fortnightly with Wesley Group.</p> <p>Team members attend and present at a wide range of external meetings (Wonkhe, Advance HE, Universities UK, Carers Trust, AMOSSE, National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, Scottish Disability Leads Network, All Party Parliamentary Group on Education) to inform the work of the group and reflecting on research and benchmarking exercises which they have</p>	<p>Documents and details are shared by emails, MS TEAMS, and feeding into discussion, UEC papers, Principles and Accessibility and Inclusion in Education Framework</p>
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	carried out. Written reports are considered eg by Wonkhe, Hannover, NADP, JISC, Higher Education Policy Institute, Advance HE Leadership Intelligence, “Arriving at Thriving” and contribution to work of Fair Access Commissioner.	

a) Brief summary of results of consultation indicating how this has affected the Policy, Procedure, or Function

Preparation for and delivery of teaching and learning in AY 22/23 continues to draw on the issues, dialogue and challenge explored in the past and in its EQIAs referred to above.

The decision to return to on campus teaching reflects the [Scottish Government decisions notably of 14 March 22](#) and to new stay at home guidance of from 1 May 22 <https://www.gov.scot/news/new-stay-at-home-guidance-published/> . The removal of a parallel online path also reflects the workload challenges (as was also noted in the Sustainability open session on 25 April 22).

Principle 3 of the Scottish Government 14 March recognises that restrictions on in-person teaching/learning have been harmful for many students and that it is the responsibility of institutions to determine the appropriate balance between in-person and online teaching/learning, according to their individual institutional needs and circumstances.

The University make staff and students aware in April 22 (see consultation summary) that teaching and learning would be on campus with no option for an online path, that details would be provided over the summer and that

Principles were being developed about delivery of teaching (see consultation).

Alongside the benefits of a return to on campus teaching, the possibility for this to lead to a loss of the benefits for many students which resulting from blended learning, particularly around flexibility, has long been recognised and the University is committed to avoiding this. There was discussion about this with the Vice-Principal for Education at the AUSA AGM on 12 May 22. Principle 5 for delivery in 22/3 is “ensuring accessibility and inclusion” and the Principles [website](#) addresses this [specifically](#).

Full details of how this is being approached for all students, in relation to teaching and learning and related areas, now follow. Responses in relation to specific characteristics come later in the document.

Resources are being developed to support staff and all students, including regarding captioning, release of slides in advance of sessions and exploring inclusive, authentic forms of assessment (including through a TESTA trial) and academic integrity. FAQs from inclusion and blended learning are being updated and will be added to this page and the [Framework](#) will be linked to

this page. Template documents for course guides are being updated to further embed guidance and issues for consideration in delivery of inclusive and accessible teaching and learning. Regular sessions are being held and will be held through 22/3 as part of both the Principles and the Framework to supporting staff in exploring new possibilities, including opportunities for integrating digital opportunities into teaching. The Framework and its Reflection Document provide an ongoing tool for consideration of content, delivery and assessment.

Inclusion was an important theme of the Learning and Teaching Symposium 2022 with key contributions made by students. A blog is being prepared to share the variety of ways in which inclusion can be delivered. Events were held throughout Global Accessibility Awareness Day in 22 and to raise awareness and begin conversations about possible new practices for staff and students.

Funding support for video captioning support will be available for AY 22/3 and the following year and requests have been made for Panopto to be updated to make it easier for students to obtain a transcript. Guidance has

been provided in the meantime as to how this can be done and will be shared on Toolkit.

Transition and orientation is key for all students and there is close planning between the University and AUSA to have a strong campus focus and resources also being availability online for revisiting/in case students are unable to attend sessions.

New systems and deadlines have been put in place to ensure that students should arrive physically in Aberdeen early in the term and consideration is being given for School and central orientation (such as engaging with alumni and the possibility of non English language introductions, toolkit, clarifying expectations about engagement with studies and use of University email, availability of student support, including regarding disability and the student learning service) to assist students.

The summer school/bridging programme for this year is available to all students, for no fee.

A pilot of a checklist “reminder” of key points raised in orientation will be launched a few weeks into term.

Orientation and the Professional Skills course for new UG and PGT includes inclusion strands, exploring that fact that University brings the opportunity to engage with people with different backgrounds and views and how to engage with and benefit from this. Updated etiquette guidelines have been re-issued.

There is ongoing work regarding progression, degree classification awards and employability with a focus on Widening Access, Race and Mature students; regard will be had to means of delivery of education and support into and within it.

No [detriment procedures](#) from 2020 remain relevant for classification of UG students in year 5. The Comprehensive Measures for Fair and Consistent Assessment approved in 17 March 2021 (SEN20:20), for which a separate EQIA was prepared, will remain relevant for classification for relevant student groups.

Work continues to support colleagues in working with students from diverse backgrounds through the Blog [Celebrating Diversity | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#) blog, informal monthly “Open to All: learning and diversity conversation” sessions which form part of the Framework.

Work on orientation, pastoral support and peer support continues to assist all students in creating, maintaining and growing their sense of community and identity linked with the University which will in turn assist them in engaging with and seeking support regarding their learning and teaching. Training and resources for colleagues leading and delivering pastoral support continues to be regularly reviewed and enhanced. For 22/3 meetings will be offered in person although this could be online if this would be more suitable in specific situations for staff and student. Peer Support systems for students sharing particular characteristics have been established if students would like to become involved, and it is hoped that they provide a useful source of guidance, feedback and student leadership.

The [peer support](#) system continues and the UG s4s system will continue to operate on an opt in basis and to offer option for UG students in their first year to ask for a mentor who matches particular experiences as well as being in their School; in 2021/2 approximately 75% of registered mentors and mentees chose to engage with this strand, and they identified with at least one other matching characteristic. The recruitment process has started for 22/3. The list of matching characteristics is being regularly reviewed and further changes will be made for 23/4.

Webpages and communications have been revised to make clearer the potential for students to take a break from their studies where they consider that is absolutely necessary and the [support for them](#) around this, including to reduce the prospect of this situation arising, and how the monitoring/ engagement system (c6 c7) work including through [wave videos](#). Work continues on this with a cross-institution team reviewing readmission.

Access to an appropriate device and reliable broadband will continue to be key for students after a physical return to campus. [Expectations](#) are made clear. Some [financial support](#) is available through hardship and specific

scholarships and support is available and being developed for [asylum seekers and refugees](#). As part of the work building on responding to the Arriving at Thriving report and experiences during blended learning, consideration is being given to having more student group study and social spaces on campus and to these being accessible.

Dialogue continues to enhance student records and IT capacity regarding service provision, e-registration, other surveys and record keeping to further support students and make them aware of opportunities.

A working group continues to explore how the University support students with particular characteristics across their full student journey and beyond, and how best the University can work with students to explore how all students and prospective can see themselves as a visible and welcome part of the University.

The orientation and University website includes material aimed at these groups and, as noted above, these student groups have been invited to events over Breaks and to a new TEAMS opportunity.

4. Monitoring
a) Detail method of monitoring of the Policy, Procedure or Function and by whom
ASES, NSS results, Staff Survey, Framework feedback, Inform
b) Detail how monitoring results will be utilised to develop the Policy, Procedure, or Function
Reflection on feedback, ongoing training and updating of Principles and resources, including as appropriate engagement with University Committees and Senate
c) Timescale of
Every 6 months

5. Impact assessment				
Select what impact there will be on each group:				
Characteristic	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Not Applicable
Race	X		X (potential for some)	

Disability (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions and impairments):	X		X (potential for some)	
British Sign Language (BSL)		X		
Neurodivergent	x		X (potential for some)	
Gender	X		X (potential for some)	
Age		X		
Sexual Orientation	X		X (potential for some)	
Religion, Belief or No Belief	X		X (potential for some)	
Gender Reassignment	X		X (potential for some)	

Non-Binary	X		X (potential for some)	
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Parents and Carers			X	
Socio-Economic Group/Widening Access	X		X (potential for some)	
Care Experienced/Estranged from Family	x		X (potential for some)	

a) For each negative impact identified above, please state your mitigating actions below with timescales.

Race: Alongside the positives of a campus based student experience, its harm reduction and a positive impact on workload for staff, there are some potential negative impacts. The need to return to campus may have a particular impact on international students (which may raise questions of race and ethnicity). Details of this need were shared in April 22 to allow time for planning and timelines have also been shared with prospective and incoming students. It is recognised that COVID-19 remains an issue and that this may be so in particular for staff and students with connections to countries where vaccination opportunities have been lower. Support services will continue to be available to support students, support will be available for staff, and established systems of good cause and absence reporting will be available for students.

It is hoped that there will be more part time employment opportunities available as Aberdeen opens up and this may reduce some of the financial pressure on students and in turn make them more able to focus on their studies. Consideration is being given to including details in orientation on employment rights and expectations and how support students if they should encounter prejudice outside the university.

The University continues its anti-racist focus and is exploring how best to continue to offer the new Union Black online training developed by Santander and the Open University, (including through September 22 orientation). Staff are offered [online training on Tackling Racial Bias, Understanding Unconscious Bias, Impact of Micro Behaviours and Effective Bystander](#)". Work continues on decolonising the curriculum.

Disability and Neurodivergent: Every student is different and the new/returned opportunities staff and students to return to campus will address the harms identified by the Scottish Government and provide opportunities for community engagement. Care continues to be taken to work with Estates and Facilities and room bookings to ensure that as much as possible of campus is accessible manner, that appropriate signing is in place, lifts are operational and that there is a review of use of car parks

The Disabled Student Forum has been proactive in raising issues and new plans are being developed to address points identified.

A pilot system was put in place at the Sir Duncan Rice Library to enable greater access to students who use a wheelchair. All individual cases should be discussed with Student Support or Human Resources. A collaborative and holistic approach has proved useful in addressing the different relevant factors in a fair and proportionate manner.

There is the continuing risk of “Long Covid” (particularly for people in their 20s and 30s) and Student Support have been raising awareness of this and are embedding support of it in the Disability Team support practices reflecting activity across the sector, with Long Covid being treated as a long term health condition.

The staff and student disability networks are consulted regularly on the support being provided, noting that support will require to be tailored to the individual requirements of staff and students. The Staff Disability Network provides a safe space for staff to discuss adjustments and ongoing requirements and activity continues in this respect.

The University has a [Homeworking Policy](#).

The University is considering any changes needed in response to sector developments and a recent court case and will share this with staff.

Guidance has been provided for all staff about the intersection between the Disability Team, School Disability Coordinator and Teaching and Learning to support all colleagues in delivering reasonable adjustments when this is appropriate and this is available on the [Framework](#).

Mental Health:

Students and colleagues with a range of mental health concerns including depression and anxiety may experience a recurrence or exacerbation of these, as their education and wider life takes a new and uncertain path. The return to campus will be positive for many, however some new issues could arise: for students whatever their level of study, and for and colleagues wherever they are based.

Students and colleagues are of course responding to the situation in different ways. There is a need to continue to maintain a focus on mental health issues for staff and students, including the prospect of some for the first time experience mental ill health as a result of the pandemic. The Student Mental Health Agreement between the University and AUSA was signed in January 2022 and the University now has a Staff and Student Wellbeing Strategy 2021-5.

The University will continue to support staff and students on campus and in some cases remotely. If an in person meeting is sought by the seeker of support, then this will be possible.

Details of a person's position are confidential, however, data can be shared with consent so that students are fully supported, for example, the SRAs may need to be aware of issues affecting students in University accommodation and pastoral leads, admin leads and Student Support and good practice is being shared about escalation by administrative leads and pastoral leads to Student Support.

Online mental health awareness training is available through MIND and details of this, and other internal and external opportunities including suicide prevention has been shared with pastoral leads for further dissemination. Work continues, led by the Wellbeing and Student Experience teams to ensure that the websources are as effective as possible for staff and students. It is hoped that this will be able to be offered in person.

The Mental Health First Aiders and the Workplace Dignity Network continue to operate and more details will be shared with staff.

New recruitment plans for staff will support this work for staff and students. This will assist everyone in delivering and getting the most from teaching and learning.

Gender: Concerns have been identified in the media and through ongoing studies, that women and carers are facing a greater burden than others in response to COVID-19 and the ongoing situations and it is recognised that this may continue as we all engage with another set of circumstances. The points made in the parents/carers section again apply.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment and Gender Identity: For some students, returning to campus will be a welcome opportunity to engage with and find their community. There is also the (hopefully minimal) possibility of students facing discrimination, including in wider society. Support will continue to be provide to students as well as expectation set of the values of inclusion which are embedded in the University.

Staff and students who identify as non-binary will continue to have access to gender-neutral toilets on campus and increasing these is under review. Guidance has been provided as to how students can change the name which appears for them on virtual learning environments, as well as on Student Records, and can choose pronouns in, at present, MyAberdeen Ultra and positive feedback has been received

Religion: Prayer rooms are now available again on campus.

In determining the timetable for classes and assessment, regard will continue to be had to conflicts with major religious festivals and other religious commitments that students and staff may have, reflecting the University's Religion and Belief policy. The Framework had held religion related events and has a list of festivals. The encouragement to explore inclusive forms of delivery and assessment and to maintain and build on new practice developed during blended learning may provide additional flexibility.

Parents/Carers (colleague and student): Students and colleagues could potentially still be required to continue to care for and "home-school" children in certain circumstances, as the prospect of COVID-19 remains. This will operate under the standard arrangements in the University regarding taking leave, including a system of extra leave days for carers.

Consideration continues to be given as to whether particular provisions, analogous to those for students with disabilities, should be considered for students who are parents/carers and also whether specific approaches should be taken with this group of students in new systems being considered for assessing student engagement in the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group.

It is noted that the caring responsibilities of staff and students mean that there may be a clash with timetabled classes when these are being offered. These are handled on a case-

by-case basis and guidance on this is included in the Accessibility and Inclusion in Education Framework.

Socio-Economic Group/Widening access: This group may potentially feel particularly unfamiliar with the return to the campus environment and may also experience financial difficulty, potentially in relation to having access to appropriate technology to complete course work or a quiet space in which to work. Financial difficulty is considered in general above.

It is hoped that there will be more part time employment opportunities available as Aberdeen opens up and this may reduce some of the financial pressure on students and in turn make them more able to focus on their studies. Consideration is being given to including details in orientation on employment rights and expectations

Care experienced/Estranged from family: For some students, returning to campus will be a welcome opportunity to continue to build their new path. These groups of students are likely to experience financial difficulty, and new opportunities are noted in relation to widening access.

Consideration continues to be given as to whether provisions, analogous to those for students with disabilities, should be considered for this group of students. Work continues the Access and Articulation Committee, including updating the University's Corporate Parenting Plan and building on the University's obligations under its Stand Alone Pledge. Funding has been obtained from the QAA Enhancement Theme for a project exploring internship support for these groups

b) How does this Policy, Procedure, or Function contribute to eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and advancing equality of opportunity?

Ongoing efforts to embed inclusion and the opportunity for all students being on campus to receive support (social, education, financial, accommodation, mental health, academic) and to flourish.

c) How is the Policy, Procedure, or Function likely to promote good relations between people with different protected characteristics?

Ongoing efforts to embed inclusion and, with the return to campus, the increased opportunity to interact with people with different experiences and views.

7. Publication

a) Provide details of arrangements to publish assessment:

It is proposed that this form is published on the UEC and EQIA section of the University website

(b) Share with UEC

(b) Share with EDIC for final approval

8. Review Date:

Author (Name and Position):

Authors signature:

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team member (name):

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Team member signature:

9. Date of submission to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee:Approval Yes No