UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Tuesday 29 August 2023** at **2.05pm** by way of **Microsoft Teams**.

Ms Isabella Fausti
(e-mail isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk)

AGENDA

FOR DISCUSSION

1.   **Approval of the Minute of the Meeting Held on 16 May 2023**   *(UEC/290823/001)*

2.   **Matters Arising**   *(UEC/290823/002)*

3.   **Remit and Composition**   *(UEC/290823/003)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **approve** the remit and composition of the UEC for 2023/24.

4.   **Risk Register**   *(UEC/290823/004)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the Risk Register with regards to the specific risks associated with Education.

5.   **Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan**   *(UEC/290823/005)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan.

6.   **Future Academic Year Structure**   *(UEC/290823/006)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the proposals for the Future Academic Year Structure for approval at Senate.

7.   **Policy and Procedures on Student Absence**   *(UEC/290823/007)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the amendments to the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

8.   **Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) Action Plan**   *(UEC/290823/008)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the QESR Action Plan update.

9.   **Aberdeen 2040 Education Updates**

(i)   **Decolonising the Curriculum Launch of Resources**   *(UEC/290823/009)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the Decolonising the Curriculum update in respect of the webpages and toolkit.

(ii)   Pastoral Review TFG update   *(UEC/290823/010)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the progress of the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group.

10.   Dean for Educational Innovation Update   *(UEC/290823/011)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the Dean for Educational Innovation Update.

11.   Education Data

(i)   Graduate Outcomes Report 2023   *(UEC/290823/012)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the Graduate Outcomes report.

(ii)   Full-Time   Undergraduate   Non-Continuation   Internal   Data   2021/22
                                                             (UEC/290823/013)

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the report on Non-Continuation for 2021/22.

(iii)   National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 Report   *(UEC/290823/014)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the report on the NSS results 2023.

12.   Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 10 October 2023 at 13:05, by way of Microsoft Teams.

13.   Items for Information – see below/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.

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13.   FOR INFORMATION

13.1   Update Reports from the UEC sub-committees:

(i)   Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC)   *(UEC/290823/015)*

13.2 Internal Teaching Review: Schedule to 2028   *(UEC/290823/016)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the Schedule of Forthcoming Reviews to 2028 for Internal Teaching Review.

13.3   Student Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG update   (UEC/290823/017)

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the progress made by the Student Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG.

13.4   Religion and Belief Policy

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the new [Religion and Belief Policy](#), available on Policy Zone.

13.5   Enhancement Themes Year 3 Report   (UEC/290823/018)

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the Year 3 Report submitted in relation to the Enhancement Themes.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 16 May 2023

Present: Ruth Taylor **(Chair)**, Waheed Afzal, Akua Agyeman, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Harminder Battu, Jason Bohan, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Nick Edwards, Bill Harrison, Malcolm Harvey (*vice* Stuart Durkin), Ken Jeffrey, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Helen Knight, David McCausland, Graeme Nixon, Rona Patey, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Anne-Michelle Slater, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Brian Henderson, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Gillian Mackintosh, Rhona Moore, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Liam Dyker **(Clerk)** and Chris Weir **(Minutes)** in attendance.

Apologies: Stuart Durkin and Alison Jenkinson.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2023
(copy filed as UEC/160523/001)

1.1   The Chair welcomed members to the University Education Committee (UEC) meeting. Members of the Committee approved the minute of the meeting held on 23 March 2023.

MATTERS ARISING (ACTION LOG)
(copy filed as UEC/160523/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 23 March 2023. The actions were recorded as complete or in progress.

2.2   Consolidation of Action Plans (*minute 11.3 refers*): The Chair highlighted that the action plans are to be placed in an area where the Committee can access them.   **Action: Clerk**

2.3   The Inclusion of LEO Data in Graduate Outcomes (*minute 15.1 refers*): It was noted that this is in progress and will be included in the graduate outcomes data if it is available.

2.4   Implementation of PTES (*minute 16.2 refers*): It was noted that PTES will be live from 26 May. The PRES Research survey has recently closed and once data is received this will be reported.

2.5   NSS Action Plans *(minute 10.1 refers)*: It was noted this action is complete.

2.6   NSS School-Level Data *(minute 10.2 refers)*: It was noted that this action is complete.

2.7   Dissemination of Good Practice for ChatGPT *(minute 11.4 refers)*: It was noted that this action is complete, however, the work will be ongoing.

2.8   Teaching and Learning Spaces Group Terms of Reference (minute 15.3 refers): The UEC was advised that this was now complete, as the terms of reference were approved by circulation. The new version is to be circulated.   **Action: KK/Clerk**

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

3.1   Members of the Committee noted the agenda item on Health, Safety and Wellbeing. Confirmation was sought as to whether this was formally required as part of the UEC agenda.
        Action: Chair/Clerk

RISK REGISTER

4.1   Members of the UEC discussed the Risk Register with regards to specific risks associated with Education.

4.2   The Chair provided the Committee with an update on an additional risk around the marking and assessment boycott and the actions being taken in this regard. Actions included meetings with the Heads of Schools, meetings with the Directors of Education and a paper to QAC with respect to students affected by the boycott. A revised version of the Risk register will be circulated after the meeting.

       [Clerk's Note: the revised version of the Risk Register was circulated on 23 May 2023]

4.3   It was discussed by the Committee that the Junior Doctors strike will have a potentially significant impact on medical students and, if the strike is during exams, then exams will not be able to run. The Chair agreed to liaise with Rona Patey to discuss if there is strike action and that the impact of any strike should be added to a School-level risk register.

FUTURE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE

5.1   The Committee heard a summary of the revised proposal in respect of the Future Academic Year Structure. The Chair advised the Committee that the proposal had been revised as a result of feedback from the Education Committees, Senate, and other consultation. The revised proposal retained the three-term structure and included a longer Spring break.

5.2   Some members of the Committee suggested that the later start date would be potentially difficult for field courses, but agreed the strengths of a three-term structure outweighed the negatives. Members also suggested that the loss of the clear marking week prior to the Winter Break would mean that staff would lose the opportunity to clear their workload before the vacation period. It was highlighted that it was not possible to move the term any earlier and that staff would still be given appropriate marking time after the Winter Break.

5.3   Members of the Committee suggested that nomenclature and numbering of the terms may cause some confusion, particularly with January start PGT students. Members of the Committee also commented on how the wording and structure caused concerns within their Schools regarding an increase in workload. It was stressed that there was no intention for this to cause an increase in workload or in PGT teaching. The Committee showed overall support for the three-term structure.

5.4   Members of the Committee highlighted that colleagues were concerned about the proposed start date of Term 1, as it would cause the start date of PGT courses to be too close to the PGR students' start time (the former is two weeks before). However, it was agreed that not having more than a two-week gap would be beneficial for PGR students, as it would allow them to catch up and join PGT courses for the first term.

5.5   A concern was raised regarding Term 2 starting in February, which may result in students' attendance dwindling if they end the lease on their flats early. The Chair noted that there are 5 weeks of teaching planned into the structure following the Spring break which should be adequate time to ensure that students see the value in returning and engaging with their education experience.

5.6   Members of the Committee noted that the suggested term dates meant that a week would be lost in terms of marking deadlines. The UEC highlighted that whilst having more time in January would be useful, it would result in a tight turnaround for getting assessments marked prior to the start of the new term. It was suggested that moving Summer graduations back a week may be a solution to allow an appropriate window for marking in the second term, extending the Spring marking period to 4 weeks. It was also suggested by a Committee member that the last week of marking for Term 1 could coincide with the ITEW for the start of Term 2.

5.7   Overall, the Committee provided support for the proposal to go to Senate for a further academic view.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW (QESR) FINDINGS REPORT

(i) QESR FINDINGS REPORT   *(copy filed as UEC/160523/005)*
(ii) QESR DRAFT ACTION PLAN *(copy filed as UEC/160523/006)*

6.1   The Committee heard a summary of the QESR Findings Report and the draft Action Plan. The Committee noted the actions being taken in respect of (i) student access to External Examiner Reports and (ii) pastoral support. The Committee was content with the QESR Findings Report and draft Action Plan.

FINAL NSS RESPONSE RATE UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/160523/007)

7.1   The Committee noted the update on the final NSS response rate. It was explained to the Committee that the final institutional NSS response rate was 67.38%, comparable to the previous year (67.80%), meeting the required minimum publication threshold of 50%. A total of 47 subjects submitted responses and 45 of these met the publication threshold; two subjects, Chemistry and Counselling, Psychotherapy and Occupational Therapy, did not achieve thresholds for publication of results due to the very small cohort size. The Committee was informed that the next steps would be provided once results were received in the Summer.

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/160523/008)

8.1   The Committee heard an update on the work of the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group. The Committee was informed that the Web and Toolkit resources would be available in June and that communications on the launch with Schools would follow. The Committee was also informed that CAD was undertaking training and that the next phase of the Steering Group was being considered.

8.2   Members of the Committee requested clarification regarding the timelines for reviewing assessments. The Chair highlighted that Schools should start having discussions regarding Decolonising the Curriculum this academic year and that any changes were to be made in line with the approved Principles.   **Action: Chair/Clerk**

INSTITUTIONAL PLAN FOR UPSCALING WORK-BASED LEARNING INCLUDING PLACEMENTS
(copy filed as UEC/160523/009)

9.1   The Committee heard an update on the institutional plan for upscaling work-based learning. It was advised that the aim is to enable work-based learning opportunities for all UG and PGT students through a menu of work-based learning types including team and individual placements of varied lengths. The Committee was advised that the next steps include the development of an institutional placement policy and the development of tools/systems to

support the delivery of work-based learning (a project is in place through the Digital Strategy Committee). The central careers team will be working alongside Employability and Skills Champions, identifying opportunities to embed work-based learning in courses and trialling a platform (Riipen) which acts as a marketplace for opportunities to work in teams.

9.2 Members of the Committee supported this plan. However, they noted that work would be required to ensure that placements and the curricula align appropriately. It was also noted by members of the Committee that the paper made no mention of additional support required for students on placements. Further, members of the Committee sought clarification on whether the new software would align with current systems to ensure a smooth transition, and it was confirmed that Riipen integrates with MyAberdeen.

TOOLS FOR THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION
(copy filed as UEC/160523/010)

10.1 The Committee heard an update on the tools piloted in AY 2022-23 (Authorship, IPAC, Respondus). It was explained that Respondus is a lockdown browser that allows invigilated exams on campus using a computer, and that trialling is going well. IPAC is a piece of software to help steer group work and group marking. Nineteen courses have so far trialled IPAC and it was found to be useful. Authorship is aimed at determining whether students have contract cheated, but not enough cases have been received yet to fully test the software. The Committee was informed of the intention to extend the Authorship pilot.

10.3 Members of the Committee showed support for all three pieces of software.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY UPDATE
(copy filed as UEC/160523/011)

11.1 The Committee heard an update on Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity. The Committee was made aware of the challenges faced with unacknowledged sources, and it was suggested that the University provides further guidance regarding what students should acknowledge as sources and that this be updated to consider AI. Further, the Committee heard a proposal for an advisory group on academic integrity and practice being implemented.

11.2 Members of the Committee discussed the proposed title for the Advisory Group and noted that 'Artificial Intelligence' should feature in it.

11.3 It was also highlighted that the Deputy Academic Registrar would no longer be required to attend the Advisory Group, given the responsibility for discipline now sits with the Assistant Registrar for Academic Services.

11.4 Support was agreed regarding the proposal, and it was suggested that a finalised version of the remit and membership of the Group be circulated at the next meeting. **Action: KK**

UPDATE REPORTS FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

12.1 The Committee noted the update reports from the UEC Sub-Committees in respect of:
(i)   Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
(copy filed as UEC/160523/012a)
(ii)   Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC)
(copy filed as UEC/160523/012b)

EDUCATION AWAYDAY UPDATE

13.1   The Education Awayday has been postponed and will be reorganised.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14.1   The next meeting of the UEC will be held on Tuesday 29 August 2023 at 14:05 pm, by way of Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2023

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
2.2	Consolidation of Action Plans.	Clerk	**Completed** - Action plans now stored in the committee's SharePoint area under Committee Resources > Action Plans
2.8	Circulation of the final version of the Teaching and Learning Spaces Group Terms of Reference to the Committee.	K Kiezebrink/Clerk	
3.1	Confirmation to be sought as to whether the Health, Safety and Wellbeing item is formally required as part of the UEC agenda.	Chair/Clerk	**Completed** - the Health, Safety and Wellbeing item is not formally required as part of the UEC agenda and has now been removed
8.2	Clarification on timelines for reviewing assessment within Schools in relation to the Decolonising the Curriculum agenda.	Chair	In progress – agenda item 9 refers.
11.4	Circulation of the finalised version of remit and membership of an Advisory Group on academic integrity and practice.	K Kiezebrink	

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

1. **COMMITTEE TITLE**
   University Education Committee (UEC)

2. **DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT**
   25 May 2021 (as Joint Committee of Court & Senate)

3. **CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA**
   Chair: Vice-Principal (Education)
   Clerk: Academic Services and Online Education (Registry)

4. **PURPOSE**
   A Strategy and Policy committee to support the University's overall educational objectives.

5. **REMIT**: *(To be reviewed annually at last meeting of committee cycle and proposed changes considered by Senate for approval)*

   To be responsible to the Senatus Academicus for the strategic oversight of:
   i.   education matters relating to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and taught elements of postgraduate research;
   ii.   the wider student experience relating to matters impacting on student success;
   iii.   the development of approaches to educational innovation

   The UEC shall:
   iv.   be responsible for the oversight, development and monitoring of the University's strategic approach to educational provision, its associated operational plan and risk register, and the alignment of these with School plans and with Aberdeen 2040 and its associated operational plans;
   v.   comment on draft education policy where input sought by the Quality Assurance Committee and drive forward its implementation working in partnership with School Education Committees;
   vi.   highlight to the Quality Assurance Committee where policy related issues are identified requiring consideration;
   vii.   be responsible for the innovation and ongoing enhancement of the quality of educational provisionand for ensuring the effective dissemination of good practice including oversight of the University's engagement with the QAA Enhancement Themes;
   viii. Through its committees, be responsible for the development of actions at institutional level, and in Schools, based on analysis of national and internal data (e.g. National Student Survey, non-continuation, Graduate Outcomes, degree classifications and awarding gaps).
   ix.   Ensure that Education and the wider student experience is delivered inclusively.
   x.   Through the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), develop, review and promote professional staff development opportunities in regard to the delivery of education, including assessment and feedback;
   xi.   Through the Centre for Academic Development, inform the support required by Schools for the development of educational innovations.
   xii.   consider recommendations from the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) in regard to the quality of provision of careers education, employability and the co-curriculum;
   xiii. consider recommendations from the Student Support & Experience Committee (SSEC) in regard to the quality ofthe delivery of effective, appropriate and consistent student support and the wider student experience;
   xiv.   be responsible for the oversight of teaching-related credit-bearing activity related to student mobility;
   xv.   engage in horizon scanning to anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in education and the wider student experience;

   Members' Responsibilities:
   Each member of the committee will contribute to discussions and feedback on these to their respectiveareas for comment and further input. School leads ensure that they use their School Education Committees and other School forums to inform feedback into UEC and to raise matters relevant to UEC or for referral onto QAC as

appropriate.

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
Dean for Student Support and Experience
Dean for Educational Innovation
Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship
Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement
Dean for Postgraduate Research School
Dean for the Qatar Campus Director of Studies (Qatar)
Dean for International Student Pathways
Dean for Widening Access, Articulation and Outreach
Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion
Two representatives nominated by Senate (2 year terms)
QAA Enhancement Theme Lead
Academic Representative of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee

In attendance: Director of Academic Services and Online Education
Head of Quality
Academic Registrar
Head of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD)
Head of the Careers and Employability Service
Head of Student Support
Head of the Language Centre
Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee)
University Librarian
School Administration Manager
Students' Association Staff Member

Quorum: 50%

ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP

7. **MEMBERSHIP**

Vice-Principal (Education)/Chair	Ruth Taylor
Student President of the Students' Association (or nominee)	TBC
Vice-President for Education of the Students' Association	Rhiannon Ledwell
School Directors of Education:	
Biological Sciences	Michelle Pinard
Business	David McCausland
Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	Ken Jeffrey
Education	Leigh Bjorkvoll
Engineering	Euan Bain
Geosciences	Joshua Wright
Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture	Shona Potts
Law	Susan Stokeld
Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition	Rona Patey
Natural and Computing Science	Bill Harrison
Psychology	Helen Knight
Social Science	Stuart Durkin
Dean for Student Support and Experience	Jason Bohan
Dean for Educational Innovation	Kirsty Kiezebrink
Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship	John Barrow
Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement	Steve Tucker
Dean for Postgraduate Research School	Graeme Nixon

~~Dean for the Qatar Campus~~Director of Studies (Qatar)	~~tbc~~Lyn Batchelor
Dean for International Student Pathways	Harminder Battu
Dean for Widening Access, Articulation and Outreach	Alison Jenkinson
Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion	Anne-Michelle Slater
Two representatives nominated by Senate (2 year terms)	Amudha Poobalan
	Afzal Waheed
QAA Enhancement Theme Lead	Steve Tucker
Academic Representative of the EDI Committee	tbc

In attendance

Director of Academic Services and Online Education	Gillian Mackintosh
Head of Quality	tbc
Academic Registrar	tbc
Head of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD)	Patricia Spence
Head of the Careers and Employability Service	Tracey Innes
Head of Student Support	Nick Edwards
Head of the Language Centre	Julie Bray
Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee)	Susan Halfpenny
University Librarian	Simon Bains
School Administration Manager	Rhona Moore~~Fiona Ritchie~~
Students' Association Staff Member	Graeme Kirkpatrick / Scott Carle

8. **REPORTING LINE/PARENT COMMITTEE AND INTERFACE WITH OTHER COMMITTEES**
   Formal reporting line: Senate which then provides assurance to Court

   Sub-committees: Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
                      Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC)

   Steering Groups and Task and Finish Groups: VLE Steering Group, Decolonising the Curriculum Steering
                                                  Group, Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education TFG,
                                                  Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG

   Interface with other committees: Quality Assurance Committee,
                                       School Education Committees,
                                       Postgraduate Research Committee,
                                       Student Recruitment Committee,
                                       Student Support & Experience Committee,
                                       Online Education Development Committee,
                                       Digital Strategy Committee,
                                       Qatar Partnership Management Group
                                       SCNU Joint Institute Academic Committee.

9. **FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS**
   A *minimum* of five meetings per session, *normally* preceding meetings of the Senate.
   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
    meetings of the UEC. Where these papers are draft, this will be clearly identified.

11. **DATE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVED/RECORDED**:

    Proposed as Senate Committee – September 2022

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

INSTITUTIONAL RISK REGISTER

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> The purpose of this paper is to provide members of the University Education Committee (UEC) with an update on the institutional risk register and to discuss any relevant actions.

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

> Members of the UEC are invited to discuss the Risk Register, with specific interest in risks related to Education, attached as *Annex A*.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   Following previous updates to the University Education Committee (UEC), members of the Committee are invited to discuss and comment on the updated Risk Register, and should note the following changes:

(i)   Addition of a focus on resit students and PGT students, under Risk 1.
(ii)   Addition of 'and other TNE provision' under Risk 5, to ensure that quality assurance arrangements are focused across all our provision.
(iii)   Addition of an action related to a more robust process of identifying and monitoring accreditation/PSRB requirements, under Risk 8.

4.2   Members of the Committee are invited to discuss the actions taken as part of the ongoing risk register.

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)

21 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> The purpose of this paper is to provide members of the University Education Committee (UEC) with an opportunity to note the actions for the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan for Education.

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

> Members of the UEC are invited to discuss the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan for Education, attached as *Annex A*, in particular the actions identified for academic year 2023/2024.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   Following previous updates to the University Education Committee (UEC), members of the Committee are invited to discuss and comment on the updated Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan, attached as *Annex A*. The Implementation Plan outlines the proposed actions for academic year 2023/24.

4.2   Members of the Committee are invited to discuss proposed actions for the subsequent academic year 2023/2024.

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)

21 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FUTURE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE

1.   **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

The purpose of this paper is to seek approval on the proposed structure of the academic year from 2024/25 onwards. The proposed model presented has been informed by feedback from Senate and its relevant committees and sub-committees

The paper provides an overview of the most recent academic view provided by Senate on 7 June 2023 of the revised proposal (SEN22:64) which was built upon the original proposal (SEN22:50) presented to Senate on 19 April 2023.

The paper provides the following information:
- A set of principles for the development of the academic year structure with comments on each in relation to feedback received throughout the process of consultation, and comments on implications for workload
- A proposed academic year structure from 2024/25 onwards
- A review of the proposed structure against the principles
- Recommendations for next steps

2.   **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	SMT	23 March 2023
	Academic view	
	Joint Meeting of EEC and SSEC	27 March 2023
	Qatar Academic Planning Group	By circulation
	UEC	23 March 2023
	QAC	29 March 2023
	Heads of School	29 March 2023
	SRC	*Via Teams*
	Senate	19 April 2023
	URC	3 May 2023
	Senate	7 June 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	Approval	
	SRC	21 August 2023
	QAC	23 August 2023
	UEC	29 August 2023
	Senate	20 September 2023

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

UEC is asked to approve, for its part, the proposed structure for the academic year from 2024/25 onwards. In summary, the proposed structure, which takes account of the consultation and feedback as detailed in section 2 above, provides the following key elements:

(i) Commence teaching w/c 23 September 2024 (week 9 of AY) with Welcome Week w/c 16 September 2024 (week 8 of AY) to allow student recruitment activity.
(ii) Put in place a three-term structure for the academic year (AY).
(iii) Utilise 'term' as the terminology for the teaching periods
(iv) Implement 13-week terms for terms 1 and 2, including one floating week; and a 12-week term 3 with no floating week (PGT teaching in term 3). (See Principle (ii) for explanation of reason for 12-week term 3).
(v) Align University holidays, as far as possible, with school holidays in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for the Winter break and the Spring break.
(vi) Implement an 'Induction/Transition and Employability Week' (ITEW) at the beginning of terms 1 and 2 for continuing UG students with this time being used for a Welcome Week for new UG and PGT entrants.

Specific dates for subsequent years, in line with the proposed structure, will be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee in line with its devolved responsibility from Senate for approval of term dates.

INTRODUCTION

4.1 Following consultation with Committees as detailed in section 2, a revised proposal for the structure of the academic year from 2024/25 onwards is presented for approval through our Committees, including Senate. The proposal presented takes on board feedback presented by Senate at its meeting on 7 June 2023 and associated feedback from its Committees and sub-committees. Feedback from earlier versions of the paper is available here. For each Principle, a summary of the feedback is provided, with a response to the feedback including implications for the Principle. A revised Principle (where revision is needed in light of feedback) is then provided.

4.2 The feedback provided through the consultation process including the discussions at Senate on 19 April 2023 is provided here. The table below details the feedback received at the meeting of Senate on 7 June 2023.

Comment at Senate	Response to comment
While noting that Term 3 would be designated for PgT teaching, concern that there would be an expected term of full teaching for all with implications for childcare, research activities, and associated negative impact on workloads	The proposals seek to provide a meaningful and consistent academic year structure for staff and students. They are not intended to increase workloads or to change the form of delivery of summer PGT teaching which is predominantly project / dissertation focused. See section 8.2 regarding workload
While supporting the three-term structure, a request for the three terms to be equal rather than 13:13:12 weeks in length as this model would give an unequal experience for January start students who have a different timing for their dissertation	The flexible week has been removed from Term 3(PGT) to enable a three-week Spring break. Retaining the flexible week in Term 3(PGT) would reduce the time between the end of one academic year and the start of the next. All three Terms will be of 12 weeks duration in terms of time for teaching and assessment.
Support for the recognition of term 3 within the model and the opportunity this would	Noted

give for potential workload allocation of teaching to two of the three terms	
While supporting the three-term structure, use of terminology of Term 1, Term 2, Term 3(PGT) would be preferable and a request for flexibility within the structure for project start dates on certain year 4 programmes in Medical Sciences to start at Term 2 two weeks earlier to provide sufficient time for their research project ahead of the assessment diet.	See 7.1(ii) – the terminology proposed uses Term 3(PGT). As noted in 7.1(ii) below, the proposals seek to establish a consistent and transparent structure to the academic year and it would be expected that programmes align to these dates unless there are strong reasons (e.g., PSRB) to deviate. This timeline also avoids overlap for staff of marking in January. Any request to deviate from the agreed structure would require approval by the Quality Assurance Committee.
A query around the rationale for moving the start date of the Spring Break forward from its usual position in week 36 to week 35 as this would provide better opportunity for continuity of teaching before the break	The timing proposed was made to ensure that the period of teaching after the Spring Break was sufficient to ensure students recognise the need to return to campus. If too short students might break accommodation contracts early and choose not to return.
Concern from staff in one School that they were already teaching too much with limited time for research and a view that the formalisation of Term 3 would exacerbate this further. It was suggested that Heads of Schools should be reaching out to staff to address this perception and explain the rationale.	As noted in 8.2 below, Heads of School have responsibility for managing staff workloads across the academic year.
A request for explicit reference to the School of Engineering's partnership with Harbin.	Reference included in section 8.1
A comment, from a staff wellbeing perspective, that loss of the week for marking in week 21 prior to the Winter break may lead to staff feeling pressured to use some annual leave time for marking. It was further suggested that there should be a commitment to keep the three weeks for marking clear from other activities. It was also queried whether consideration had been given to reducing the three-week break between Term 2 and Term 3 in order to give more separation prior to the start of the next academic year.	It is not possible to guarantee a free week for marking prior to the Winter Break without bringing forward the start date of Term 1 which would have implications for student recruitment.
In noting that the proposals presented were a substantial improvement from previous ones particularly the three-week Spring break, it was noted that Term 3 might lead to pressure for more teaching to be undertaken rather than PGT research projects. This point was echoed by another Senator who noted that much of the summer teaching takes the form of one-to-one supervision.	The proposals were considered by the Research Committee and the proposals take account of that feedback. Heads of School will need to consider research time alongside teaching commitments.
Support was noted on behalf of another School particularly in regard to Term 3 structure and the 3 week Spring break	Noted

A comment that annual leave alone is not sufficient to cover childcare associated with school holidays and that this needs to be taken into account in any move to more structured teaching over the summer together with impact on research output.	See 7.1 (v) The University has an annual leave allocation which should be utilised alongside other support mechanisms to put support in place for childcare or other caring responsibilities.[1].
A query whether data were available to quantify the level of face-to-face teaching taking place over the summer.	The proposals for the structure of the academic year do not seek to impact on the amount of teaching delivered over the summer. Any decisions regarding PGT development are taken by Schools and include consideration of workload implications.

5. BACKGROUND

5.1 Our Aberdeen 2040 Strategy articulates the ambitions for Education. In summary, the Strategy states our ambitions for Education as: Aberdeen 2040 aims to prepare 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. 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 study and location, and to be equipped for global employment. Our Curriculum is challenge-led, distinctive, has breadth and flexibility with the interdisciplinary challenges embedded. Our Curriculum is inclusive, international and enables our students to be leaders in protecting the environment. Our Environment aims to be diverse, caring, supportive, challenging, innovative, and developmental. The overarching ambitions are supported by a number of Commitments[2].

5.2 Whilst an academic year structure cannot deliver all aspects of an Education Strategy, the aim is to develop a structure that acts as an enabler for its achievement. The Principles (see section 7 below) aim to articulate how the academic year structure can support the delivery of Aberdeen 2040 Education. Of particular relevance to the development of these proposals are the actions to increase the opportunities for student mobility, international learning, work-based learning, and placements, all of which are being taken forward through Aberdeen 2040 workstreams.

5.3 The academic year structure that was in place for seven years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic is provided in Appendix 3 (approved at Senate on 14 November 2012). In 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23, and 2023/24 revisions to the academic year structure were approved by Senate[3] on a temporary basis to address the challenges of the pandemic. These are also provided in Appendix 3. It is not appropriate to continue to make changes year on year, and it is therefore important that an agreed academic year structure is in place for academic year 2024/25 onwards.

5.4 Consideration has been given to the future possible structures of the academic year to take forward from academic year 2024/25 with four options presented to Senate on 19 April 2023. The proposals aimed to support the developments in Education in line with the Aberdeen 2040 Commitments (see section 5.1 above) and are in line with changes to the external context that are impacting on recruitment and admissions of students. Once agreed, the new structure would take effect from academic year 2024/25. The new structure will apply to the majority of UG and PGT programmes with the exception of certain programmes[4] where professional requirements necessitate a different academic year structure.

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[1] Staff can request up to 18 weeks unpaid leave under the parental leave policy.
[2] Commitments 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17
[3] Changes to second half-session 2020/21 and first half-session 2021/22 approved by Senate on 21 October 2020; 2021/22 term dates approved by Senate on 3 Feb 2020; Changes to second half-session 2021/22 approved by Senate on 12 May 2021; 2022/23 term dates approved by Senate on 1 December 2021 with adjustments approved 11 May 2022; 2023/24 term dates approved by Senate on 2 November 2022.
[4] Programmes with non-standard academic year structures: MBChB, Physician's Associate, BDS, PGDE. Some programmes also include optional fieldwork over the spring and summer breaks.

5.5   In developing a proposal for the structure of the academic year, we have also been mindful of the increasingly competitive and complex global student recruitment marketplace within which we are operating. We need to take an approach that places us in a strong position with our external audiences, specifically prospective students and their influencers including recruitment agents and scholarship providers.

5.6   An extensive process of consultation for the development of the initial options took place with colleagues and students as follows:

- Recruitment and Admissions Teams (UK and international)
- Dean for Student Support and Experience
- Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion
- Team Leaders in the Directorate of Academic Services and Online Education
- School Directors of Education
- PGT Leads from Schools
- AUSA Education Committee
- Vice-Principal (Global Engagement)

5.7   Further consultation then took place through the formal committees and through Schools via the School representatives of the Education Committees, through the School Education Committees and other School-led discussions. The student membership of committees both institutional and School level will continue to ensure that student views inform the final outcome. The feedback provided through the consultation process prior to Senate along with details of the comments raised at Senate in April and June 2023 is provided here.

5.8   The paper outlines (in sections 6 and 7) the Aims and the set of Principles on which the proposal for the new academic year structure is based. In the initial proposal, four options were presented. Following initial feedback, Option 1 was identified as the most appropriate as it allows for the achievement of all of the Principles. Amendments to the length of the Spring break and to Term 3 (PGT) have been made based on feedback and these amendments are explained in section 7.1(ii). Option 1 was presented to Committees, including Senate in June 2023 for a further academic view with this remaining the model now presented for approval. As discussed at Senate in June 2023, the other options have not been taken forward for the following reasons:

- Option 2: the earlier start date for the academic year does not allow for optimising recruitment opportunities.
- Options 3 and 4: the late start date for the academic year impacts on the timing of teaching over Summer and would impact on research activities; they do not enable suitable student mobility opportunities; assessment is not completed prior to the Winter break. In addition, Option 4 does not achieve the principle of completion of marking before the start of the next term and, in addition, an overlap of marking and teaching was not seen as favourable from a workload perspective.

5.9   Appendix 1 provides the proposal for the academic year structure with an appraisal against the Principles set out in Appendix 2.

6.   AIMS OF THE PROPOSAL

6.1   The overarching aims of the development of a revised academic year are to:

(i)   Ensure appropriate allocation of time for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment so that students are provided with sufficient time to undertake all programme requirements.
(ii)   Provide opportunities to further enhance the student experience in relation to, for example, student preparedness and transition into university and subsequent study years.
(iii)   Adopt a transparent three-term structure that better reflects current practices, which will aid clarity for prospective and current students, and support Schools in their workload planning. In doing so, there is no intention, through the proposal, to require any additional teaching activity in T3(PGT) where this does not already happen.

(iv)	Ensure that the structure facilitates the Aberdeen 2040 Education Commitments relating to student mobility, international learning, work-based learning, and placements.

(v)	Ensure academic year start dates that provide optimal student recruitment opportunities.

**7.	PRINCIPLES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE 24/25 ONWARDS**

7.1	In developing the proposal for the future structure of the academic year, a set of Principles have been developed which have been used to evaluate the proposal. There are eight Principles, and, whilst there are connections across them, each one is considered separately in this section. Within each of these sections, comments are made on the feedback received, any adjustments that have been made in light of the feedback, and consideration of workload for each of the Principles.

**(i)	Provide a structure that supports our Aberdeen 2040 Education ambitions**

> ***Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback***
>
> *Feedback*
> *Feedback indicates support for the Induction, Transition and Employability Week (ITEW), and overall structure as a means to enabling student mobility, international learning opportunities, and opportunities for placement activity such that external stakeholders have clarity about student availability.*
>
> *Response*
> *No adjustments have been made to this Principle.*

As part of the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, the University has committed to providing 'an international education to learners from all around the world' (Commitment 11), equipping 'our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods' (Commitment 12), and to ensuring that 'all our students can have an international experience, by studying or working collaboratively with international partners' (Commitment 14). These ambitions are being addressed, in part, through our workstreams on placements and work-based learning, Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills, and international learning (through student mobility and collaborative online international learning (COIL)). The academic year structure aims to be an enabler for these ambitions by:

- Providing a consistent academic year structure, including three equal terms, to enable consistent and coherent engagement with external stakeholders (e.g., employers, student mobility placement providers).

- Providing a dedicated week for returning students at the start of terms 1 and 2 to be used as a focus on skills enhancement recognising the importance of the University supporting continuing UG students to enhance their employability (Induction, Transition and Employability Week (ITEW)). These transition weeks will not only enhance skills development but will also augment a sense of belonging. For new entrants (UG and PGT) this time will be used for Welcome Week. Further work will be required to determine how best to use these weeks and is referred to in section 11.1 and workload implications section below.

As part of our overall approach to enhancement of the student educational experience, there will be different areas of focus dependent on outcomes of student experience feedback (e.g., NSS), external quality assurance and enhancement processes (e.g., through QAA Scotland and professional / accreditation bodies), and the national focus on enhancement (e.g., the Resilient Learning Community Enhancement Theme, 2020-2023). In addition, the work that the University has undertaken over recent years in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated need to pivot our education online, has led to enhancements across our provision (e.g., delivery of continuous, authentic assessment). The academic year structure therefore aims to continue to support the ability for flexibility for enhancements such as these by:

- Providing consistent term timelines across the academic year.
- Clear timelines for assessment and feedback on assessment.
- Creating space for community building and creating a sense of belonging (through the Induction, Transition and Employability Weeks).
- Creating some flexibility for discipline-specific approaches to structuring the delivery of Education across each term.

Workload implications
The development of the two ITE Weeks for returning students will build on existing activities through the Careers and Employability Service, and will be discussed with Schools, through the Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship (because some Schools have identified that there may be opportunities for them to use the Week for School-based activities). The aim would be to minimise academic staff workload (e.g., by providing packages of support through Toolkits and other means) whilst at the same time allowing scope for Schools to undertake high-impact and School-specific activities with their students. It is anticipated that these induction and transition activities will help with staff workload in the longer-term as we ensure that students are adequately prepared across a whole range of areas including, for example, academic integrity.

(ii) **A consistent and transparent structure of three equal terms across UG and PGT provision to provide adequate time for teaching, learning and assessment**

Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback

Feedback
Feedback on this aspect of the proposal has demonstrated different viewpoints summarised as follows:
- *Concerns that three formal terms will: lead to increased teaching and associated administration across Summer where these were previously not taking place; concern that there would be an introduction of undergraduate teaching to the proposed Term 3; reduced time for research activities; impact on childcare responsibilities; impact on the ability of academic staff to take annual leave.*
- *Support that three formal terms will: recognise teaching and associated activity that is already taking place; provide clarity for students, staff and external stakeholders (e.g., employers) on the timings of delivery of teaching; enable international students particularly to plan their year and when they are able to return home; provide practical advantages (e.g., in making room bookings easier); support recruitment onto PGT programmes which represent an important part of the income stream; should not impact on staff workloads as Schools manage staff workload whilst allowing for annual leave; transparently places value on the delivery of the PGT teaching that takes place across the proposed Term 3.*
- *Summer teaching is a reality for many academics and the proposal formalises what is already in place in many areas; appropriate management of workload, including teaching, by Heads of School is key to ensuring an equitable approach that enables all researchers to have time for undertaking research (e.g., one term each year free from teaching); concerns that the structure is a precursor to the introduction of more January start programmes and increased teaching loads generally leading to erosion of teaching-free period over the Summer and creating barriers to collaboration and team working for research; on balance, the structure could be neutral in terms of impact on research activities as long as teaching loads are not increased. [Feedback from URC]*

Response
- *Retain the three-term structure.*
- *Confirm that there is no intention, through this proposal, to introduce undergraduate intakes at any other time of year than September (therefore no undergraduate*

teaching in T3), nor to require teaching and associated activity to take place in T3 where this does not already happen.

- *Adjust the naming of the current Term 3 to Term 3 (PGT) to clearly identify it as PGT-only teaching (noting that some UG fieldwork currently takes place during that time period).*
- *Confirm that Schools will manage workload appropriately to ensure that staff are able to take allocated annual leave over the Summer and are able to undertake research activities.*
- *Encourage Schools to consider appropriate ways to utilise the three-term structure as a basis for the allocation of teaching (e.g., an approach might include the allocation of a term which is free from teaching).*

Additional Feedback
- *The previously proposed reduction (in the proposals brought to Senate on 19 April) from 2 weeks to 3 weeks for the Spring break would impact negatively on some field trip opportunities[5].*
- *Consideration be given to creating a break between cohorts, with the suggestion that marking time be reduced to two weeks to accommodate the suggestion.*
- *A single week of delivery after the Spring break is of limited value.*

Response
- *The proposal introduces a third week to the Spring break, followed by 5 weeks of teaching including a two-week assessment period. This additional week will enable the field trips to take place, and for staff and students to have at least one week of vacation. The additional week is likely to provide more flexibility for staff and students with childcare should school holiday timings shift over the lifetime of the AY structure.*
- *Reduce the proposed Term 3 to 12 weeks (from 13 weeks) with no flexible week (compared to Terms 1 and 2) to accommodate the extended Spring break.*
- *Whilst there is merit in the suggestion to create a break between cohorts, a reduction in marking time would not be feasible due to workload.*
- *The proposed structure avoids having only a single teaching week followed by a two-week assessment period after the Spring break, as previously was in place.*

Additional comments, not covered previously, from feedback from Senate in June 2023
- *A request for Term 3 to be of equal length to Terms 1 and 2 to ensure equity for January starts*
- *A request for flexibility to accommodate different start dates in certain programmes*
- *Consideration be given to moving the Spring break one week later to provide better opportunity for continuity of teaching before the break*
- *Consideration be given to providing a free week for marking prior to the Winter break*
- *A suggestion that the three-week break between Terms 2 and 3 be reduced to give more separation between the end of Term 3 and start of the next academic year.*

Response
- *The flexible week has been removed from Term 3 to enable the Spring Break to be of three-weeks length to accommodate fieldwork. There will still be 12 weeks of teaching and assessment in Term 3 which will align with Terms 1 and 2.*

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[5] In Geosciences, 2 weeks of field trips and 1 week of vacation typically take place across the 3-week period. The trips are scheduled to fit with learning outcomes threaded through T2 and staff availability. Most students do 2 separate field trips based on discipline, and these could not be moved to 'within' term as they would clash with other Schools' teaching at level 2. They cannot be moved later as data gathered is required for later assessment. It is important that students and staff are able to have at least one week of vacation.

> - *The proposals seek to establish a consistent and transparent academic year structure and it would be expected that programmes align to these dates unless there are strong reasons (e.g., PSRB) to deviate.*
> - *The timing of the Spring Break was made to ensure that the period of teaching after the break is sufficient to ensure students recognise the need to return to campus.*
> - *It is not possible to guarantee a free week for marking prior to the Winter break without bringing forward the start date of Term 1 which would have implications for student recruitment.*
> - *The three-week break between Terms 2 and 3 is included to ensure staff have clear time for marking and to ensure that students have a break prior to the start of Term 3.*

Currently the academic year has two defined half-sessions currently with 11 weeks (including a floating week) teaching followed by 2 weeks assessment with the summer teaching period for PGT being set at a School / programme level. This approach leads to variability in both timing and length of the summer period and given the lack of consistency, means the transparency of information about term dates for PGT students is impacted. The rationale for Principle (ii) is:

- As each stage of PGT programmes carries 60 credits, it is important that each term is of equal and appropriate length to recognise the notional student effort required.
- Helpful for external messaging to prospective and new students as it will better support a dual entry model (i.e., term 1 and term 2 entry) which is important from a recruitment perspective given international markets.
- Transparently acknowledges the delivery of Education that takes place in many areas across the University, and the associated staff workload (although does *not require* delivery of education across all three terms).

As such an academic year model based on three terms of equal length is proposed with the start and end dates of each term being consistent across Schools. The nomenclature is proposed to be:
- Term 1 (T1)
- Term 2 (T2)
- Term 3 (PGT) (T3 (PGT)).

For September PGT cohorts they would work through T1, T2, and T3 (PGT) in that order. For January PGT cohorts they would work through T2, T3 (PGT), and T1 in that order. Comparison universities have similar models and naming conventions (see paragraph 9.2).

The proposal for the academic year structure consists of two 13-week (T1 and T2) and one 12-week (T3 (PGT)) periods of teaching. Term 3 (PGT) is clearly identified as a PGT-only teaching period. The structure is composed of:
- 10 weeks of teaching (including in-course assessment) in T1 and T2 and 2 weeks of assessment in weeks 12 and 13 to allow for in-person exams where these need to take place.
- 12 weeks of teaching and assessment in T3 (PGT) (for postgraduate taught delivery recognising that for many programmes, dissertations / projects / fieldwork take place over that teaching period)[6].
- In T1 and T2, one flexible week for:
    - Revision where in-person exams are used
    - Reading week
    - Fieldwork
    - Other suitable activities

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[6] Some non-PGT teaching also takes place in term 3 (e.g. Summer Access, English Language and regulated Healthcare programmes).

- A dedicated two-week assessment period at the end of Terms 1 and 2 for most undergraduate programmes. While in-course assessment is threaded through the term for most courses, this assessment period provides time for end-of-course assessments and, where required, formal exams. For postgraduate provision, this period can be used for teaching due to the more prescriptive nature of these programmes except if formal exams are required in which case a two-week assessment period will be used.

The proposed new structure will apply to the majority of UG and PGT programmes with the exception of certain programmes[7] where professional requirements necessitate a different academic year structure.

Workload Implications
Feedback from some Senators indicate that the three-term structure will support the management of staff workload by providing transparency and consistency of timings across the academic year. It is important to reiterate that, where teaching does not take place, there is no intention through this proposal to introduce teaching or administration during Term 3 (PGT). There will be no introduction of new undergraduate teaching across T3 (PGT). There should therefore be no negative impact on workload and the proposed approach should support the allocation of workload by providing opportunities to consider discipline- and School-specific approaches which might include the allocation of a no-teaching term where this is appropriate.

(iii) All first term assessment completed prior to the Winter break

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Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback

Feedback
- *Completion of assessment prior to the Winter break is favoured, with students stating that this is their preference.*

Response
- *No changes to the Principle have been made.*

A core principle underpinning the last substantive review of the academic year structure, approved by Senate in November 2012, was the move of first half-session assessments before the Winter break. This was agreed to be important to allow students to have a proper break and take advantage of employment opportunities over that period. It was also agreed to be important from a retention perspective to reduce the risk of those struggling in the first half-session not returning after the Winter break. Additionally, this structure was also agreed to be beneficial to both incoming and outgoing international exchange students because it allowed visiting students to return home prior to the Winter break having completed all teaching and assessment and likewise allowed outgoing exchange students to be able to start their exchange early in the new year without needing to return to Aberdeen to complete assessments.

It is possible to change the timing of the completion of assessment to after the Winter break and two options were presented in the previous paper to that effect (Options 3 and 4). Not all international students choose to return to their home country over that period; some students prefer to have time over the Winter break to complete assessment (although it is important to note that students will not have access to support from academic or professional services staff who can support assessment during that period). Comparable data on student retention related to any change to the timing of assessment is not available for the University so it is not possible to make an evidence-based judgement on this matter.

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[7] Programmes with non-standard academic year structures: MBChB, Physician's Associate, BDS, PGDE and some Exec Education programmes. Some programmes also include optional fieldwork over the Spring and Summer breaks.

Where the delivery of assessment takes place after the Winter break, this timing allows for a later start date.

> *Workload Implications*
> *Workload remains the same no matter when assessment is submitted. However, having submissions prior to the Winter break ensures that staff do not feel a sense of obligation to support students with their assessment over the break. There is the usual period of marking time within the structure, so time for this activity is not impacted negatively.*

(iv) Marking completed in 3-week window prior to start of next term

> ***Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback***
>
> *Feedback*
> * *The allocation of marking time (3 weeks) does not reflect the reality of workloads at 'heavy' marking times and, in the case of the feedback provided, impacting on the opportunity to take annual leave over the Spring break.*
>
> *Response*
> * *We make a commitment to our students through our Feedback Framework that feedback should be provided within a maximum of three working weeks excluding vacation periods.*
> * *No changes to this Principle have been made.*
>
> *Additional comments, not covered previously, from feedback from Senate in June 2023*
> * *Consideration be given to providing a free week for marking prior to the Winter break*
>
> *Response*
> * *It is not possible to guarantee a free week for marking prior to the Winter break without bringing forward the start date of Term 1 which would have implications for student recruitment.*

The University's Feedback Framework states that feedback should be timely and normally provided within a maximum of three working weeks (excluding vacation periods). In the context of the academic year structure, it is important that students can receive their overall course results before the start of the next Term to allow them, where necessary, to make changes to their curriculum (e.g., changes to curriculum breadth courses). This timing is important where students may not have passed a pre-requisite or where a student finds they have not done well in their elective courses and wish to make changes (e.g., a student who has taken a language to fulfil their Enhanced Study requirements who decides after the Term 1 that, based on performance, they would prefer to switch to a Sixth Century course in Term 2 instead of taking a further language course).

> *Workload Implications*
> Marking is currently undertaken in a 3-week time period. Therefore there are no additional workload implications.

(v) Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 1: school, public and religious holidays

> ***Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback***
>
> *Feedback*
> * *Consideration should be given to guaranteeing that people with childcare responsibilities can be free from scheduled teaching during the Winter, Spring and Summer school holidays.*

The University has an increasingly diverse student population and, in line with the Aberdeen 2040 commitments in regard to inclusion, it is important that in developing a new academic year structure that consideration is given to equality, diversity and inclusion issues impacting both staff and students.

School holidays
In recognition of caring (childcare), work commitments, and wellbeing needs of both staff and students, where possible, the proposed structure has been aligned with school holidays. As the timing of City and Shire school holidays can vary, it cannot be guaranteed that the academic year structure will always fully align with school holidays but where possible alignment will be made. School term dates for 2022/23 to 2024/25 for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire as currently published, are given in Appendix 5.

The Spring break aligns with the City and Shire holidays, and it is proposed that it reverts to 3 weeks in length rather than the previously proposed 2 weeks (see Section 7(ii)).

The school Summer holidays, as currently in the Summer teaching period, fall within the proposed Term 3 (PGT). As currently, it is expected that staff will take annual leave during the Summer period in agreement with their line manager.

The October school holidays fall in the first term. It is not possible to include a formal break given the proximity to the start of Term 1. Importantly, Schools have the flexible week which could be used to provide a reading week at this time if the timing is appropriate in relation to the student learning experience.

Public holidays
In regard to public holidays, there are normally four public holidays which fall during teaching as outlined below for 2022/23:

Spring Public Holiday – 18 April
May Day Holiday – 2 May
Start of Trades Fortnight – 11 July
Autumn Public Holiday – 26 September

These dates may fall within teaching, assessment or non-term-time periods. Where an alternative teaching slot is requested to compensate for the public holiday, Schools can liaise with the Central Timetabling Team to review alternatives after Registration. It may not be possible to reschedule due to the flexibility of the curriculum as it can be difficult to find alternative slots which avoid clashes with other courses being taken by students and also available appropriate rooms for the type of teaching (e.g., lecture theatres). In the case of assessment, the scheduling will be managed to avoid delivery of assessments on public holidays. Where it is not possible to reschedule delivery to avoid public holidays, staff will be enabled to take a day in lieu as part of their existing annual leave entitlement.

Religious holidays
The Policy on Religion and Belief states that the University recognises that there may be circumstances where students may request absence or adjustment on the grounds of religious observance and where this is the case reasonable adjustments will be made. It is important that we do everything that we can as a University to create a sense of belonging and welcome for all. In addition, we have a partnership with Al Faleh Group for Education and Academic Services (AFG) in Qatar for whom religious days such as Eid Al-

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[8] Staff can request up to 18 weeks unpaid leave under the parental leave policy.

Fitr.[9] and Eid Al-Adha.[10] are important national holidays when the campus in Qatar is closed. The timing of these holidays varies widely.

> *Workload Implications*
> *The flexible (floating) week allows for School-based management of workload around holiday periods. Where Summer teaching does take place, Schools will manage workload such that all staff are able to take their annual leave entitlement which, for some, will support childcare responsibilities.*

(vi) **Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 2: optimal orientation and induction opportunities so as to enhance the preparation and readiness of students for university, their studies and wider student life**

> ***Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback***
>
> *Feedback*
> - *There could be opportunities for some Schools to put in place School- or discipline-specific activities that will enhance the student experience.*
> - *The proposal presents opportunities to put in place institution-wide activities.*
>
> *Response*
> - *No changes have been made to this Principle.*

It is critical that new students receive robust induction into their studies. This is important to ensure those joining the University are given an appropriate introduction to their chosen subject and informed about relevant policies and procedures (e.g., those associated with student support, academic integrity, wellbeing etc.). This approach will also allow opportunities for new students to have time to meet other students and get an insight into the wider student experience (e.g., clubs and societies). As such the proposed academic year structure as set out in Appendix 3 provides time for orientation and induction at the start of Terms 1 and 2. As detailed in (i), it is proposed that this time is also used to support skills development for returning students. As part of the ongoing work to enhance student induction, orientation and transition, consideration will be given to how such induction and orientation can be delivered more flexibly, whilst ensuring that we provide all opportunities for students to arrive during these important weeks.

> *Workload Implications*
> *See Principle (i) workload implications.*

(vii) **Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 3: Equality Impact Assessment**

In developing the new academic year structure, an equality impact assessment has been undertaken prior to the proposal being brought forward for a further academic view.

A revised Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken (see Appendix 6).

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[9] Eid al Fitr / End of Ramadan dates for the years 2023-2033 https://www.qppstudio.net/global-holidays-observances/eid-al-fitr-end-of-ramadan.htm

[10] Eid al Adha / Feast of Sacrifice dates for the years 2023-2033 https://www.qppstudio.net/global-holidays-observances/eid-al-adha-feast-of-sacrifice.htm

(viii) **Academic year start date late enough to allow recruitment activity, including the Clearing period following school exam results, timing of release of school results more generally, UKVI requirements and timing of the confirmation of external scholarships**

> ***Feedback from consultation including Senate, and response to feedback***
>
> *Feedback*
> - *A later start date is seen as beneficial for recruitment and that, whilst there was some support for the previously presented option 2 (with a start date of 09 September 2024), it does not support this Principle. Whilst the start date for options 3 and 4 (30 September 2024) are noted as allowing further time for recruitment, a number of concerns were raised around the impact on the timing of teaching over the Summer (e.g., time for research).*
>
> *Response*
> - *On balance, option 1 with its start date of 16 September 2024 (Welcome Week) and 23 September 2024 (for teaching) is proposed (see Appendix 1).*

Although enhancements have been made to processing times for applications for study to allow more time for prospective students to complete required actions after receiving an offer of admission, there are different external factors which mean a later start date is competitively advantageous.

In recent years, we have recruited around 200 undergraduate students during "Clearing" that is the period following the release of Higher and A Level exam results in August. This group has been key to us achieving growth in Rest of UK undergraduates, and now, with a very competitive market for Home fees/Scotland students is even more strategically important. However, a school exam release date of 8 August (Highers) and 17 August (A Levels) is very close to a September start, which could be off-putting for an applicant who is re-considering their university options in Clearing. Some of our Clearing applicants will also be international and require time to apply for a Student Visa. It is worth noting that the staffing within the UKVI will reflect the volume requirements for English Institutions, generally.

Specifically in relation to international students, the arrangements they require to put in place both before we an issue them a CAS.[11] and before they apply for a Visa are complex and time consuming. Evidence of funding is required for some markets; in many cases this is dependent on external sponsors confirming scholarship awards which can occur close to the start of the academic year. To obtain a Visa, self-funding applicants have to demonstrate to UKVI that adequate finances have been held consistently in their bank account for 28 days. And the external bodies driving these processes often work to an understanding of an autumn start for the UK sector that is closer to October.

A later start date would also be advantageous for recruitment in Qatar.

Table 1 below provides details of start dates for 2023/24 for a range of other UK institutions where dates for the equivalents of our "Welcome Week" and "Start of Teaching" are readily available. This shows that our 2023/24 start date is one of the earliest in the group, with the most common start date for 2023 being one or two weeks later (a Welcome Week that starts on 18 September or 25 September). A start date that is more in line with others across the UK would be more line with the expectations of prospective students, their agents, and other external agencies. It is noted that Scottish institutions in general start earlier, but we do need to be mindful of the wider UK context.

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[11] Certificate of Acceptance for Studies, the formal UKVI document we issue to applicants which they require to apply for a Visa.

Table 1: Start Dates at other UK Universities

Wesley Group	Welcome week / Freshers' week	Start of teaching
St Andrews	04/09/2023	11/09/2023
Aberdeen	11/09/2023	18/09/2023
Dundee	11/09/2023	18/09/2023
East Anglia	18/09/2023	25/09/2023
Kent	18/09/2023	25/09/2023
Surrey	18/09/2023	25/09/2023
Bath	25/09/2023	03/10/2023
Leicester	25/09/2023	
Loughborough	26/09/2023	02/10/2023
Lancaster	02/10/2023	06/10/2023

Russell Group	Welcome week / Freshers' week	Start of teaching
Birmingham	18/09/23	25/09/23
Bristol	18/09/23	25/09/23
Cardiff	25/9/2023	2/10/2023
Durham	25/9/2023	2/10/2023
Edinburgh	12/09/23	18/09/23
Exeter	19/09/23	25/09/23
Glasgow	11/09/23	18/09/23
King's	18/09/23	25/09/23
Leeds		02/10/2023
Liverpool	18/09/23	25/09/23
Manchester	18/09/23	25/09/23
Newcastle	18/09/23	
Nottingham	25/09/23	
Oxford	09/10/2023	
Queen Mary	18/09/2023	
Sheffield	18/09/23	25/09/23
Southampton	25/09/23	2/10/23
Warwick	25/09/23	2/10/23

> _Workload Implications_
> _The structure prevents the impact of teaching running later into the Summer, and the subsequent impact on research time for academic colleagues._

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 *The structure will be appropriate for our Transnational Education*

The University has a number of transnational education (TNE) partnerships (e.g. the partnership with AFG in Qatar, SCNU and Harbin). Some of these necessarily require to be delivered over a different timeframe to that of our academic year, such as the SCNU Joint Institute where delivery takes place on the SCNU campus in China and as such requires delivery to align with their academic year structure and associated public holidays (e.g., Chinese New Year). Others such as the University's partnership with AFG in Qatar in contrast require the alignment of delivery between Aberdeen and Qatar to ensure equivalence of experience between both cohorts who are studying on the same programme. As such, input has been provided from the Qatar Academic Planning Group as part of the consultation and support for option 1 was provided. In this context, it is noted that the Ministry of Education in Qatar can impose changes to the academic year structure to reflect nationwide events such as the FIFA World Cup.

8.2   *Staff Workload*

The impact of each of the Principles, and therefore the proposal, has been addressed within each of the sections i)-vii). To highlight a response to a key concern:

- Whilst the proposal is to create three terms as a transparent approach to recognising the teaching activity that takes place across the academic year, it is recognised that Heads of School <u>currently</u> manage staff workload in relation to the realities of whole year teaching (including PGT summer teaching) in many areas. The management of staff workload in the context of delivery of Education across the whole academic year in some areas is of particular importance given the growing intake of January start PGT entrants and the need to ensure that staff have focused time for research or other activities. Delivery across three teaching periods is not new. However, the proposal highlights the need for Schools to appropriately manage workload in this context. For example, **it is not a requirement that academics teach across all three terms**, and it is important to ensure appropriate workload management in Schools as part of an overall approach to address workload concerns and create further time for research. It is also important to reiterate that there is no intention, as part of this proposal to introduce undergraduate teaching across the proposed Term 3 (PGT) (noting that some fieldwork takes place currently at this time).

Once the structure of the new academic year is agreed, work will be required to support the transition (e.g., updates to University IT systems (e.g., Student record) to accommodate the changed structure). Consideration will also need to be given, within Directorates and School Admin teams, to the management of any workload implications posed by the new structure. This will be done ahead of the presentation of proposals for approval in September.

One of the next phases of work for Aberdeen 2040 Education, is scoping of the flexibility of our curriculum with a view to aligning the breadth curriculum more closely with Aberdeen 2040 to benefit the student experience, as well as providing opportunities to appropriately streamline the curriculum.

8.3   *The structure enables achievement of Statutory Requirements*

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) defines full-time study as requiring at least 24 weeks of study.[12] for at least 21 hours per week. The proposed academic year structure enables the achievement of these requirements. Additionally, the University has a growing number of students who are funded by US Federal Loans who stipulate a requirement for 30 weeks of instruction, exams, or study for final exams (excluding formal breaks). As such it is important that consideration is given to these requirements in designing the new academic year structure. The proposed structure offers a 28-week undergraduate academic year structure including the induction / transition and employability week at the start of Terms 1 and 2. In this regard, it is worth noting that a comparison of other Scottish HEIs shows their academic year structure for UGs to vary between 26 and 31 weeks in length.[13].

9.   NOMENCLATURE

9.1   We currently use the terminology 'half-session' and have only two half-sessions (from September to December, and from January to May). We deliver our Education across the entire academic year and the proposals for the new academic year structure transparently acknowledges this. The terminology proposed for the three teaching periods is 'term' (i.e., Term 1, Term 2, and Term 3 (PGT) for the specific teaching periods). Feedback from some areas suggest the use of Autumn, Spring, Summer as indicators of the terms. However, this could be confusing for some international students where seasons are at a different time of year. Numbering is suggested as being more inclusive. Previous discussion with QAC.[14] on this matter indicated some concern

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[12] Study is defined as including contact teaching time, private study and assessment.
[13] QAC Minute of 24 February 2022
[14] Section 2.2-2.4 of Minute of 24 February 2022

that all Schools and disciplines would be required to deliver education across all three terms (and thus staff would be required to teach across all three terms). In line with section 7.1(ii) above, Heads of School already manage staff workload in relation to the realities of whole year teaching (including PGT summer teaching) in many areas particularly given the growing intake of January start PGT entrants.

9.2   Many institutions across the sector use the terminology of 'term' (see table 2 below for examples). Other institutions use the terminology of 'semester' or 'trimester' (e.g., Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and St Andrews) and likewise denote these either numerically or by seasons. It is felt that term is more meaningful internationally and would be most easily understood by our prospective and current students. It is proposed that numerical indicators are used as these are neutral rather than seasonal indicators given that seasons differ for our transnational education.

Table 2: Terminology

University	Terminology
Edinburgh Napier University	Trimester 1, 2 and 3 (latter ending at end of August)
Glasgow Caledonian University	Trimester A, B and C (latter ending at end of August)
University of Kent	Undergraduate Terms (Autumn, Spring, Summer); Postgraduate Terms (Autumn, Spring, Summer) (whole year academic calendar recognised)
Lancaster University	Michaelmas, Lent, Summer Terms (latter ends in June)
University of Leicester	Uses both Terms (1, 2 and 3) and Semesters (1 and 2) (term 2 and semester 2 end in June)
Loughborough University	Uses Term to refer to the period when students are on campus. Semesters refer to teaching periods for taught modules: Semesters 1, 2, 3 (PGT) (whole year academic calendar recognised through terms and semesters)
University of Oxford	Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity Terms (latter ends in June)
UCL	Uses Terms with these being denoted as First, Second and Third Term (latter ending in June) though it is acknowledged that PGT students study beyond the third term and submit their dissertation in September
Warwick University	Autumn, Spring, Summer Terms (latter ends beginning July)
University of West of Scotland	Terms 1, 2 and 3 (whole year academic calendar recognised)

10.   ACTION REQUIRED

10.1 UEC is asked to approve, for its part, the proposed structure for the academic year from 2024/25 onwards. In summary, the proposed structure, which takes account of the consultation and feedback as detailed in section 2 above, provides the following key elements:

- Commence teaching w/c 23 September 2024 (week 9 of AY) with Welcome Week w/c 16 September 2024 (week 8 of AY) to allow student recruitment activity.
- Put in place a three-term structure for the academic year (AY).
- Utilise 'term' as the terminology for the teaching periods
- Implement 13-week terms for terms 1 and 2, including one floating week; and a 12-week term 3 with no floating week (PGT teaching in term 3). (See Principle (ii) for explanation of reason for 12-week term 3).
- Align University holidays, as far as possible, with school holidays in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for the Winter break and the Spring break.

- Implement an 'Induction/Transition and Employability Week' (ITEW) at the beginning of terms 1 and 2 for continuing UG students with this time being used for a Welcome Week for new UG and PGT entrants.

11.   NEXT STEPS

11.1   Subject to approval of the proposed academic year structure for 2024/25 onwards, the following next steps will be required:

- Development of an implementation plan, identifying all actions required to put the new structure in place (e.g., changes to processes, regulations).
- Proposals around an employability and skills focused induction/transition and employability week (ITEW) for returning UG students will be brought forward (see 7.1(ii) above).
- A communications plan for students and new entrants will be developed with the aim of ensuring clarity around the structure for both continuing and new entrants.

12.   FURTHER INFORMATION

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

15 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Closed

Proposed New Academic Year Structure

[The full set of options presented to Senate on 19 April 2023 are available here]

Week No.	Date (w/c)	Important Dates	Proposed Structure	
1	29.7.24			
2	5.8.24			
3	12.8.24			
4	19.8.24			
5	26.8.24			
6	2.9.24			
7	9.9.24		PGT Marking	
8	16.9.24		ITEW*	PGT Marking
9	23.9.24	Sept Hol (Mon)	T1.1	
10	30.9.24		T1.2	
11	7.10.24		T1.3	
12	14.10.24	School Holidays	T1.4	
13	21.10.24	School Holidays	T1.5	
14	28.10.24		T1.6	
15	4.11.24		T1.7	
16	11.11.24		T1.8	
17	18.11.24		T1.9	
18	25.11.24		T1.10	Winter Grads
19	2.12.24		T1.11	Qatar Grads (TBC)
20	9.12.24		T1.12	
21	16.12.24		T1.13	
22	23.12.24	School Holidays	Uni Closed Period	
23	30.12.24	School Holidays	Uni Closed Period	
24	6.1.25		Marking.[15]	
25	13.1.25		Marking	
26	20.1.25		Marking	ITEW*
27	27.1.25		T2.1	
28	3.2.25		T2.2	
29	10.2.25		T2.3	
30	17.2.25		T2.4	
31	24.2.25		T2.5	
32	3.3.25		T2.6	

[15] Marking period includes marking time and Examiners' Meetings

* ITEW – Induction, Transition and Employability Week

33	10.3.25		T2.7	
34	17.3.25		T2.8	
35	24.3.25		Spring Break	
36	31.3.25	School Holidays	Spring Break	
37	7.4.25	School Holidays	Spring Break	
38	14.4.25		T2.9	
39	21.4.25	April Hol (Mon)	T2.10	
40	28.4.25		T2.11	
41	5.5.25	May Hol (Mon)	T2.12	
42	12.5.25		T2.13	
43	19.5.25		Marking.[16]	
44	26.5.25		Marking	
45	2.6.25		Marking	
46	9.6.25		Marking	T3.1
47	16.6.25		T3.2	
48	23.6.25		T3.3	
49	30.6.25		T3.4	Summer Grads
50	7.7.25	School Holidays	T3.5	
51	14.7.25	School Holidays | July Hol (Mon)	T3.6	
52	21.7.25	School Holidays	T3.7	
1	28.7.25	School Holidays	T3.8	
2	4.8.25	School Holidays	T3,.9	
3	11.8.25	School Holidays	T3.10	
4	18.8.25		T3.11	
5	25.8.25		T3.12	
6	1.9.25		Marking.[17]	

[16] Marking period includes marking time and Examiners' Meetings
[17] Marking period includes marking time and Examiners' Meetings

Mapping of Proposed Academic Year Structure to Principles

Principles	Proposed Structure
Provides a structure that supports our Aberdeen 2040 Education ambitions	Consistent structure supports work placement activity and mobility. Provides time for skills development to support employability. Completion of term 1 before Winter break may assist with student mobility.
A consistent structure of three equal terms across UG and PGT provision	Yes (13 weeks for Terms 1 and 2; 12 weeks for Term 3 (PGT) with the latter having no 'floating' week but same number of weeks available for teaching and assessment).
All first term assessment completed prior to Winter break	Yes
Marking completed in 3 week marking window prior to start of next term	Yes
Alignment of University vacation periods with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire School holidays	Yes for Winter and Spring breaks but timing of City and Shire holidays do move and do not always align so cannot guarantee there will always be alignment. Summer school holidays: Annual leave should be managed in Schools so that staff can take their annual leave entitlement to support their childcare responsibilities. October School holidays fall in weeks 4 and 5 of teaching.
Academic year start as late as possible to support recruitment activity, including clearing, UKVI requirements and timing of release of school results	Induction starts on 16 September and teaching on 23 September – aligns with 2023/24 timeline. For January starts, induction starts on 27 January and teaching on 2 February.
Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion	Supports childcare through school holiday alignment (see above) for Winter and Spring breaks. Assessment completion before Winter break would provide opportunity for employment and could support childcare responsibilities for students with school-aged children. Induction and orientation at all years to provide sense of belonging for all students.

Former Academic Year Structures

Week No.	Pre-Covid Structure	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6	Induction				
7	S1 Teaching & Assessment (14 weeks)			Induction	Induction
8		Induction	Induction	S1 Teaching & Assessment (13 Weeks)	S1 Teaching & Assessment (13 Weeks)
9		S1 Teaching & Assessment (12 Weeks)	S1 Teaching & Assessment (12 Weeks)		
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking
22	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation
23					
24	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking
25	S2 Teaching & Assessment (11 weeks)	Marking / Induction	Marking / Induction		Marking / Induction
26		S2 Teaching & Assessment (10 Weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (10 Weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (10 Weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (10 Weeks)
27					
28					
29					
30					
31					
32					
33					
34					
35					
36	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation	Vacation
37					
38					
39	S2 Teaching & Assessment (4 weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (3 Weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (3 Weeks)	S2 Teaching Assessment (3 weeks)	S2 Teaching & Assessment (3 weeks)
40					
41					
42	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking	Marking
43					
44					
45					
46					
47					
48					
49	Resits	Resits	Resits	Resits	Resits
50					
51	Marking			Marking	Marking
52		Marking	Marking		
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

BACKGROUND TO STUDENT RECRUITMENT REQUIREMENTS

Optimise the conditions for recruitment to Intakes A and B for international students.

The University has taken a strategic decision to increase the number of international students, in particular postgraduate students. It is essential for the institution's financial sustainability that growth targets are achieved. It is therefore important that our academic year arrangements recognise the challenges and timelines that exist for international students.

It is apparent that there is a general perception that UK universities start teaching in late September from key bodies such as UKVI (in considering the timing for student Visa applications); external sponsorship bodies (in considering timing for scholarship awards that are required for us to issue CAS.[18] to students) and our international applicants and recruitment agents. Applicants and agents will be applying/researching many different UK universities. They develop an understanding of when the sector as a whole starts and plan on the basis. Our University should therefore aim not to be an outlier with regard to academic year start date and to align with other UK institutions.

In short, this final stage of conversion, post acceptance and after CAS is issued but prior to registration, is complex and challenging and institutions across the UK are in strong competition for these students (who may well hold CAS from more than one university). It is essential to provide as much space as possible at this time to allow students to make the progress they require to register at the University of Aberdeen. Any attrition through the various stages has financial implications for the institution. These are dedicated, committed students who wish to join to study at the University of Aberdeen, but some simply will not be able to through no fault of their own based on the potentially restrictive timeframes involved here. A key aim is therefore to mitigate this attrition as much as possible.

Optimise the conditions for recruitment to Intakes A and B for UK students.

Timing of exam results for domestic students and impact on start dates

- Opportunities for those with conditional offers to achieve conditions. As well as in the UK, internationally prospective students are waiting for exam results (school and undergraduate degree) across late Spring and into summer. This impacts on those applicants being able to achieve conditions of their offer and any delay to exam periods eats into the time that applicants have to accept their offer and move to the next stage of the process.

- School exam results and impact on offering places in Clearing. A Level results day in 2023 is Thursday 17 August and the equivalent date in 2024 would be 15 August – only just over **two weeks** before a start date of 2 September. Yet offering places in Clearing extends until well after a week after A Level results day. Clearing applicants will probably be applying to Aberdeen for the first time; they will have very limited time to plan for moving to Aberdeen – asking them to make that decision in less than two weeks will inevitably impact on the conversion of these applicants. This Summer we made 428 Clearing offers to international and RUK applicants and had 173 acceptances (40% conversion rate). Every 10% of those 428 offers that converts (assuming that they are all RUK and not the higher-level international fees level) is equivalent to annual income of almost 400K (42.8 X 9250) and total income of £1.6M (42.8 * 37K).

- In respect of students joining us through College pathways with an HNC or HND, we require confirmation of exam results from Colleges which can also be delayed close to the start of term.

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[18] Certificate of Acceptance for Studies, the document we need to provide to applicants in order for them to apply for a Student Visa.

Future School Holiday Dates (Academic Year 2022/23 to 2024/25)

TERM 1	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE
In-Service Day	Mon 22/08/22	Mon 22/08/22	Mon 21/08/23	Mon 21/08/23	Mon 19/08/24	Mon 19/08/24
Term Starts	Tue 23/08/22	Tue 23/08/22	Tue 22/08/23	Tue 22/08/23	Tue 20/08/24	Tue 20/08/24
Sept Holiday	Fri 23/09/22 – Mon 26/09/22	Mon 19/09/22	Fri 22/09/23 – Mon 25/09/23		Fri 20/09/24 – Mon 23/09/24	
Term Ends	Fri 14/10/22	Fri 14/10/22	Fri 13/10/23	Fri 13/10/23	Fri 11/10/24	Fri 11/10/24
Oct Holiday	Mon 17/10/22 – Fri 28/10/22	Mon 17/10/22 – Fri 28/10/22	Mon 16/10/23 – Fri 27/10/23	Mon 16/10/23 – Fri 27/10/23	Mon 14/10/24 – Fri 25/10/24	Mon 14/10/24 – Fri 25/10/24

TERM 2	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE
Term Starts	Mon 31/10/22	Mon 31/10/22	Mon 30/10/23	Mon 30/10/23	Mon 28/10/24	Mon 28/10/24
In-Service Day	Fri 18/11/22	Thu 17/11/22 – Fri 18/11/22	Fri 17/11/23	Thu 16/11/23 – Fri 17/11/23	Fri 15/11/24	Thu 14/11/24 – Fri 15/11/24
Term Ends	Thu 22/12/22	Fri 23/12/22	Thu 21/12/23	Fri 22/12/23	Fri 20/12/24	Fri 20/12/24
Christmas Holiday	Fri 23/12/22 – Fri 06/01/23	Mon 26/12/22 – Fri 06/01/23	Fri 22/12/23 – Fri 05/01/24	Mon 25/12/23 – Fri 05/01/24	Mon 23/12/24 – Fri 03/01/25	Mon 23/12/24 – Fri 03/01/25

TERM 3	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE
Term Starts	Mon 09/01/23	Mon 09/01/23	Mon 08/01/24	Mon 08/01/24	Mon 06/01/25	Mon 06/01/25
Mid-Term Holiday	Mon 13/02/23	Mon 13/02/23	Mon 12/02/24	Mon 12/02/24	Mon 10/02/25	Mon 10/02/25
In-Service Day	Tue 14/02/23 – Wed 15/02/23	Tue 14/02/23 – Wed 15/02/23	Tue 13/02/24 – Wed 14/02/24	Tue 13/02/24 – Wed 14/02/24	Tue 11/02/25 – Wed 12/02/25	Tue 11/02/25 – Wed 12/02/25
Term Ends	Fri 31/03/23	Fri 31/03/23	Fri 29/03/24	Thu 28/03/24	Fri 28/03/25	Fri 28/03/25
Spring Holiday	Mon 04/04/23 – Fri 14/04/23	Mon 04/04/23 – Fri 14/04/23	Mon 01/04/24 – Fri 12/04/24	Fri 29/03/24 – Fri 12/04/24	Mon 31/03/25 – Fri 11/04/25	Mon 31/03/25 – Fri 11/04/25

TERM 4	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE	CITY	SHIRE
Term Starts	Mon 17/04/23	Mon 17/04/23	Mon 15/04/24	Mon 15/04/24	Mon 14/04/25	Mon 14/04/25
Good Friday					Fri 18/04/25	Fri 18/04/25
May Day Holiday	Mon 01/05/23	Mon 01/05/23	Mon 06/01/24	Mon 06/01/24	Mon 05/05/25	Mon 05/05/25
In-Service Day	Tue 02/05/23		Tue 07/05/24		Tue 06/05/25	Tue 06/05/25
Term Ends	Fri 07/07/23	Fri 07/07/23	Fri 05/07/24	Fri 05/07/24	Fri 04/07/25	Fri 04/07/25

<u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment</u>

Title of Policy, Procedure, or Function: **FUTURE ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE**	
School/Directorate: **Academic Services**	
Author/Position: **Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience**	**Date created:** **11/5/23**

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

The purpose of the paper is to agree an academic year structure for 2024/25 which will:

(vi) Ensure appropriate allocation of time for the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment so that students are provided with sufficient time to undertake all programme requirements.
(vii) Facilitate opportunities to enhance workload planning through a transparent full-year structure, and provide opportunities to create further time for research.
(viii) Ensure that the structure facilitates the Aberdeen 2040 Education Commitments.
(ix) Facilitate optimal student recruitment opportunities.
(x) Provide opportunities to further enhance the student experience in relation to, for example, student preparedness and transition into university and subsequent study years.

2. Stakeholders:

- Students
- Academics
- Professional Services

3. Additional Consultation/Involvement

Organisation/person consulted or involved	Date, method, and by whom	Location of consultation records
SMT	23 March 2023	See associated minutes for these meetings
<u>Academic view</u> Joint Meeting of EEC and SSEC	27 March 2023	
Qatar Academic Planning Group	By circulation	
UEC	23 March 2023	
QAC	29 March 2023	
Heads of School	29 March 2023	
SRC	*Via Teams*	

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

The current paper summarises the feedback received vi the last round of consultation. In the previous paper there were four options presented describing the academic year and the consultation proved effective in identifying a preferred structure with further amendments. This consultation was successful in identifying a preferred structure however did require further amendments. Based on the feedback from this round of consultations the revised recommendations to be further considered for an academic view are:
 	
  i.   Put in place a three-term structure for the academic year (AY).
  ii.   Commence teaching w/c 23 September 2024 (week 9 of AY) with Welcome Week w/c 16 September 2024 (week 8 of AY) to allow student recruitment activity.
  iii.   Implement 13-week terms for terms 1 and 2, including one floating week; and a 12-week term 3 with no floating week (PGT teaching in term 3). (See Principle (ii) for explanation of reason for 12-week term 3).
  iv.   Align University holidays, as far as possible, with school holidays in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for the Winter break and the Spring break (see Principle (v) for comment on Summer school holidays).
  v.   Implement an 'Induction/Transition and Employability Week' (ITEW) at the beginning of terms 1 and 2.
  vi.   Complete all term 1 assessment prior to the Winter break.
  vii. Complete marking in the 3-week window prior to the start of the next term.
 	
Utilise 'term' as the terminology for the teaching periods. However, it was felt that more colleagues needed to be given the opportunity to comment and feedback on the proposed structure and so the attached paper is presented again for academic view.

4. Monitoring

a) **Detail method of monitoring of the Policy, Procedure or Function and by whom**
Consultation with colleagues in Student Support, Disability, and members of EDIC were consulted in preparing the EQIA. Ongoing monitoring will be conducted by Academic Services with further discussion at relevant committees, SMT, UEC, SSEC, QAC, and Senate overseen by the VP for Education and the EQIA revised accordingly if required.

b) **Detail how monitoring results will be utilised to develop the Policy, Procedure, or Function**
Ongoing feedback will be collated, analysed and discussed with appropriate committees, groups and networks.

c) **Timescale of monitoring including proposed dates**
Consultation is currently on-going and the paper will be discussed at various committees for further academic view prior to seeking approval, with the intention of being introduced for AY 2024, however equality impact concerns will continue to be considered at all stages of this project.

5. Impact assessment

Select what impact there will be on each group:

Characteristic	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Not Applicable
Race		X		
Disability (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions and impairments):			X	
British Sign Language (BSL)			X	
Neurodivergent			X	
Gender		X		
Age		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
Religion, Belief or No Belief			X	
Gender Reassignment		X		
Non-Binary		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Parents and Carers	X			
Care Experienced or Estranged		X		
Socio-Economic Group		X		

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

There are potential impacts for current students with disabilities, particularly neurodivergence, in relation to learning styles and assessment preparation, where they transition from the current to a new academic year structure. Where there are such changes consideration will need to be given about the support required through our specialist teams (e.g. Student Support) and from Schools to overcome this potential impact and gap between learning and assessment. This will be particularly the case for UG students where this change may come part way through a programme and require a change to learning approaches in a single programme.

Students with disabilities need to be assessed by the student support team in term 1 for their exam provisions to be put in place or reviewed by late October/early November. This has implication for staff workload in this team and for Schools who also require clarity on provisions as early as possible. Whilst models offering a later assessment period are preferable, the proposed model is broadly similar to current provision and further thought may need to be given to how best to manage this workload. Failure to do so can result in increased volume of emails, student anxiety, and increased number of GC/MCs.

A later start date between students receiving their UF and the start of term is preferable for students with disabilities to allow the Disability Team to put in place the support that they require, for example technology and equipment funded by Disabled Students Allows (DSA) or arranging non-medical help such as BSL or note-taking.

There are potential impacts in relation to religious festivals and the interplay new term dates have on key festivals. This will need to be considered during any transition period and particularly with regard to flexibility for such festival in line with our normal processes. In reality any AY structure will benefit some and not others, however the universities Religion and Belief Policy addresses our commitment to fairness for all and implications on education and assessments should be considered throughout implementation to ensure that no groups are discriminated against.

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

This paper is aimed at establishing an inclusive educational experience for all students and supportive working conditions for staff. One goal of this paper has been to align academic weeks and holiday periods with local school holidays where possible. As such, this may advance equality of opportunity for staff and students who are parents, however providing a clear and transparent academic year structure, especially recognising the existing teaching that occurs during 'term 3' will be greatly beneficial for both staff and students.

c) How is the Policy, Procedure, or Function likely to promote good relations between people with different protected characteristics?
The current paper has developed a proposed new structure to the academic year that attempt to articulate our Aberdeen 2040 ambitions for Education through a set of principles underpinning the proposed structure. As such this paper aims to promote good relations between all members of the academic community, however principal (v) explicitly aims to address that EDI concerns when planning the AY. The 8 principles are: (i) *Provide a structure that supports our Aberdeen 2040 Education ambitions* (ii) *A consistent and transparent structure of three equal terms across UG and PGT provision to provide adequate time for teaching, learning and assessment* (iii) *All first term assessment completed prior to the Winter break* (iv) *Marking completed in 3-week window prior to start of next term* (v) *Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 1: school, public and religious holidays* (vi) *Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 2: optimal orientation and induction opportunities so as to enhance the preparation and readiness of students for university, their studies and wider student life* (vii) *Enable optimal consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion 3: Equality Impact Assessment* (viii) *Academic year start date late enough to allow recruitment activity, including the Clearing period following school exam results, timing of release of school results more generally, UKVI requirements and timing of the confirmation of external scholarships*

7. Publication
a) Provide details of arrangements to publish assessment: This Equality Impact Assessment will be published on the Policy and Governance webpage where other EIAs sit. It will be shared with the staff and student equality networks and through the staff and student's newsletter.

8. **Review Date: See paper**

Author (Name and Position): Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support
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: To be circulated to EDIC once comments/revisions of the paper have been made**
Approval Yes ☐   **No** ☐

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STUDENT ABSENCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES REVIEW

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> The purpose of this paper is for the University Education Committee to **consider** and **discuss** the amendments to the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence (as detailed in Appendix A).

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SSEC	21 August 2023
	APRG	21 August 2023
	QAC	23 August 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	Senate	20 September 2023

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> Members of the UEC are asked to **consider** and **discuss** the proposed amendments to the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence (as detailed in Appendix A).

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   Following the decision to stop providing students with medical certificates for absences by Old Aberdeen Medical Practice, a review of the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence has been undertaken, which has recommended the relaxation of some of the requirements for evidence.

4.2   Discussions with Old Aberdeen Medical Practice have indicated that they will only provide medical letters (Med3 form) for absences that impact on employment of patients. They highlighted a need for directing students to "Know Who To Turn To" and "Pharmacy First" advice, as they often go to the practice for matters which do not require GP input.

4.3   In considering the amendments to the Absence Policy, a period of consultation was had, which included two separate meetings (one with Directors of Education and AUSA representatives; and one with School Administrative Managers) to discuss possible approaches to these changes and sector research (see Appendix B).

4.4   During the consultation, it also became apparent that Schools (and students) required further clarity on:
   i.   What Schools should consider when making decisions on whether an absence is justified.
   ii.   How the Student Advice & Support Team can help and when it is or isn't appropriate to get in touch with them.
   iii. For students to be more aware of the fact that this is a separate procedure from the extension request procedure, for which there is no institutional policy.
   iv.   Any links with the Policy on the Penalty for Unauthorised Late Submission of Coursework and other policies.
   v.   How the Absence Policy and the Monitoring procedures are related to each other.
   vi.   The regulatory requirements for external bodies such as funders or the UK Visas and Immigration Department (UKVI).
   vii. In which cases supporting evidence is not needed.

viii. How disability provisions impact the Absence Policy.

ix. What happens in cases of long or repeated absences and is there an absolute threshold independent of the reason/cause of the absence?

4.5 Other wider suggestions that emerged during the discussions were:

i. For the wording to be more consistent with other policies and procedures, including the Monitoring Students' Progress Guidance Notes.

ii. That it would be useful to have an agreed institutional list of what is or isn't considered good cause for absences (a list was created by the Monitoring Task and Finish Group (TFG) but it was noted that more discussion and consideration is to be given to this before it is used.

iii. That consideration be given to the establishment of an institutional extensions policy.

iv. That consideration be given to introducing a fit to sit policy.

v. To have an institutional framework that clearly links together student attendance, monitoring and engagement, absences and extensions, in order to provide Schools with a robust structure that they can adhere to with confidence.

5. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

5.1 Following the consultation, revisions were made to the Student Absence Policy and Procedures as detailed in Appendix A. This seeks to address the main points made in 4.4 above.

5.2 In recognition of the difficulty in obtaining medical letters (see 4.2 above), it is proposed that the definition of supporting evidence is relaxed and widened to include a detailed narrative from an alternative support service/person who had an ongoing relationship with the student and was aware of the circumstances of the student prior to or during the absence taking place or, when that is not available, a detailed narrative from the student themselves.

5.3 The table below provides a summary of the main changes made:

REQUEST	SECTION UPDATED
Changes to evidence requirements in relation to GP surgeries' ability to provide evidence	Section 2.4.1 amended to widen what is considered acceptable evidence for medical absences. Section 2.4.2 deleted. Former Section 2.4.3, now 2.4.2, amended to clarify what is considered acceptable evidence for non-medical absences.
Clarifying the cases in which evidence is not needed	Section 2.3.2 was not explicit about students in UG programme years 1 & 2 not needing evidence for absences of less than 7 days even when exam, deadline or compulsory class missed. Section 2.3.3 added to clarify this.
Ensuring the Policy isn't encouraging students to seek medical certificates from GPs when this is not needed	Link to Know Who To Turn To guidance added in section 2.4.1
Changing terminology to include allied health professionals and physician associates, not just doctors.	Section 2.4.1 amended. "Medical practitioner" replaced with "clinical practitioner" and "clinician". Reference to secondary, tertiary and community care services included.
Ensuring some discretion can be applied in cases in which it may not be appropriate to ask for additional evidence	Section 2.3.5 addresses School discretion on when supporting evidence is required and section 2.4.5 covers School discretion on whether the supporting evidence provided is satisfactory
More consistency and referencing monitoring procedures	Sentence added to Section 1.3. Reference to monitoring procedures in 2.3.4, 2.3.5 and 2.4.5.
Reference to the Policy on the penalty for unauthorised late submission of coursework.	Section 1.6 added. Also references in sections 2.3.4, 2.3.5 and 2.4.5
More clarity on the fact that the Student Absence Policy is separate	Sections 1.6 and 2.5.3 added

from extension requests for submission deadlines	
Clarifying the impact of absences on Student visa holders	Section 1.8 added
Reference to regulatory requirements for external bodies	Sections 2.3.4 and 2.4.5 mention external bodies' regulatory requirements
How disability provisions impact the Absence Policy	Section 2.3.6 added
Reference to Support for Study Policy	Section 2.5.2 added
Reference to the Policy and Procedures on Academic Flexibility for students involved in High Performance Sports	Footnote 1 added
Wording in Section mentioning meeting the intended learning outcomes to be clearer	This is now Section 1.7 and has been modified as requested
Reference to "course handbook" changed as some courses don't have course handbook as such. This was changed to "Course documentation"	Course documentation referenced in Sections 1.1, 1.6 and 1.7
Reference to students on work placements	Footnote 3 added
Clarify that translations should be verified by someone other than the student	Section 2.4.4 amended

6.   **ACTION REQUIRED**

6.1   The UEC is invited to **consider** and **discuss** the amendments to the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence, as presented in Appendix A.

7.   **NEXT STEPS**

7.1   An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the updated Policy (Appendix C).

7.2   Guidance notes will be developed to help support Schools in implementing the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

7.3   While the proposals set out in Appendix A seek to address the points raised during the consultation as noted in 4.4 above, consideration will be given to the wider aspects noted in 4.5 above. These will be considered alongside the wider timeline for Policy Review managed through the Quality Assurance Committee.

8.   **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk)   and   Isabella   Fausti,   Administrative   Officer (isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk).

7 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT
ABSENCE

This Policy and Procedures on Student Absence was approved by the ~~University Education~~Quality Assurance Committee (~~UEC~~QAC) on ~~25 August 2021~~[insert date]. It applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students.

The University places a high value on the health and wellbeing of its students. The University is keen to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to maximise the welfare of students but also to limit the consequences for students when genuine absences do occur.

1.   POLICY ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE

1.1   The University expects that students will normally attend all classes, whether these are on-campus or online[1]. Some teaching sessions (e.g., tutorials, seminars, and laboratories) are compulsory. Course ~~handbooks~~ documentation will make clear attendance requirements.

1.2   Students are required to undertake all assessments (including examinations) and to submit all pieces of in-course assessment by the required deadline.

1.3   The University Senate may terminate the studies of any student who persistently fails to attend, or perform the required work of, the course for which they are registered without medical or other good cause for doing so. The University's student monitoring webpages provide more information on how attendance and the submission of coursework is monitored. Students should note that failure to report an absence (see 1.4) may trigger their School's monitoring procedures for student attendance.

1.4   Students must report an absence (defined as an inability to attend or perform required work)~~, through the absence~~reporting in Student Hub (section 2.1.1 below provides further information). This is of particular importance in the following instances:

(i)   They are absent for any period of more than seven consecutive days[21];
(ii)   They are absent for a period of less than seven consecutive days but during this time they:
   a. fail to undertake a piece of required assessment (including invigilated examinations or in-course assessment) ~~(e.g., an examination or 'open book' examination)~~;
   b. do not submit a required piece of ~~or a substantial piece of formative~~ in-course assessment by the required deadline;
   c. are unable to attend a compulsory teaching session (e.g., tutorial, laboratory, or seminar).

1.5   By attending an exam or submitting an assignment, students are declaring that they are fit to do so and there are no extenuating/mitigating circumstances (defined as exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems, both medical and not). Where a student believes that they are not fit to sit an exam or to submit an assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, they must advise the School by completing the absence form at the first possible opportunity, in line with Section 2.1, and in any case before any results are published. Failure to follow this may undermine any future appeal.

1.6   Notwithstanding Section 1.5, this policy is distinct from extension requests for assessment deadlines. Notifying an absence does not necessarily justify the absence and will not automatically authorise an extension. School-specific information on extension rules can be found in the relevant course documentation. Failure to adhere to those rules will result in a penalty, as set out in the Policy on the penalty for unauthorised late submission

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[1] Students who are involved in High Performance Sports and are seeking to apply for academic flexibility should refer to the Policy and Procedures on Academic Flexibility.

[2] Seven consecutive days includes weekends (for example Thursday, Friday. Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

of coursework.

1.7   Students should be aware that, although an absence may be considered justifiable, ~~a student~~they must be able to demonstrate that they meet all the intended learning outcomes of a course before a pass can be awarded. Students who fail to demonstrate they meet the intended learning outcomes ~~outcomes~~ of a course, even where evidence supporting the absence exists, will not be eligible to receive a class certificate. Details of the learning outcomes for each course ~~can be found in~~will be provided in the relevant course documentation~~handbook~~.

1.5   Student v~~V~~isa h~~H~~olders should be aware that periods of extended absence ~~longer absences~~ may have an impact on ~~their visa requirements~~the University's ability to continue sponsoring their Student visa.~~, as T~~the University is only permitted to continue sponsoring a student's visa during a period of absence if the student is still able to achieve their overall degree intention upon their return to study. Students should refer to the Immigration and Student Visas webpage, or contact the Student Immigration Compliance Team for advice. ~~(the University can only continue sponsoring a student that has experience absence if they are still able to achieve their overall degree intention, regardless of the circumstances of the absence) and should refer to the Tier 4 Students Monitoring Guidance for Schools, or contact the Immigration Team for advice.~~

1.8

2.   PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN ABSENCE

2.1   When should an absence be reported?

2.1.1   Absence should be reported as far as possible in advance where the absence is planned (e.g., funeral or representing the University in an official event). Where advance notification is not possible (e.g., in event of illness), it **is expected that students will inform the University on the first day of any period of absence.**

2.1.2   Where it is impossible for a student to report on the first day of absence, students should report at the first possible opportunity (normally no later than 3 days after the first day of any period of absence) and provide an explanation of the reasons which prevented them notifying their absence earlier. Late notification of absence without good cause will only be permissible in exceptional circumstances.

~~2.1.2~~2.1.3   In cases in which a student becomes ill during an invigilated examination and is unable to continue, they must alert the invigilator, who will record this in line with the Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas, Section 3.16. They should then advise the School by completing the absence form at the first possible opportunity, normally within three days.

2.2   How should an absence be reported?

2.2.1   ~~2.2.1~~ A student should report an absence through the absence reporting tool in Student Hub or, where a student is unable to access the Student Hub, the absence should be reported, by email, directly to the School (or each of the Schools, when the absence impacts more than one course) concerned3. Any required supporting evidence should be included when reporting the absence.

2.3   When is supporting evidence required?

2.3.1   The~~All absences must be reported, however, not all periods of absence will require supporting evidence. The~~ requirement for submitting supporting evidence with an absence report~~s~~ ~~vary~~ varies depending on the period of absence, the nature of the absence, the nature of the events missed and the programme year of the student. Students should, however, note that notification of an absence will not necessarily justify ~~an~~ the absence and a clear explanation of the reasons for the absence should be given.

~~2.3.2~~ Supporting evidence is required in the following scenarios:
2.3.2

(a) Where a student in UG programme years 1 and 2 has been absent for more than seven consecutive days[4][3];

(b) Where a student in UG programme years 3, 4 or 5 and in PGT programmes:

    (i) has been absent for more than seven consecutive days;

    (ii) has been absent for less than seven consecutive days and has been unable:

        a. to undertake a piece of required assessment (including invigilated examinations or in-course assessment);

        b. to submit a piece of required in-course assessment by the required deadline;

        c. to attend a compulsory teaching session.

2.3.3 Supporting evidence is not usually required where a student in UG programme years 1 and 2 has been absent for less than seven consecutive days, even if they have been unable to undertake a required assessment, submit an assessment by the required deadline, or attend a compulsory teaching session.

2.3.4 Notwithstanding Section 2.3.3, monitoring procedures for student attendance and late submission of coursework penalties still apply, as well as external bodies' regulatory requirements, including Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), funders funding bodies, or the UK Visas and Immigration department (UKVI) of the Home Office (see Section 2.4.5).

2.3.5 Schools have discretion on whether or not evidence is required for specific cases. For example, in certain situations (such as, but not limited to, very sensitive or traumatic circumstances) it may be inappropriate or difficult to provide independent evidence for an absence. Students are advised to seek the appropriate support when needed (see Section 2.6 for details).

2.3.3 2.3.6 Students with disability provisions/adjustments approved by Student Support or by Occupational Health may not need to provide evidence for absences that affect their attendance at to compulsory teaching sessions. However, monitoring of student attendance and late submission of coursework penalties may still apply.

2.4 What is considered supporting evidence?

2.4.1 For medical absences, appropriate supporting evidence may include (this is not an exhaustive list):

    i. In the case of illness, students should submit a medical certificate[4]. This can take the form of W written evidence from a medical clinical practitioner[5] (which may include pro-forma or a letter) who has been providing health assessment/care for the student which must be signed and by a medical practitioner or clearly show the medical practitioner's clinician's details, to enable verification. This can include written evidence from a secondary (e.g. hospital clinic, specialist doctor), tertiary (highly specialised national or regional centre) or community care service, or a private surgery/clinic, etc. In case of illness, students should refer to the Know Who To Turn To guidance for advice on which service they should use. If it is impossible for the clinician to verify subsequently that the student had been ill on the date of absence, a back-dated form of evidence will not normally be accepted.

    ii. Alternative forms of corroborating evidence could include a photo of a dated prescription, medication, or a A detailed narrative letter/email from a support service (including services within the University, e.g. Student Advice & Support Team or University Counselling Service, but also an external counsellor) if they have an ongoing relationship with the student and are already aware of the student's circumstances prior to the absence taking place or have had contact with the student while they were experiencing the illness (i.e. retrospective evidence will not normally be accepted). In these cases, the

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[4] Seven consecutive days includes weekends (for example Thursday, Friday. Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.)

[5] Students should note that, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Executive Health Department, medical clinical practitioners may charge a fee for the provision of medical certificates. Students should note that the University will not reimburse any costs incurred. Some clinical practitioners may not be able to supply medical certificates other than for employment reasons. In these cases, students may use an alternative form of evidence if needed.

support service practitioner should provide a letter or email outlining the nature of the medical issue, how it has impacted on the ability of the student to attend a compulsory teaching session or submit an assessment (if relevant) and the nature/extent of the support being given.

i. iii. A detailed explanation, included in the absence form, from the student describing the impact that the illness has had on their ability to attend a compulsory teaching session or prepare for an assessment and/or undertake the assessment, if relevant. ~~Schools will decide on whether the evidence is satisfactory and may request additional information.~~

2.4.1 ~~Where it is impossible for a doctor to verify subsequently that students had been ill on the date of absence it is inappropriate to request a back-dated medical certificate. It is therefore important that students arrange a consultation with their medical practitioner (in person or by telephone and/or a nurse consultation) as soon as possible following the onset of illness and when the signs of illness are still evident.~~

2.4.2 ~~Where absence has occurred for good cause of a~~ For non-medical ~~absences~~natur[6], appropriate supporting evidence may include (this is not an exhaustive list):

i. ~~e.~~[5]~~,~~ ~~students should supply a full description of the cause along with appropriate corroborating evidence.~~ in place of a medical certificate from a service that was providing them support with their issues. For the purposes of this policy, appropriate sources of support from which alternative evidence (including a letter or email outlining the nature of the support being given) include the Student Advice & Support team or University Counselling Service, an external counsellor. ~~Additional~~The evidence that ~~may be provided could~~an also include a~~A~~ letter/email from a support service (including services within the University, e.g. Student Advice & Support Team or University Counselling Service, but also an external counsellor or other services) detailing how the student's circumstances affected their studies and the nature/extent of the support being given.

ii. A full description of the cause including the impact that it has had on their ability to attend a compulsory teaching session or prepare for an assessment and/or undertake the assessment, if relevant.

i. iii. ~~police report, notification of a death or o~~Other evidence acknowledged by the University to be of a significant nature, such as a police report, notification of a death, etc.

~~2.4.2~~2.4.3 The Student Advice & Support Team can provide students with support in reporting their absences~~,~~ ~~where appropriate, and,~~ and, with the students' permission, ~~with permission,~~ can liaise with School(s) on ~~a students'~~their behal~~f[7]. f[6].~~ Where a student believes their medical condition or personal circumstance to be of a particularly sensitive nature, or where the ~~Team~~Team is already aware of a student's specific circumstances, ~~they~~ students are encouraged to~~should~~ contact the Student Advice & Support Team directly. The University recognises that, for very personal or private issues/events, students may be reluctant to disclose the information to their School. In some cases, it may be possible, ~~if the student prefers,~~ for the Student Advice & Support Team to ~~supply evidence to the School(s)~~ confirm to School(s) that~~ing~~ they have sight of the relevant personal information and that the evidence is satisfactory.~~s~~

2.4.4 Where appropriate, documentation submitted as supporting evidence~~,~~ should normally be in English or translated into English and verified.

~~2.4.3~~2.4.5 Schools will decide on whether the evidence is satisfactory ~~and~~however~~but~~ may request additional information if required. In making this decision, Schools may refer to previous absences and School monitoring procedures for student attendance. Specific requirements by external bodies, including Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), ~~funders~~funding bodies, or the UK Visas and Immigration department (UKVI) of the Home Office, will also need to be considered by the School. Students should note that, as per Section 1.6, submitting an absence report does not necessarily authorise an absence and this procedure is separate from

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[6] Students should not request a medical certificate from a ~~medical~~ clinical practitioner to cover absences of a non-medical nature.

[7] In certain circumstances, it may also be appropriate for a personal tutor (or equivalent) to liaise with a School on a students' behalf. Such circumstances can include instances where a student has been in regular contact with a personal tutor (or equivalent) over a period of time such that the students' personal circumstances are well-known to the personal tutor.

an extension request.

2.5 What happens to reports of absence?

2.5.1 Reports of absence may be used:

- By Course Coordinators and/or Heads of School to suggest any remedial work the student should do on return to study. It is the responsibility of the student to ask the appropriate member of staff about any required remedial work. Students should note that, depending on the period of absence and work ~~missed~~ missed~~that~~ it may not be possible for a student to make up the missed work and as such a student may not be eligible to receive their class certificate on account of their absence (see 1.7~~5~~).
- By the Examiners in deciding whether to award an 'MC' (medical absence), 'GC' (good cause) or 'SC' (Self-certificate) for the course.

2.5.2 In cases of serious issues (eg when there~~y~~ is concern for a student's welfare~~. ...~~) Schools may need to share reports of absence with the other University services, to ensure the student receives appropriate support. In cases where students are struggling with health issues, Schools and other staff should refer to the processes outlined in the Support for Study Policy.

2.5.3 Reports of absence are not the same as extension requests and do not provide by themselves a justification for late submissions of coursework (see 1.6).

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2.6 What support is available?

2.6.1 The University understands that students may need support and guidance as they deal with issues leading to periods of absence. The University has a range of support services available to support students, as detailed below:

- ~~Schoolsare often the first point of contact.provide pastoral support and guidance for their students and smay get in touch with acan contact them for advice on available support. Relevant school contact includes the School admin office, course-cordinators, personal tutors etc. tutor, lecturer, or the . find out how to catch up?~~
- The Student Advice & Support Team (student.support@abdn.ac.uk) offers impartial and confidential advice and support on a range of issues, including finance, disability information and more.
- The Counselling Service (counselling@abdn.ac.uk) is open to all students of the University.
- The Multi-faith Chaplaincy (chaplaincy@abdn.ac.uk) is a place of welcome for all and serves as a spiritual and social centre for students and staff.
- Schools can provide academic guidance for their students and can also be contacted for advice on available support. Relevant school contacts include the School admin office, course-coordinators, lecturers or tutors.
- The Students' Association (AUSA~~)~~ (ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk) represents and serves student's interests and works to make their time in Aberdeen as happy and enjoyable as possible.
-
- The Personal Tutor or PGT Pastoral Support Leads (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/undergraduate-personal-tutoring-4764.php) ~~is available to undergraduate students and~~ can ~~direct~~help direct students ~~them to~~to the appropriate support service, as needed.
- ~~The Counselling Service (counselling@abdn.ac.uk) is open to all students of the University.~~
- Registry Officers can provide ~~a source of support~~guidance to students who have concerns about their programme of study.
- The Student Immigration Compliance Team (immigration@abdn.ac.uk) can provide information and advice on Student visa responsibilities. ~~on visa requirements.~~
- A full list of Support and Wellbeing services offered at the University is available on the website (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/index.php).

Student Absence Policy: Sector Research

Institution and Policy	Main points
RGU - Fit to Sit Policy and Extenuating Circumstances	• Definition and examples of extenuating circumstances • Self-certification for absences but not for appeals • Fit to sit – tight timeframe for completing form (no more than 5 days after date of assessment)
University of St Andrew - Policy on Student Absence	Definition of absence includes: students unable to attend classes for a total of 10 non-consecutive teaching days
University of St Andrew - Extenuating Circumstances Policy	includes list of what is and isn't likely to be considered an extenuating circumstance, a list of types of evidence depending on type of circumstance and flowchart on how evidence is assessed
Napier University – Fit to Sit and Extenuating Circumstances regulations	Examples of different types of forms and flowcharts
University of Glasgow - Student Absence Policy	Includes a useful table to explain when and what type of evidence is needed
Glasgow Caledonian University - Fit to Sit Policy	• Tight timeframe for notification of extenuating circumstances (other than for extreme and exceptional cases): up to five days prior to an exam/coursework submission date and up to two days after the date • Very detailed Fit to Sit policy
University of York - Exceptional circumstances affecting assessment	Specifies that self-certification for short, acute and unforeseen circumstances can be used up to three times per year
UCL - Student Support Framework	Draws together the main academic support processes (short-term absences, longer-term conditions and disability provisions, interruption of study and support to study) under one banner
University of Sussex – Attendance, Engagement and Absence Policy	One policy bringing together attendance, engagement and absence
Office of the independent adjudicator for Higher Education (applies to England/Wales but is relevant to Scotland too)	Best practice advice on evidential requirements from Universities

Appendix C

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Impact Assessment

Title of Policy, Procedure, or Function:	
Student Absence Policy Update	
School/Directorate:	
Academic Services	
Author/Position:	**Date created:**
Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience	**14/8/23**

1. Aims and purpose of Policy, Procedure, or Function:
Following the decision to stop providing students with medical certificates for absences by Old Aberdeen Medical Practice, a review of the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence has been undertaken, which has recommended the relaxation of some of the requirements for evidence.
2. Stakeholders:
- Students   - Academics   - Professional Services
3. Additional Consultation/Involvement

Organisation/person consulted or involved	Date, method, and by whom	Location of consultation records

Directors of Education	19 June	See associated minutes for these meetings
SAMs	7 July	
APRG	21 August	
SSEC	21 August	
QAC	23 August	
UEC	29 August	
Senate	20 September	

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

In recognition of the difficulty in obtaining medical letters it is proposed that the definition of supporting evidence is relaxed and widened to include a detailed narrative from an alternative support service/person who had an ongoing relationship with the student and was aware of the circumstances of the student prior to or during the absence taking place or, when that is not available, a detailed narrative from the student themselves. The paper provides a detailed summary of all changes in the paper.

4. Monitoring

a) Detail method of monitoring of the Policy, Procedure or Function and by whom

The policy will be reviewed at the end of AY2023-24 by SSEC with feedback actively sought from Schools and relevant Academic Services. This policy will also be reviewed as part of proposed wider work in conjunction with related policies outlined in the paper if this work were to proceed.

b) Detail how monitoring results will be utilised to develop the Policy, Procedure, or Function

Ongoing feedback will be collated, analysed and discussed with appropriate committees, groups and networks.

c) Timescale of monitoring including proposed dates

The policy will be reviewed at the end of AY 2023-2024.

5. Impact assessment

Select what impact there will be on each group:

Characteristic	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact	Not Applicable
Race	X			
Disability (impact may differ according to physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions and impairments):	X			
British Sign Language (BSL)	X			
Neurodivergent	X			
Gender	X			
Age	X			
Sexual Orientation	X			
Religion, Belief or No Belief	X			
Gender Reassignment	X			
Non-Binary	X			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	X			
Pregnancy and Maternity	X			

Parents and Carers	X			
Care Experienced or Estranged	X			
Socio-Economic Group	X			

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

We don't envisage this policy change to have any negative impact on student groups. This policy aims to clarify absence procedures

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

The purpose of this paper is to relax the requirements on providing medical evidence when students are absent or fail to complete required assessments whilst also providing clarity on the absence procedures. As detailed in the paper, currently some GP practices are refusing to supply medical evidence, or are charging fees. The paper details that evidence still has to be submitted however broadens what is permissible as evidence, to include all healthcare providers (e.g. pharmacists), or other professionals who have been involved in supporting the student (e.g. Student Support, Counselling etc), or even allowing the student to provide their own narrative explaining the situation. This change will support all students and will advance equality of opportunity in that it will permit all students to report and detail the circumstances for absence who previously may have felt that they could not report or evidence the reasons for absence. This will be particularly support of students who suffer from periods of ill-health, or have recurring mental health concerns, but also covers a wide-range of non-medical circumstances that impact on their studies. This paper also provides clarity in how it connects with other policies (e.g. late coursework and monitoring procedures) which will be of benefit to students.

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

All people with different protected characteristics are treated equally by this policy.

7. Publication
a) Provide details of arrangements to publish assessment: This Equality Impact Assessment will be published on the Policy and Governance webpage where other EIAs sit. It will be shared with the staff and student equality networks and through the staff and student's newsletter.

8. Review Date: The paper reviews all dates of the consultation. This paper will also reviewed over AY2023-2024 by academic services and discussed at SSEC.

Author (Name and Position): Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support

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: To be circulated to EDIC once comments/revisions of the paper have been made

Approval Yes ☐   **No** ☐

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW: ACTION PLAN UPDATE

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> The purpose of this paper is to provide members of the UEC with an update to the Action Plan for the recent Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) by the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS), which took place on 14 February 2023.
>
> Members of the Committee are invited to **approve** the update to the Action Plan for the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	QAC	18 May 2023
	UEC	23 May 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	QAC	23 August 2023
	UEC	29 August 2023

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the update to the Action Plan for the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review attached as **Appendix A**.

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   The Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) review process, Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR), completed its fourth and final cycle in 2021/22. ELIR has been replaced by a new external institutional review methodology which will be a two-phase approach as follows:

- **Phase 1:** Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR)/Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) (2022/23-2023/24)
- **Phase 2:** Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) (2024/25 onwards)

4.2   The Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) for the University took place on 14 February 2023, following a comprehensive submission of required documentation. On the day, a number of sessions took place with the Review panel:

- Session with HEI Key Contacts
- Session with Students
- Session with Quality Assurance-focused Staff
- Session with Quality Enhancement-focused Staff

5.   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.1   The University was advised that the Review Panel had **confidence** that the institution is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.

5.2   The QESR report identified the following areas of good practice:

5.2.1   *Effective implementation of University strategies:* the University has an effective approach to strategic planning in relation to teaching and learning, particularly the engagement with the strategy and its underpinning action plans.

5.2.2   *Engagement with Enhancement Themes:* the University has successfully embedded learning from the national Enhancement Themes, particularly in relation to institutional policy and practice.

5.2.3   *An Inclusive Approach to Blended Education/Learning and Teaching:* the University has made significant progress with its vision for blended education, effectively using learning and recommendations from its in-depth review and evaluation of blended and online learning to develop the vision for education.

5.2.4   *Student Partnership:* the University and Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) have a long-standing, embedded and collaborative relationship based on partnership working across all aspects of University life.

5.3   In terms of identified recommendations, the QESR report identified the following:

5.3.1   *Student Access to External Examiner Reports* (**QAC**)*:* ensuring the publication of External Examiner reports by the end of the academic year 2022/23. Progress is being made to develop communications to Schools and to students in this regard.

5.3.2   *Personal Tutoring* (**UEC, via SSEC**)*:* continuing work to finalise the University's approach to personal tutoring arrangements, ensuring the provision of equity of experience for all students, and that the support is clearly communicated by the end of the academic year 2022/23. Progress is being made to consolidate this information and to present it to students in a meaningful way.

6.   ACTION PLAN

6.1   An Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the Vice-Principal, Education, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Dean for Student Support and Experience, and Director of Academic Services and Online Education. The Action Plan sets out key actions to be undertaken to progress the recommendations in respect of (i) student access to External Examiner reports, and (ii) personal tutoring. This is appended as **Appendix A**.

6.2   As part of the formal process, the Action Plan has been reviewed by the relevant Quality Assurance Agency Scotland Officer for the University. Feedback provided indicates that the University has produced a thoughtful response that shows the institution is taking the recommendations seriously. The feedback suggests that the University reflects and ensures clarity on the frequency of intention to review and update the action plan, to ensure that the web information remains current.

6.3   In relation to the specific recommendations, the following feedback was received:

6.3.1   Student Access to External Examiner Reports

        (i)   It was suggested to consider the information provided to students, who may be new to the University, as to how to access the reports.

6.3.2   Pastoral Support (Personal Tutoring)

        (i)   It was suggested that the University reflect on the mechanisms used to ensure the consistency of the student experience going forward in respect of personal tutoring.

        (ii)   Further, clarity was sought as to whether the outcomes of the review of pastoral support will be brought together into a guidance/policy document.

(iii)   In relation to PGT Personal Tutoring, clarity was sought on how the outcomes of this review will feed into the wider communications planned.

(iv)   It was suggested that there be explicit reference to the communication of these developments to students within the action plan, in order that they have the most up-to-date information.

6.4   The feedback received was used to develop the granularity of the action plan and has been taken into account for the updated version (attached as Appendix A).

6.5   The Action Plan will be published on the University webpages and updated as actions are completed. The Plan is due to be finalised and received by QAA Scotland by 26 September 2023.

7.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement (s.j.tucker@abdn.ac.uk), Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk), and Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services and Online Education (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk)

3 July 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
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QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW: ACTION PLAN
Updated: August 2023

This plan provides the actions to be taken in respect of (i) Student Access to External Examiner Reports; and (ii) Pastoral Support. These actions are continued from the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 4 process.

As part of the Education Committee governance, all Education Committees have representation from all Schools, which allows a two-way flow of communication between the Schools and University.

Overarching Area for Action	Associated Actions	Timelines	Responsible Person(s)	Responsible Committee and Monitoring	Update on Progress	Review Date
Student Access to External Examiner Reports	Communication to External Examiners to advise that their reports will be published and made available to students.	July 2023	Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**Complete:** A communication to External Examiners was issued on 3 July 2023.	-
	Communication to Schools to ensure upload of External Examiner Reports to organisation page on MyAberdeen.	July 2023	Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**Complete:** A communication to Schools was issued on 3 July 2023.	September 2023 (Ensure reports have been uploaded)
	Guidance to be developed regarding the publication of External Examiner Reports to describe the location of publication, naming conventions and the relevant process.	August 2023	Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**In Progress:** The guidance is being drafted currently and will be issued to Schools before the end of August 2023.	September 2024 (Review guidance)
	Inclusion of transparent information pertinent to the Organisation Area in MyAberdeen to be added to the annual staff communication for the updating of course handbooks and for induction/ orientation events at School-level.	August 2023	Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**In Progress:** The staff communication is being developed and will be issued before the end of August 2023.	September 2024 (Review communication)
	Communication to Students to advise of uploaded External Examiner Reports to MyAberdeen.	August 2023	Schools	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**In Progress:** communications will be issued to students by the end of August 2023.	September 2023 (Ensure communications have been issued)

	Amendments to the External Examiner Annual Report form to advise that reports will be published.	April 2023	Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement	QAC. Reports back via Annual Monitoring exercise for 2022/23.	**Complete:** the amended report was approved by Senate on 19 April 2023.	September 2024 (Review of form)
Pastoral Support	Review and restructuring of public-facing pastoral UG and PGT support webpages to enhance the purpose and clarity of the personal tutor and pastoral guidance roles.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**Complete**: Webpages revised and published for September 2023	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of Webpages)
	Restructuring of staff pastoral guidance staff web resources to aid staff in locating appropriate information for UG and PGT pastoral support.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**Complete**: Webpages revised and published for September 2023	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of Webpages)
	Introduction of in-person staff training for pastoral support and guidance role.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**In Progress**: training will be advertised to staff in September 2023 for start of new academic year and will run in terms 1 and 2	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of feedback from previous sessions)
	Introduction of an annual pastoral support and guidance staff/student information event to be included as part of BeWell/Mental Health Awareness week.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**In Progress**: this will take place during 9-13th October 2023	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of feedback and communications)
	The Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance Forum will oversee and review the consistency and equity of the student experience the reporting to the Student Support and Experience Committee.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**Complete**: forum currently exists and SSEC agenda will include pastoral support agenda item	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of SPS&GF Arrangements)
	Dissemination of information to staff pertinent to pastoral support to ensure they have the most up to date information about support available via Senior Personal Tutors within Schools.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**In Progress**: actions will be completed September 2023 for start of new academic year	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of SPT Forum Arrangements)
	Communications to be issued to students pertinent to the pastoral support arrangements in their School to ensure they have the most up to date information about support available, including specific information in orientation and induction materials. [1]	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**In Progress**: actions will be completed September 2023 for start of new academic year	June 2024 ahead of next AY (Review of communications)

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[1] Information is disseminated to students via the Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing team, who coordinate student communications. Further information is disseminated via Senior Personal Tutors and the Senior Personal Tutor Forum.

	Review of PGT pastoral support to enhance consistency of provision and enhance student understanding and access to appropriate support networks.	Sept 2023	Dean for Student Support and Experience	UEC, via SSEC. Updates provided to Committee via SSEC Report to UEC.	**In Progress**: review will be overseen by SPS&GF and reported to relevant committees	June 2024 ahead of next AY.[2]

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[2] This action will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to ensure an equity of the student experience, and feedback will be captured as part of the ASES and PTES surveys. The data from these surveys inform discussions at SSEC and UEC. The SSEC has a standing item on pastoral support for discussion related to any pastoral support matters. All Schools are represented on both the SSEC and UEC, and thus the School representatives maintain a flow of communication between the Committee and Schools.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM RESOURCES

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the launch of resources for Decolonising the Curriculum. The paper considers:

- The website and toolkit resources
- The Senate approved paper on Decolonising the Curriculum Principles and Timelines
- A brief summary of the governance role of the UEC in relation to the implementation plan, and next steps for School Leads.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered by	Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group	28 August 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	N/A	

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

The University Education Committee is invited **note (and share)** the paper.

4.   WEB RESOURCES

4.1   The Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group has developed a series of resources available on the University website and is in the final stages of developing a Toolkit to support the web-based resources. These resources have now launched, and the links are provided as follows:

- Decolonising the Curriculum Website
- Toolkit

4.2   In preparing the web and toolkit resources, an email address specific to the decolonising the curriculum activities has been created as decolonising@abdn.ac.uk. This is available on the 'Contact Us' section of the webpages and allows colleagues to share feedback and / or to provide case studies or additional resources to further enhance the webpage.

4.3   The Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group received a communication with the link to the web resources and the Toolkit on 18 August. A short article for the ezine is planned as part of an overall process of dissemination. Staff and students will be encouraged to engage with the decolonising the curriculum resources, particularly as they are reviewing their own courses.

5. TIMELINES AND PRINCIPLES

5.1   The University Senate approved the paper, Decolonising the Curriculum – Principles and Timelines on 8 February 2023. For reference, the paper is available on the Senate webpages (SEN22:37).

5.2   As per Section 4.5 of the paper, Schools were asked to ensure that courses and programmes will commence work to decolonise their curriculum (including assessment) in academic year 2022/23, aiming to have completed a School review by the end of academic year 2023/24, and full implementation of all changes in academic year 2025/26.

5.3   Within the paper as approved in February 2023, the following timelines were approved:

During academic year 2022/23	Clarity on quality assurance processes for course/programme/assessment changes
	Clarity on course/programme approval requirements
	Training in place
	All Schools commence work
By the end of academic year 2023/24	All Schools complete School review
By the end of academic year 2024/25	Course/programme/assessment changes agreed and managed
During academic year 2025/26	Implementation of curriculum changes

5.4   School Leads on the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group will ensure that:
   i)   The availability of the resources is shared with relevant School colleagues.
   ii)   Take the paper to their School Education Committees as part of the process of leading and monitoring progress.
   iii) Liaise with their Director of Education when the University Education Committee seeks updates on progress.

6. GOVERNANCE

6.1   As stated above, School Education Committees are responsible for monitoring School progress towards the Senate-approved programme of activity and will report to the University Education Committee.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

7.1   Further information can be obtained from Professor Ruth Taylor (Vice-Principal, Education), ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk, Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink (Dean for Educational Innovation), k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk, or Chris Weir (Clerk to the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group), christopher.weir@abdn.ac.uk.

17 August 2023
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

PASTORAL REVIEW TFG - UPDATE

1.   **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This Paper is to update the committee on the work of the pastoral review TFG

2.   **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Considered by	SSEC	21ˢᵗ August
Further consideration by	UEC	29th August

3.   **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The committee is invited to note the progress of the pastoral review TFG.

4.   **BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (the TFG) was established in 2021 as a response to the outcome of the University's Enhancement Led Institutional Review (EILIR), published in 2019, which recommended that the institutions should review the pastoral support provided for PGT students and the UG Personal Tutor system.   The ELIR One Year on Report approved at Senate on 5 February 2020 refers to the need for pastoral support for PGT and online students.

4.2 An initial report produced by the TFG, presented a set of recommendations which were considered by Senate on 21 September 2022 as SEN22:03.   Some positive comment was received from Senate, particularly regarding proposals for supporting PGT students. Significant concern was expressed, however, at the additional workload which would be needed to deliver the recommendations, especially in terms of extending the personal tutoring system to PGT and online students in its current form.

4.3 Building on the feedback from Senate and information collated by the TFG consultation with colleagues, the TFG developed a further set of recommendations discussed at UEC (October 2023) which included:

- Review the UG personal tutor online resources and training to make clear the scope of the role and the place of the personal tutor alongside other support which is available across the University.
- Not to establish a formal PGT personal tutor role, however to work with Schools to ensure that pastoral support and guidance is available for PGT and online students.
- Discuss with the Digital Strategy Committee ways of developing MyAberdeen/Student Records System to make the UG personal tutor system more manageable, supportive and user friendly for staff and students.
- Explore opportunities for enhancing PGT/PGR feedback through the University's participation in PTES, a Postgraduate Student Survey and PRES, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. This work was taken forward and the surveys were introduced in 2023.

4.4 QAA Scotland's follow-up to the ELIR, the Quality Enhancement Standards Review, was conducted in February 2023 and their report recognised the work conducted to date on reviewing the personal tutoring system and recognised that this work is still ongoing. The report acknowledged that the current personal tutor arrangements for undergraduate students are well established, postgraduate taught arrangements appear to be more bespoke and vary depending on subject area. The QESR team recommended that the University completes the review of its personal tutoring arrangements, and ensure equity of experience for all students, particularly postgraduate taught students.

5. **UPDATE ON CURRENT TFG ACTIVITIES**

5.1 Pastoral Support and Guidance Remit

The pastoral support and guidance webpages states that "all students will be provided with pastoral support and guidance throughout their studies. Pastoral support and guidance is provided by our wide network of support services as well as by staff in the student's School, who will help students settle into life at the University of Aberdeen, reflect on their progress and take advantage of the opportunities available during their studies. They can also direct students to appropriate services when it's needed." Therefore, delivery of pastoral support is not reliant on one individual but involves a number of services and individuals from across the academic community. The role of the personal tutor/pastoral lead is therefore not expected to be able to solve every problem a student may have, but to be able to direct them to the appropriate service that is best able to provide this support. So, for example, it is not the role of the personal tutor to support mental health issues but to ensure that students are directed to the appropriate services who have the relevant expertise to provide support.

Undergraduate Support. At School level pastoral support and guidance is largely provided by members of the administration teams, course coordinators, lecturers, but must notably from their personal tutor (or Regent for students on healthcare programmes). All undergraduate students are allocated a Personal Tutor who is a key contact within their School (wherever possible). The personal tutor is a member of academic staff who is there to help and guide students, supporting them with any problems that are affecting their experience at university. Their primary role is to be a key named contact that the student can approach for advice and who will signpost them to relevant support as required. Whilst students can contact their personal tutors at any point in the year, personal tutors are asked to meet with UG students at least twice a year at the start of terms 1 and 2. Meetings may be held either singly or in groups, online or in-person. Attendance is not compulsory, but strongly encouraged, especially for students in Level 1 and 2. Staff have an organisational page on MyAberdeen which facilitates communication with their personal tutees or they can contact via email.

PGT Support. PGT School-level pastoral support and guidance is similarly provided by members of the administration teams, course coordinators and lecturers. In addition, many schools identify the programme leads as the named contact who will provide pastoral support and guidance, although two schools, Psychology and LLMVC (pilot), have adopted a personal tutor system similar to undergraduate students. However, the role of the pastoral lead, and the information provided to students about how pastoral support is provided, varies across Schools. Meetings with the Schools have indicated that they would welcome a more consistent institutional approach to delivering pastoral support to ensure equity of experience for students and these meetings have helped articulate what all Schools should provide for their students, along with a number of examples of good practice that Schools may wish to adopt which are described below. The need to provide a more consistent approach is reinforced by both the ELIR and QESR reports.

5.2 Review of PGT pastoral support.

There is no consistent approach in PGT pastoral support provision across the institution however the ELIR and QESR reports have requested that appropriate support is in place for all students. The majority of Schools identify the Programme lead as the person who provides pastoral support, but implementation varies across Schools. Whichever approach a School adopts, pastoral support and guidance must still be delivered to ensure that PGT students are provided with appropriate support throughout their studies. The Dean for Student Support met with School

PGT pastoral leads to articulate what the support should look like, and this is described below, along with examples of good practice.

PGT pastoral support is described on the pastoral support webpages as, "pastoral support and guidance is provided to taught postgraduate students both by our network of support services as well as by staff in your School. In your programme there will be staff members assigned as your Pastoral Support Lead. Their role is to be a point of contact and someone who can help you with advice and guidance on matters affecting your experience at university. They will be able to direct you to the appropriate services provided by the university to ensure you receive the guidance and advice you need to succeed at university."

Schools requirements include:

- **PGT pastoral support team** – Schools acknowledged that pastoral support is currently delivered by various members of the school, but this should be fully acknowledged and clearly explained to students, so they know who to contact with their various enquiries. This team should as, a minimum, consist of the named contacts below. Providing pastoral support can impact on staff workload and so these roles should be fully acknowledged in workloads so that, for example, programme leads have reduced / no UG personal tutees. This decision is devolved to Schools who determine for example, personal tutor loads.
- **Named contacts** – Schools should ensure that students are provided with at least three named contacts clearly signposted at Induction, on course pages, in course guides etc which should include:
    - a general School Support email alias monitored by the School's administration team who can triage various enquiries.
    - the Programme Lead or Coordinator for academic-related queries.
    - a Senior Pastoral Lead (similar to the UG SPT) for students to approach as an alternative to the programme lead if needed. Most Schools already have someone acting in this capacity, for example it may be the PGT director or the UG SPT who has oversight of all pastoral support in the School. This role is described in more detail below.
    - Office hours – Clear signposting to the school office hours so students can speak to a member of staff in person if needed.
    - Additional staff may be included in this team by the School if required. For example, some Schools devolve some academic enquiries to course coordinators or include deputy support alongside programme leads.

- **PGT Senior Pastoral Lead –** Schools should ensure that there is a staff member who has oversight over PGT pastoral support provision. They will be responsible for the planning, coordination and delivery of pastoral support within the School including the activities outlined below. They will be an additional contact for students who do not wish to contact programme leads. The senior pastoral lead (or nominee) will be a member of the Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance Forum which allow discussion on pastoral support matters, sharing of good practice.
- **Clear and visible signposting to pastoral support**. Schools should ensure that induction materials, course handbooks, course pages, and regular communication clearly identifies named contacts (who to approach and why); sign-posting to the wide network of student support services; visible guidance on common issues, such as how to apply for extensions.
- **Plans for late arrivals.** Schools should have a clear plan to ensure that late PGT arrivals understand who to approach with their questions. Some Schools have a scheduled repeated induction class in week 3 and others provide administrative support at registration to direct late arrivals to appropriate support. Whatever the approach, Schools should ensure that they have a procedure in place that works for them to fully support students in this situation.
- **Communication plan directing students to support services**. Schools should have a communication plan overseen by the Senior Pastoral Lead which explains to students how pastoral support is provided in their school and proactively directs students to where they can find support at key points throughout the academic year (e.g. middle of term, exam periods, prior to assessments etc) which advises students on where to go for help in various circumstances (e.g. how to register with disability services to ensure provisions are in place, how to apply for extensions, who to speak to if struggling with studies etc.).

- **Consistency and equity of experience.**. Schools should ensure that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that there is consistency and equity in the pastoral support and guidance student experience. Student experience may be evaluated via:
  - Survey data which can help Schools gauge the effectiveness of pastoral support include both ASES and PTES which both contain questions related to pastoral support.
  - Informal feedback given to staff, as well as from colleagues within the School.
  - Pastoral support should be a standing item at SSLC meetings.
  - Pastoral support should be a standing item at School Education meetings and issues fed back to the Student Support and Experience Committee.

Good Practice – these are areas of good practice that Schools may consider adopting, if they are not currently included in their practice.

Study skills courses. Some Schools have introduced study skills courses that are delivered either over one or two terms and cover a range of topics commonly raised in pastoral meetings, including, academic writing skills, library/research skills; academic integrity; mental health support; careers advice, language support etc., and may include social elements to promote community building. Schools report that these have had a positive impact and helped signpost students to appropriate sources of support or help establish appropriate academic expectations. Negative experiences have been that attendance can be variable. Given the value int the topics covered schools may consider making attendance compulsory andsubject to monitoring procedures. However, it is recognised that some topics may not be relevant for home students.

Student support committee. Some Schools have a student support committee which brings together the UG SPT, monitoring leads, and admin and are being extended to include PGT leads to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach to school pastoral support activities. This group provides feedback to School Education and Student Support and Experience Committees.

Social space. Some Schools have provided social spaces for PGT on-campus students to promote community building.

Additional pastoral support work

5.3 Review and restructuring of public-facing pastoral UG and PGT support webpages.

The pastoral support webpages are currently hosted over several pages, which includes separate student and staff pages containing largely similar information. This includes detailed descriptions of School UG provision and some staff resources; a separate password protected staff resource page; several student and staff FAQs; limited information on PGT pastoral provision. Staff report that navigating through these pages is confusing and difficult to locate relevant information. Whilst there are a lot of useful resources, some colleagues have reported concern about the scope of the PT role extending beyond its original role into providing mental health support due to the inclusion of mental health resources whilst others report that it is valuable to have this information included.

Members of the TFG have reviewed the webpages pages and plans discussed with the Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance Forum. Changes which have been made include:

- Only having one public facing pastoral support webpage replacing the current student and staff pages. This page will link to UG, PGT, Qatar and online pastoral support links which will provide an overview of the support available including the wider network of student support services.
- Detailed School specific information on UG personal tutor provision removed.
- Password-protected staff resource page containing support materials restructured into categories to make it easier to find information (e.g. meeting preparation, training resources, administration etc.).

The revised webpage is currently hidden from public view but can we viewed by colleagues here. Please direct any comments/feedback to the Dean for Student Support. The revised webpage will be made public at the start of Welcome Week (w/b 11th September).

5.4 Introduction of in-person staff training for pastoral support and guidance role.

Currently there is no in-person training for personal tutoring/pastoral support nor is it included at new staff induction events. Staff who are new to personal tutoring are currently trained in Schools by SPTs and further supported with online resources available on the staff resource pages. It was felt that there should be more central support for staff training new to personal tutoring and pastoral support. As such, staff induction events will include information on the universities support services and there will be in-person training on personal tutoring and pastoral support delivered by the Dean for Student Support and Senior Personal Tutors available for all staff. 2023/24 training dates have been scheduled on November 8th and March 27th and will be advertised to staff when booking is opened

5.5 Introduction of an annual pastoral support and guidance staff/student information event as part of the BeWell / Mental Health Awareness week in October.

As part of the university's on-going work to promote health and wellbeing, we will promote and celebrate the network of student support services currently available to students at key events such as BeWell/Mental Health Awareness weeks to enhance the visibility of these services.

6. Academic Workload Engagement Exercise

The Academic Workload Engagement Exercise (May 2023) identified a number of key factors where pastoral and academic support needs increased workload pressures facing Academic staff. The table below lists the concerns raised in the AWEE and how the proposals outlined in this paper will help mitigate these concerns:

Comment in AWEE	Response	Action
The amount of Academic staff time required by the role (e.g. it was reported that in some Schools the role and frequency of out-of-hours contact from students is not fully reflected in workload models);	Personal tutors can meet students in groups to help reduce workload demands. Staff are not expected to reply to student emails out with office hours.	Students are now advised on the pastoral webpage that staff will not reply during out of office time (emergency contact information is provided). School induction material should reiterate this point.
The pressures and stress placed upon Academic staff in dealing with some issues raised by students for which they are not comfortable (or fully trained) to deal with;	Personal tutors are not expected to provide mental health support for students. They should direct students to Student Support / Counselling as appropriate.	Staff resources have been updated to clarify the limits of the personal tutor role and training resources will further address this issue.
The frustrations encountered by Personal Tutors in seeking responses to questions for which they are unclear about the answer (or where to direct the student for support);	Personal tutors are not expected to be able to answer all questions, however should be able to direct students to the appropriate person/service	Web resources have been updated to clearly list help/advice contacts to support personal tutors.
Students approaching both their Personal Tutor and Lecturer in parallel for assistance on the same matter	This is a frustrating problem and can lead to confusion and delays in resolving the issue.	Students are advised on the pastoral webpage not to do this. School induction

		material should reiterate this point.
Student Support Needs - Academic Support		
Several respondents highlighted that peak workload pressure points occurred during the academic year at defined periods e.g. marking assessments and exam periods.	Pressure points during the academic year tend to be around assessment deadlines/exams which can be planned for in advance and schools can proactively send regular communication reminding students of support available.	It is recommended in this paper that Schools develop a communication strategy to address these issues. Communication in advance reminding students of the support available, how to apply for extensions, report absences, university support for exam stress etc.
Some respondents articulated a concern that the amount of time required all-year round to provide students with supervision/academic skills and welfare support was increasing In particular, resilience and independent study skills were cited as areas in which some students would benefit from more training/development activities at an early stage of their studies.	Personal tutor/pastoral lead role is to signpost students to the appropriate services.	Regular communication directing students to support services PGT study skills courses can address a range of academic and pastoral issues and promote independent study skills.

7. Next Steps

- The committee is asked to note the current direction of travel on the actions outlined in this paper.
- It is recommended that the TFG is disbanded and that continuing work monitoring pastoral support issues are monitoring by the Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance Forum.
- It is recommended that the Senior Pastoral Support and Guidance Form (SPS&GF) is established as a formal group, which reports to the Student Support and Experience Committee
- It is recommended that PGT pastoral support provisions are reviewed at the end AY2023 by the SPS&GF reporting to SSEC.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION
- Further information is available from Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience, Jason.Bohan@abdn.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION UPDATE

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper provides a summary of significant work being undertaken/completed under the remit of Dean for educational innovation. The work on decolonizing the curriculum has been detailed in a separate paper. The paper considers:
> - Tools for the Delivery of Education
> - Academic Integrity
> - Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment Pilot
> - Collaborative online internarial learning (COIL) Pilot

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 Educational Innovation update.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1.   Tools for the Delivery of Education

On 8 August the Digital Strategy Committee discussed the following three business cases. Due to the budget allocations for AY 2023-24 and that these tools being classed as revenue rather than capital expenditure it has not been possible to secure funding for all 3. Therefore IPAC has been prioritised as this is the tool that is likely to support the greatest reduction in staff workloads and provide enhancements for the student experience.

A.   Individual Peer Assessed Contribution (IPAC) to support peer evaluation in group work, for a 3-year period, following the pilot that took place during AY 2022/23
Cost is £7,800 per year (inc. VAT), totalling £23,400 (inc. VAT) over 3 years. Funding approved

B.   Extending the pilot of Turnitin Originality, for a further year, to support the investigation of academic misconduct.

Cost is £26,242 (inc. VAT) for AY 2023/24 Currently no funding available.

Funding for this was being sought in order for the institution to have the option to pilot the use of Turnitin's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Detection tool beyond December 2023. The committee should note that AI detection tools, including Turnitin's AI detection tools, cannot definitively prove that the text submitted has been produced by a generative AI tool, and that the institutional approach to the challenges posed by the inappropriate use of such tools is to focus on assessment design, rather than detection. We will also provide clear communication to staff that they must not submit student work to external detection tools/software.   We will revisit this business case at the end of term 1 AY 2023/24.

C.   Respondus LockDown Browser for Exam Integrity, for a 3-year period, following a free trial during AY 2022/23
Cost is ~£5,040 per year (inc. VAT), totalling £15,120 (inc. VAT) over 3 years. Currently no funding available.

A custom browser that is deeply integrated within Blackboard Learn (MyAberdeen), which locks down the testing environment: it is proposed that Schools interested in using this tool contribute to the cost for AY 2023-24 and this business case is revisited for AY 2024-25.

4.2.   Academic Integrity

Improvements have been ongoing across the university to proactively address the challenges of academic integrity. The university is focusing on shifting the culture towards encouraging academic integrity rather than solely emphasizing the prevention and detection of academic misconduct. This is an important aspect of maintaining a fair and ethical learning environment, as well as essential as part of the training for our graduates for their future careers.

4.2.1. Student-Facing Resources

A new series of short videos on the following topics have been developed: referencing, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, generative artificial intelligence (genAI), contract cheating, and data falsification have been developed for AY 2023-24. These videos provide accessible and engaging resources for students to understand potential pitfalls and ethical considerations in their academic work.

These can be as s accessed through the updated Academic Integrity Guidance and Resources and Academic Integrity & Referencing Toolkit. Schools are requested to signpost students to these through the course/programme digital spaces and handbooks.

A new quiz on academic integrity has been embedded in PD1002 and PD5006, to reflect these updates.

4.2.2. Guidance for Staff on Generative Artificial Intelligence tools

The guidance for Staff on Artificial Intelligence tools and Assessment Practices is being updated and will be made available by the 5th of September. This will include additional guidance on detection.

The Task and Finish Group (TFG) established to provide governance and make recommendations about future implementation of Turnitin Originality's Authorship tool, which is a tool to support the investigation of potential cases of contract cheating, had its final meeting

on the 23 May. The recommendation from the group was to pause the pilot of Turnitin Originality's Authorship tool for AY 2023-24, and focus on reviewing our educational practices and policies to address contract cheating, including the development of a toolkit for use by School Investigative officers.

4.2.3. Evidence Base

The student led research project into barriers and facilitators to engaging with contract cheating services has been completed and preliminary findings have been presented at the annual symposium 2003 and HETL23. This project is now being extended to incorporate student views on engaging with generative AI. Currently awaiting ethical approval.

4.2.4. Case Studies

CAD will be collecting case studies from across the university of how staff have engaged with generative AI tools within their teaching and or research and will be sharing these through the website. The link to submit a case study is to follow.

Our comprehensive strategy includes training, resources, research, and targeted messaging to both staff and students. By fostering a culture that encourages academic integrity and addressing emerging issues, we hope to contribute to the overall quality and fairness of education. We will continue to monitor, adapt, and improve these efforts based on research and feedback to maintain and enhance their effectiveness over the next academic year.

4.3. *Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) pilot*

In the previous academic year, we undertook a pilot of an adapted version of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) programme. This pilot was successfully completed in two schools, covering seven single-honours degree programmes. We are currently in the process of evaluating the initial pilot phase and making adjustments to the programme based on our findings.

The upcoming adaptations will involve several key elements. Firstly, we will be introducing the involvement of the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAC) officer in the programme review meetings with the core teaching team. This integration aims to foster a better understanding of potential improvements and to ensure that the QAC team is fully briefed on the rationale behind planned changes.

Additionally, through this process, we have identified specific training needs that we believe warrant broader attention. As a result, we have initiated a plan to deliver school-specific training immediately upon completion of the TESTA programme, focusing on the design of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

In the next phase of the pilot, we will be modifying the processes to include Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programmes within this scheme. Initial outcomes from the first cohort of the pilot programmes have indicated that a majority of courses have subsequently submitted changes to either the intended learning outcomes or the assessments, or both, following completion of the TESTA review. All schools have created action plans based on the pilot, and these will be reviewed and followed up within six months.

We have established and are leading a North East of Scotland TESTA group, which have met twice to discuss how we can work together to enhance the programme across the sector.

4.4. Collaborative online international learning (COIL) Pilot

Initial designs for the collaborative teaching room have been approved. This includes a room layout with two distinct zones: Zone 1: This zone will combine a flexible seating space for 25 students, suitable for both traditional lectures and workshop formats. Zone 2: There will be five sound-baffled booths set up in this zone. These booths are designed to allow five students to work with students from another location through an interactive monitor. The booths will have a full acoustic setup to facilitate collaborative conversations and project work. The movement between the "traditional" space and the booths has been designed to allow easy movement throughout the teaching session.

We experienced a slight delay in finalising the room setup due to the need to reconfigure some equipment specifications because of financial challenges. However, the new budget and design have now been approved. Equipment is currently being purchased and installed, and the room will be ready for use in the upcoming academic year.

Due to issues with RAAC in some of our teaching spaces, we have had to redeploy our timetable to utilise different rooms. This unexpected change has presented a potential opportunity. More groups of staff and students will now be utilising this room, initially as a basic teaching space. However, this presents us with an opportunity to provide advice and support on how their learning experience could be enhanced with the use of the additional room capabilities. This initiative has led to the generation of a series of guides and support tools, which will be made available to all room users. The aim is to encourage others to consider what they could achieve with this space in future years.

5.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink (Dean for Educational Innovation), k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk, or Dr Sara Preston (Senior eLearning Adviser) s.preston@abdn.ac.uk

18 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

GRADUATE OUTCOMES SURVEY 2023

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

Attached is an analysis of the University of Aberdeen results in the Graduate Outcomes Survey 2023.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SMT	10 August 2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	EEC	18 September 2023

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

This paper is provided for discussion.

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   The Graduate Outcomes (GO) Survey results 2023 for the AY 2020/21 leavers cohort were published in June 2023.

4.2   The attached report provides an analysis of the results of leavers in AY 2020/21 against a list of 132 institutions that were included in the latest Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide. The report focuses is on UK-domiciled full-time first-degree leavers as this population is used by league table providers, but results for other domiciles and levels of study are also provided.

5.   RESULTS

5.1   The results for the University's first-degree leavers are mixed, with a rise in rank on two key metrics and a drop on four, while results are awaited on two metrics relating to league table results (Times & Sunday Times and Complete University Guide).

5.2   The University response rate is comparatively high, although it is marginally lower than the previous year (down 1.1 percentage points (to 65.3%), with Aberdeen ranking 6th in the UK of the 132 HEIs for response rate.

5.3   Overall, the trends for the first-degree FT UK-domiciled leavers are down on last year, while trends for UK-domiciled postgraduate leavers are generally up. Key headlines for the first-degree FT UK-domiciled leavers and postgraduate leavers are as follows:

- 92.8% of first-degree FT UK-domiciled leavers are in employment or further study in 2023, compared to 93.8% in last year's survey, leading to a fall in UK rank of 42 places to 97th in the UK ,which is the lowest rank for the University since the survey started in 2020.

- The University has risen 55 places for UK-domiciled postgraduates in employment or further study, ranking 77th in the UK (96.7%). However, the proportion of non-UK domiciled postgraduates in employment or further study has dropped slightly from 89.1% to 88.3%, with a drop in rank to 95th place (down 14 places).

- The proportion of first-degree leavers in highly skilled employment has increased by 2.2 percentage points but the University has dropped in rank by four places to 53rd in the UK.

- However, there has been a positive movement at postgraduate level, with UK-domiciled postgraduates in highly skilled employment rising from 90.5% to 93.2%, resulting in a rise in rank to 29th in the UK (rise of 27 places). Non-UK domiciled postgraduates do not fare as well with rank dropping from 57th to 68th in the UK (88.4% to 82.6%).

- In terms of Graduate Reflections results:

- o The University has dropped 21 places for UK-domiciled FT first-degree leavers agreeing that their current activity fits in with their future plans ('**on track**' - a measure also used by the Complete University Guide), ranking 68th in the UK (75.5%).

- o However, the University's rank for UK-domiciled postgraduates 'on track' has increased by 17 places to 48th in the UK (84.2%). Rank for non-UK domiciled postgraduates has also improved by 37 places to 73rd place (although the proportion has dropped slightly to 72.9%).

- o The University has dropped in rank for UK-domiciled FT first-degree leavers considering their current activity to be '**meaningful**', with a drop of two places to 70th in the UK (83.5% agree).

- o However, again in line with general PG trends, rank for UK-domiciled postgraduates agreeing that their activity is meaningful has improved by 14 places to 76th (90.0%) and rank for non-UK domiciled postgraduate leavers has risen by 66 places to 45th in the UK (84.1%).

- o In terms of leavers considering their activity to have utilised skills learnt in their studies ('**skills**'), rank for UG FT UK-domiciled leavers has improved, moving the University to 45th in the UK (68.3%).

- o However, the trends for the postgraduate population are down in terms of skills, with the University ranking 67th for UK-domiciled postgraduates (a drop of 19 places), and 68th for non-UK domiciled postgraduates (a rise of four places, 71.1%).

5.4 The attached report provides more detail about subject performance.

6. CONSIDERATIONS FROM SMT
6.1 Employability is a key strategic priority area for the University and as such will be a focus for the Planning round in 2023/24.

7. NEXT STEPS FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 The report will be circulated to Schools via School Admin Managers, School Employability & Skills Champions, and the Schools' Careers Advisor.

7.2 The report will also be presented to EEC in the autumn for discussion and approval of these next steps.

7.3 Once ready, the same data presented in the report will be circulated to Schools via an updated version of an existing Power BI dashboard (see here for previous dashboard).

7.4 The Careers & Employability Team will carry out further analysis to create a dashboard with more granular details of graduate destinations with a special focus on metrics such as salary and skills, sectors worked in, and further study destinations. When ready, this data will also be shared with Schools through the above channels.

7.5 All the above information and extended analyses will allow Schools to provide a contextualised report that can be discussed at EEC and UEC as part of a GO Action Plan (TBC as part of a series of Education Action Plans currently under development).

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk), John Barrow, Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship (j.barrow@abdn.ac.uk), Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk), Chris Souter, Head of Data and BI (chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk) and Lisa Gove, Planning Analyst (lisa.gove@abdn.ac.uk).

15 August 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Open*

GRADUATE OUTCOMES

1495 **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN**

Graduate Outcomes 2023 analysis

Analysis by the Directorate of Planning

13th July 2023

Background

Graduate Outcomes is the biggest UK annual social survey and captures the perspectives and current status of recent graduates. All graduates who completed a programme of study will be asked to take part in the survey 15 months after they finish their studies. The survey aims to help current and future students gain an insight into career destinations and development. Graduate Outcomes 2023 surveys the 2020/21 cohort of leavers from higher education and represents the third instance of the survey, having replaced the earlier Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. This report considers performance by the University of Aberdeen against a variety of measures derived from the Graduate Outcomes survey, including those utilised by the domestic league table rankings, to offer an indication of performance against the previous year, and against the HE sector (excluding small and specialist institutions). The metrics and measures utilised in this report are as follows:

- **Employment and/or Further Study:** This is a measure indicating the percentage of leavers that are in further work and/or study of all those who are available for work and/or further study. Leavers who are unavailable for work or study due to other activities (e.g., caring, travel, retirement) are exempt from the calculation.
- **Highly Skilled Employment:** This is a measure indicating the percentage of leavers in UK-based employment that are in highly skilled employment.
- **Domestic University Rankings – "Positive Destination" metrics:** These are metrics utilised by the three domestic league table university rankings (the Times & Sunday Times Good, Complete, and Guardian university guides) to determine the percentage of leavers that are in a positive destination (i.e. highly-skilled employment and/or graduate level study).
- **Graduate Reflections – On Track:** This reflective measure indicates the percentage of leavers available for employment who agree that their current activity fits with their future plans (this metric is used by the Compete University Guide).
- **Graduate Reflections – Meaningful:** This reflective measure indicates the percentage of leavers available for employment who agree that their current activity is meaningful.
- **Graduate Reflections – Skills:** This reflective measure indicates the percentage of leavers available for employment who agree that their current activity utilises skills gained from their programme of study.
- **Response Rate:** This is a measure to indicate the percentage of the Graduate Outcomes eligible population of leavers from higher education who responded to the Graduate Outcomes survey.

The headline figure for each measure or metric is for UK domiciled full-time first-degree programmes. This is because the full-time first-degree population represents a stable, comparable base between institutions throughout the UK, and this is also the population used by the league tables for their metrics. In addition to UK domiciled full-time first-degree graduates, other domicile and level of study combinations are provided.

Undergraduate data (unless otherwise specified) expands on the UK full-time first-degree population by combining first-degree with other undergraduate leavers. Postgraduate data combines leavers from taught and research programmes at postgraduate level.

Unless otherwise stated, any rankings provided have been done against a list of 132 institutions that were included in the latest overall Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide, and therefore excludes many small and specialist institutions.

Graduate Outcomes Survey 2023 (2020/21 leavers)
headline data

Table 1: University of Aberdeen performance for measures/metrics in Graduate Outcomes 2022 data. This data reflects UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers only.

Metric / Measure	Graduate Outcomes 2023 (2020/21 leavers)		Graduate Outcomes 2022 (2019/20 leavers)		difference	
UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers	**Percentage**	**Rank**	Percentage	Rank	Percentage	Rank
Employment and/or Further Study	92.8%	97	93.8%	55	-1.0 pp ▼	-42 ▼
Highly Skilled Employment	76.5%	53	74.3%	49	+2.2 pp ▲	-4 ▼
Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide Graduate Prospects¹	81.1%	TBC	79.9%	33	+1.2 pp ▲	TBC
Complete University Guide Graduate Prospects - Outcomes²	TBC	TBC	76.1%	38	TBC	TBC
Guardian University Guide Career Prospects	84.1%	Q2	82.9%	Q2	+1.2 pp ▲	■
Graduate Reflections – On Track Also used by the CUG as additional GO metric³	75.5%	[68]	76.6%	47	-1.1 pp ▼	-21 ▼
Graduate Reflections – Meaningful	83.5%	70	84.2%	68	-0.7 pp ▼	-2 ▼
Graduate Reflections – Skills	68.3%	45	68.3%	50	■	5 ▲
Response Rate	65.3%	6	66.4%	7	-1.1 pp ▼	1 ▲

▬ QUARTILE BAND 1		▬ QUARTILE BAND 3
▬ QUARTILE BAND 2		▬ QUARTILE BAND 4

†Note: estimated percentages and ranks are indicated by square brackets.

The University has risen in percentage terms in five out of nine measures and metrics considered in this report on the Graduate Outcomes 2023 data on 2020/21 leavers. The University has fallen in percentage terms in three metrics from Graduate Outcomes 2022 in percentage score and this is reflected in terms of UK rank out of 132 institutions. Despite a rise in percentage terms for the Highly Skilled Employment, the University is estimated to fall in the sector rankings by four places. The impact on one metric, the 'Graduate Prospects – Outcomes' as used by the Complete University Guide has not yet been determined due to availability of data.

Where known, the University sits in the top quartile for only one metric/measure (Response Rate) and in the second quartile for three further measures and metrics (Highly Skilled Employment, Career Prospects (Guardian), and Graduate Reflections – Skills). Three metrics/measures sit in the third quartile in the 2023 Graduate Outcomes survey (Employment and/or Further Study, Graduate Reflections – On Track and Graduate Reflections – Meaningful). It is not yet known where the University will sit in quartile band terms for two metric/measures: Graduate Prospects (Times & Sunday Times Good), and Graduate Prospects – Outcomes (Complete).


¹ GO 2023 rank for this represents an estimate for the Graduate Prospects in the Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024
² GO 2023 data & rank for this represents an estimate for the Graduate Prospects - Outcomes metric in the Complete University Guide 2025
³ GO 2023 rank for this represents an estimate for the Graduate Prospects – On Track metric in the Complete University Guide 2025

Employment and/or Further Study

Employment and/or Further Study as a measure is an approximation on the old E1 UK Performance Indicator formerly published by HESA from Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education data. It reflects the percentage of leavers who are in either employment or further study 15 months after graduation. The figures presented here treat leavers who have indicated that their most important activity is either work or study as a positive outcome (regardless of the level of employment or further study). Conversely, those leavers who have indicated that their most important activity is "Unemployed and looking for work" represent a negative outcome. Leavers who are unavailable for work or study due to other activities (e.g., caring, travel, retirement) are exempt from the calculation.

Chart 1: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Employment and/or Further Study by domicile and level of study
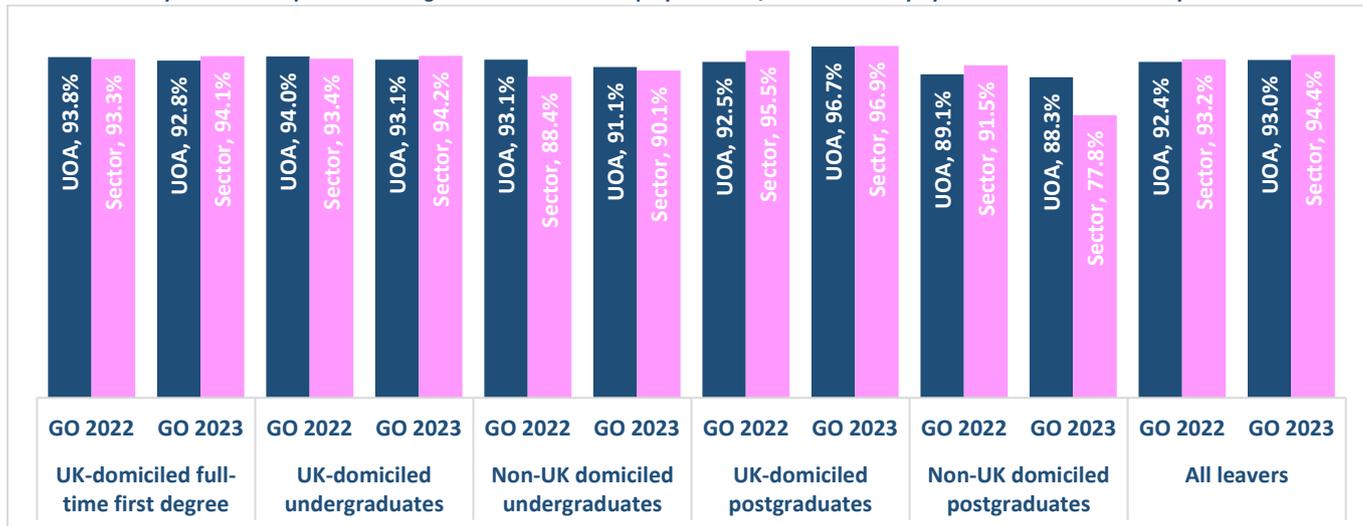
As can be seen in Chart 1 the University of Aberdeen has fallen in percentage terms for those in employment and/or further study for almost every category except the UK domiciled postgraduates and the All leavers categories.

Chart 2: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Employment and/or Further Study for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
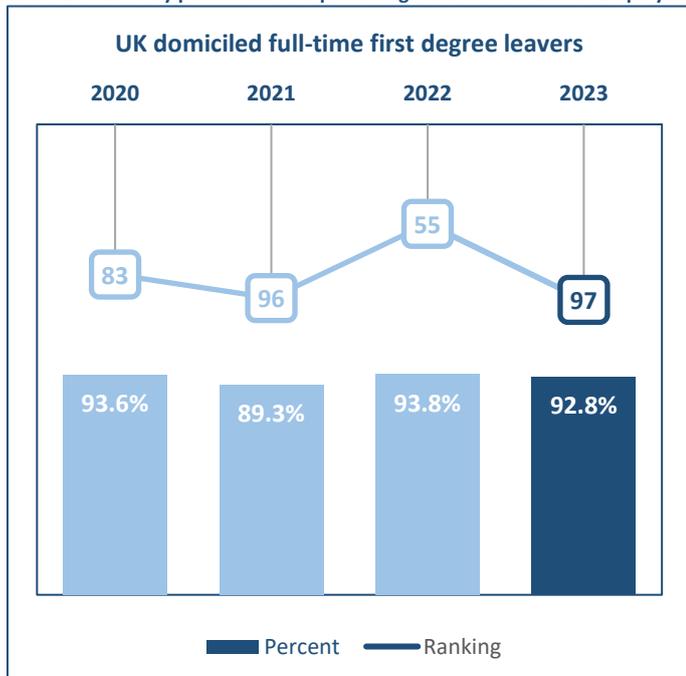
As can be seen in Chart 2, the percentage of UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers in employment and/or further study has fallen by 1 pecentage point between the 2022 and 2023 Graduate Outcomes survey. This drop in percentage is also reflected in a decrease in sector rank, with the University dropping from 55th to 97th among 132 institutions.

Table 2: University and Sector percentage by CAH⁴ Level 1 Subject in Employment and/or Further Study for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	109	100.0%	99.2%	0.8%
	GO 2023	91	100.0%	99.3%	0.7%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	51	91.4%	97.1%	-5.7%
	GO 2023	27	87.8%	96.9%	-9.1%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	75	94.2%	94.1%	0.1%
	GO 2023	68	89.2%	94.3%	-5.1%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	50	96.4%	93.4%	2.9%
	GO 2023	50	95.3%	93.9%	1.4%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		95.6%	
	GO 2023	0		96.8%	
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	20	82.1%	92.8%	-10.8%
	GO 2023	29	80.2%	93.5%	-13.2%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	low population		92.3%	
	GO 2023	8	87.5%	93.0%	-5.5%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	117	92.3%	92.6%	-0.3%
	GO 2023	89	92.1%	94.2%	-2.1%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	6	83.3%	90.4%	-7.1%
	GO 2023	low population		91.8%	
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	5	90.0%	93.1%	-3.1%
	GO 2023	low population		95.0%	
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	120	95.0%	92.8%	2.2%
	GO 2023	88	92.6%	93.8%	-1.2%
(16) Law	GO 2022	89	94.4%	91.9%	2.4%
	GO 2023	77	94.8%	93.6%	1.2%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	60	92.4%	92.4%	0.1%
	GO 2023	47	93.6%	93.9%	-0.2%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	48	88.5%	91.9%	-3.3%
	GO 2023	40	92.4%	93.0%	-0.5%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	74	91.2%	91.3%	-0.2%
	GO 2023	37	99.1%	92.2%	6.9%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	55	94.5%	94.1%	0.4%
	GO 2023	57	89.5%	94.6%	-5.1%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	22	93.2%	91.9%	1.3%
	GO 2023	26	94.2%	92.9%	1.3%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	61	93.4%	93.9%	-0.5%
	GO 2023	21	89.0%	94.1%	-5.2%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	17	100.0%	93.7%	6.3%
	GO 2023	8	91.5%	94.8%	-3.3%

As can be seen in Table 2, the University of Aberdeen has GO results for 19 CAH Level 1 subjects, and outperformed the sector in four of these subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers in employment and/or further study. This is a drop from the 2022 survey where a total of eight CAH Level 1 subjects outperformed the sector. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

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⁴ The Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) provided by HESA, is a system of coding and categorising degree programmes into distinct subject groupings. Based on these groupings it is possible to disaggregate the University's score for each metric and measure into subject level scores.

Chart 3: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Employment and/or Further Study for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
83	96	52	98
93.9%	89.6%	94.0%	93.1%

■ Percent —— Ranking

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
45	81	14	51
91.1%	85.4%	93.1%	91.1%

■ Percent —— Ranking

UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
22	120	122	77
98.1%	94.0%	92.5%	96.7%

■ Percent —— Ranking

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
10	92	81	95
91.8%	91.1%	89.1%	88.3%

■ Percent —— Ranking
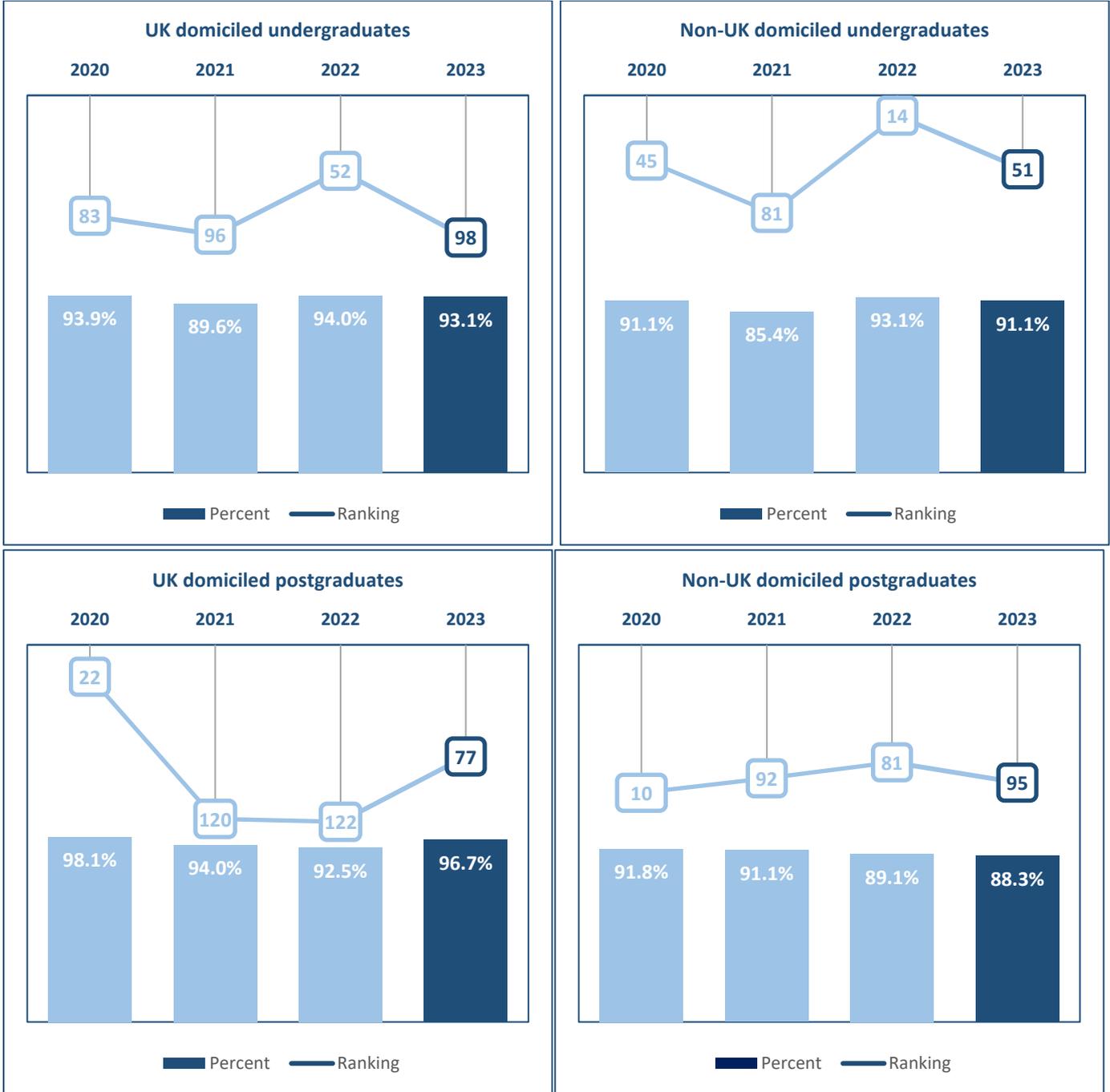
As can be seen in Chart 3, above, the University of Aberdeen has dropped in percentage terms for those in employment and/or further study for every combination of domicile and level of study except for UK domiciled postgraduates. A rise can be seen in the UK domiciled postgraduates category with a percentage increase of 4.2 percentage points between 2022 and 2023 Graduate Outcomes survey. This results in a sector rank increase from 122nd to 77th.

Chart 4: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Employment and/or Further Study for all leavers

ALL LEAVERS

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |

Ranking: 73, 104, 88, 103

Percent: 94.2%, 90.4%, 92.4%, 93.0%

Legend: ■ Percent —— Ranking
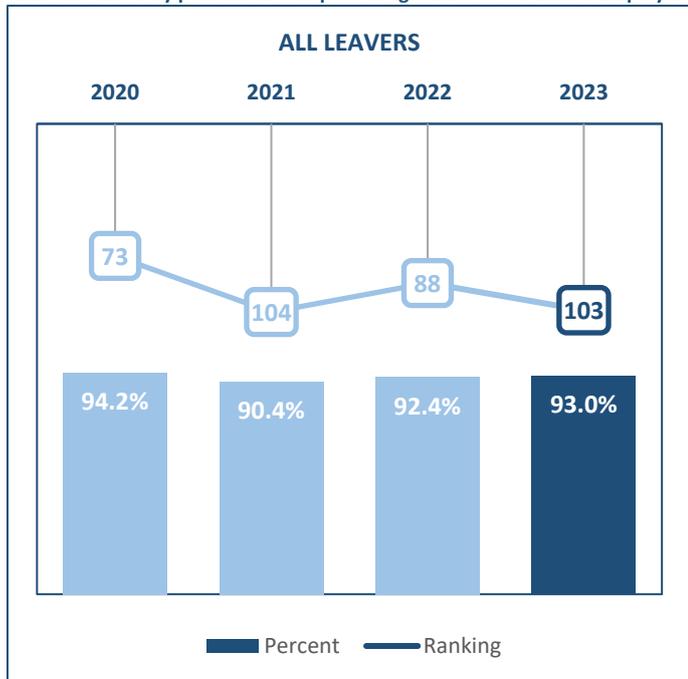
Despite a decrease in percentage in three of the four level/domicile categories, there has been a rise in percentage in all graduates who are in employment and/or further study. The percentage has risen from 92.4% in 2022 to 93.0% in this year's release of the Graduate Outcomes survey. However, the University is 103rd in rank for this measure against the sector, with a decrease from 88th in the 2022 survey.

Highly Skilled Employment

Highly Skilled Employment as a measure reflects the percentage of leavers (who have indicated that employment is their most important activity) that are *employed in the United Kingdom* who are in employment positions mapped to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes that indicate their employment is one of the following categories:

(1) Managers, directors, and senior officials

(2) Professional occupations, or

(3) Associate professional occupations

Chart 5: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Highly Skilled Employment by domicile and level of study

	GO 2022	GO 2023
UK-domiciled full-time first degree	UOA, 74.3% / Sector, 73.2%	UOA, 76.5% / Sector, 76.0%
UK-domiciled undergraduates	UOA, 74.2% / Sector, 73.3%	UOA, 76.7% / Sector, 75.9%
Non-UK domiciled undergraduates	UOA, 84.7% / Sector, 81.1%	UOA, 78.0% / Sector, 80.3%
UK-domiciled postgraduates	UOA, 90.5% / Sector, 89.6%	UOA, 93.2% / Sector, 90.7%
Non-UK domiciled postgraduates	UOA, 88.4% / Sector, 88.6%	UOA, 82.6% / Sector, 84.6%
All leavers	UOA, 81.6% / Sector, 78.8%	UOA, 84.1% / Sector, 71.6%

As can be seen in Chart 5, above, the University of Aberdeen has risen in percentage terms for those in Highly Skilled Employment for three combinations of domicile and level of study; UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers, UK domiciled undergraduates and UK domiciled postgraduates. The University has outperformed the sector in almost every domicile and level of study combination with the exception of the slight drop in non-UK domiciled undergraduates and postgraduates.

Chart 6: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Highly Skilled Employment for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
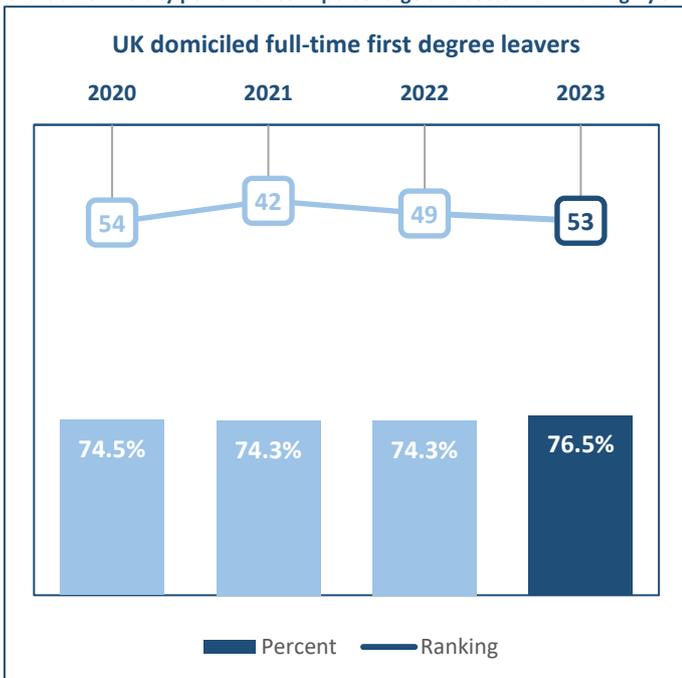

As can be seen in Chart 6, the University has increased in percentage terms for Highly Skilled Employment from 74.3% in 2022 to 76.5% in the 2023 survey. However, the University has ranked 53rd for this measure against the sector, with a decrease from 49th in the 2022 survey.

Table 3: University and Sector percentage by CAH Level 1 Subject in Highly Skilled Employment for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	105	100.0%	99.3%	0.7%
	GO 2023	83	98.8%	99.4%	0.6%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	16	93.9%	93.9%	0.0%
	GO 2023	10	75.0%	92.9%	-17.9%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	46	54.7%	64.7%	-10.0%
	GO 2023	39	48.1%	69.6%	-21.5%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	31	36.7	50.0%	-13.2%
	GO 2023	34	35.0	55.2%	-20.2%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		56.0%	
	GO 2023			59.3%	
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	8	87.5%	80.4%	7.1%
	GO 2023	15	80.0%	82.6%	-2.6%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	low population		83.1%	
	GO 2023	low population		85.3%	
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	86	77.9%	84.0%	-6.1%
	GO 2023	67	92.5%	87.5%	5.0%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	low population		85.5%	
	GO 2023	low population		87.1%	
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	low population		85.1%	
	GO 2023	low population		89.9%	
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	72	62.5%	65.8%	-3.3%
	GO 2023	60	75.0%	69.5%	5.5%
(16) Law	GO 2022	62	74.2%	67.5%	6.7%
	GO 2023	61	85.1%	73.0%	12.1%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	42	75.0%	65.6%	9.4%
	GO 2023	38	68.4%	69.3%	-0.8%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	25	69.6%	64.7%	4.9%
	GO 2023	27	58.5%	68.1%	-9.6%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	42	54.2%	61.3%	-7.1%
	GO 2023	25	57.1%	64.6%	-7.5%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	48	93.8%	75.8%	18.0%
	GO 2023	49	93.9%	79.2%	14.6%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	12	51.3%	58.3%	-6.9%
	GO 2023	14	43.4%	62.9%	-19.5%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	32	72.2%	69.0%	3.2%
	GO 2023	8	66.0%	76.0%	-10.0%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	12	50.7%	69.9%	-19.2%
	GO 2023	5	54.8%	77.8%	-23.0%

As can be seen in Table 3, the University of Aberdeen outperformed the sector in four CAH Level 1 subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers in Highly Skilled Employment (put in brackets the four subject areas). This is a decrease from the 2022 survey where a total of seven CAH Level 1 subjects outperformed the sector. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

Chart 7: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Highly Skilled Employment for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
53	46	48	54
75.3%	73.8%	74.2%	76.7%

Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
79	83	41	70
74.2%	72.9%	84.7%	78.0%

Percent — Ranking

UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
41	44	56	29
92.8%	92.3%	90.5%	93.2%

Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
18	100	57	68
97.3%	76.7%	88.4%	82.6%

Percent — Ranking
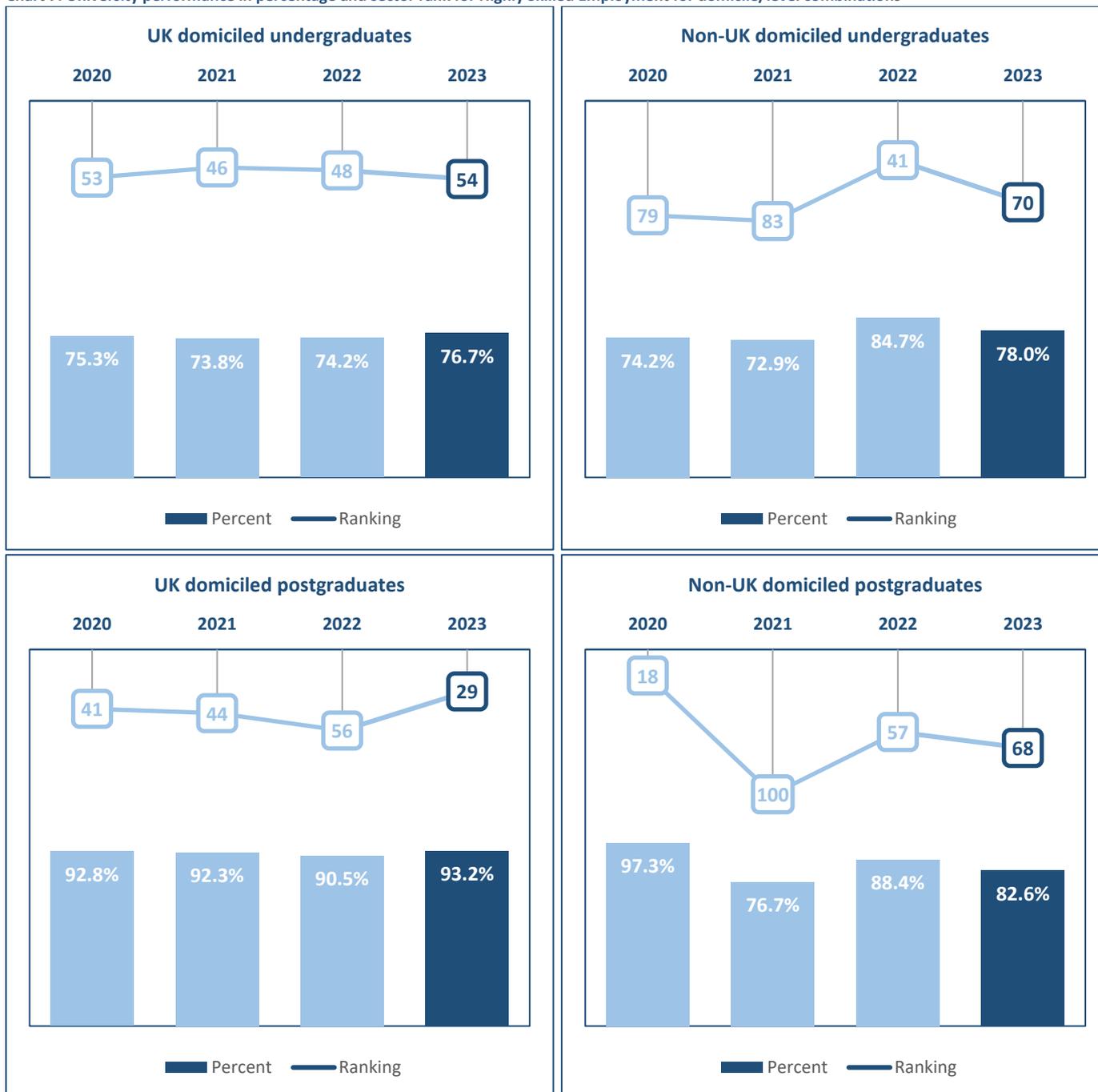
As can be seen in Chart 7 above, there is a rise in the UK domiciled undergraduates and postgraduates categories for the University of Aberdeen. UK domiciled undergraduates saw a rise of 2.5 percentage points with a drop of 6 places in rank. For UK domiciled postgraduates, the University saw a rise of 2.7 percentage points in 2023 with a rise of 27 places from 56th to 29th.

ALL LEAVERS

2020	2021	2022	2023
36	35	36	34

| 82.1% | 81.1% | 81.6% | 84.1% |

■ Percent ── Ranking
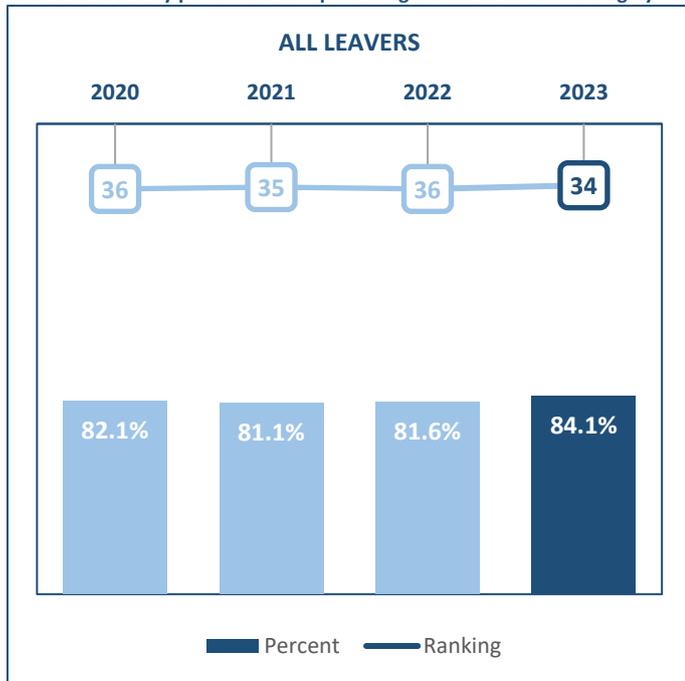
Overall, among all leavers, there is a rise from 81.6% to 84.1% in terms of percentage identified as being in UK-based Highly Skilled Employment. This is reflected in an increase in rank from 36th to 34th for this metric among 132 HEIs.

Domestic University Rankings – "Positive Destination" metrics

The three domestic league tables each have a metric derived from Graduate Outcomes data designed to reflect the career prospects of graduates. Although the three metrics do differ in methodology, the principle behind each of the three metrics is broadly similar – that it shows the percentage of leavers from an institution that are in either highly skilled employment or graduate-level further study out of those leavers that are available to work, although there are more nuanced differences in the definition of positive outcome between the three.

The years indicated in the charts in this section refer to the year of Graduate Outcomes survey rather than the edition year of each league table university ranking (e.g. the Graduate Outcomes 2022 data has been used in the Times & Sunday Times 2023 edition). The rankings provided are appropriate to each league table, and not the 132 comparable HEIs as used elsewhere in this report.

In each case the metrics are restricted to UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers only. This is because the full-time first-degree population represents a stable, comparable base between institutions throughout the UK, and this is also the population used by each league table for their metrics.

Please note that it is not possible to fully replicate each league table metric from HESA's HeidiPlus data extraction platform as it does not contain the breadth of fields required to do so. Therefore, we have instead included the GO score only where we know this from the HESA data transfer to league table compilers, and the associated rank when this has been released by league table compilers. These will be updated in new iterations of this report as these values become known.

There are a number of minor differences between the three methodologies in the domestic league tables for their metrics based on Graduate Outcomes activity data, the key distinctions between the three are as follows:

- The Guardian University Guide and Complete University Guide consider graduates in further sub-degree undergraduate study to be a positive outcome, whereas the Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide does not.
- The Guardian University Guide and Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide consider students in interim study to be a positive outcome whereas the Complete University Guide does not.

The result of these distinctions generally means that the Guardian University Guide will typically have the highest positive outcome percentage (as it includes both sub-degree undergraduate further study, and interim further study), followed by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide and then the Complete University Guide. The positive outcome percentage in the Complete University Guide is deflated by not considering interim study.

As stated earlier, this section of the report on domestic university rankings will be updated and expanded upon in later iterations to reflect known league table performance once it becomes available, including at league table subject level.

Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide – Graduate Prospects metric

Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide - Graduate Prospects

2020	2021	2022	2023
36	31	33	
79.8%	77.3%	79.9%	81.1%

Percent ■ Ranking ━
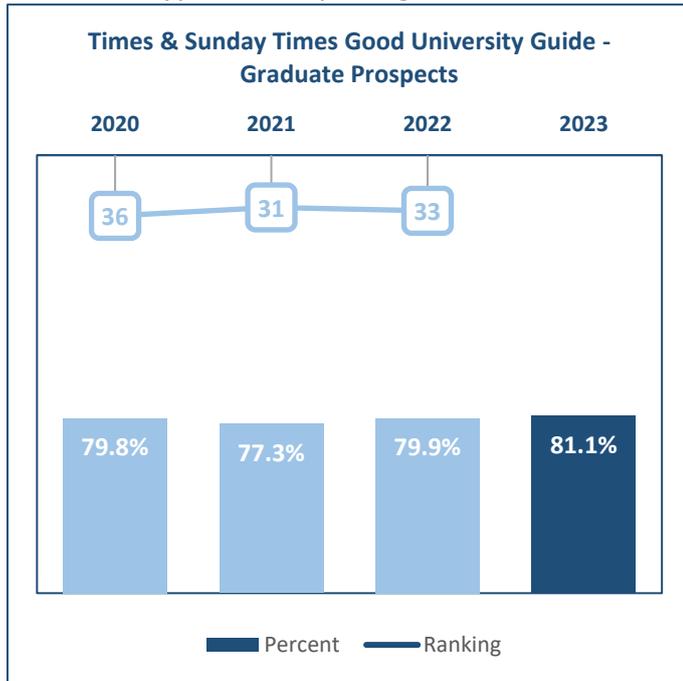
The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide Graduate Prospects metric indicates that the University has increased by 1.2 percentage points from 79.9% in 2022 to 81.1% in 2023. It is noted that the UK rank is still to be confirmed.

It is anticipated that the Graduate Outcomes 2022 data will be used in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide's 2024 edition, which is expected to be published in September 2023.

Complete University Guide – Graduate Prospects (Outcomes) metric

Complete University Guide - Graduate Prospects - Outcomes

2020	2021	2022	2023
45	46	38	TBC
74.8%	71.6%	76.1%	

Percent ■ Ranking ━
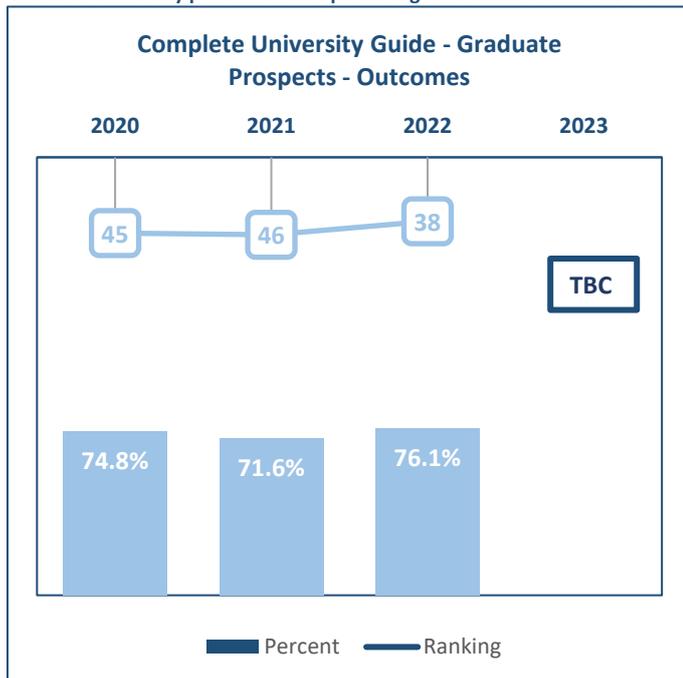
Currently, there is no Complete University Guide – Graduate Prospects (Outcomes) data for 2023. It is anticipated that the Graduate Outcomes 2023 data will be used in the Complete University Guide's 2025 edition, which is expected to be published in June 2024. It is anticipated that we will receive the value for this metric in early 2024.

Guardian University Guide – Career Prospects metric

**Guardian University Guide - Career Prospects**
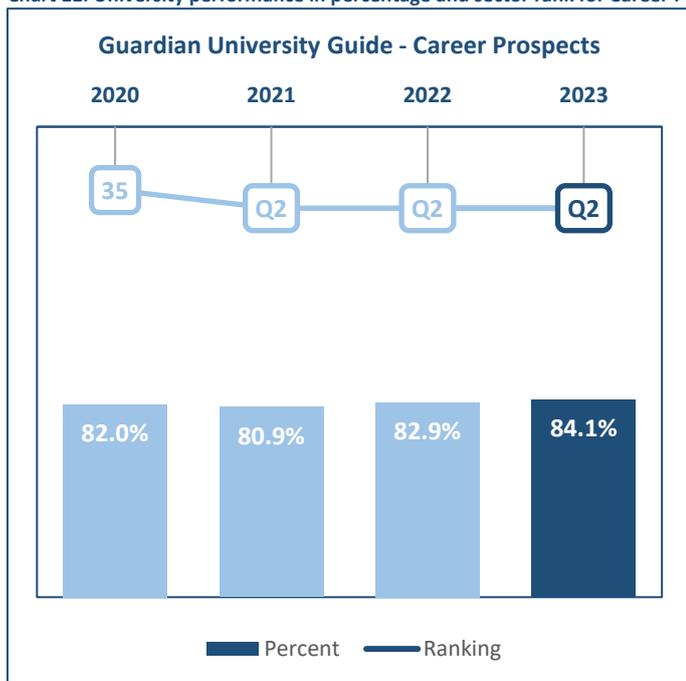
The Guardian University Guide Career Prospects metric indicates that the University has increased by 1.2 percentage points from 82.9% in 2022 to 84.1% in 2023. It is noted that the UK rank is still to be confirmed. The rank for 2021 and 2022 is given only as "Q2" (second quartile) as universities were not assigned a rank for individual Graduate Outcomes surveys in the Guardian University Guide 2023 due to that edition combining data from GO 2021 and GO 2022.

It is anticipated that the Graduate Outcomes 2023 data will be used in the Guardian University Guide's 2024 edition, which is expected to be published in September 2023.

## Graduate Reflections – On Track

Graduate Reflections – On Track reflects the percentage of leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to fit in with their future plans. Leavers who indicate that they strongly agree or agree with this statement are positive outcomes in this metric, whereas leavers who neither agree or disagree, or disagree or strongly disagree are negative outcomes for this metric.

This metric is used by the Complete University Guide as a second metric based on Graduate Outcomes data and is restricted to UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers for that usage.

Chart 12: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Graduate Reflections – On Track by domicile and level of study
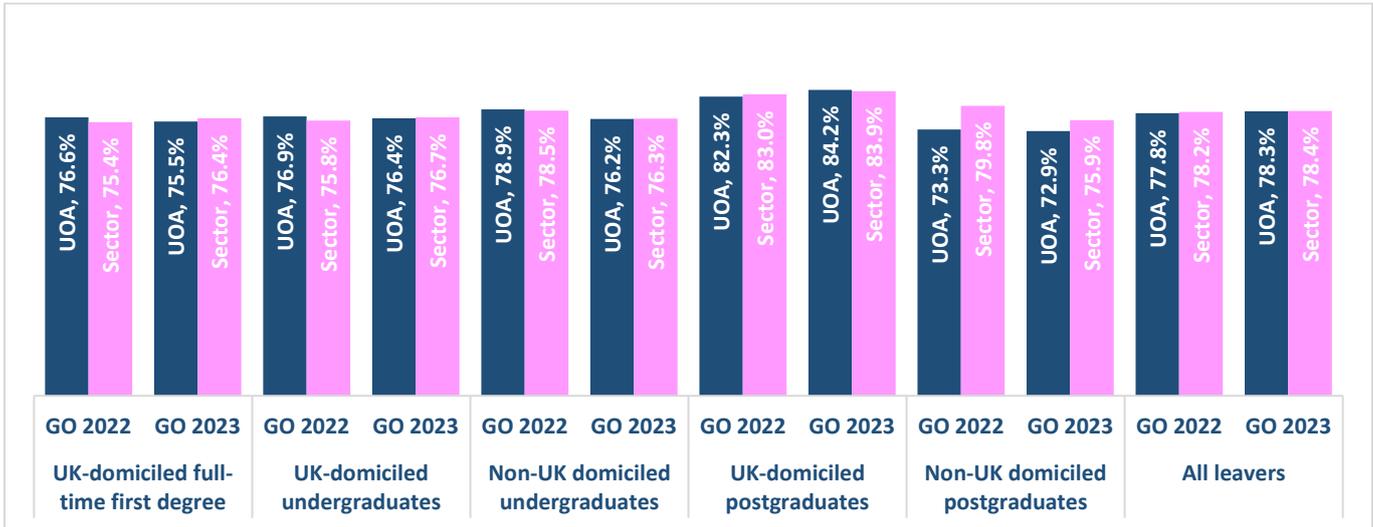
As can be seen in Chart 12, above, the University of Aberdeen has dropped in percentage terms for those who consider their current activity to be on track with their future plans for almost every combination of domicile and level of study (with the exception of UK domiciled postgraduates and the All leavers categories). It can also be observed that the University has a lower percentage of leavers who consider their employment to be on track with their future plans than in the sector in the Graduate Outcomes 2023 survey for every combination except from UK domiciled postgraduates.

Chart 13: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – On Track for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
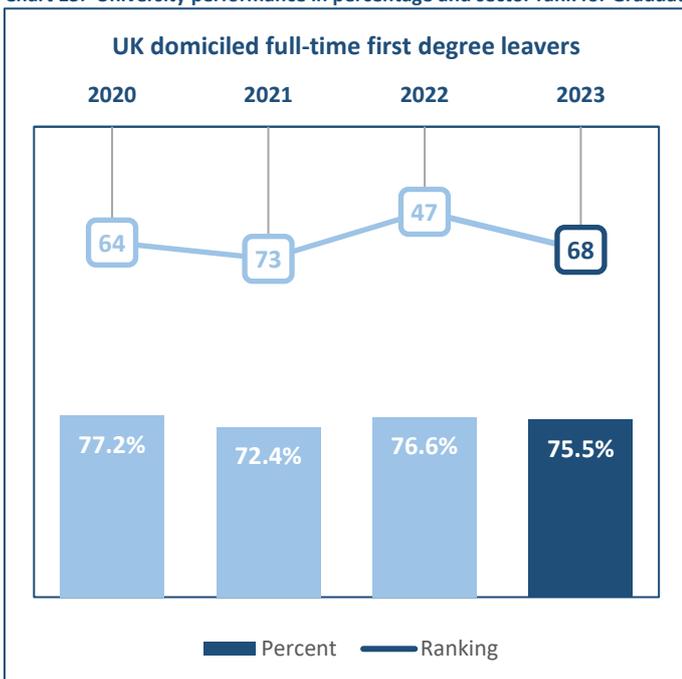

As can be seen in Chart 13, the University has dropped in percentage terms for Graduate Reflections – On Track from 76.6% in the 2022 survey to 75.5% in 2023. This percentage decrease is also reflected in the ranking increase from 47th to 68th among 132 UK universities.

As this metric and population is used by the Complete University Guide, the 2023 data position can also be considered to be an estimate of position for this metric in the Complete University Guide 2024 next year.

Table 4: University and Sector percentage by CAH Level 1 Subject in Graduate Reflections – On Track for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	107	96.3%	96.2%	0.1%
	GO 2023	76	96.1%	93.9%	2.1%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	46	76.1%	88.0%	-11.9%
	GO 2023	25	81.5%	85.6%	-4.1%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	69	69.6%	73.2%	-3.6%
	GO 2023	65	62.7%	73.6%	-11.0%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	43	75.3%	73.6%	1.7%
	GO 2023	47	75.5%	72.4%	3.1%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		76.1%	
	GO 2023	0		78.2%	
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	18	63.9%	74.1%	-10.2%
	GO 2023	29	75.6%	75.4%	0.2%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	low population		78.4%	
	GO 2023	8	75.0%	78.5%	-3.5%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	109	77.1%	76.6%	0.5%
	GO 2023	84	75.0%	78.9%	-3.9%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	6	91.7%	76.8%	14.8%
	GO 2023	low population		77.9%	
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	low population		80.9%	
	GO 2023	low population		83.3%	
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	110	70.3%	72.2%	-1.8%
	GO 2023	81	75.8%	73.4%	2.4%
(16) Law	GO 2022	78	80.6%	72.0%	8.7%
	GO 2023	70	86.3%	75.4%	10.9%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	53	76.4%	72.6%	3.8%
	GO 2023	42	72.6%	75.3%	-2.7%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	47	63.8%	70.0%	-6.2%
	GO 2023	35	62.6%	69.9%	-7.3%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	69	65.1%	69.0%	-3.9%
	GO 2023	34	60.7%	70.6%	-9.9%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	50	86.0%	83.6%	2.4%
	GO 2023	53	79.2%	83.5%	-4.2%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	20	89.8%	66.2%	23.6%
	GO 2023	23	61.3%	69.5%	-8.2%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	57	71.4%	71.4%	0.1%
	GO 2023	19	55.5%	74.3%	-18.7%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	15	79.3%	72.9%	6.4%
	GO 2023	6	69.4%	76.7%	-7.2%

As can be seen in Table 4, the University of Aberdeen outperformed the sector in four CAH Level 1 subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to of UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to fit in with their future plans (include these subjects in brackets). This is a drop from the 2022 survey where a total of ten CAH Level 1 subjects outperformed the sector. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

Chart 14: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – On Track for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
69	87	51	70
77.7%	72.6%	76.9%	76.4%

Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
89	73	50	53
77.5%	76.2%	78.9%	76.2%

Percent — Ranking

UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
81	110	65	48
85.2%	80.6%	82.3%	84.2%

Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
86	68	110	73
80.4%	81.7%	73.3%	72.9%

Percent — Ranking
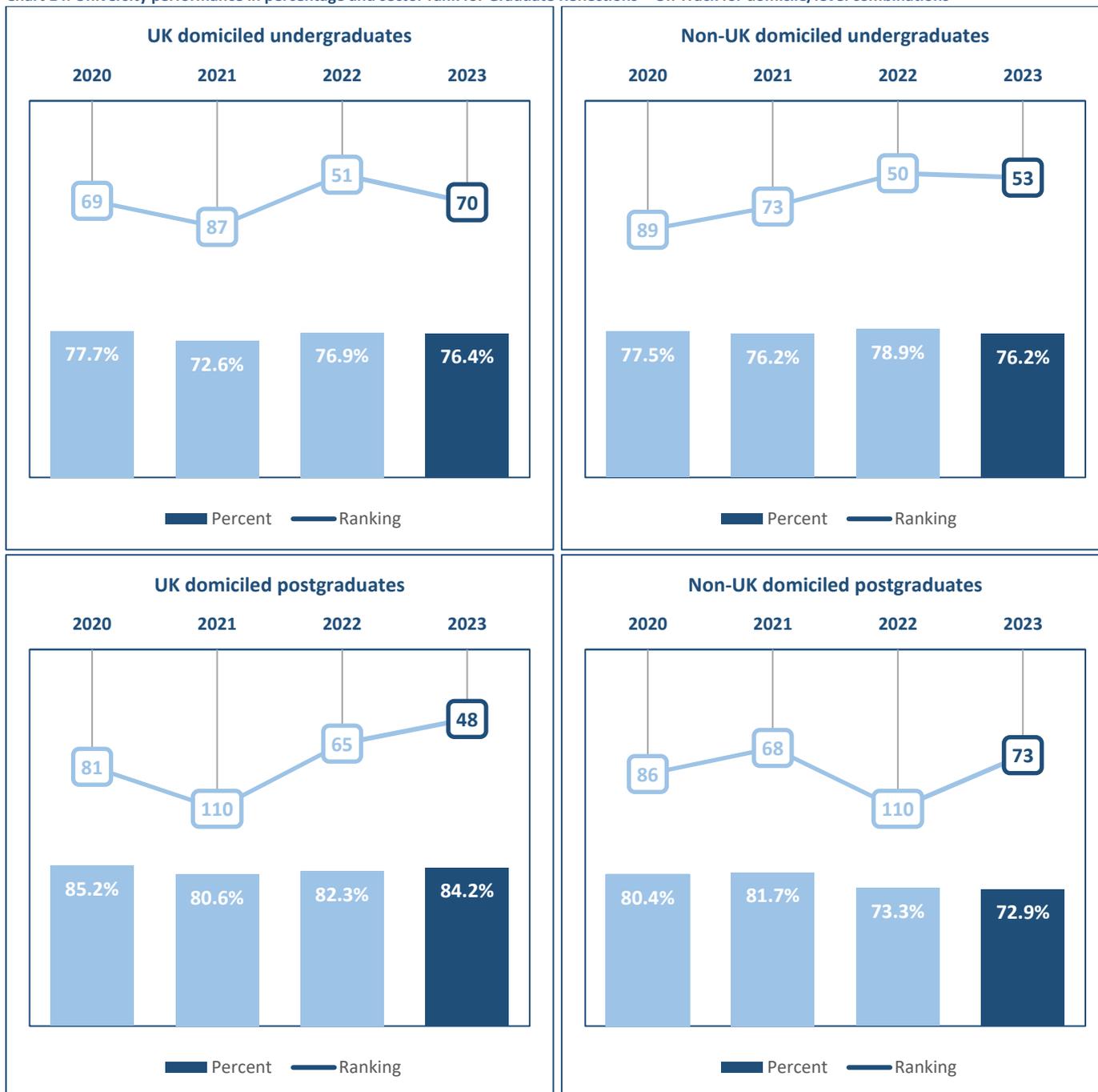
As can be seen in Chart 14 the University has risen in percentage of leavers who positively responded to the statement for Graduate Reflections – On Track for only UK domiciled postgraduates with a rise of 1.9 percentage points. This resulted in an increase of 17 places in rank in the 2023 Graduate Outcomes survey from 65th to 48th.

ALL LEAVERS

2020	2021	2022	2023
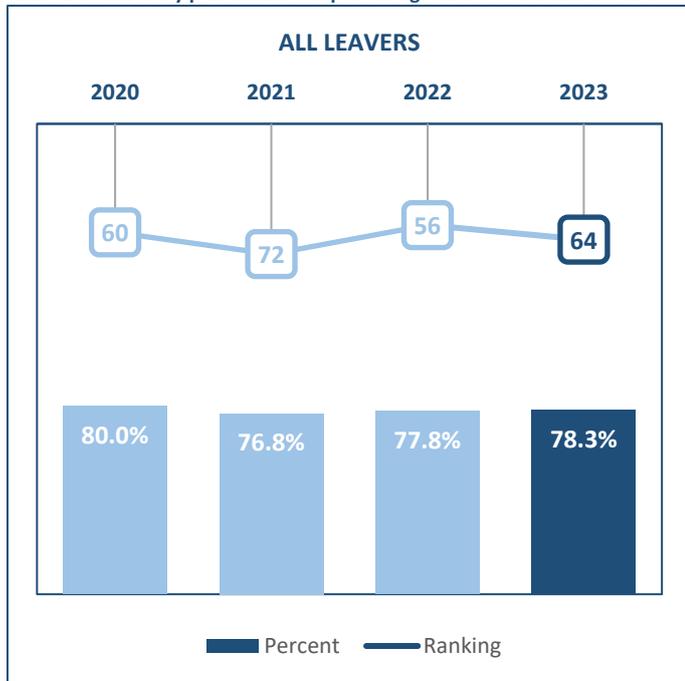
Overall, among all leavers, there is a rise from 77.8% to 78.3% in terms of percentage who indicate that they agree that their current employment is on track with their future plans. Despite this increase in percentage, there is a drop from 56th to 64th in UK rank.

Graduate Reflections – Meaningful

Graduate Reflections – Meaningful reflects the percentage of leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to be meaningful. Leavers who indicate that they strongly agree or agree with this statement are positive outcomes in this metric, whereas leavers who neither agree or disagree, or disagree or strongly disagree are negative outcomes for this metric.

Chart 16: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Graduate Reflections – Meaningful by domicile and level of study
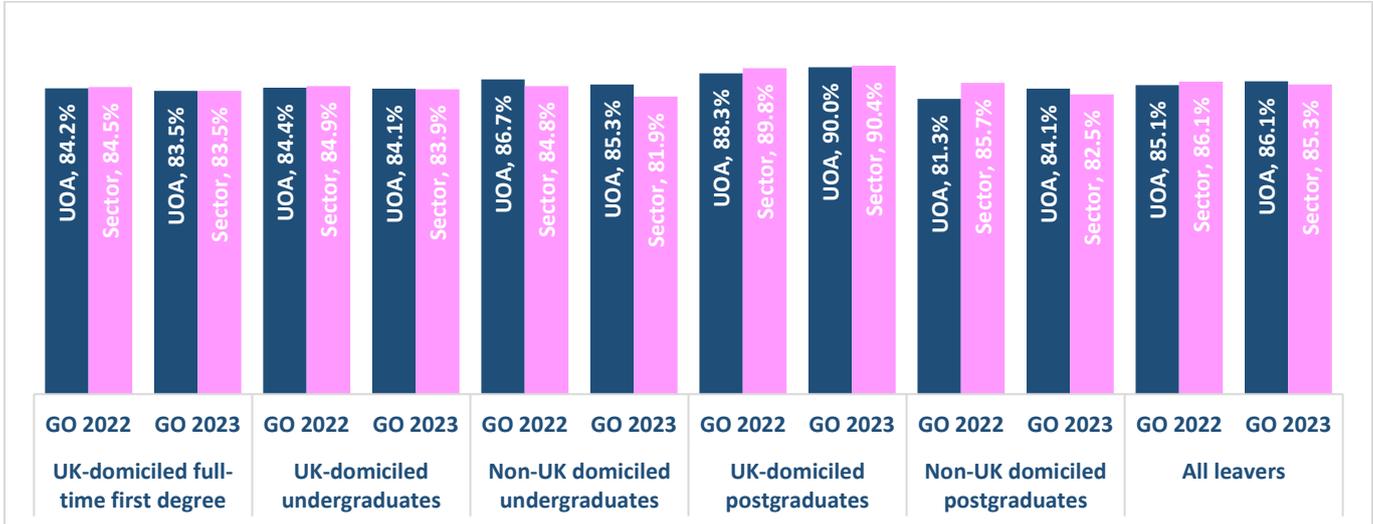
As can be seen in Chart 16 above the University has had an increase in positive responses to this question between years for UK domiciled postgraduates, non-UK domiciled postgraduates and the All leavers category. It can also be observed that the University has outperformed the sector in the UK domiciled undergraduates, non-UK domiciled undergraduates, non-UK domiciled postgraduates and the All leavers categories.

Chart 17: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – Meaningful for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
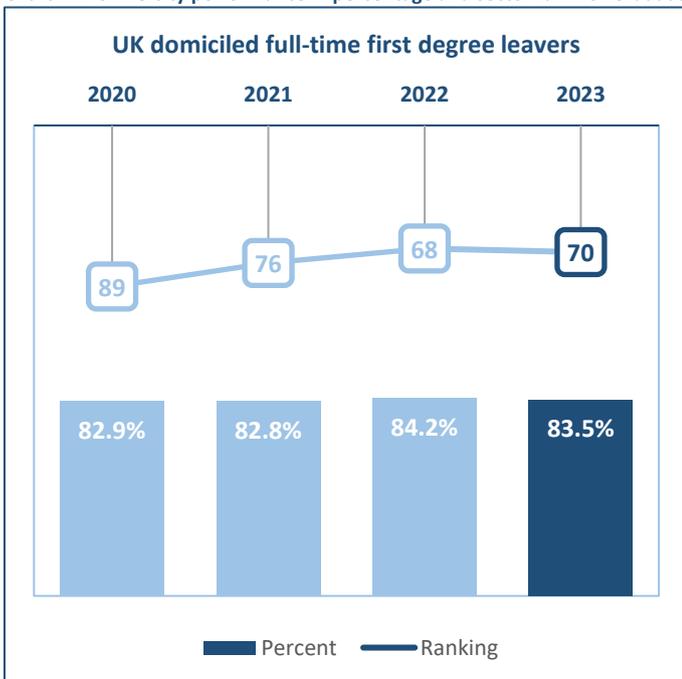
As can be seen in Chart 21, the University has decreased in percentage terms for positive responses (0.7 percentage points) and the University's rank among the 132 HEIs has dropped two places from 68th to 70th.

Table 5: University and Sector percentage by CAH Level 1 Subject in Graduate Reflections – Meaningful for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	107	99.1%	97.4%	1.7%
	GO 2023	76	96.1%	96.2%	-0.2%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	46	87.0%	94.3%	-7.3%
	GO 2023	25	85.5%	92.6%	-7.1%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	69	78.3%	85.9%	-7.6%
	GO 2023	65	82.9%	84.2%	-1.4%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	42	85.4%	85.0%	0.4%
	GO 2023	44	75.8%	83.7%	-7.9%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		86.7%	
	GO 2023	0		87.9%	
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	18	63.9%	83.8%	-19.9%
	GO 2023	29	82.6%	82.6%	-0.1%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	low population		83.8%	
	GO 2023	8	62.5%	81.8%	-19.3%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	107	83.2%	84.7%	-1.6%
	GO 2023	83	81.9%	85.3%	-3.4%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	6	75.0%	82.8%	-7.8%
	GO 2023	low population		81.2%	
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	low population		87.1%	
	GO 2023	low population		88.5%	
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	110	77.6%	82.9%	-5.2%
	GO 2023	79	86.0%	81.4%	4.6%
(16) Law	GO 2022	78	87.1%	83.2%	3.9%
	GO 2023	70	83.5%	82.3%	1.1%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	53	79.2%	81.2%	-1.9%
	GO 2023	41	79.3%	81.0%	-1.7%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	47	82.1%	80.7%	1.4%
	GO 2023	35	84.4%	78.7%	5.7%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	69	79.6%	79.7%	-0.1%
	GO 2023	34	68.0%	79.2%	-11.3%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	50	96.0%	91.5%	4.5%
	GO 2023	53	88.7%	91.0%	-2.3%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	20	84.7%	77.2%	7.6%
	GO 2023	23	80.3%	77.0%	3.3%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	57	80.8%	83.3%	-2.6%
	GO 2023	19	83.8%	83.3%	0.5%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	15	83.7%	84.2%	-0.5%
	GO 2023	6	77.7%	83.2%	-5.4%

As can be seen in Table 5, the University of Aberdeen outperformed the sector in five CAH Level 1 subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to be meaningful. This is a drop from the 2022 survey where a total of six CAH Level 1 subjects outperformed the sector. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

Chart 18: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – Meaningful for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
87	78	74	67
83.4%	83.0%	84.4%	84.1%

Percent ▬ Ranking

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
98	84	38	28
81.5%	81.7%	86.7%	85.3%

Percent ▬ Ranking

UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
72	72	90	76
91.6%	89.8%	88.3%	90.0%

Percent ▬ Ranking

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
85	49	111	45
84.9%	87.8%	81.3%	84.1%

Percent ▬ Ranking
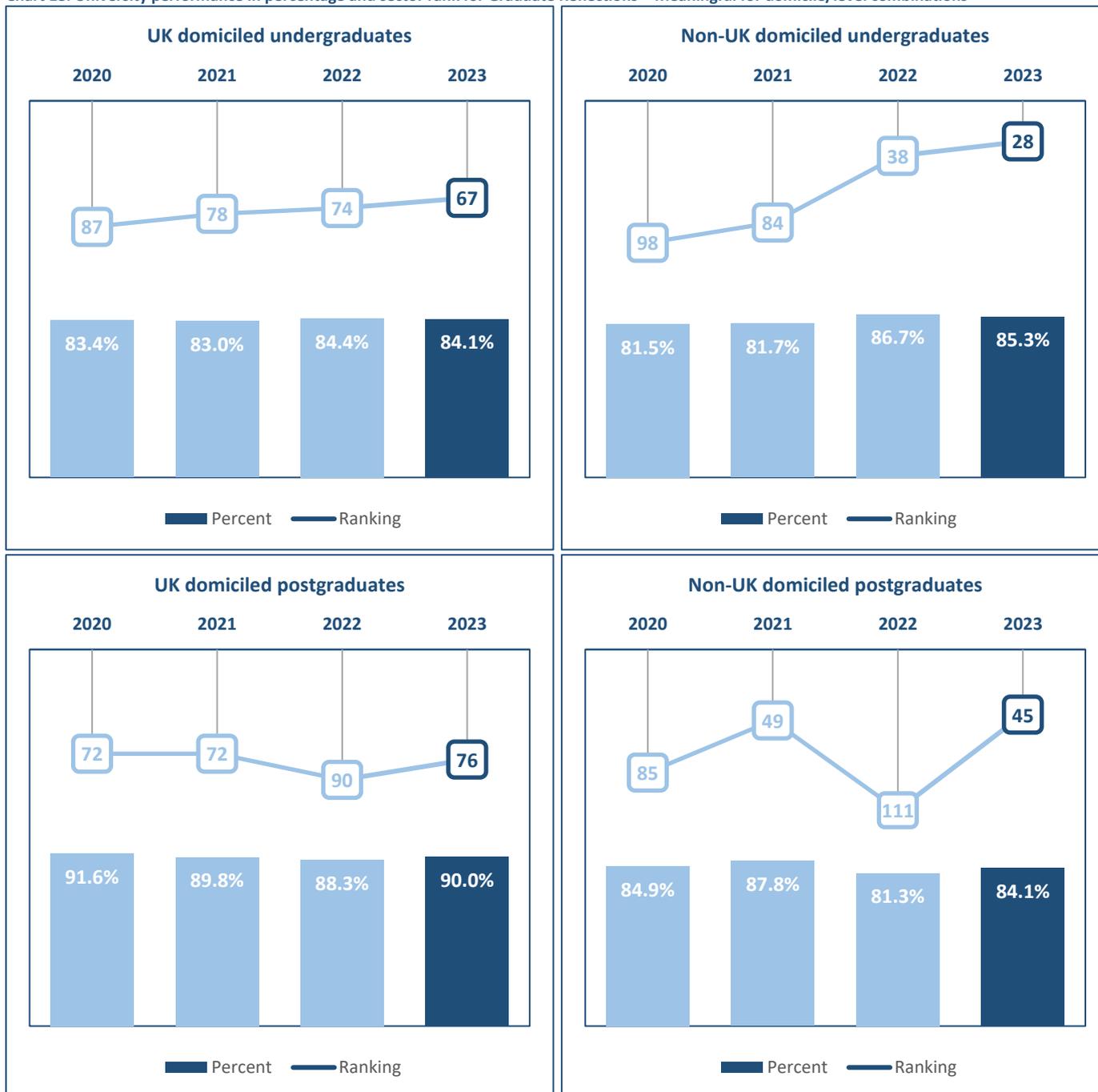
As can be seen in Chart 18 above the University has had an increase in positive responses for UK and non-UK domiciled postgraduates. The largest increase was seen for non-UK domiciled postgraduates with a rise of 2.8 percentage points. This results in a sector rank increase from 111th to 45th.

ALL LEAVERS

2020	2021	2022	2023

Ranking values: 80 (2020), 67 (2021), 87 (2022), 48 (2023)

Percent values: 85.4% (2020), 85.4% (2021), 85.1% (2022), 86.1% (2023)

Legend: Percent — Ranking
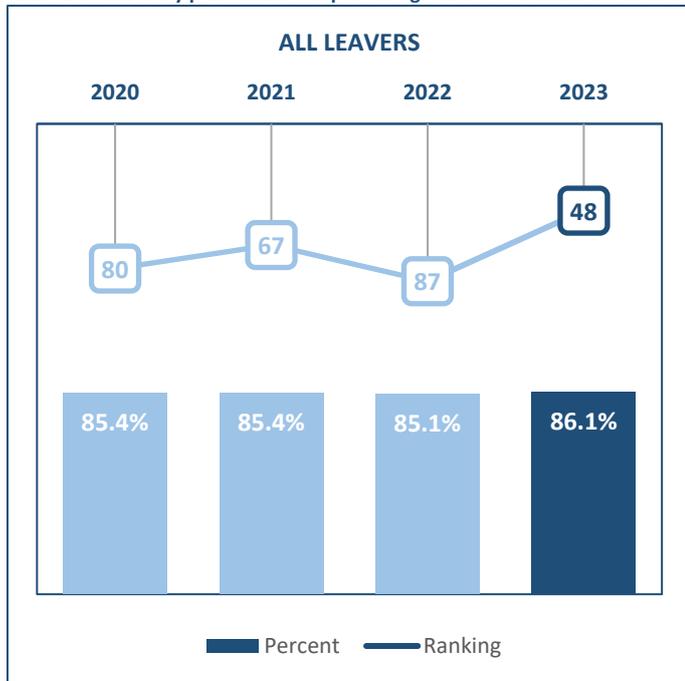
Overall, among all leavers, there is rise from 85.1% to 86.1% in terms of percentage who indicate that they agree that their current employment to be meaningful. This is reflected in an increase from 87th to 48th in UK rank for this metric.

Graduate Reflections – Skills

Graduate Reflections – Skills reflects the percentage of leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to have utilised skills learnt in their studies. Leavers who indicate that they strongly agree or agree with this statement are positive outcomes in this metric, whereas leavers who neither agree or disagree, or disagree or strongly disagree are negative outcomes for this metric.

Chart 20: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Graduate Reflections – Skills by domicile and level of study
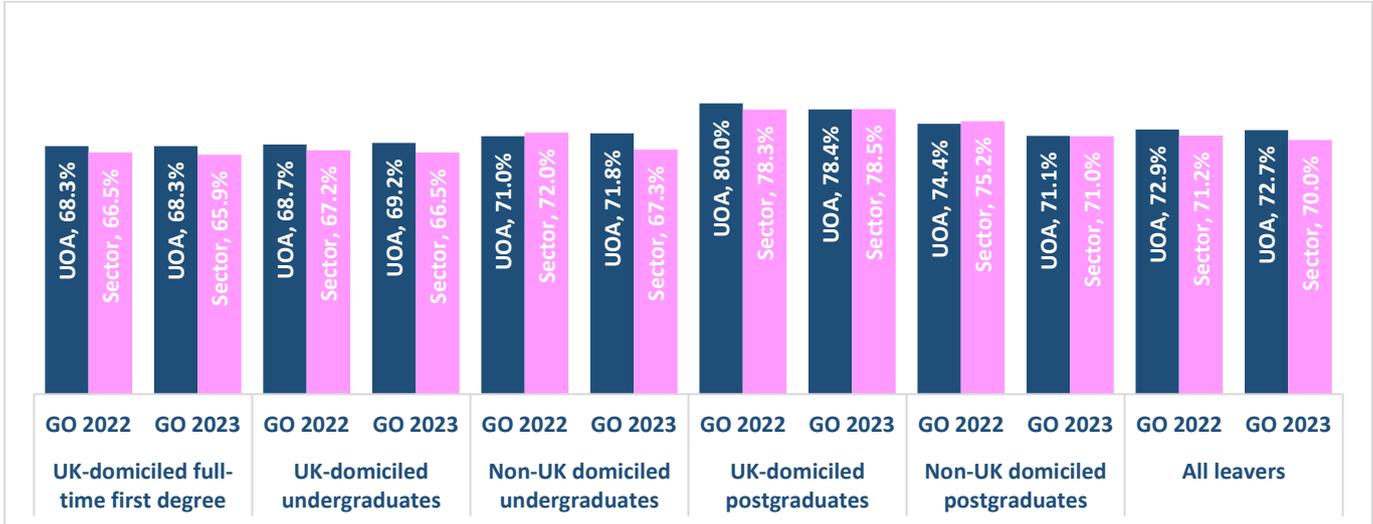
As can be seen in Chart 20 the University of Aberdeen has risen in percentage terms for UK and non-UK domiciled undergraduates who consider their employment activity to be utilising skills learnt in their studies. It can also be observed that the University has outperformed the sector in almost every domicile/level category with the exception of the slight drop in UK domiciled postgraduates.

Chart 21: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – Skills for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
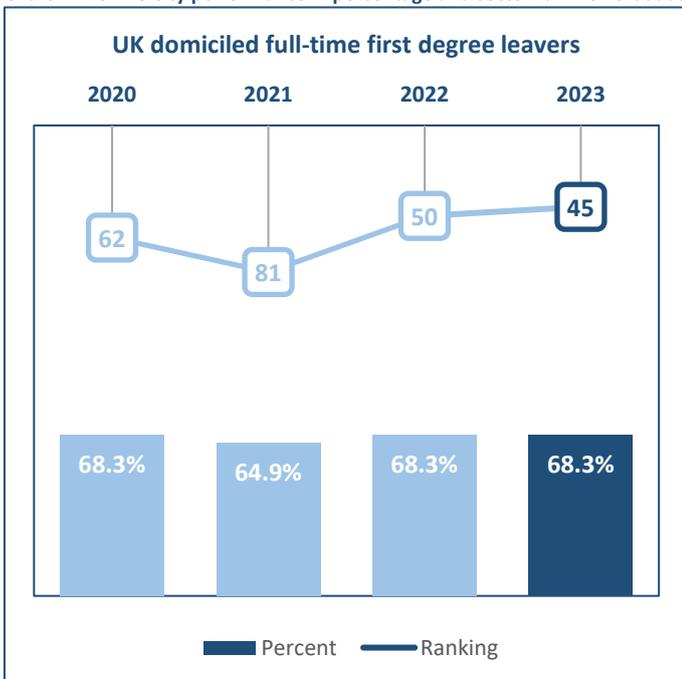
As can be seen in Chart 21 the University has remained at the same percentage for Graduate Reflections – Skills at 68.3%. However, there has been an increase of 5 places in UK rank from 50th in 2022 to 45th in 2023.

Table 6: University and Sector percentage by CAH Level 1 Subject in Graduate Reflections – Skills for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference	
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	107	99.1%	96.7%		2.4%
	GO 2023	76	94.7%	95.2%		-0.5%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	46	71.0%	87.6%		-16.6%
	GO 2023	25	65.1%	84.5%		-19.4%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	69	66.2%	65.0%		1.2%
	GO 2023	65	59.3%	62.8%		-3.4%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	42	56.1%	65.6%		-9.5%
	GO 2023	44	57.6%	65.1%		-7.5%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		69.8%		
	GO 2023	0		70.2%		
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	18	63.9%	62.4%		1.5%
	GO 2023	28	71.1%	62.0%		9.1%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	low population		58.4%		
	GO 2023	8	87.5%	57.5%		30.0%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	107	65.4%	62.1%		3.3%
	GO 2023	83	66.3%	62.1%		4.1%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	6	83.3%	68.8%		14.6%
	GO 2023	low population		67.8%		
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	low population		73.7%		
	GO 2023	low population		73.5%		
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	109	50.5%	58.2%		-7.7%
	GO 2023	79	59.2%	58.3%		0.9%
(16) Law	GO 2022	78	74.2%	63.3%		10.9%
	GO 2023	70	74.8%	64.0%		10.8%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	53	56.2%	61.6%		-5.4%
	GO 2023	41	64.6%	61.7%		2.9%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	47	60.2%	59.7%		0.5%
	GO 2023	35	55.4%	58.7%		-3.2%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	69	54.6%	54.6%		0.0%
	GO 2023	34	54.8%	54.8%		0.0%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	50	92.0%	82.2%		9.8%
	GO 2023	53	84.9%	81.8%		3.2%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	20	81.4%	60.2%		21.2%
	GO 2023	23	56.9%	60.7%		-3.8%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	57	63.8%	60.4%		3.4%
	GO 2023	19	59.0%	63.2%		-4.2%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	15	62.0%	54.5%		7.5%
	GO 2023	6	50.0%	57.8%		-7.8%

As can be seen in Table 6, the University of Aberdeen outperformed the sector in seven CAH Level 1 subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to of UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers available for employment who consider their current activity to have utilised skills learnt in their studies (names of subjects in brackets). This is a drop from the 2022 survey where a total of 11 CAH Level 1 subjects outperformed the sector. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

Chart 22: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Graduate Reflections – Skills for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ranking	59	79	56	41
Percent	68.7%	65.6%	68.7%	69.2%

Percent ■ Ranking ─

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ranking	106	68	68	33
Percent	71.0%	71.7%	71.0%	71.8%

Percent ■ Ranking ─

UK domiciled postgraduates

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ranking	77	83	48	67
Percent	80.0%	77.9%	80.0%	78.4%

Percent ■ Ranking ─

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ranking	94	92	72	68
Percent	74.4%	73.9%	74.4%	71.1%

Percent ■ Ranking ─

As can be seen in Chart 22, the University has risen in rank for Graduate Reflections – Skills for UK and non-UK domiciled undergraduates. The largest increase in rank can be seen for non-UK domiciled undergraduates from 68th in 2022 to 33rd in the 2023 Graduate Outcomes survey.

ALL LEAVERS

2020	2021	2022	2023
66	69	42	38
72.9%	71.2%	72.9%	72.7%

Percent — Ranking

Overall, among all leavers, there is a slight decrease from 72.9% to 72.7% in terms of percentage who indicate that they agree that their current employment utilises skills learnt in their studies. However, there is an increase in rank from 42nd to 38th in the UK.

Response Rate

The Response Rate measure is simply an indication of the percentage of the Graduate Outcomes eligible population of leavers from higher education that responded to the Graduate Outcomes survey. Responses considered to be partial are also included alongside those who completed the survey. This is when a respondent does not answer all applicable questions in the survey but does not necessarily deem their responses to be negative – for example, if a respondent answers all questions applicable for inclusion in a metric they will be assessed as positive/negative according to their response. Alternatively, if they have not responded to sufficient questions they will be excluded from that metric calculation.

Chart 23: University of Aberdeen performance against the sector for Response Rate by domicile and level of study
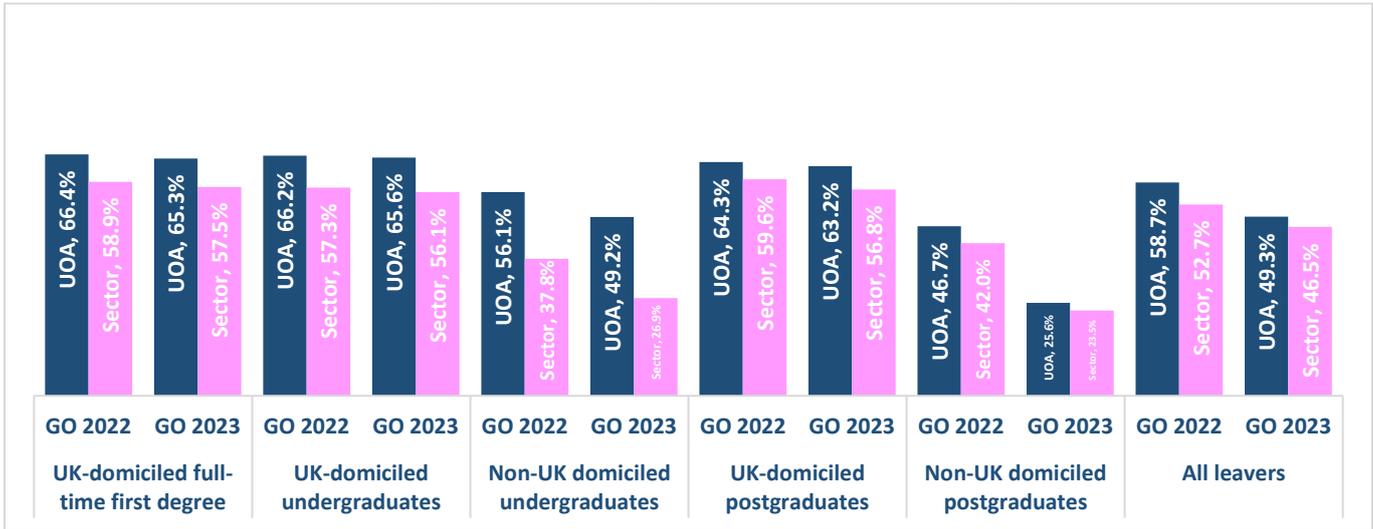
As can be seen in Chart 23 the University of Aberdeen has decreased in the response rate in Graduate Outcomes for every combination of domicile and level of study compared to 2022. It can also be observed that the University has a higher response rate than the sector in the Graduate Outcomes 2023 survey for each domicile/level combination.

Chart 24: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Response Rate for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers
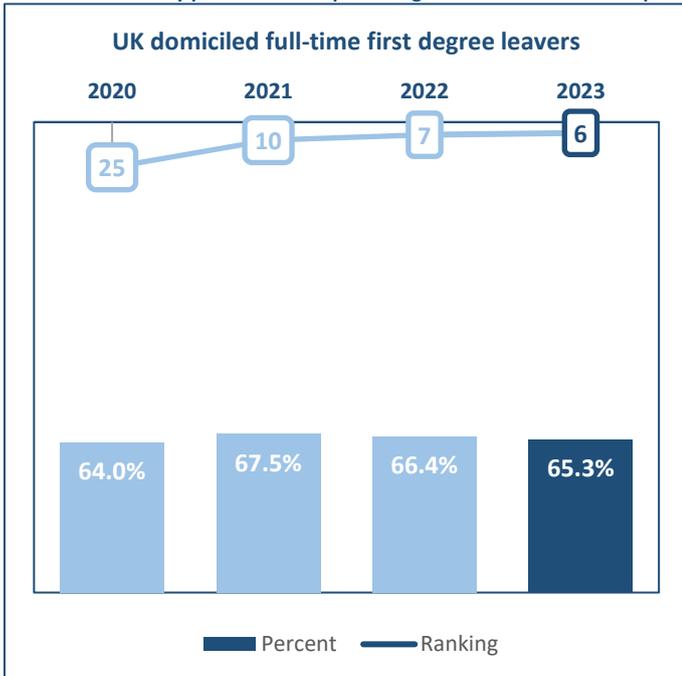
As can be seen in Chart 24, the University has decreased in the response rate for Graduate Outcomes from 66.4% in the 2022 survey to 65.3% in 2023. However, there is a ranking rise from 7th to 6th.

Table 7: University and Sector percentage by CAH Level 1 Subject for Response Rate for UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UOA Popn	UOA	Sector	Difference
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2022	169	64.5%	57.6%	6.9%
	GO 2023	147	63.3%	55.5%	7.7%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2022	66	77.4%	59.0%	18.4%
	GO 2023	42	72.6%	57.8%	14.8%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2022	122	64.6%	58.6%	6.0%
	GO 2023	106	68.8%	57.8%	10.9%
(04) Psychology	GO 2022	74	68.5%	59.6%	8.9%
	GO 2023	85	64.3%	58.4%	5.9%
(06) Agriculture, food and related studies	GO 2022	low population		62.7%	
	GO 2023	low population		63.7%	
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2022	36	63.4%	66.3%	-3.0%
	GO 2023	41	75.1%	65.0%	10.1%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2022	6	72.7%	66.1%	6.7%
	GO 2023	12	69.6%	63.0%	6.6%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2022	173	69.4%	66.8%	2.6%
	GO 2023	131	68.7%	66.3%	2.5%
(11) Computing	GO 2022	7	85.7%	63.5%	22.2%
	GO 2023	10	42.1%	62.2%	20.1%
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2022	8	66.7%	60.6%	6.0%
	GO 2023	low population		57.9%	
(15) Social sciences	GO 2022	187	66.8%	57.2%	9.6%
	GO 2023	145	64.1%	56.6%	7.5%
(16) Law	GO 2022	147	62.6%	54.9%	7.7%
	GO 2023	122	66.0%	53.5%	12.4%
(17) Business and management	GO 2022	96	62.8%	54.9%	7.9%
	GO 2023	73	67.1%	52.9%	14.2%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2022	82	61.0%	59.7%	1.3%
	GO 2023	71	59.3%	57.6%	1.6%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2022	102	74.4%	60.0%	14.4%
	GO 2023	61	65.5%	57.0%	8.4%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2022	99	55.6%	55.6%	0.0%
	GO 2023	96	62.5%	56.9%	5.6%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2022	34	65.2%	56.0%	9.2%
	GO 2023	45	57.9%	55.1%	2.9%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2022	88	73.6%	66.8%	6.8%
	GO 2023	32	65.5%	63.1%	2.4%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2022	26	69.7%	63.1%	6.5%
	GO 2023	11	71.2%	58.9%	12.3%

As can be seen in Table 7, the University of Aberdeen outperformed the sector in almost all the CAH Level 1 subjects in the 2023 survey with regards to of UK domiciled full-time first-degree leavers from higher education that responded to the Graduate Outcomes survey. Subjects with less than five respondents have been labelled "low population" in the table above and are excluded.

Chart 25: University performance in percentage and sector rank for Response Rate for domicile/level combinations

UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
17	4	6	3

| 64.0% | 67.2% | 66.2% | 65.6% |

Legend: Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled undergraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
19	7	4	7

| 52.6% | 55.5% | 56.1% | 49.2% |

Legend: Percent — Ranking

UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
108	28	20	11

| 52.0% | 61.5% | 64.3% | 63.2% |

Legend: Percent — Ranking

Non-UK domiciled postgraduates

2020	2021	2022	2023
85	75	47	38

| 33.5% | 39.7% | 46.7% | 25.6% |

Legend: Percent — Ranking

As can be seen in Chart 25, the University has decreased in Response Rate across each of the domicile and level of study combinations with the largest drop of 21.2 percentage points for non-UK postgraduates. Despite the decrease in scores, the University saw rises in UK rank for each of almost every category with the exception of non-UK domiciled undergraduates.

As could be expected given the decrease in response rate in the component categories, the response rate for all leavers decreases from 58.7% to 49.3%, with a decrease from 12th to 65th in terms of UK rank for response rate.

Future Analysis

This iteration of the report on Graduate Outcomes 2023 data reflects the initial analysis of this data. Future iterations of this report will contain additional analysis on Graduate Outcomes data in the following areas:

Demographics: Ethnicity, Age, Gender, Disability

League Tables: As league table data is shared with the University, this league table data will be added to confirm ranking for GO-based metrics at both an institutional and league table subject level

Please also note that a Microsoft Power BI dashboard on GO data is currently being updated with this year's results by the Data and Business Intelligence team within the Directorate of Planning.

Directorate of Planning and Governance

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 2021/22 full-time undergraduate non-continuation data as produced internally by the University.

This differs from the HESA non-continuation performance indicator, which is restricted to first year undergraduate entrants only, and is used as a metric in the Guardian University Guide and the Complete University Guide. The HESA non-continuation performance indicator is under review as part of a wider review of HESA performance indicators and has not been produced for 2023 as a result.

2. **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

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

3. **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

This paper is for information, discussion, and appropriate action planning at the relevant University committees.

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 2021/22 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

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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

28 February 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation (internal data) 2023 Report
Analysis by the Directorate of Planning

7th June 2023

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 low non-continuation rate is the overall aim for the University.

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 metrics in the Guardian University Guide and the Complete University Guide, which is also used for the School data files.

Please note that the academic year refers to the earlier academic year of comparison (e.g. 2021/22 data measures the proportion of 2021/22 undergraduates who are flagged as non-continuing for 2022/23).

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

Undergraduate Non-Continuation 2021/22
5.1% ⬆ (up from 3.2%)
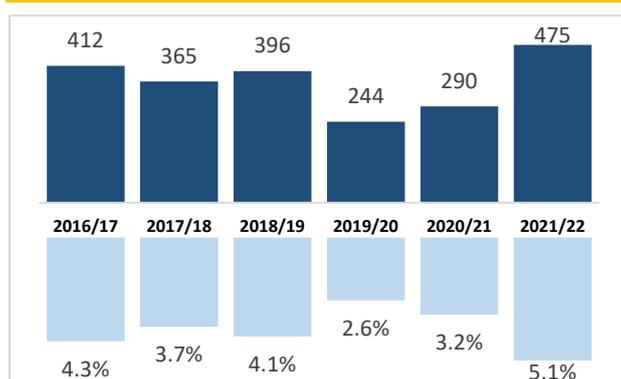
Chart 1: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2016/17 to 2021/22

Chart 1 shows the University of Aberdeen's non-continuation rate for 2021/22 is 5.1% (475 students), which represents a rise of 1.9% students from 2020/21's position of 3.2%.

This non-continuation rate is the highest observed between 2016/17 and 2021/22.

Chart 2: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by School

	BUS	DHPA	EDU	ENG	GEOSCI	LAW	LLMVC	MMSN	NCS	PSY	SBS	SOC SCI
Count	41	39	15	92	13	30	61	36	51	35	27	36
%	3.7%	7.2%	3.2%	12.8%	5.2%	2.8%	8.2%	1.9%	10.1%	4.9%	5.2%	4.9%
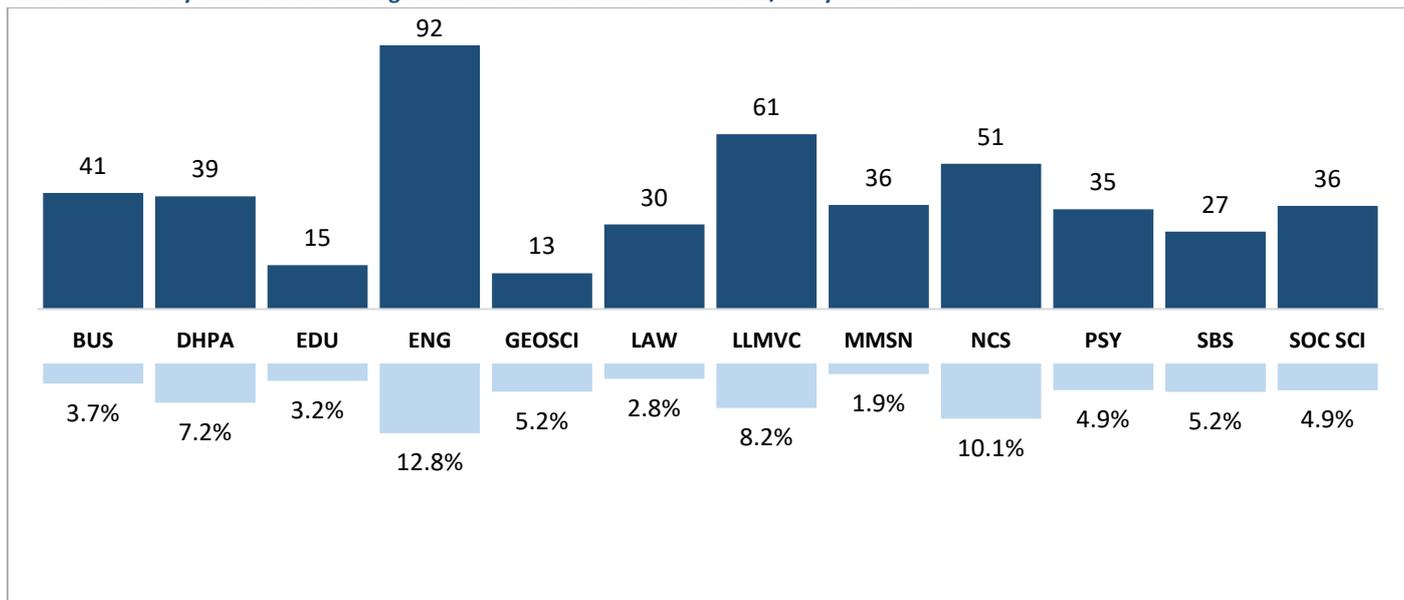
Chart 2 shows at a School level the highest undergraduate non-continuation rate for 2021/22 is observed to be in Engineering at 12.8% (92 students), followed by NCS at 10.1% (51 students). MMSN (1.9%) and Law (2.8%) have the lowest non-continuation rates for 2021/22.

When considering patterns across the previous 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 Law.

Chart 3: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by School
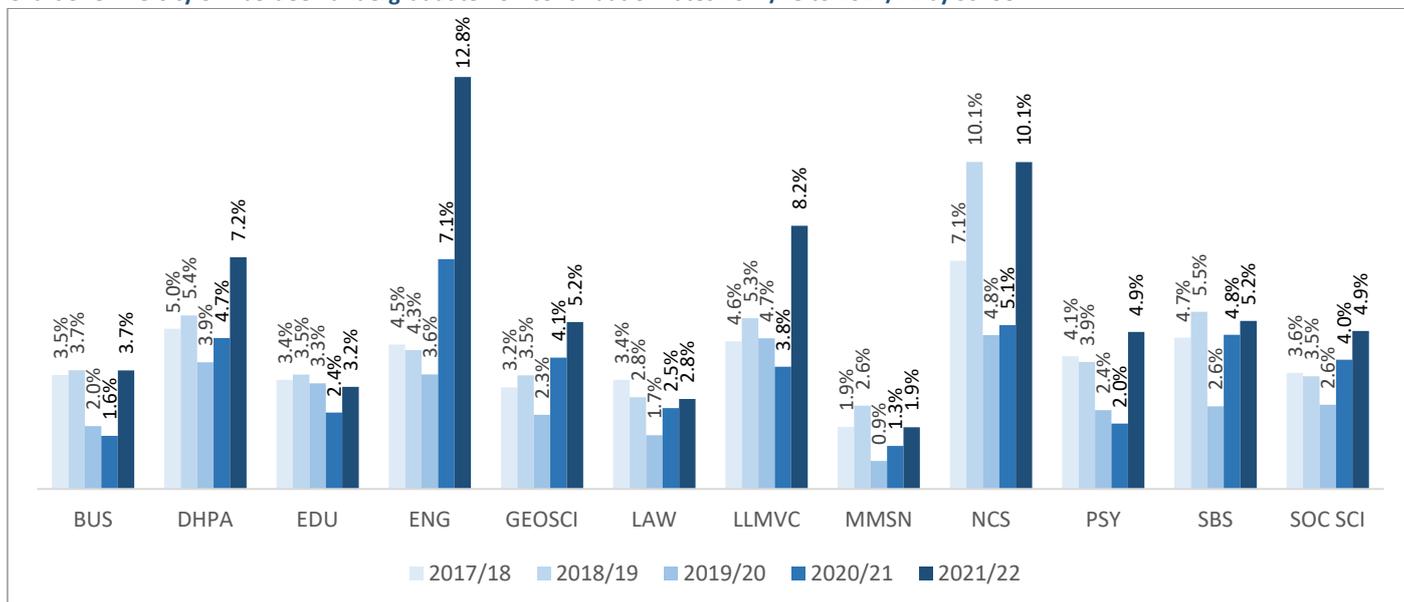
We can additionally observe that Engineering's current rate of 12.8% is juxtaposed against what had previously been a much lower and improving non-continuation rate. In addition to the rise in Engineering, there have also been rises for 2021/22 across all other eleven schools.

It can also be seen that there has been significant rise in non-continuation rates in NCS after 2019/20 and 2020/21 with a non-continuation rate of 10.1% for that School.

Chart 4: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by year of undergraduate study #1
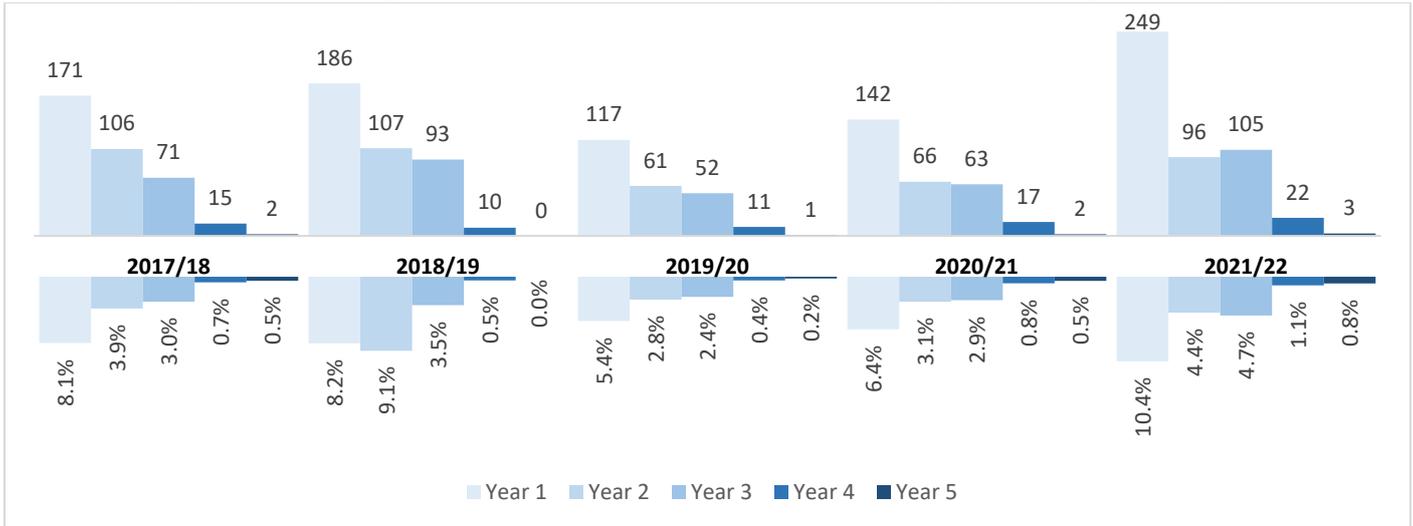
Chart 4 demonstrates the difference in non-continuation rates by year of programme for undergraduate study, with demonstrating that non-continuation rates generally improve with each subsequent programme year. For 2017/18 and 2018/19 the undergraduate non-continuation rate for Year 1 was over 8% for the institution and that contrasts sharply with a non-continuation rate of 0.5% and 0.0% for Year 4 in 2017/18 and 2018/19, respectively. There has been an improvement in Year 1 non-continuation rates thereafter to 5.4% for 2019/20 and 6.4% for 2020/21. However, there has been a significant increase for 2021/22 with the Year 1 non-continuation rate rising to 10.4%.

Chart 5: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by year of undergraduate study by School
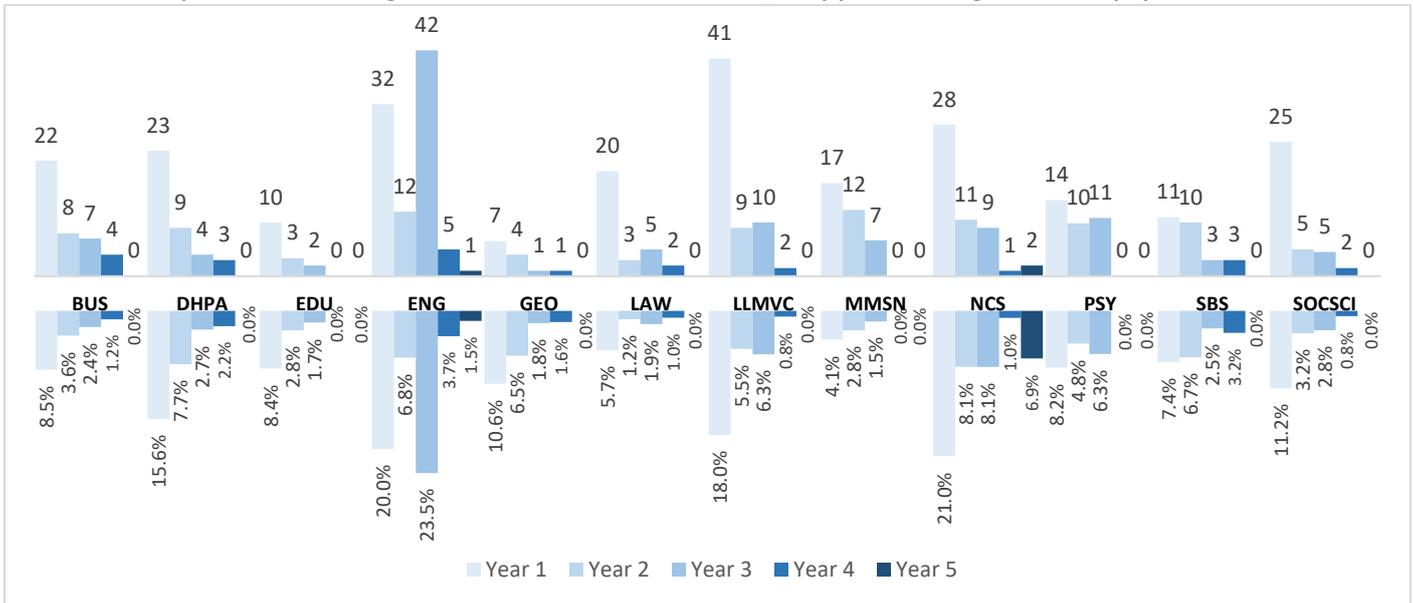
Chart 5 breaks down the 2021/22 non-continuation rates for year of undergraduate programme by School. The highest non-continuation rates for Year 1 students are found in DHPA, Engineering, Geosciences, LLMVC, NCS and Social Sciences – where the non-continuation rates near or exceed 10%. The highest non-continuation rate is in Engineering for Year 3 at 23.5%.

In contrast, the lowest Year 1 non-continuation rates can be found in MMSN at 4.1%, followed by Law at 5.7%.

University of Aberdeen: by domicile

Chart 6: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by student domicile
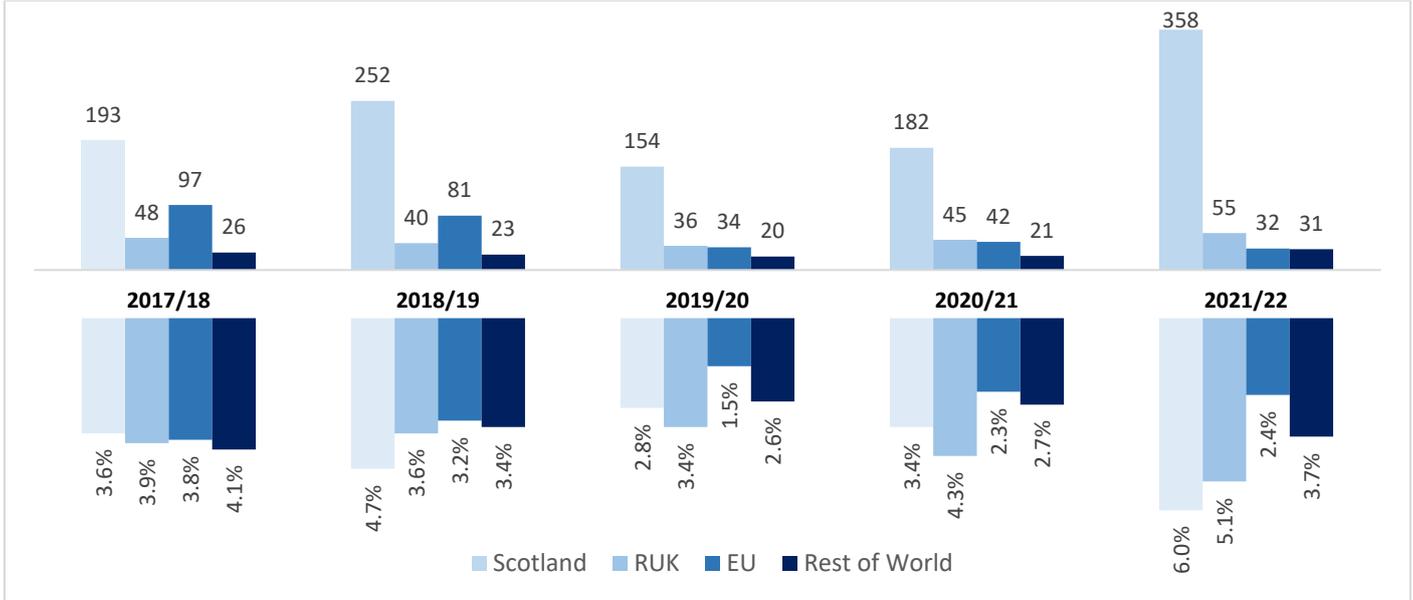
As can be seen in Chart 6, the non-continuation rates by domicile present a mixed picture, although for more recent years the non-continuation rate for students outwith the UK have generally lower non-continuation rates than their UK counterparts.

For 2020/21 and 2021/22, Scottish domiciled and rest of the UK students have had the highest non-continuation rates among the four categories of students, having risen to 6.0% and 5.1% for 2021/22, respectively.

Chart 7: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by student domicile by School
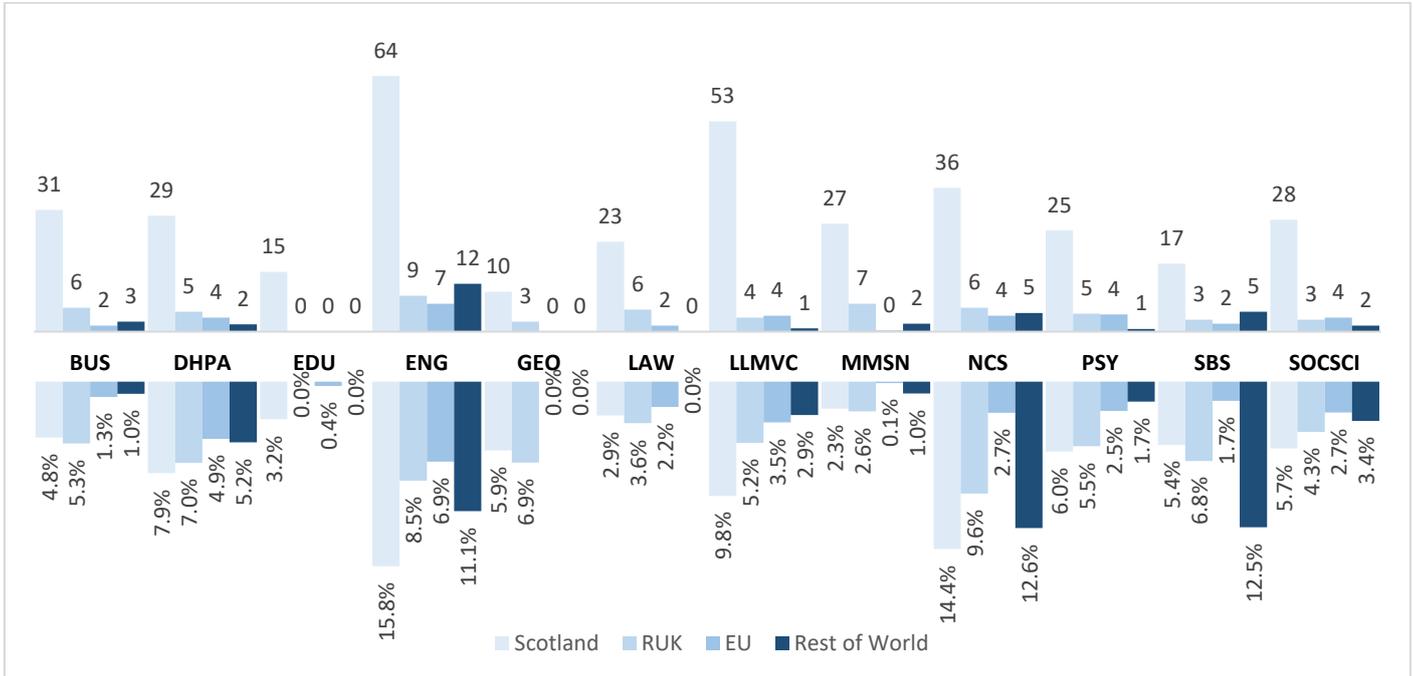
Chart 7 shows the variation between non-continuation rates with the highest non-continuation rates for Scottish-domiciled students in Engineering (15.8%) and NCS (14.4%). Cross-referencing this against historical data for Engineering shows that this rate is an outlier, compared to the previous three years.

The highest non-continuation rates for rest of the world students are in NCS at 12.6%, followed by SBS at 12.5%.

Chart 8: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by student gender
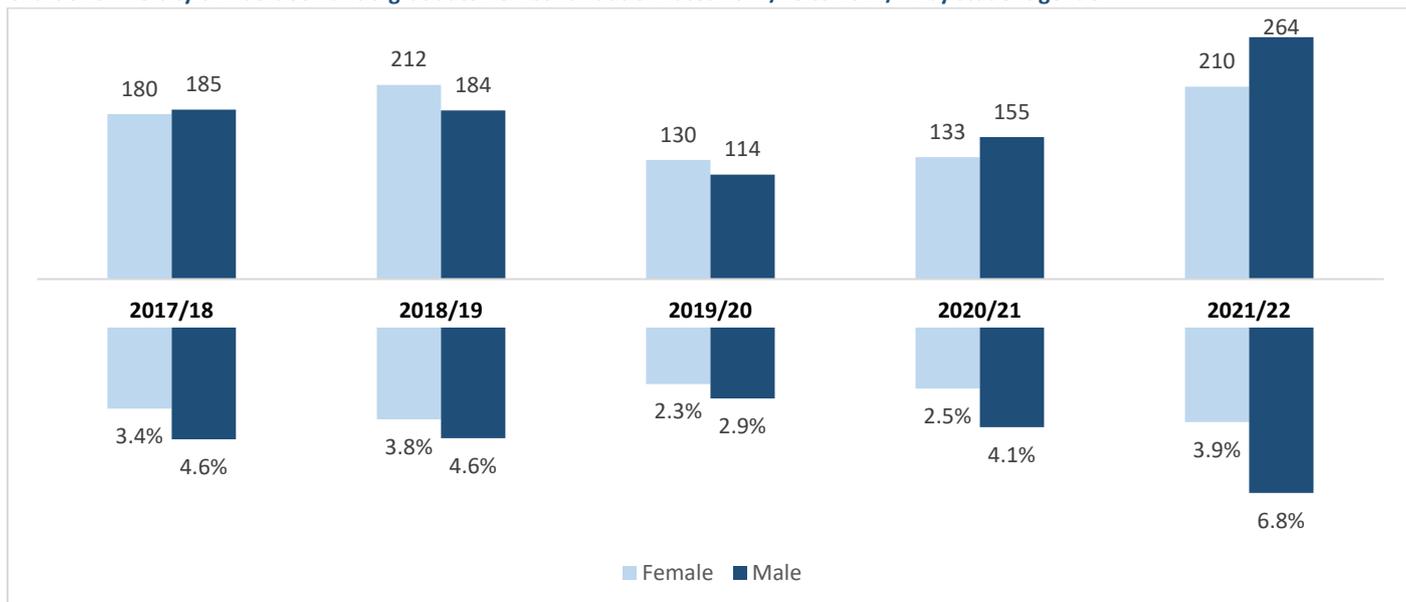
Chart 8 shows that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among male undergraduates than their female counterparts, with the 2021/22 gap of 2.9% the largest gap observed over the five years considered.

Chart 9: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by student gender by School
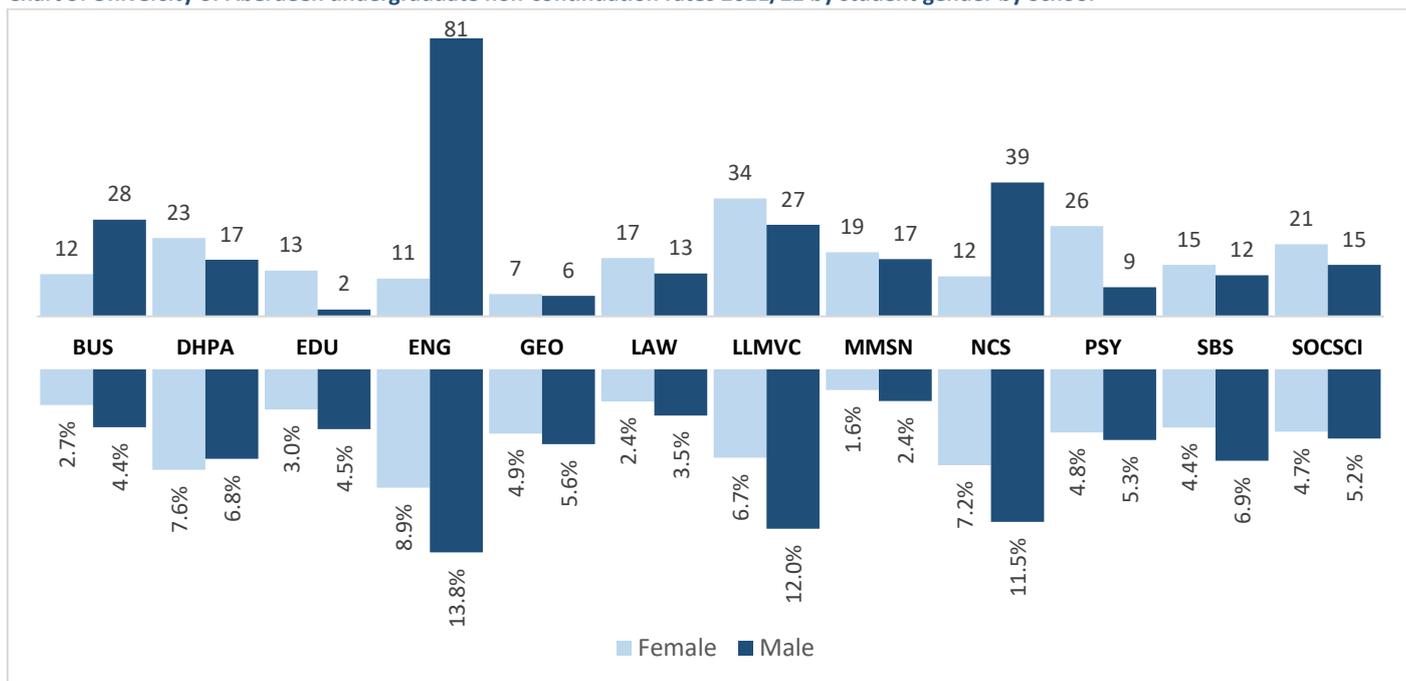
Chart 9 shows that the institutional pattern of female undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than male students is repeated across eleven of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in LLMVC where female undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 6.7% compared with a non-continuation rate of 12.0% for males – although it should be noted that the population of male undergraduates is much lower than female undergraduates in LLMVC.

One School reverses the institutional picture – with DHPA showing a slightly higher rate (7.6%) for female non-continuation.

Historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.

**Chart 10: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by student ethnicity #1**
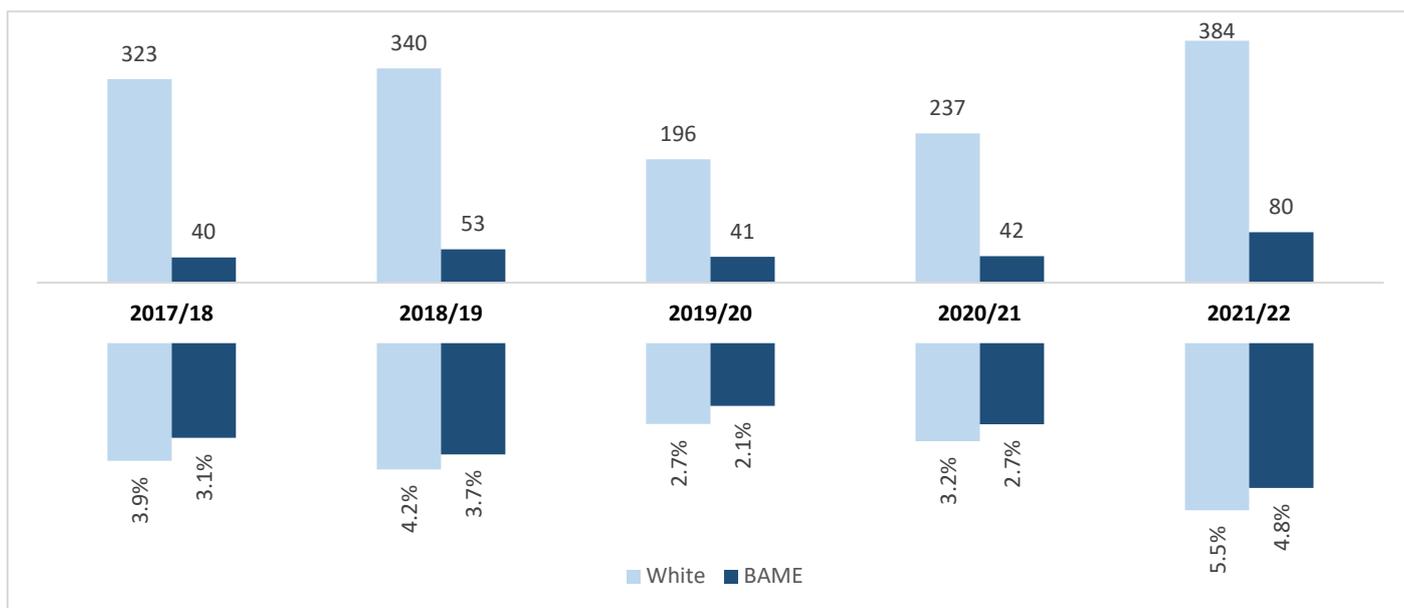
Charts 13 (above) and 14 (below) show that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among White undergraduates than their Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) counterparts, with gaps between 0.5-0.8% in each year.

Chart 11: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by student ethnicity
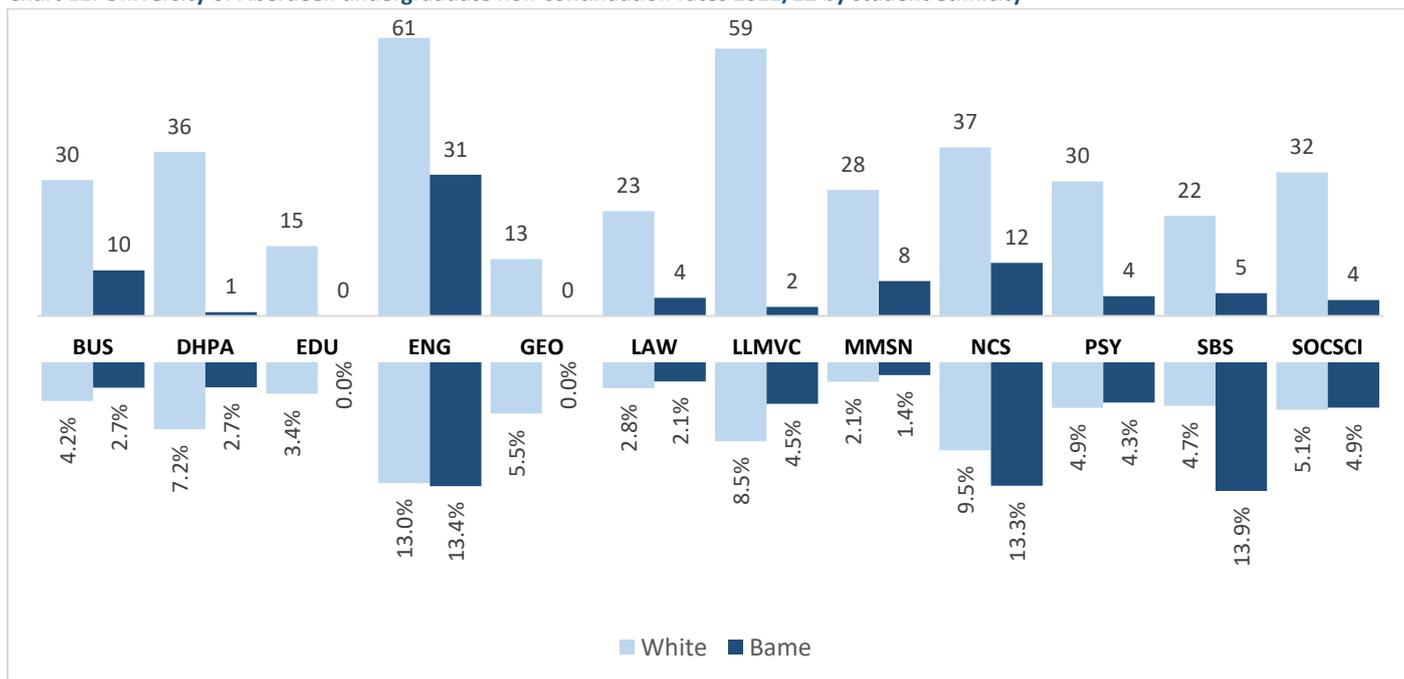
Chart 15 shows that the institutional pattern of BAME undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than White students is repeated across nine of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in Geosciences where BAME undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 0.0% compared with a non-continuation rate of 5.5% for White undergraduates.

Three Schools reverse the institutional picture – with Engineering, NCS 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 (five students from 27).

However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.

University of Aberdeen: by disability status

Chart 12: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2017/18 to 2021/22 by student disability status #1
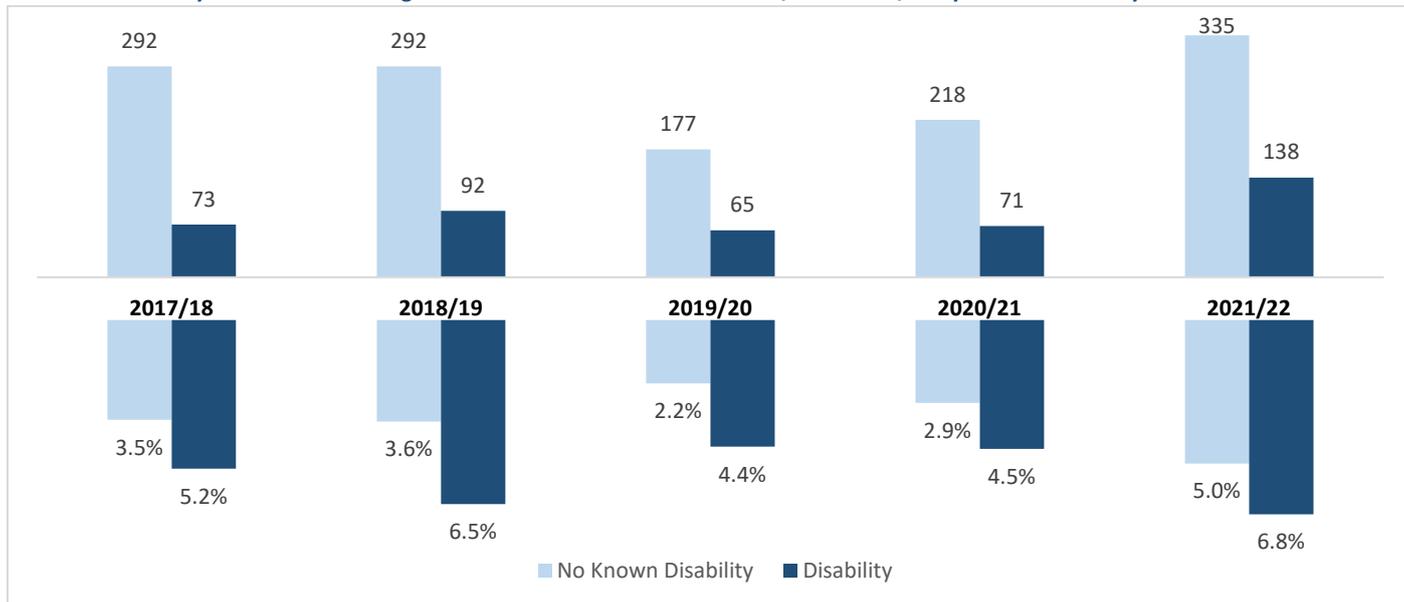
Chart 12 shows that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among undergraduates who indicate that they have a disability than their counterparts who do not declare any known disability, with gaps varying from year to year between 2.9% in 2018/19 and 1.8% in 2021/22.

Chart 13: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2021/22 by student disability status
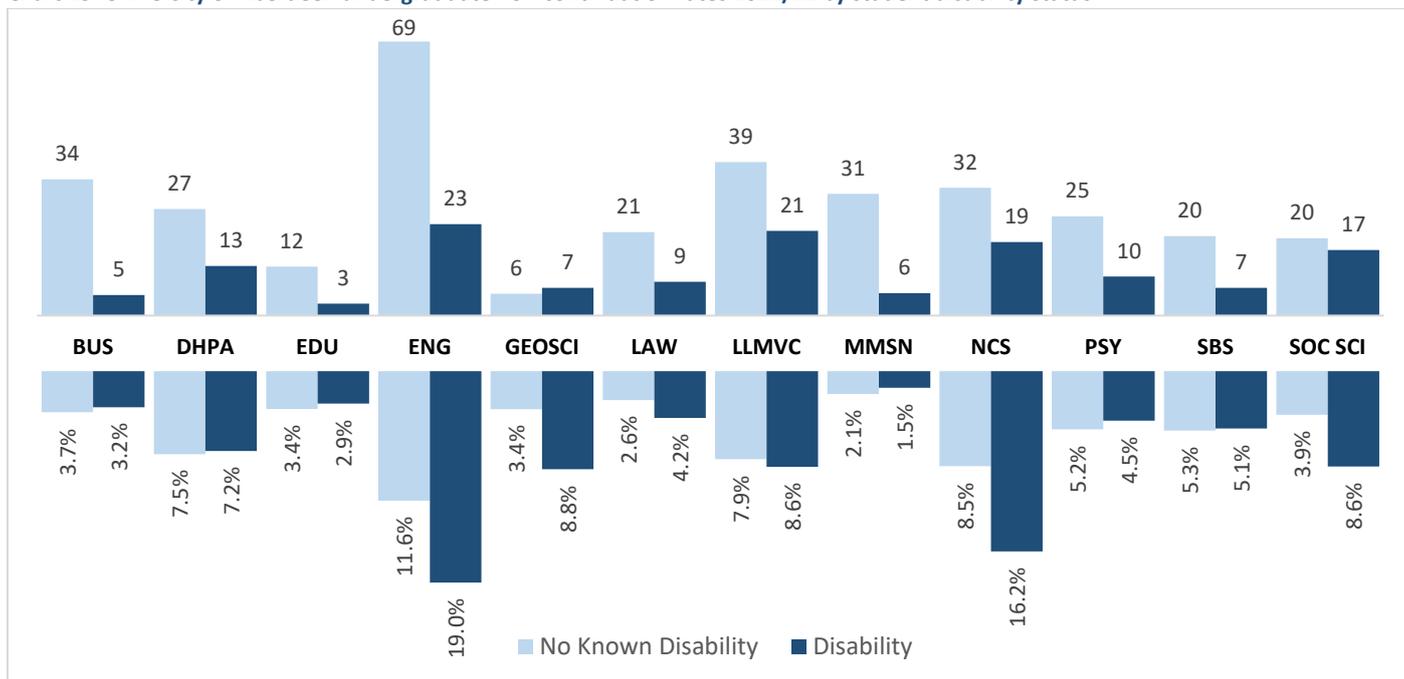
Chart 13 shows undergraduates who have no known disability having lower non-continuation rates than students with disability is repeated across six of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in NCS where non-disabled undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 8.5% compared with a non-continuation rate of 16.2% for disabled undergraduates. This is followed by the School of Engineering where non-disabled undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 11.6% compared with a non-continuation rate of 19% for disabled undergraduates.

Six Schools show disabled undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than non-disabled students, with gaps around 0.5% in each School.

However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.

Chart 14: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates by reason for non-continuation
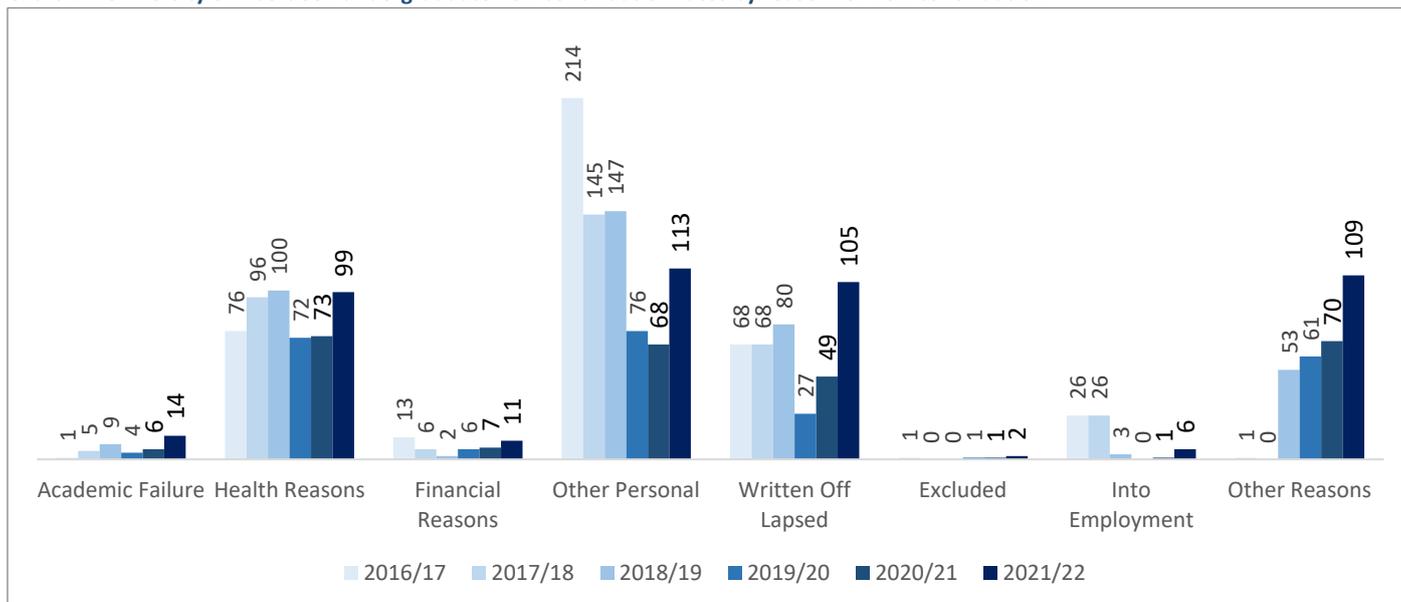
Chart 14 shows that generally, the most common reason for non-continuation is, in terms of magnitude, 'Other Personal', followed by 'Health Reasons' and 'Other Reasons'.

It is noted that numbers may not be identical as reported at the time due to changes against the individual student records in respect of the reason provided for non-continuation, although the number of changes will be small and make no material difference to any patterns.

Chart 15: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates by reason for non-continuation (%)
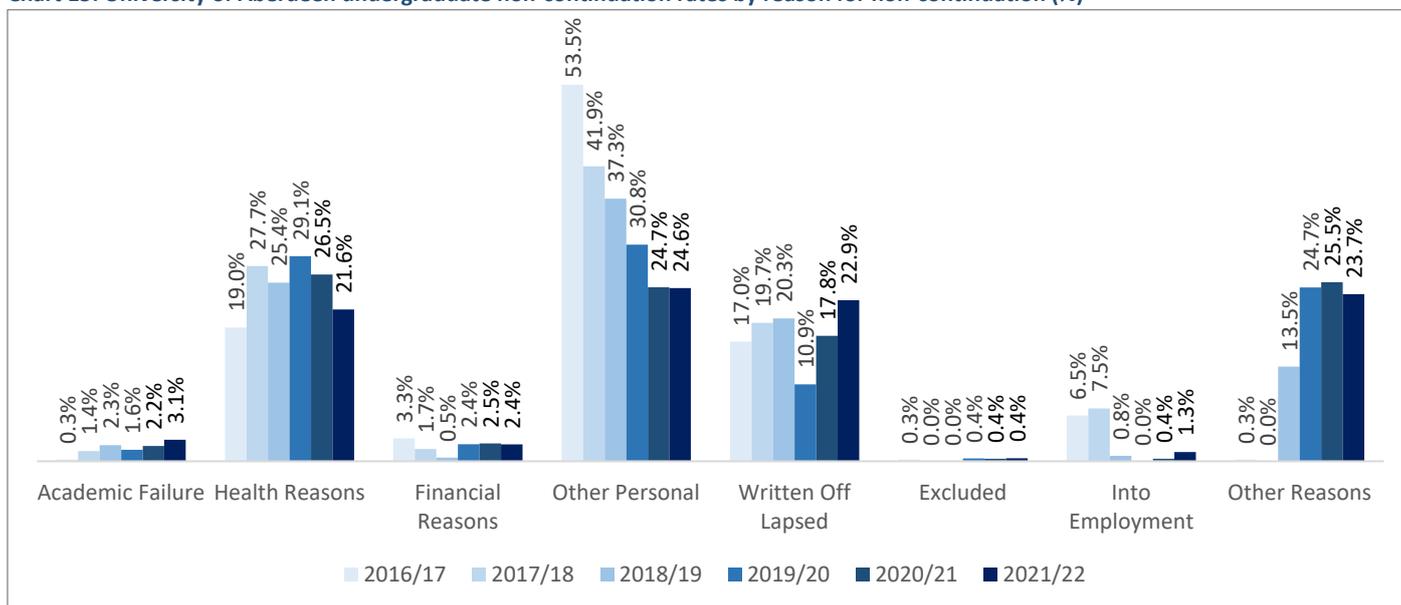
Chart 15 shows that 2021/22 had higher non-continuation rates than the previous year for all eight reasons for non-continuing students.

Lisa Gove, Planning Analyst
Directorate of Planning & Governance

Full-time Undergraduate Retention 2021/22
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	8788	2156	2086	2107	2072	367	5638	1031	1310	809	5163	3596	29	6949	1672	167	6643	2021	124
	Non-continuing	475	249	96	105	22	3	358	55	32	31	210	264	1	384	80	11	335	138	2
	% NC	5.1%	10.4%	4.4%	4.7%	1.1%	0.8%	6.0%	5.1%	2.4%	3.7%	3.9%	6.8%	3.3%	5.5%	4.8%	6.6%	5.0%	6.8%	1.6%
BUS	Continuing or Qualifying	1060	231	215	291	322	2	605	107	112	236	445	616	-	687	356	18	895	155	11
	Non-continuing	41	22	8	7	4	0	31	6	2	3	12	28	-	30	10	1	34	5	1
	% NC	3.7%	8.5%	3.6%	2.4%	1.2%	0.0%	4.8%	5.3%	1.3%	1.0%	2.7%	4.4%	-	4.2%	2.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.2%	8.5%
DHP	Continuing or Qualifying	508	126	108	143	132	0	340	67	68	33	278	228	3	463	30	15	333	162	13
	Non-continuing	39	23	9	4	3	-	29	5	4	2	23	17	0	36	1	3	27	13	0
	% NC	7.2%	15.6%	7.7%	2.7%	2.2%	-	7.9%	7.0%	4.9%	5.2%	7.6%	6.8%	0.0%	7.2%	2.7%	14.0%	7.5%	7.2%	0.0%
EDU	Continuing or Qualifying	468	110	114	115	129		450	7	9	3	426	42	-	453	15	1	362	103	3
	Non-continuing	15	10	3	2	0	-	15	0	0	0	13	2	-	15	0	0	12	3	0
	% NC	3.2%	8.4%	2.8%	1.7%	0.0%	-	3.2%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	3.0%	4.5%	-	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	2.9%	0.0%
ENG	Continuing or Qualifying	628	128	165	137	131	67	340	97	95	96	112	505	1	407	201	20	524	98	6
	Non-continuing	92	32	12	42	5	1	64	9	7	12	11	81	0	61	31	0	69	23	0
	% NC	12.8%	20.0%	6.8%	23.5%	3.7%	1.5%	15.8%	8.5%	6.9%	11.1%	8.9%	13.8%	0.0%	13.0%	13.4%	0.0%	11.6%	19.0%	0.0%
GEOSCI	Continuing or Qualifying	229	55	58	55	61	1	159	34	26	10	128	100	1	214	12	4	155	73	1
	Non-continuing	13	7	4	1	1	0	10	3	0	0	7	6	0	13	0	0	6	7	0
	% NC	5.2%	10.6%	6.5%	1.8%	1.6%	0.0%	5.9%	6.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	5.6%	0.0%	5.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	8.8%	0.0%
LAW	Continuing or Qualifying	1027	322	244	254	196	12	751	149	68	60	682	345	-	823	194	11	811	202	15
	Non-continuing	30	20	3	5	2	0	23	6	2	0	17	13	-	23	4	3	21	9	0
	% NC	2.8%	5.7%	1.2%	1.9%	1.0%	0.0%	2.9%	3.6%	2.2%	0.0%	2.4%	3.5%	-	2.8%	2.1%	23.8%	2.6%	4.2%	0.0%
LLMVC	Continuing or Qualifying	686	185	155	149	177	21	484	63	111	28	480	195	12	630	43	14	450	227	9
	Non-continuing	61	41	9	10	2	0	53	4	4	1	34	27	0	59	2	0	39	21	1
	% NC	8.2%	18.0%	5.5%	6.3%	0.8%	0.0%	9.8%	5.2%	3.5%	2.9%	6.7%	12.0%	0.0%	8.5%	4.5%	2.3%	7.9%	8.6%	9.8%
MMSN	Continuing or Qualifying	1862	401	424	428	387	222	1140	267	261	193	1176	680	5	1285	549	27	1461	374	26
	Non-continuing	36	17	12	7	0	0	27	7	0	2	19	17	1	28	8	1	31	6	0
	% NC	1.9%	4.1%	2.8%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	2.6%	0.1%	1.0%	1.6%	2.4%	16.7%	2.1%	1.4%	3.5%	2.1%	1.5%	0.0%
NCS	Continuing or Qualifying	449	106	119	102	96	27	215	57	146	33	150	300	-	353	76	20	345	96	9
	Non-continuing	51	28	11	9	1	2	36	6	4	5	12	39	-	37	12	2	32	19	0
	% NC	10.1%	21.0%	8.1%	8.1%	1.0%	6.9%	14.4%	9.6%	2.7%	12.6%	7.2%	11.5%	-	9.5%	13.3%	9.0%	8.5%	16.2%	0.0%
PSY	Continuing or Qualifying	680	158	197	162	160	3	397	77	168	38	526	151	3	571	95	14	454	211	16
	Non-continuing	35	14	10	11	0	0	25	5	4	1	26	9	0	30	4	1	25	10	0
	% NC	4.9%	8.2%	4.8%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%	5.5%	2.5%	1.7%	4.8%	5.3%	0.0%	4.9%	4.3%	6.7%	5.2%	4.5%	0.0%
SBS	Continuing or Qualifying	491	137	139	115	91	9	296	41	119	35	326	162	3	447	31	13	355	129	7
	Non-continuing	27	11	10	3	3	0	17	3	2	5	15	12	0	22	5	0	20	7	0
	% NC	5.2%	7.4%	6.7%	2.5%	3.2%	0.0%	5.4%	6.8%	1.7%	12.5%	4.4%	6.9%	0.0%	4.7%	13.9%	0.0%	5.3%	5.1%	0.0%
SOC SCI	Continuing or Qualifying	699	199	149	156	193	4	461	67	129	43	425	272	2	617	72	11	498	193	9
	Non-continuing	36	25	5	5	2	0	28	3	4	2	21	15	0	32	4	1	20	17	0
	% NC	4.9%	11.2%	3.2%	2.8%	0.8%	0.0%	5.7%	4.3%	2.7%	3.4%	4.7%	5.2%	0.0%	5.1%	4.9%	9.1%	3.9%	8.6%	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

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2023 REPORT

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This report provides an overview of the National Student Survey 2023 results for the University of Aberdeen.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	n/a	
Further consideration/ approval required by	SSEC UEC	21 August 29 August

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The paper is provided for information and discussion on the next steps.

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   The National Student Survey (NSS) is undertaken annually by students across the higher education sector. As such, it is published every year and is a rich and influential source of information about higher education. The survey is a key component of the quality assurance and wider regulatory landscape in UK higher education, and the results are also utilised by the three domestic league tables for ranking universities (Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide, Complete University Guide, and the Guardian University Guide). The survey is completed by final-year students at:

- All publicly funded higher education universities and colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland
- Further education colleges in England and Northern Ireland
- Further education institutions (FEIs) in Wales (with directly funded higher education students)

4.2   Following a review and subsequent consultation conducted by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies in 2020-2022, the themes, questions and responses in the NSS have changed for 2023.

4.3   The changes to the NSS for 2023 make direct comparison with previous years difficult as the suite of questions within the NSS have been changed with some questions removed and added. Further to this, questions have been reframed for NSS 2023 to move away from soliciting an agree/disagree style response. The previous five-point Likert response scale has been replaced by a new four-point item-specific response scale for most questions, essentially removing a neutral response option such as the 'neither agree nor disagree' from the Likert scale.

4.4   The seven themes ('scales') included in the NSS 2023 are as follows: Teaching on my course, Learning opportunities, Assessment and feedback, Academic support, Organisation and management, Learning resources, and Student voice. Additionally, there are standalone questions on the students' union, mental wellbeing services, freedom of expression (England only) and overall satisfaction (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only).

4.5   Previously the focus of NSS reporting has been around the overall satisfaction question. However, this question has only been retained within NSS 2023 for Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish institutions and therefore can no longer provide a full sector comparison. This measure has been retained as a secondary measure in this report.

4.6   This report will instead focus on an aggregated mean average of the positive response percentages across the 25 questions that are asked at all institutions across the United Kingdom, excluding the Student Union question. This closely mirrors the approach that the Complete University Guide has taken in its "Student Satisfaction" metric for previous iterations of the NSS. This aggregated mean average of the positive responses will be abbreviated to "positive response" for the purposes of this report. This also mirrors the approach taken by many other UK institutions in order to rank their UK positioning, although some variability is noted (e.g. University of Surrey additionally include the English institution-only question on freedom of expression in their calculation).

5.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS

5.1   The University's mean positive response score across the 25 UK-wide questions was 83.7% in NSS 2023, which represents a 4.6 percentage point rise from 2022, noting that direct comparison is limited due to the change in NSS methodology. This ranks the University at 10th in the UK when using the list of providers included in the latest iteration of the Guardian University Guide (published September 2022). In Scottish terms the University is ranked 4th, behind St Andrews, Abertay and Robert Gordon. St Andrews is ranked top across the United Kingdom for this measure.

5.2   The University is ranked in the UK Top-10 for four of the seven scales contained within the NSS: Teaching on my course (6th), Academic support (7th), Organisation and management (7th), and Learning resources (2nd).

5.3   In terms of individual questions, the University has been ranked at top of the UK for two questions: Question 19 ("The IT resources and facilities have supported my learning well") in Learning resources and Question 22 ("I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course") in Student voice.

5.4   The scales outwith the Top-10 are ranked as follows: Learning opportunities (16th), Assessment and feedback (65th), and Student voice (21st). Notwithstanding the methodology change, the Assessment and feedback scale has been consistently the poorest ranked NSS scale for the University in recent years.

5.5   In terms of individual questions, Question 13 ("Feedback on my work has been timely") included in the Assessment and feedback scale is the lowest ranked question for the University in NSS 2023 at 97th in the UK.

5.6   In terms of CAH Level 3 subjects in the NSS, the University is ranked top in the UK in the NSS for the following five subjects:

- Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology
- Business Studies
- History of Art, Architecture and Design
- Linguistics
- Philosophy

5.7   The University is ranked in the Top-10 nationally for a total of 21 subjects at CAH Level 3.

5.8   The highest level of positive response at School level is found in the School of Education (89.4%). The lowest level of positive response is in the School of Engineering (75.0%).

5.9   For the specific overall satisfaction question the University has a score of 84.7%, down from 85.6% last year. Although there can be no UK rank for this question due to its non-inclusion in

England, the University is ranked second across the 25 providers in the devolved nations of the UK for this question, with only St Andrews ranked higher.

5.10   At School level the highest level of overall satisfaction is found in the School of Social Science (89.0%). The lowest level is found in the School of Engineering (77.6%).

5.11   The response rate for NSS 2023 was 68%, which was up one percentage point from last year. This ranked the University 103rd in the sector for NSS response rate.

6.   NEXT STEPS

6.1   Headline communications were sent to Court, UMG and staff on Friday 11 August. The initial analytical report was sent to Schools on Monday 14 August.

6.2   The NSS Power BI Dashboard will be made available to users in the next week (aiming for 19 August).

6.3   The initial analytical report will be discussed by the NSS Steering Group, the Student Support and Experience Committee, and the University Education Committee during August.

6.4   An expanded analytical report will be completed by 31 August and will include: demographic analyses (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, IMD), qualitative analyses of students' comments, and the optional bank questions. This report will then be further discussed through the SSEC and UEC with institutional action(s) identified. [NB. In academic year 2022/23, assessment and feedback was an institutional action and it is likely that this will continue into 2023/24].

6.5   Schools will take forward action planning at School and discipline level using an updated template (which allows for all Education-related action planning in one overall action plan). School action plans will be completed by the end of October after which the Dean for Student Support and Experience will hold a Directors of Education forum to discuss results and good practice. The aim will be to share and disseminate good practice as appropriate. School Education Committees will provide School-level governance on progress with action plans, and SSEC will monitor updates on School action plans at university level.

6.6   The institutional action plan will be developed and finalised by the end of September with governance for its implementation and progress sitting with SSEC and UEC.

7.   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).

14 August 2023
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Closed*

National Student Survey 2023 Results (Initial Report)

Analysis by the Directorate of Planning & Governance

14ᵗʰ August 2023

Background & Outline Methodology

The National Student Survey (NSS) is undertaken annually by students across the higher education sector. As such, it is published every year and is a rich and influential source of information about higher education. The survey is a key component of the quality assurance and wider regulatory landscape in UK higher education, and the results are also utilised by the three domestic league tables for ranking universities (Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide, Complete University Guide, and the Guardian University Guide). The survey is completed by final-year students at:

- All publicly funded higher education universities and colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland
- Further education colleges in England and Northern Ireland
- Further education institutions (FEIs) in Wales (with directly funded higher education students)

For the purposes of ranking the University of Aberdeen in the UK higher education sector, the institutional-level rankings have considered 121 higher education institutions that are included in the most recent Guardian University Guide. Please note that although this list includes the University of Cambridge and University of Oxford, these two institutions do not ordinarily participate in the National Student Survey, effectively making the ranking out of 119 institutions historically (see Appendix for a full list). However, the University of Oxford has participated in NSS 2023, so the rankings for this year are now out of 120 institutions.

There are some changes for NSS 2023. Following a review and subsequent consultation conducted by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies in 2020-2022, the themes, questions and responses in the NSS have changed for 2023. The themes included for NSS 2023 are as follows:

- Teaching on my course
- Learning opportunities
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Student voice
- Mental wellbeing services
- Freedom of expression (England only)
- Overall Satisfaction (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland only)

Additionally, some questions have been added/removed from the above sections, and the questions have been reframed slightly to move away from soliciting an agree/disagree style response. The previous five-point Likert response scale has been replaced by a new four-point item-specific response scale for each question, essentially removing a neutral response option such as the 'neither agree nor disagree' from the Likert scale. The one exception to this has been for *Q28: Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course*, also known as the "Overall Satisfaction"

question, which remains unchanged from the previous version of NSS and retains the five-point Likert response scale. This question is asked at Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish institutions only.

For previous versions of our NSS reporting we have focused on the Overall Satisfaction question (was Q27 previously, now Q28) as the headline item for reports. However, with the change to this question only being asked for Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish institutions it has necessitated a refocussing of the headline item in order to provide a full sector comparison. This means that this report will instead focus on an aggregated mean average of the positive responses percentage across the 25 questions that are asked at all institutions across the United Kingdom excluding the Student Union question. This closely mirrors the approach that the Complete University Guide has taken in its "Student Satisfaction" metric for previous iterations of the NSS. This aggregated mean average of the positive responses will be abbreviated to "positive response" for the purposes of this report.

The responses to the Overall Satisfaction question will not be included in the aforementioned "positive response" measure as it is not asked across the UK. However, it is included in this report as a secondary focus as it allows continuity with previous versions of the National Student Survey and remains an important question in its own right.

This report contains the following sections and subdivisions:

Section One: Positive response
- NSS 2023: University of Aberdeen overall performance in positive response
- NSS 2023: University of Aberdeen positive response performance by Scale – Score and Rank
- NSS 2023: Institutional positive response score / rank / quartile by NSS Scale and Question
- NSS 2023: Positive response by Subject (CAH Level 3) against Sector – Scores
- NSS 2023: Positive response by Subject (CAH Level 3) against Sector – Rank
- NSS 2023: Positive response by University of Aberdeen School

Section Two: Overall satisfaction
- NSS 2023: University of Aberdeen overall performance in overall satisfaction
- NSS 2023: Overall satisfaction by University of Aberdeen School

Section Three: Response rates
- NSS 2023: Response rates

In addition to the mandatory set of questions in the core NSS survey, universities also have the option to choose up to six banks of optional questions and may include up to two additional questions specific to the provider. This year the University chose the optional six bank question themes as follows:

- B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)
- B7. Course Delivery
- B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities
- B15. Employability and skills
- B16. Environmental sustainability
- B17. Student safety

Further analysis on the additional questions above will be included in the expanded report.

NSS 2023: University of Aberdeen overall performance in positive response

National Student Survey 2023 Positive Response

'Positive response' is the average of positive responses across all UK-wide questions in the NSS.

Positive Response 83.7% ▲ (up 4.6 pp from 2022)

UK Rank 10th ▼ (-3 places)

Scottish Rank: 4th (-2 places)

Year	Positive Response	Positive Response (UK Rank)	Positive Response (Scottish Rank)
2023	**83.7**	**10th**	**4th**
2022	79.1	7th	2nd
difference	4.6	3	2
movement	▲	▼	▼

Table 1: University of Aberdeen performance in the National Student Survey 2023 for positive response compared with 2022.

The University of Aberdeen's score for positive response has risen by 4.6 percentage points from the 2022 position (*see table 1*), although it should be noted that this has been based on a new set of questions in 2023, so not directly comparable. The University has fallen from a UK rank of 7th to 10th in 2023 out of 120* institutions (based on the 121 institutions listed in the Guardian University Guide 2023, not including Cambridge who did not participate in the NSS). The University moved from a rank of 2nd to a rank of 4th for positive response within Scotland.

Previously we had framed the University performance around an agreed list of 124 universities which commonly featured in domestic league tables. With the changes to the NSS this year we have instead opted to use the most recently available list of institutions ranked in the Guardian University Guide against which to rank the University. Had we continued to use the list of 124 institutions we would have ranked 13th in the UK for this measure.

Chart 1: University of Aberdeen performance for NSS positive response (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen scored the greatest positive response of the past five years at 83.7% in 2023 (*see chart 1*). This was a 4.6% increase from 2022 and a 2.9% increase from the previous maximum of 80.8% in 2019.

Additionally, a 10th place rank in 2023 was a three-place decrease from the previous year but the second highest rank of the past five years.

Table 2: University of Aberdeen performance across NSS Scales 01 to 07 in 2023 compared to 2022.

Year	Scale 01: Teaching on my course	Scale 02: Learning Opportunities	Scale 03: Assessment and Feedback	Scale 04: Academic Support	Scale 05: Organisation & management	Scale 06: Learning resources	Scale 07: Student Voice
2023 PR	**89.5**	**84.4**	**77.1**	**89.2**	**82.3**	**91.6**	**76.3**
2022 % agree	85.8	81.7	69.8	80.4	80.2	86.4	74.5
difference	3.8	2.7	7.3	8.9	2.1	5.2	1.8
movement	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
2023 rank	**6**	**16**	**65**	**7**	**7**	**2**	**21**
2022 rank	4	16	55	6	5	8	9
difference	-2	0	-10	-1	-2	6	-12
movement	▼	■	▼	▼	▼	▲	▼

The University of Aberdeen was ranked inside the UK Top-10 for four of the seven scales in NSS 2023 – Teaching on my course (6th), Academic Support (7th), Organisation & management (7th), and Learning resources (2nd).

Positive response scores increased across all seven NSS scales for the University of Aberdeen between 2022 and 2023 (*see table 2*). The greatest rise was for Scale 04 (Academic Support) at 8.9 percentage points.

Rank, however, increased for only one of the seven NSS scales (Learning Resources) for the University of Aberdeen. Aberdeen decreased in rank for five of the seven scales. The largest decrease in rank was Scale 07 (Student Voice) with 13 places.

Note: Some caution is advised on making time trend assumptions with this data as the changes for NSS 2023 do not make the data directly comparable to previous years.

Scale 01: Teaching on My Course
Based on student responses to questions 1 to 4:

1. Staff are good at explaining things, 2. Staff have made the subject interesting, 3. The course is intellectually stimulating, and 4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.

Chart 2: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 01: TEACHING ON MY COURSE in NSS (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen rank for the Teaching on My Course scale within NSS has been variable over the last five-year period (*see chart 2*). In 2023, the University increased in score by 3.7 percentage points from 85.8% to 89.5%.

Despite the increase in score for Teaching on My Course, the University has dropped two places from 4th to 6th.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 3rd for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 02: Learning Opportunities
Based on student responses to questions 5 to 9:

5. My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth, 6. My course introduced subjects and skills that builds on what I have already learned, 7. My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics, 8. My course has the right balance of directed and independent study, and 9. My course has developed my knowledge and skills that I will need for my future.

Chart 3: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 02: LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES in NSS (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen's positive response score has been consistently in the low 80s from 2019 to 2023 (*see chart 3*). In 2023, there was an increase in score for Learning Opportunities from 81.7% to 84.4% - a rise of 2.7 percentage points.

The institutional rank for the Learning Opportunities scale had previously been declining for several years with Aberdeen falling to 102nd in 2020. However, the University of Aberdeen has increased for this scale since this. The University of Aberdeen have remained 16th for 2023.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 5th for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 03: Assessment and Feedback

Based on student responses to questions 10 to 14:

10. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance, 11. Marking and assessment has been fair, 12. Assessments have allowed me to demonstrate what I have learned. 13, Feedback on my work has been timely, and 14. Feedback helps me improve my work.

Chart 4: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 03: ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK in NSS (2019-2023)

There was a rise of 7.3 percentage points from 69.8% in 2022 to a 77.1% in 2023 (*see chart 4*).

In recent years, the University of Aberdeen ranking for the Assessment & Feedback scale has remained consistently low before there was a significant rise to 55th in the sector in 2022. However, in 2023 the rank decreased ten places from 55th to 65th despite the rise in positive response score.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 7th for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 04: Academic Support

Based on student responses to questions 15 to 16:

15. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to and 16. Teaching staff have supported my learning.

Chart 5: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 04: ACADEMIC SUPPORT in NSS (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen's ranking for the Academic Support scale in the NSS has been generally rising over the last five years, despite a dip in 2020 (*see chart 5*). The University of Aberdeen ranked 7th in the UK in 2023, a decrease in ranking of one place, compared with 2022. Additionally, positive response score increased by 8.8 percentage points to 89.2%.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 3rd for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 05: Organisation and Management

Based on student responses to questions 17 to 18:

17. The course is well organised and running smoothly and 18. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.

Chart 6: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 05: ORGANISATION & MANAGEMENT in NSS (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen's rank for the Organisation & Management scale has been consistently high across the five-year period and remains in the top-10 for the fourth consecutive year, ranking 7th which is a decrease of 2 places in rank from 2022 (*see chart 6*).

Aberdeen's score has risen by 2.1 percentage points from 2022 to 2023, the highest score of the latest five years.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 3rd for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 06: Learning Resources

Based on student responses to questions 19 to 21:

19. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well, 20. The library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well, and 21. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to.

Chart 7: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 06: LEARNING RESOURCES in NSS (2019-2023)

In terms of scoring, the University of Aberdeen has remained fairly consistent, although there was a drop in score by almost ten percentage points for positive score in 2021 (*see chart 7*). An increase of 5.2 percentage points for our latest year has helped drive our rank to its highest position in the five-year period.

The University of Aberdeen has performed exceptionally well in ranking for the Learning Resources scale within the NSS in recent years. The University achieved its highest position of 2nd place for the latest NSS results.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 1st for this scale in the Scottish sector.

Scale 07: Student Voice
based on student responses to questions 23 to 25:

22. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course, 23. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course, and 24. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.

Chart 8: University of Aberdeen performance in SCALE 07: STUDENT VOICE in NSS (2019-2023)

The University has achieved its highest score in Student Voice over the five-year period (*see chart 8*). There has been a rise of 1.8 percentage points from 74.5% in 2022 to 76.3% in this year's release.

Despite a rise in score, the University has dropped 15 places in UK rank from 9th to 21st. This has been the largest drop in rank over the seven NSS scales.

The University of Aberdeen ranked 5th for this scale in the Scottish sector.

NSS 2023: Score / Rank / Quartile by NSS Scale and Question

Table 3: University of Aberdeen performance across NSS Scales and Questions by Score and Rank/Quartile

Question	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	UK Rank Change	% Agree	Quartile
Scale 1: The teaching on my course	**6**	**4**	**-2** ▼	**89.5**	**Q1**
1. How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	15	4	-11 ▼	93.4	Q1
2. How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?	14	10	-4 ▼	85.5	Q1
3. How often is the course intellectually stimulating?	8	6	-2 ▼	90.5	Q1
4. How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?	9	11	2 ▲	88.4	Q1
Scale 2: Learning opportunities	**16**	**16**	**0** ■	**84.4**	**Q1**
5. To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	14	12	-2 ▼	85.7	Q1
6. How well does your course introduce subjects … on what you have already learned?	7	new	-	87.9	Q1
7. To what extent have you had the chance … ideas from different topics?	30	20	-10 ▼	83.9	Q1
8. To what extent does your course … balance of directed and independent study?	18	new	-	80.8	Q1
9. How well has your course … skills that you think you will need for your future?	25	new	-	83.9	Q1
Scale 3: Assessment and feedback	**65**	**55**	**-10** ▼	**77.1**	**Q3**
10. How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	46	61	15	78.1	Q2
11. How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?	18	7	-11 ▼	84.6	Q1
12. How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	50	new	-	81.6	Q2
13. How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	97	80	-17 ▼	72.6	Q4
14. How often does feedback help you to improve your work?	78	new	-	68.8	Q3
Scale 4: Academic support	**7**	**6**	**-1** ▼	**89.2**	**Q1**
15. How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	8	3	-5 ▼	89.9	Q1
16. How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	11	new	-	88.6	Q1
Scale 5: Organisation and management	**7**	**5**	**-2** ▼	**82.3**	**Q1**
17. How well organised is your course?	9	10	1 ▲	82.3	Q1
18. How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?	7	4	-3 ▼	82.0	Q1
Scale 6: Learning resources	**2**	**8**	**6** ▲	**91.6**	**Q1**
19. How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	1	15	14 ▲	90.8	Q1
20. How well have the library resources … supported your learning?	5	7	2 ▲	93.2	Q1
21. How easy is it to access subject specific resources … when you need them?	8	7	-1 ▼	90.5	Q1
Scale 7: Student voice	**21**	**9**	**-12** ▼	**76.3**	**Q1**
22. To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?	1	1	0 ■	89.2	Q1
23. To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?	12	10	-2 ▼	79.7	Q1
24. How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?	64	37	-27 ▼	60.0	Q3
26. How well communicated was information about … mental wellbeing support services?	12	new	-	81.6	Q1
Positive Response	**10**	**7**	**-3** ▼	**83.7**	**Q1**
25. How well does the students' union … represent students' academic interests?	93	93	0 ■	68.4	Q4
28. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course. ***	2	3	1 ▲	84.7	Q1

*Note: ***Q28 only applicable in 2023 to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland*

Note: Some caution is advised on making time trend assumptions with this data as the changes for NSS 2023 do not make the data directly comparable to previous years.

Across the 25 total questions counted within the NSS 2023 positive response calculation, four had improved in UK rank since the previous year – Q4, Q17, Q19 and Q20 (*see table 3*). Similarly, of the seven total scales, Learning Resources increased in rank by six places.

Twelve questions decreased in rank, resulting in the greatest negative rank change of 27 places in 2023 for question 24 (on feedback from students), placing it at 64th of 120 ranked institutions.

Questions 13 (timely feedback) and 14 (impact of feedback on work) ranked 97th and 78th respectively, making them the lowest ranking questions in the main part of the survey. The Assessment and Feedback scale consequently ranked lowest of all University of Aberdeen scales at 65th in the UK for 2023.

At the base of table 3 we have additionally included Question 25 on the students' union and Question 28 on the overall satisfaction, the latter only being asked in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In regards to the student's union and how well it represents students interest, the University remained in 93rd place. Overall student satisfaction increased by one place in 2023 to 2nd place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The missing question (27) on freedom of expression is only applicable to English universities.

This section provides a more detailed analysis of individual subject performance in the NSS. Subjects are measured at different levels, known as the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH). This data is provided by HESA and determines how degree programmes are categorised into distinct subject groupings. Based on these groupings it is possible to disaggregate the University's score for each metric to subject-level. For the purposes of this report, subjects have been analysed at the more detailed CAH level 3. This section utilises the new positive response measure across the UK-wide questions in the NSS, excluding the students' union question.

Chart 9: University of Aberdeen performance in positive response measure against Sector across the NSS CAH Level 3 Subjects 2023

Subject	Score
University of Aberdeen	3.7
Accounting	3.2
anatomy, physiology and pathology	11.7
anthropology	10.0
biology (non-specific)	7.9
biomedical sciences (non-specific)	9.2
building	-5.4
business studies	11.6
chemical, process and energy engineering	12.7
cinematics and photography	1.5
civil engineering	-5.1
computer science	3.8
creative writing	7.3
earth sciences	3.5
economics	0.0
education	6.0
electrical and electronic engineering	9.3
english studies (non-specific)	10.1
finance	4.1
french studies	5.4
genetics	-5.7
history	-1.1
history of art, architecture and design	16.8
human geography	4.4
law	4.3
linguistics	12.5
management studies	-2.5
mathematics	8.5
mechanical engineering	3.0
medicine (non-specific)	9.3
microbiology and cell science	3.8
molecular biology, biophysics and biochemistry	3.8
music	-6.3
others in biosciences	6.3
pharmacology	-0.5
philosophy	13.4
physical geographical sciences	2.1
physics	10.5
politics	5.4
psychology (non-specific)	3.2
sociology	11.6
sport and exercise sciences	-2.0
teacher training	9.2
theology and religious studies	6.2
zoology	1.1

The University of Aberdeen generally performed favourably compared to the sector for most CAH Level 3 subjects, with the University outperforming the sector for 34 of the 42 CAH Level 3 subjects to which it has been assigned a positive response score (*see chart 9*).

Eight subjects have a positive score of larger than 10% against the sector - anatomy, physiology and pathology (11.7% positive gap), business studies (11.6% positive gap), English studies (non-specific) (10.1% positive gap), history of art, architecture and design (16.8% positive gap), linguistics (12.5% positive gap), philosophy (13.4% positive gap), physics (10.5% positive gap) and sociology (11.6% positive gap).

Nine subjects performed lower for the University against the sector, with the largest gap existing between chemical, process and energy engineering at -12.7%.

Chart 10 on the next page indicates the positive response score per CAH Level 3 subject and the respondents (full-person equivalent) that have been included in each subject area.

Chart 10: University of Aberdeen positive response performance in NSS CAH Level 3 Subjects 2023 and number of respondents

Subject	Respondents (FPE)	Positive Response
zoology	50	80.4
theology and religious studies	9	91.8
teacher training	77	88.6
sport and exercise sciences	15	82.6
sociology	27	89.7
psychology (non-specific)	85	82.7
politics	60	84.6
physics	10	90.5
physical geographical sciences	11	83.7
philosophy	16	93.6
pharmacology	16	80.8
others in biosciences	7	85.9
music	16	72.3
molecular biology, biophysics and biochemistry	22	83.9
microbiology and cell science	8	84.0
medicine (non-specific)	97	84.4
mechanical engineering	36	79.5
mathematics	20	89.7
management studies	39	78.2
linguistics	12	94.3
law	169	81.9
Iberian studies	8	78.5
human geography	10	84.0
history of art, architecture and design	8	96.8
history	54	81.1
genetics	15	75.4
French studies	10	87.0
finance	75	87.0
English studies (non-specific)	34	91.3
electrical and electronic engineering	10	86.7
education	31	91.6
economics	50	77.9
earth sciences	13	84.7
creative writing	4	91.6
computer science	34	80.3
civil engineering	15	74.7
cinematics and photography	10	79.3
chemical, process and energy engineering	37	67.4
business studies	13	95.2
building	6	73.0
biomedical sciences (non-specific)	7	85.9
biology (non-specific)	15	89.5
anthropology	18	89.7
anatomy, physiology and pathology	22	91.4
accounting	20	85.7

Legend: ■ Respondents (FPE) ■ Positive Response

Charts 11 to 54 below provide an overview of University of Aberdeen performance for Positive Response at CAH level 3 subject level, between 2019 and 2023, compared to the sector positive response.

Some caution is advised on making time trend assumptions with this data as the changes for NSS 2023 do not make the data directly comparable to previous years.

**Chart 11: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Accounting (2019-2023)**
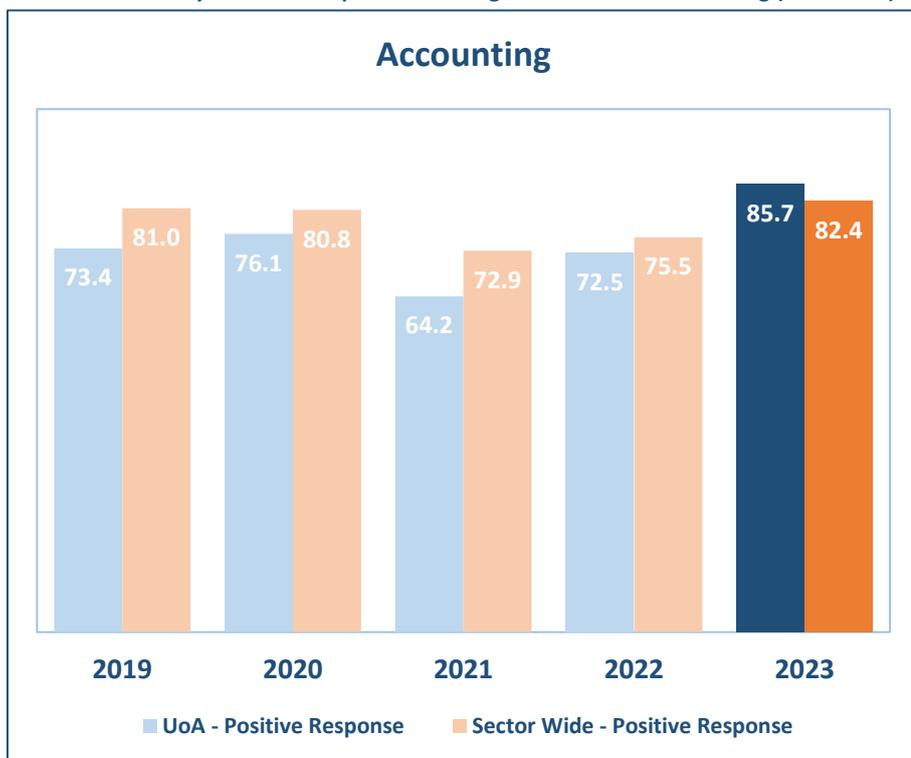
The University of Aberdeen had consistently scored below the sector positive response in Accounting since 2019 (*see chart 11*). However, in 2023 there is a positive gap of 3.3 percentage points against the sector.

Chart 12: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology (2019-2023)
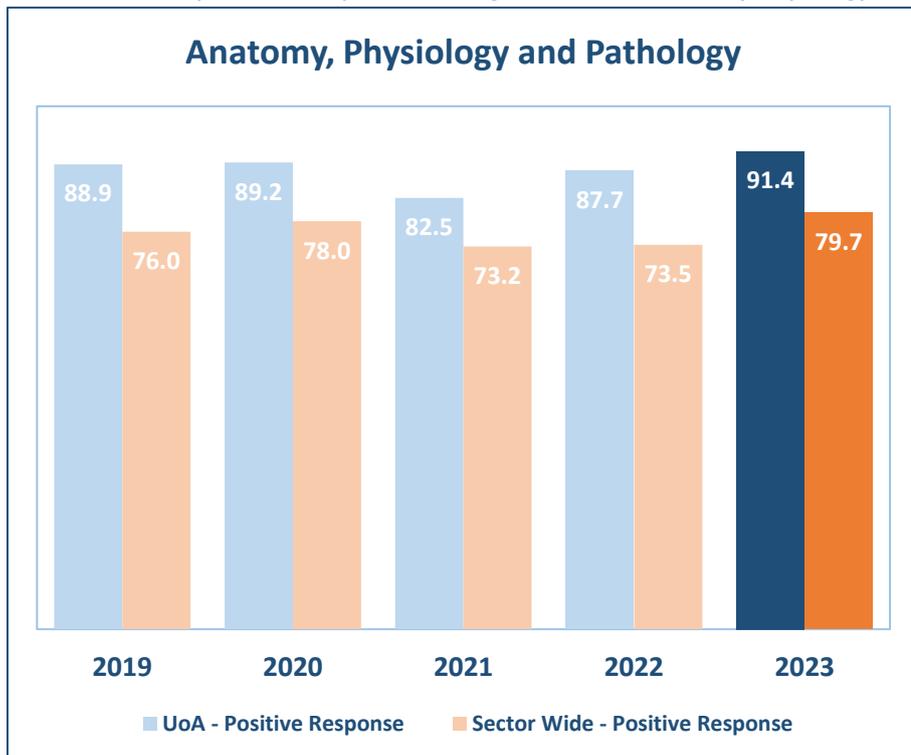
The University of Aberdeen has outperformed the sector positive response for Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology for the previous five years (*see chart 12*). In 2023 the subject achieved a positive gap of 11.7 percentage points compared to the sector response.

Anthropology

Year	UoA	Sector
2019	81.6	77.6
2020	75.5	74.4
2021	74.4	69.6
2022	79.7	71.2
2023	89.7	79.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response

The University of Aberdeen has outperformed the sector for Anthropology throughout the previous five years (*see chart 13*). For 2023, the positive gap is 10.1 percentage points.

Biomedical Sciences (Non-Specific)

Year	UoA	Sector
2019		
2020	76.3	76.0
2021	87.5	69.4
2022	86.7	69.8
2023	85.9	76.7

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
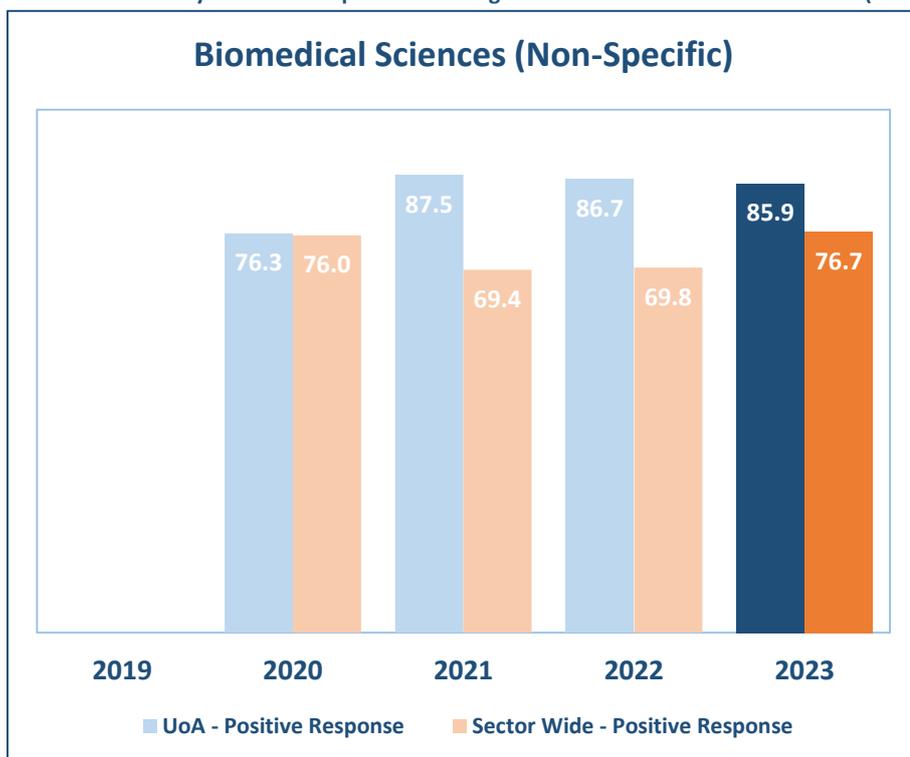
The University of Aberdeen has outperformed the sector positive response for Biomedical Sciences (non-specific) for the previous four years (*see chart 14*). In 2023 the subject achieved a positive gap of 9.2 percentage points compared to the sector positive response.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Biology (Non-Specific)

Year	UoA	Sector
2019	75.1	79.4
2020	89.6	78.9
2021		
2022	76.8	73.9
2023	89.5	81.7

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
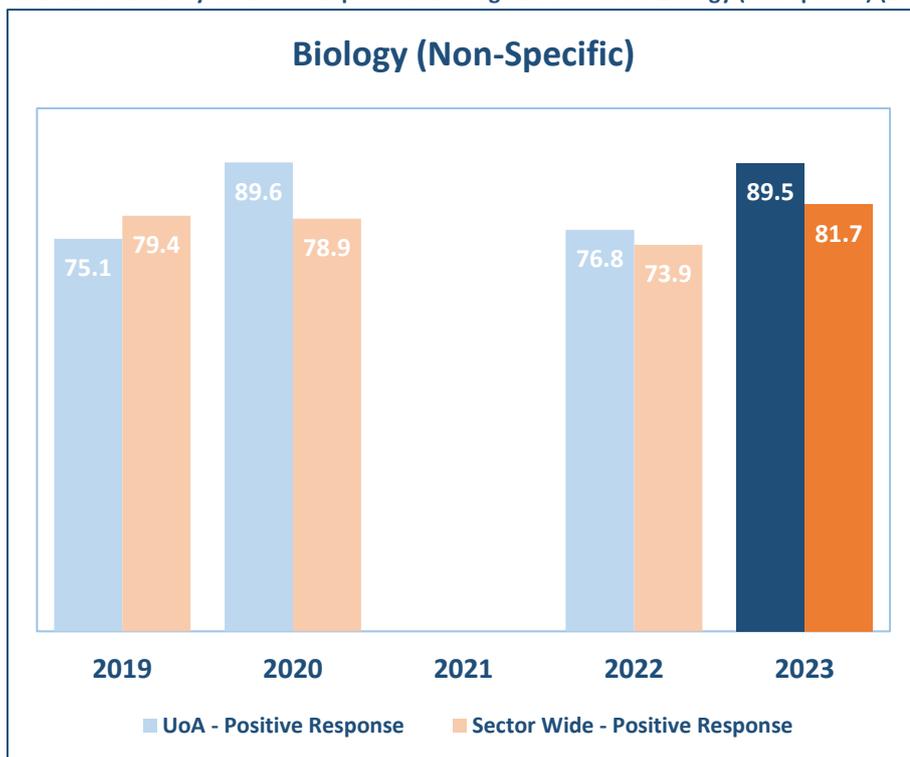
For Biology (non-specific) the University of Aberdeen's performance has generally outperformed the sector over the timescale (note that this subject area did not report in NSS 2021) (*see chart 15*). In 2023, the University achieved a positive gap of 7.8 percentage points.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Chart 16: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Building (2019-2023)

Building

| Year	UoA	Sector
2019	83.2	74.7
2020	81.2	74.8
2021	85.0	66.9
2022		
2023	73.0	78.4

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
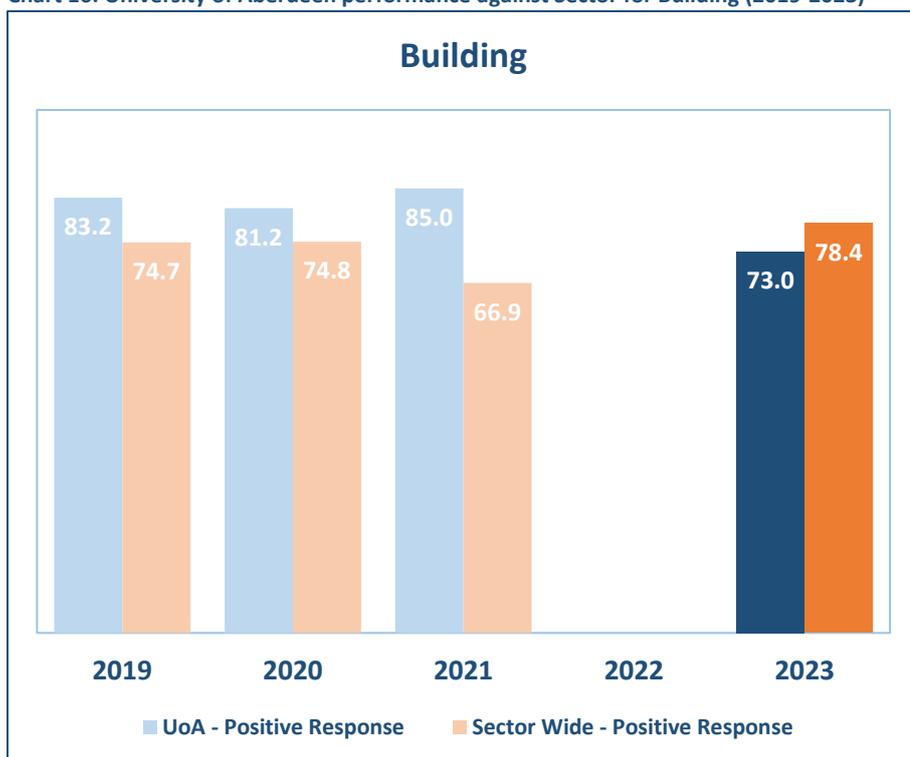
Historically, the University consistently outperformed the sector in Building for positive response (except for 2022 where it was not scored) (*see chart 16*). However, there is a negative gap of 5.4 percentage points when comparing the University with the sector in the 2023 results.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Business Studies

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
					95.2 / 83.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
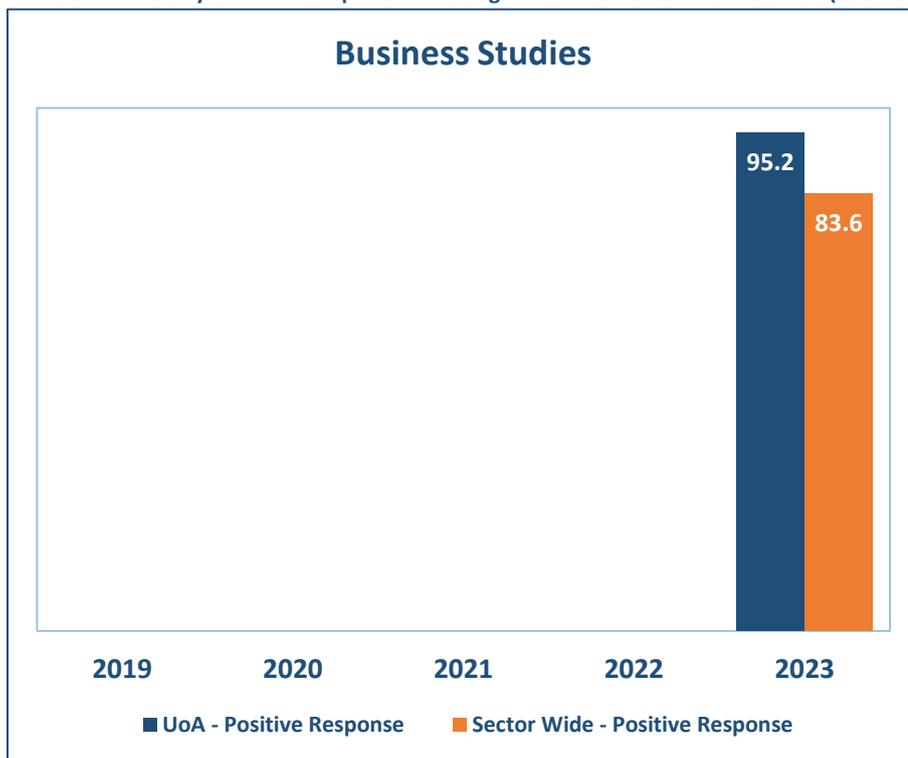
In 2023, the University outperformed the sector in Business Studies with a positive gap of 11.6 percentage points (*see chart 17*). It is noted this is the first year that Business Studies has been scored for the University for the NSS in the last 5 years.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	76.6 / 74.3	75.3 / 75.0	70.8 / 72.8	80.2 / 74.7	67.4 / 80.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
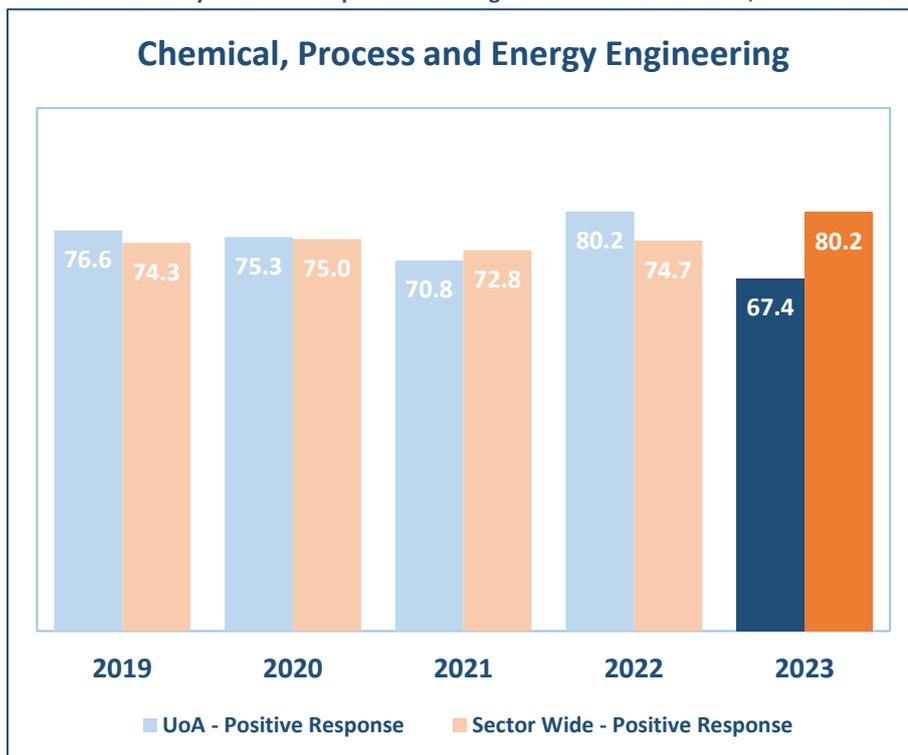
The University of Aberdeen has a negative gap of 12.8% against the sector's positive response score of 80.2% (*see chart 18*) for Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering. This is the largest gap in the time period shown.

Cinematics and Photography

Year	UoA - Positive Response	Sector Wide - Positive Response
2019	73.8	76.3
2020	79.4	76.5
2021	79.8	66.9
2022	87.3	70.9
2023	79.3	77.8

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
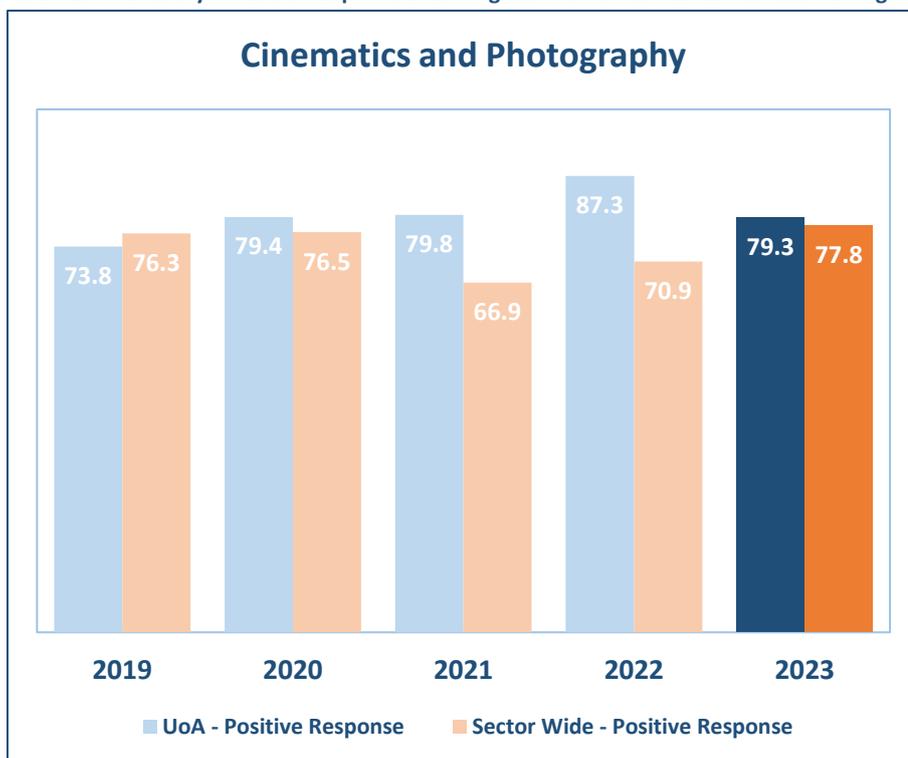
The University of Aberdeen has seen a year-on-year increase in positive response scores for Cinematics and Photography from 2019 to 2022 (*see chart 19*). However, in 2023 there has been a decrease in positive response from 87.3% to 79.3%. Despite this, the University still outperformed the sector.

Civil Engineering

Year	UoA - Positive Response	Sector Wide - Positive Response
2019		
2020	80.2	77.4
2021	75.4	73.0
2022	70.0	73.7
2023	74.7	79.8

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
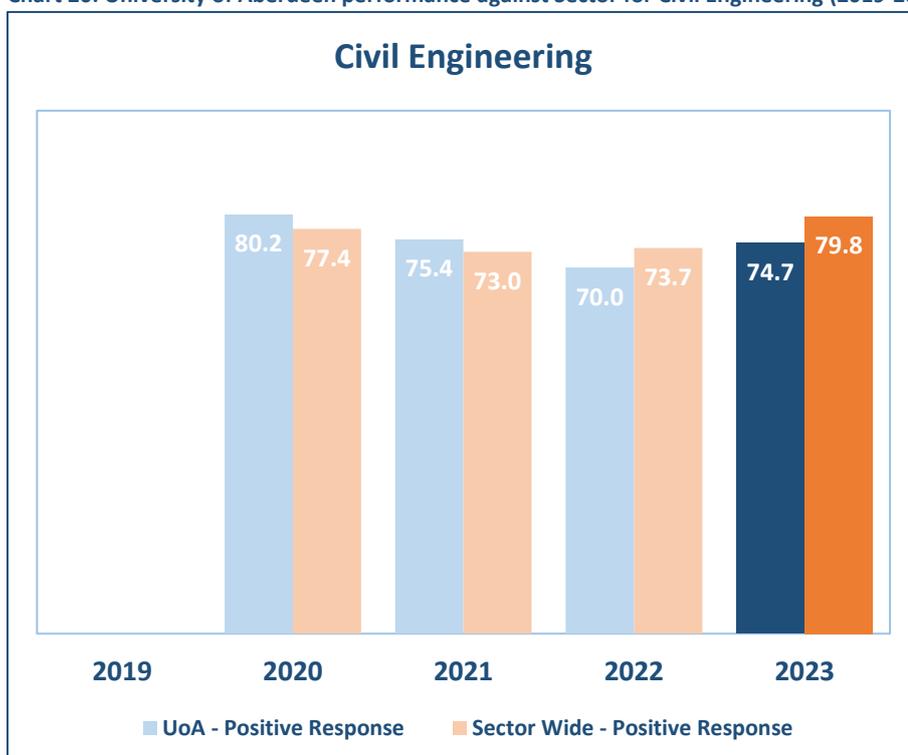
The University of Aberdeen has risen in positive response from the previous year with a score of 74.7% compared with 70.0% (*see chart 20*) for Civil Engineering. However, a negative a gap of 5.1% in positive response is seen when compared with the sector.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

**Chart 21: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Computer Science (2019-2023)**

Computer Science

Year	UoA	Sector
2019	72.9	74.1
2020	81.3	73.7
2021	73.4	68.2
2022	69.1	69.4
2023	80.3	76.5

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
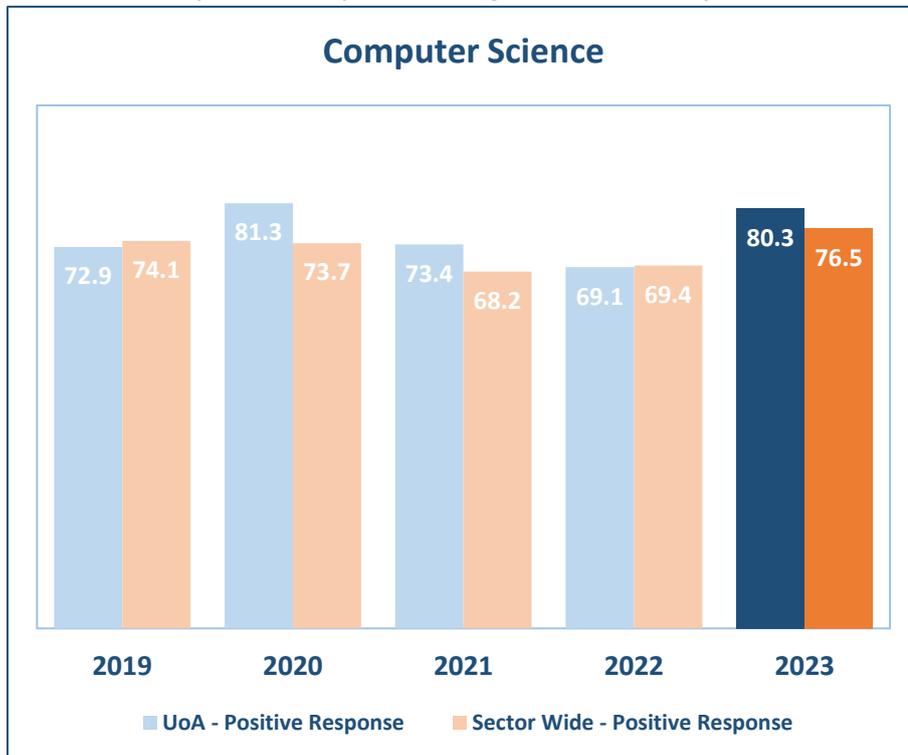
Performance for Computer Science at the University of Aberdeen has been inconsistent across the timescale (*see chart 21*). In 2023 the subject achieved a positive gap of 3.8 percentage points compared to the sector positive response.

Chart 22: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Creative Writing (2019-2023)
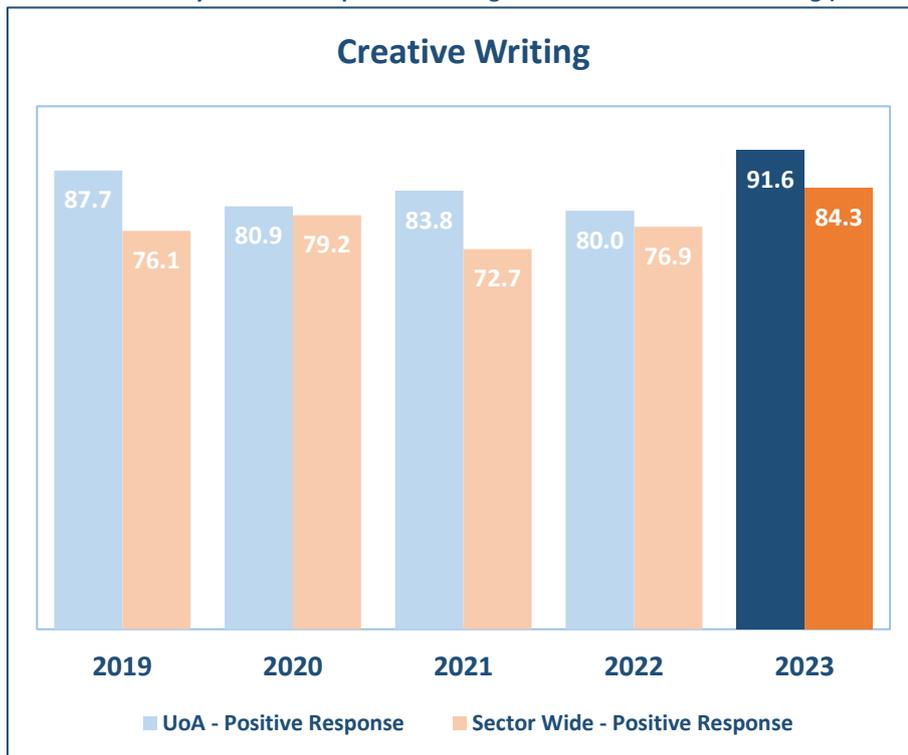
Creative Writing

Year	UoA	Sector
2019	87.7	76.1
2020	80.9	79.2
2021	83.8	72.7
2022	80.0	76.9
2023	91.6	84.3

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response

The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector positive response in Accounting since 2019 (*see chart 22*). This has continued in 2023 with a positive gap of 7.3 percentage points.

Chart 23: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Earth Sciences (2019-2023)

Earth Sciences

UoA - Positive Response   **Sector Wide - Positive Response**

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA	79.7	71.9	88.5	90.1	84.7
Sector	81.2	83.5	77.3	76.8	81.2
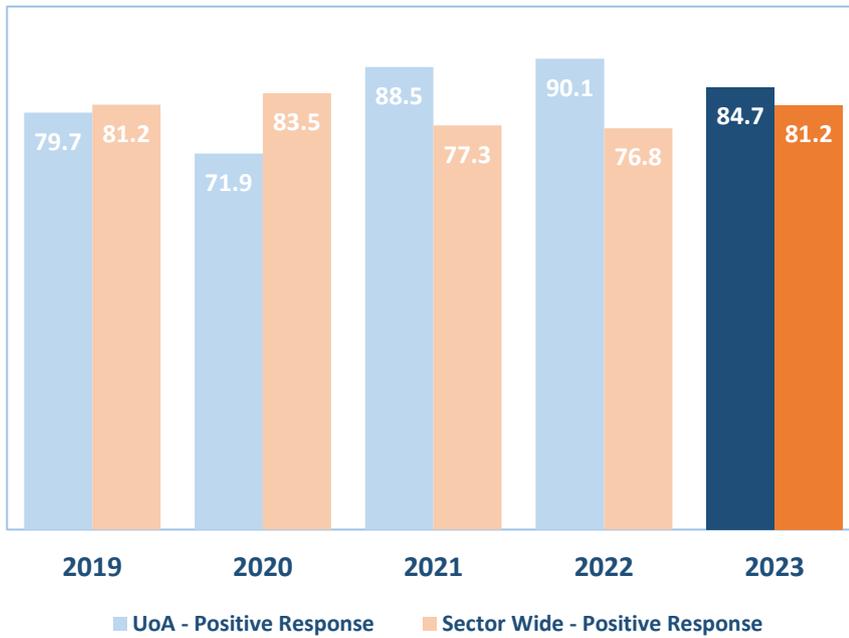
The University of Aberdeen performance in Earth Sciences has outperformed the sector for the three most recent years (*see chart 23*). In 2023, it can be seen that there is a positive gap of 3.5 percentage points compared with the sector.

Chart 24: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Economics (2019-2023)

Economics

UoA - Positive Response   **Sector Wide - Positive Response**

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA	74.5	65.9	75.2	75.3	77.9
Sector	75.7	75.2	69.6	71.4	77.8
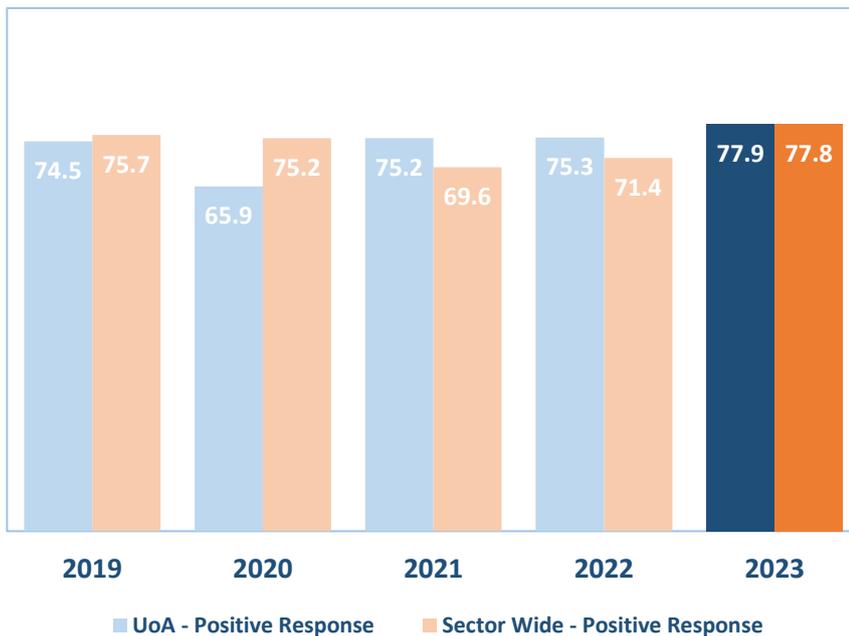
Economics has outperformed the sector for the past three years (*see chart 24*). However, in 2023 there is a positive gap of only 0.1 percentage points.

Education

| | | | | 91.6 | 85.6 |
| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 (82.2 / 78.9) | 2023 | |

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
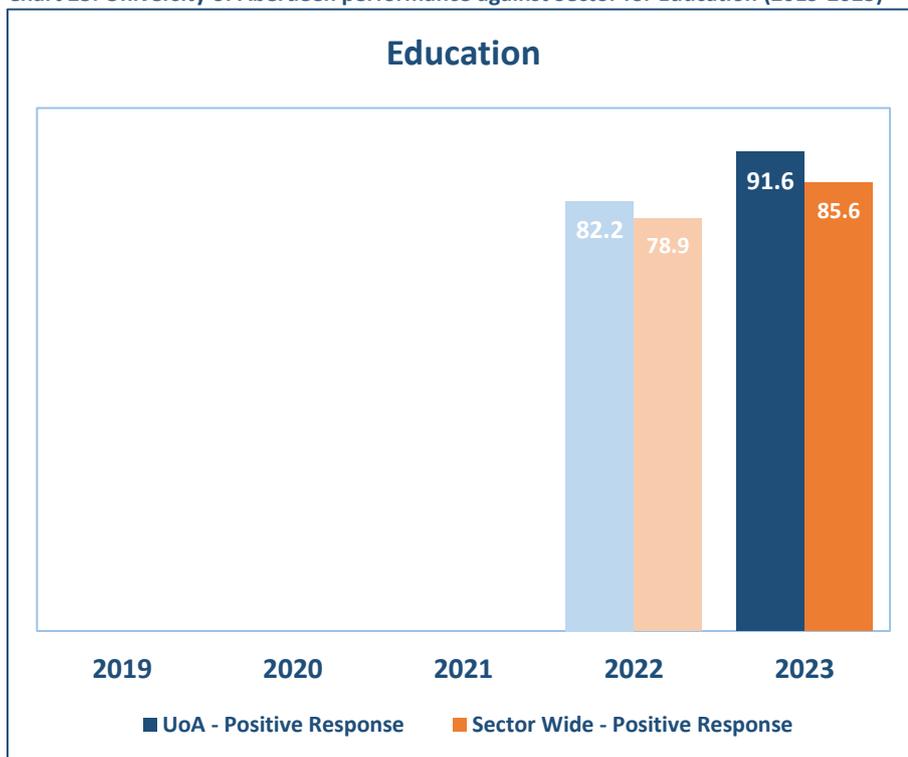
In 2023, the University of Aberdeen has outperformed the sector for Education by 6 percentage points (*see chart 25*). To note: this is only the second time that Education has featured in the NSS. It is noted that Education does not include Teacher Training.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Chart 26: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Electrical and Electronic Engineering (2019-2023)

Electrical and Electronic Engineering

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| 76.5 / 77.3 | 79.0 / 76.4 | 68.2 / 71.7 | 70.9 / 72.2 | 86.7 / 77.4 |

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
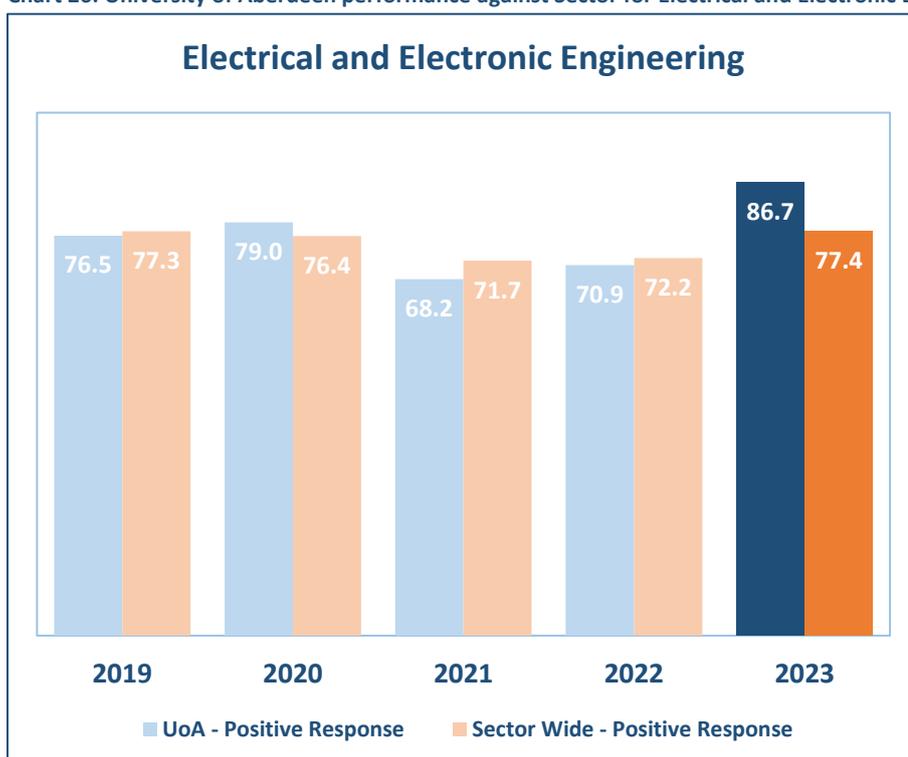
Electrical and Electronic Engineering has performed inconsistently against sector positive response scores over the past five years (*see chart 26*). However, in 2023, the University has achieved its highest score in this subject area since 2020 and outperformed the sector positive response score by 9.3 percentage points.

English Studies (Non-Specific)

Year	UoA - Positive Response	Sector Wide - Positive Response
2019	84.2	79.4
2020	79.7	78.7
2021	78.5	72.3
2022	80.4	74.9
2023	91.3	81.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
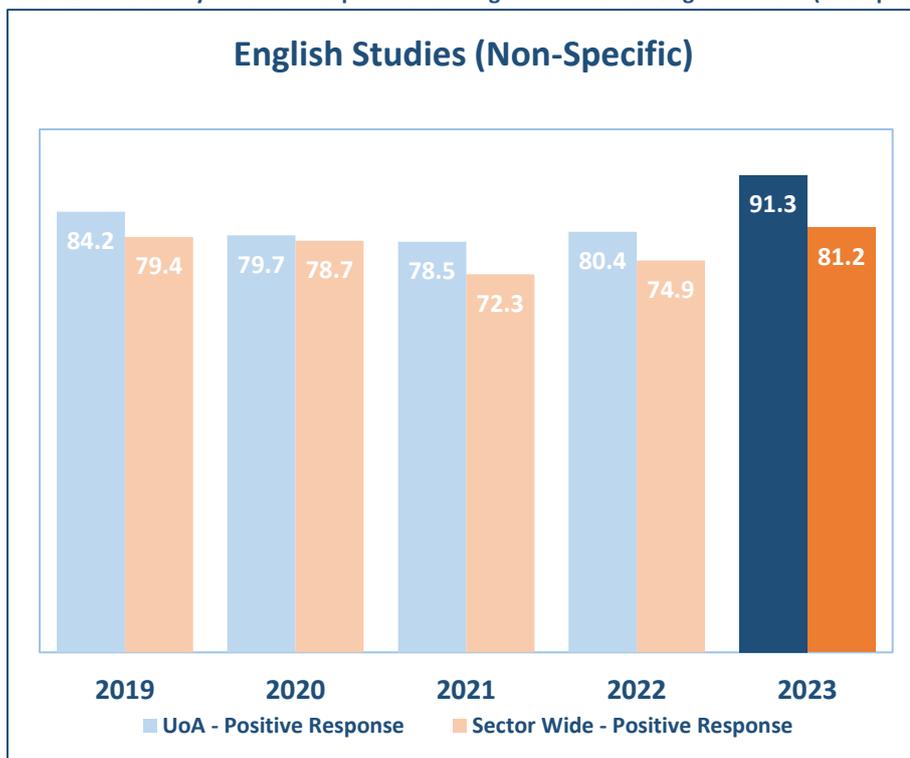
The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector benchmark for English Studies (non-specific) (*see chart 27*). In 2023, the University has achieved its highest score in this subject area since 2020 and outperformed the sector positive response score by 10.1 percentage points.

Finance

Year	UoA - Positive Response	Sector Wide - Positive Response
2019	79.6	80.2
2020	72.4	78.7
2021	84.2	72.9
2022	79.0	75.4
2023	87.0	82.9

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
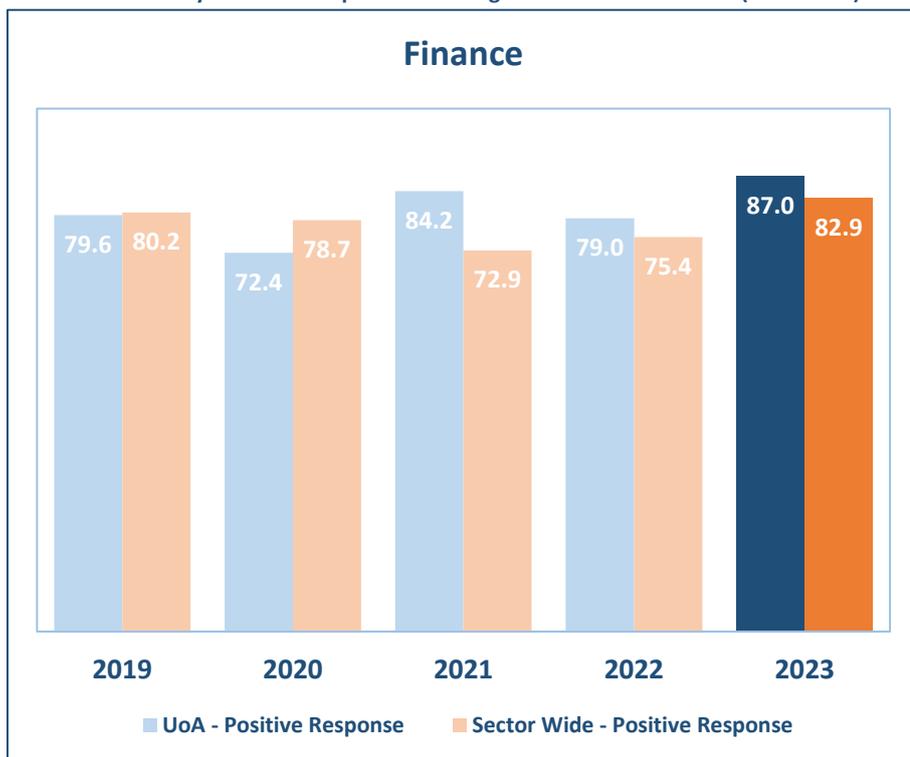
Positive response has varied in Finance over the five-year period (*see chart 28*). In 2023, the University has achieved its highest score in this subject area since 2020 and outperformed the sector positive response score by 4.1 percentage points.

French Studies

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	77.0	90.3	74.2	80.0	87.0
Sector Wide - Positive Response	81.7	79.0	74.0	73.5	81.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
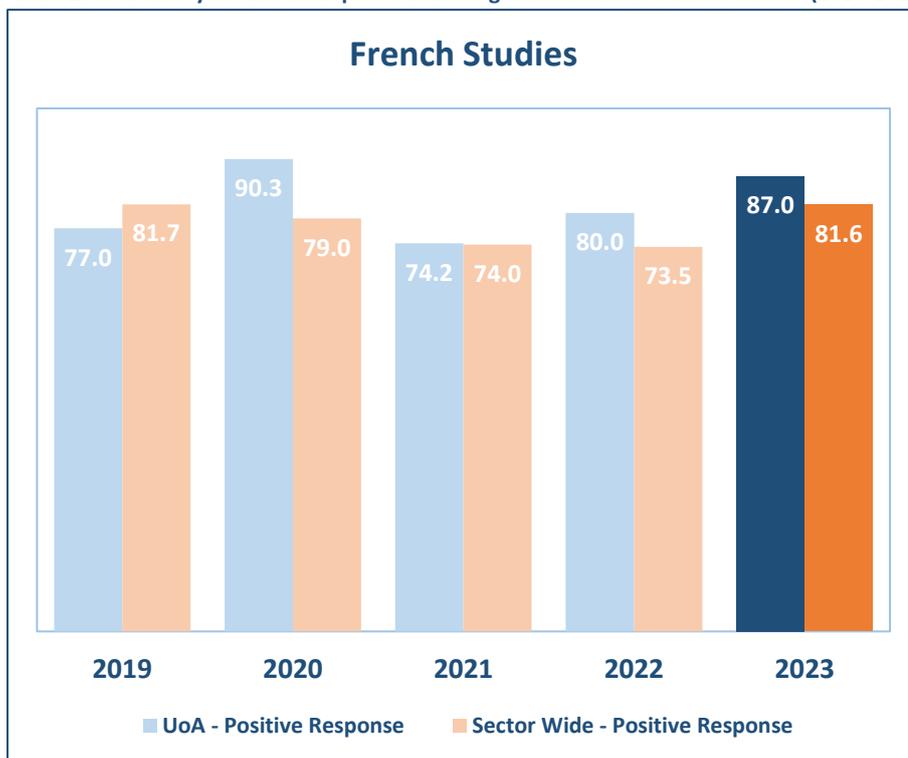
The University of Aberdeen has outperformed the sector positive response score in French Studies for the previous four years (*see chart 29*). In 2023, there is a positive gap of 5.4 percentage points.

Genetics

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	83.1		76.8	67.2	75.4
Sector Wide - Positive Response	79.2		72.4	71.2	81.1

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
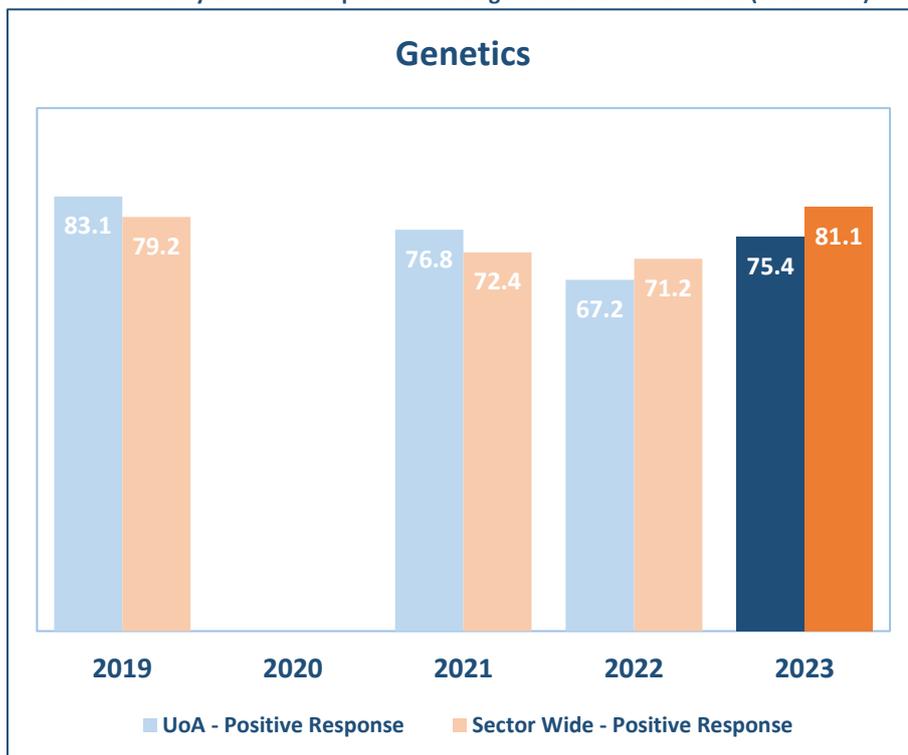
The University of Aberdeen has scored lower than the sector for Genetics in the last two years (*see chart 30*). In 2023, there is a negative gap of 5.7 percentage points.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

History

UoA - Positive Response: 78.7 (2019), 81.2 (2020), 80.4 (2021), 80.4 (2022), 81.1 (2023)
Sector Wide - Positive Response: 78.8 (2019), 77.6 (2020), 73.3 (2021), 75.1 (2022), 82.2 (2023)

- UoA - Positive Response
- Sector Wide - Positive Response

The University of Aberdeen had outperformed the sector benchmark in History between 2020 and 2022 (*see chart 31*). However, in 2023 there is a negative gap of 0.1 percentage points.

Chart 32: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for History of Art, Architecture and Design (2019-2023)

History of Art, Architecture and Design

UoA - Positive Response: 89.6 (2019), 84.3 (2020), 84.0 (2022), 96.8 (2023)
Sector Wide - Positive Response: 78.9 (2019), 75.5 (2020), 71.7 (2022), 80.0 (2023)

- UoA - Positive Response
- Sector Wide - Positive Response
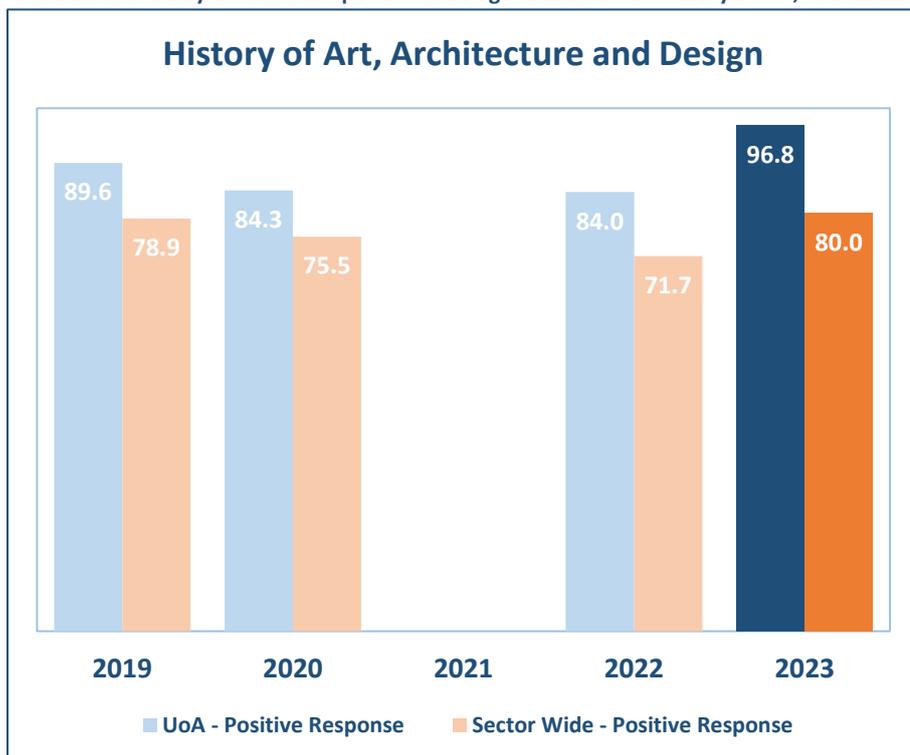
The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector in History of Art, Architecture and Design (no data is available for 2021) (*see chart 32*). In 2023 the positive gap against the sector positive response score is 16.8 percentage points, with the subject area achieving its highest score since 2019.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Human Geography

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	76.3	77.0	68.9	83.1	84.0
Sector Wide - Positive Response	80.3	79.7	72.2	73.5	79.7

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
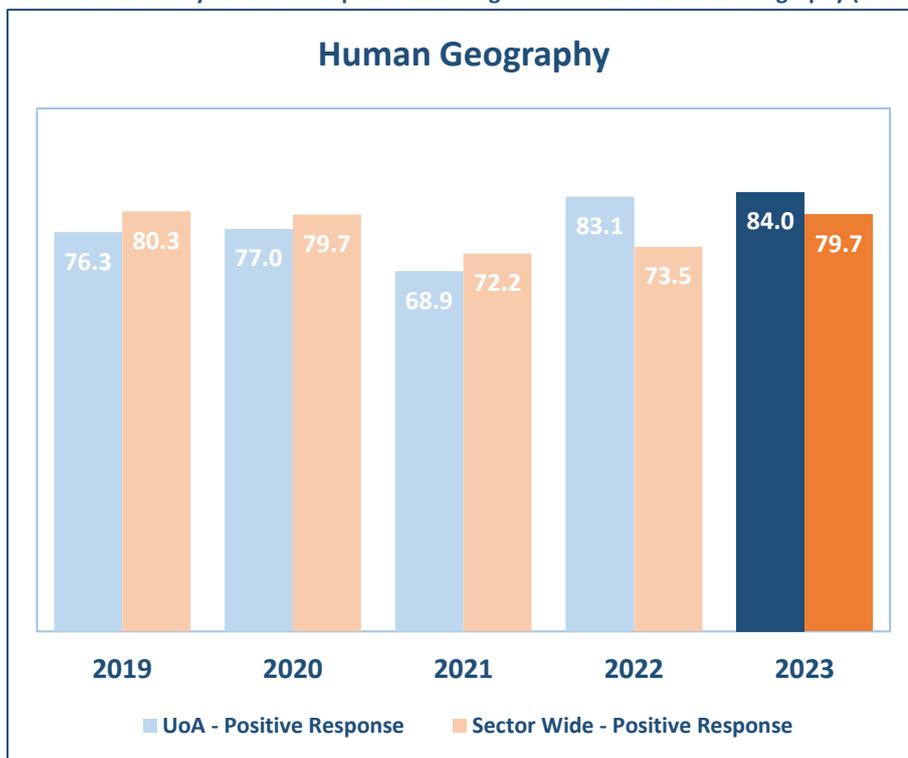
The University of Aberdeen scored below the sector positive response score for Human Geography every year between 2019 and 2021 (*see chart 33*). However, in the two most recent years the subject has outperformed the sector score with a current positive gap of 4.3 percentage points in 2023.

Law

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	80.9	77.1	74.4	75.7	81.9
Sector Wide - Positive Response	75.1	74.3	67.7	69.7	77.7

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
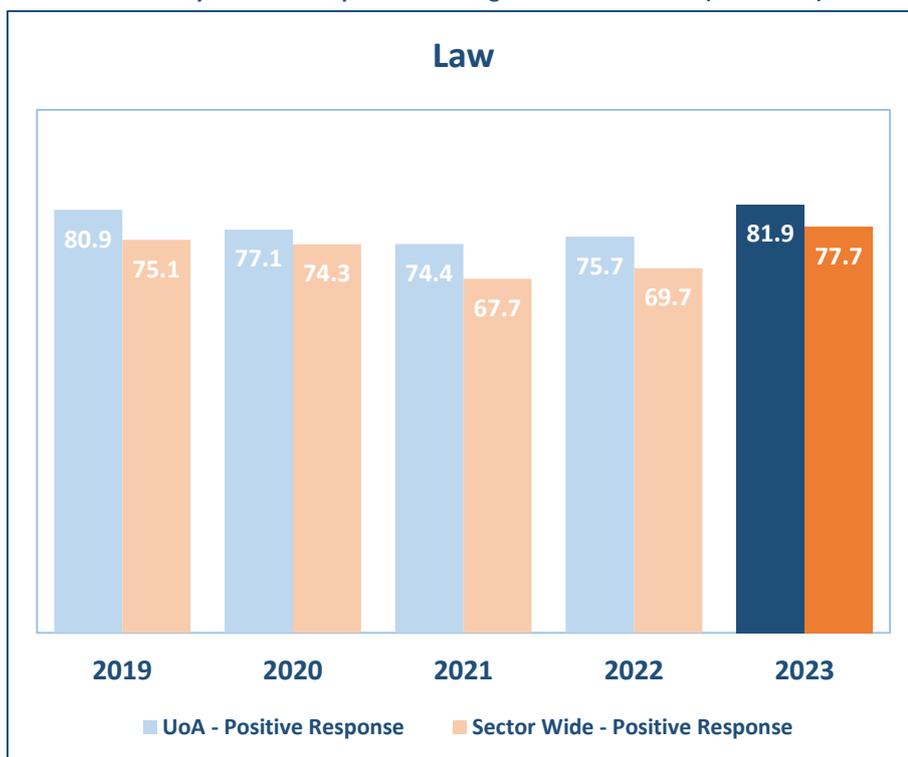
The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector in Law over the five-year period (*see chart 34*). In 2023 the subject achieved a score of 81.9%, 4.2 percentage points above the sector.

Linguistics

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	75.4	81.4	80.2	87.2	94.3
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.3	77.7	72.7	73.8	81.8

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
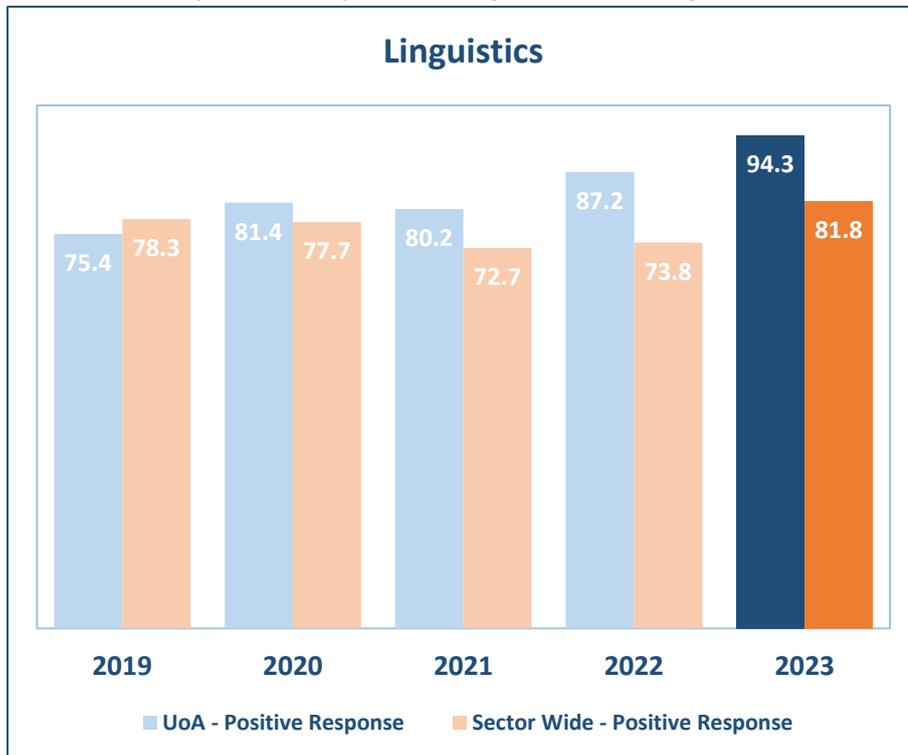
The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector in Linguistics over the last four years (*see chart 35*). In 2023, the University has achieved its highest score in this subject area and outperformed the sector positive response score by 12.5 percentage points.

Management Studies

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	72.3	74.3	68.0	79.1	78.2
Sector Wide - Positive Response	76.4	75.5	73.0	75.4	80.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
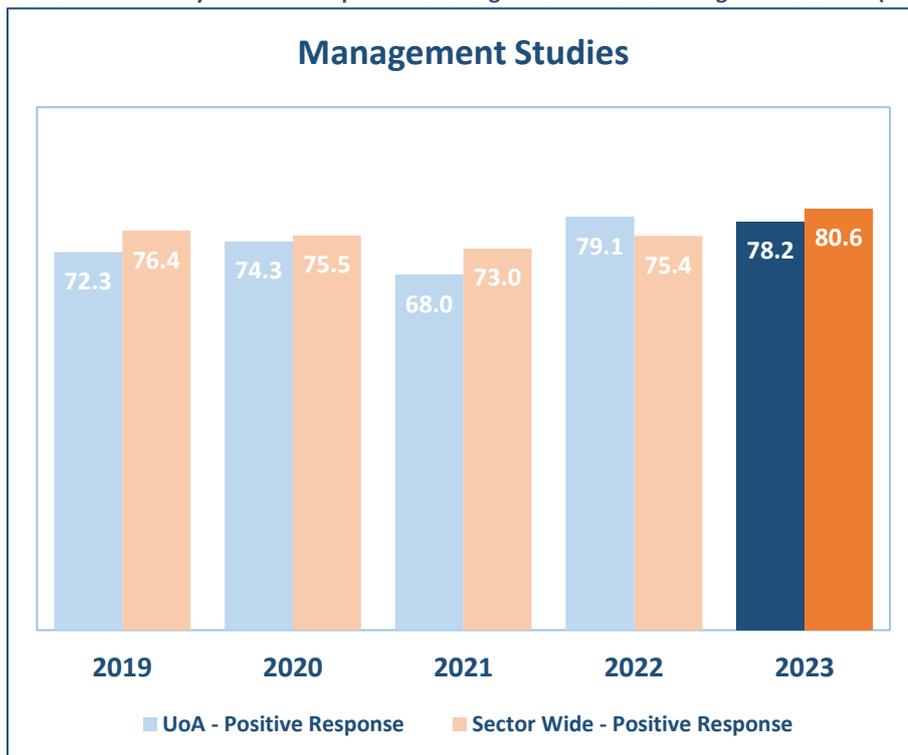
Positive response has varied in Management Studies over the five-year period (*see chart 36*). The University of Aberdeen has scored lower than the sector positive response by 2.4 percentage points in Management Studies in 2023.

Mathematics

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	84.7	81.1	72.1	73.7	89.7
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.4	77.4	72.5	71.8	81.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
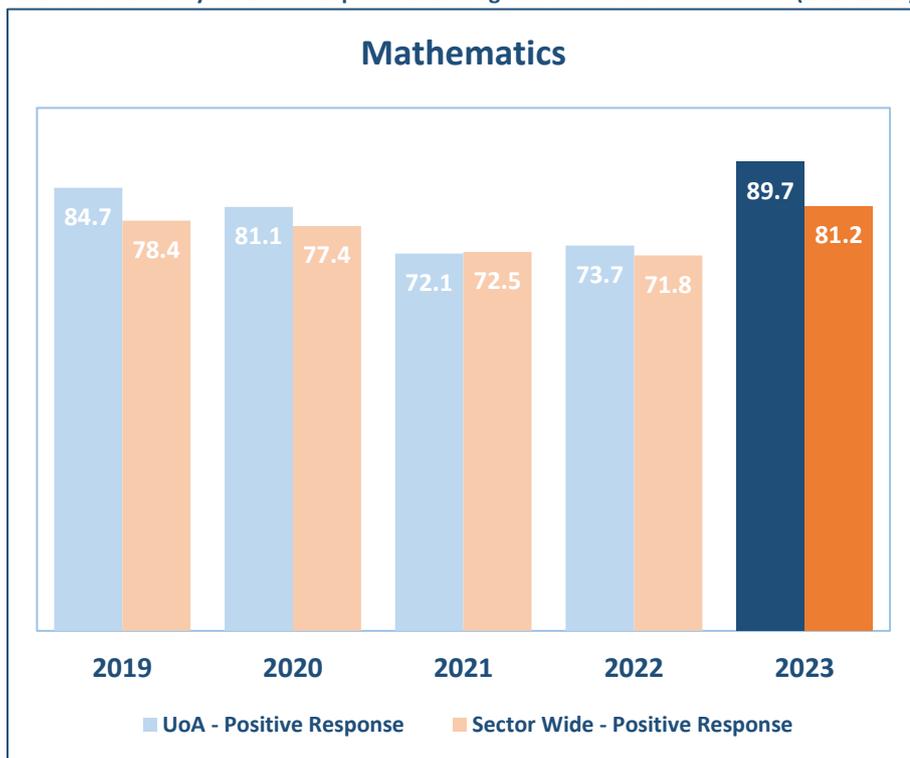
The University of Aberdeen scored 89.7% in Mathematics which is a positive gap of 8.5 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 37*). This was Aberdeen's highest score for the past five years and was greater than any sector score in the same timeframe.

Mechanical Engineering

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	76.0	65.7	75.1	72.2	79.5
Sector Wide - Positive Response	74.7	73.8	69.2	69.3	76.5

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
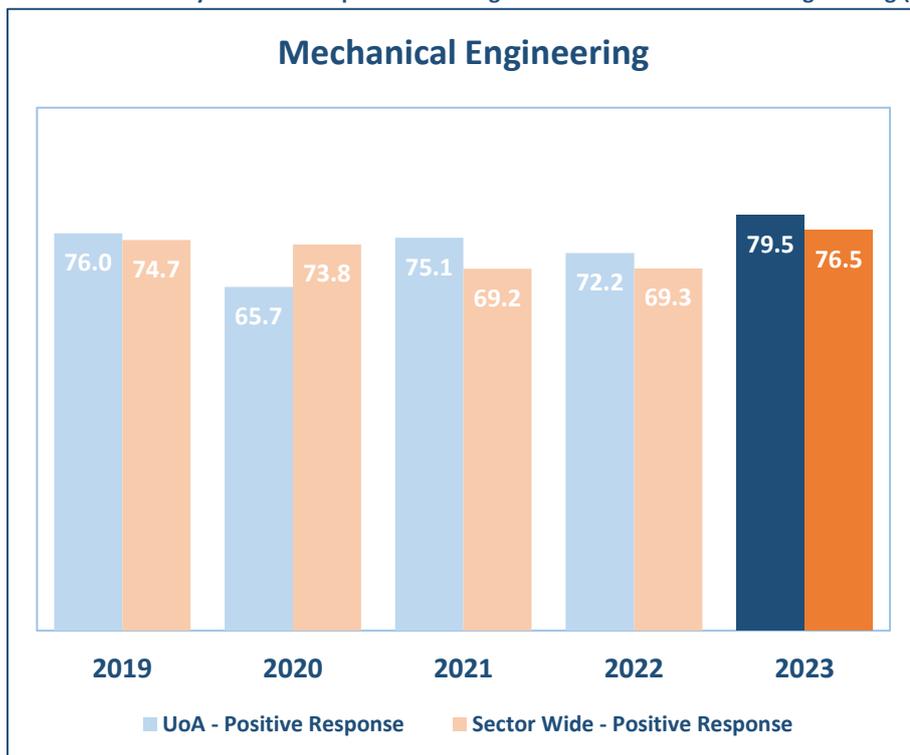
The University of Aberdeen scored 79.5% in 2023 for Mechanical Engineering, outperforming the sector by 3 percentage points (*see chart 38*) by three percentage points.

Medicine (Non-Specific)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	84.2	88.2	77.4	82.1	84.4
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.2	79.8	75.3	69.3	75.1

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
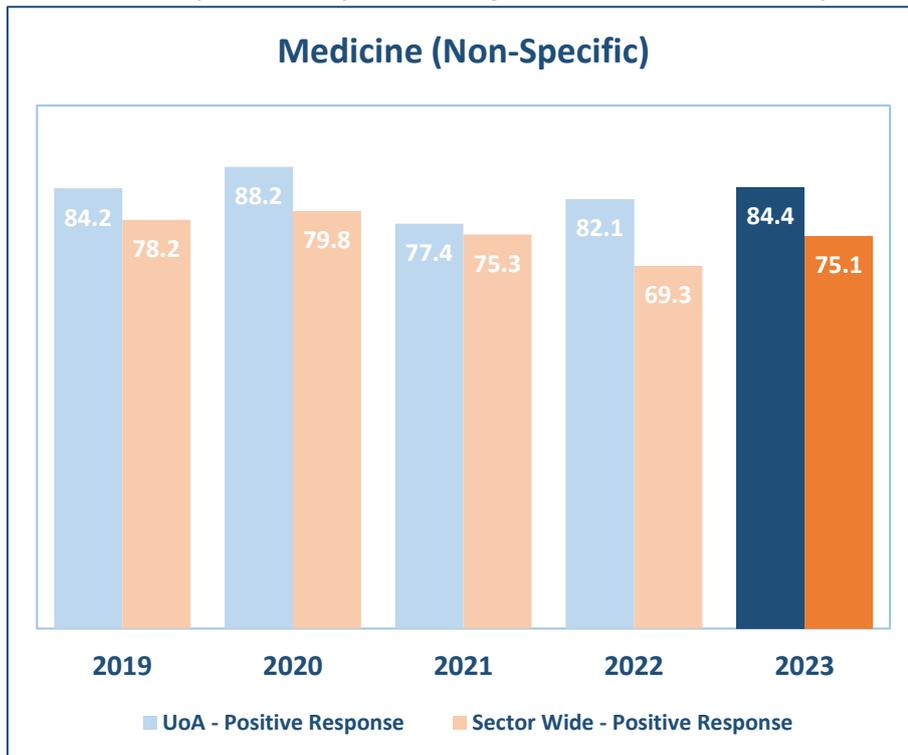
The University of Aberdeen scored 84.4% in 2023, which is a positive gap of 9.3 percentage points compared to the sector. The University of Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector throughout the five-year period.

Microbiology and Cell Science

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	75.9		66.6	74.2	84.0
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.1		74.8	74.4	80.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
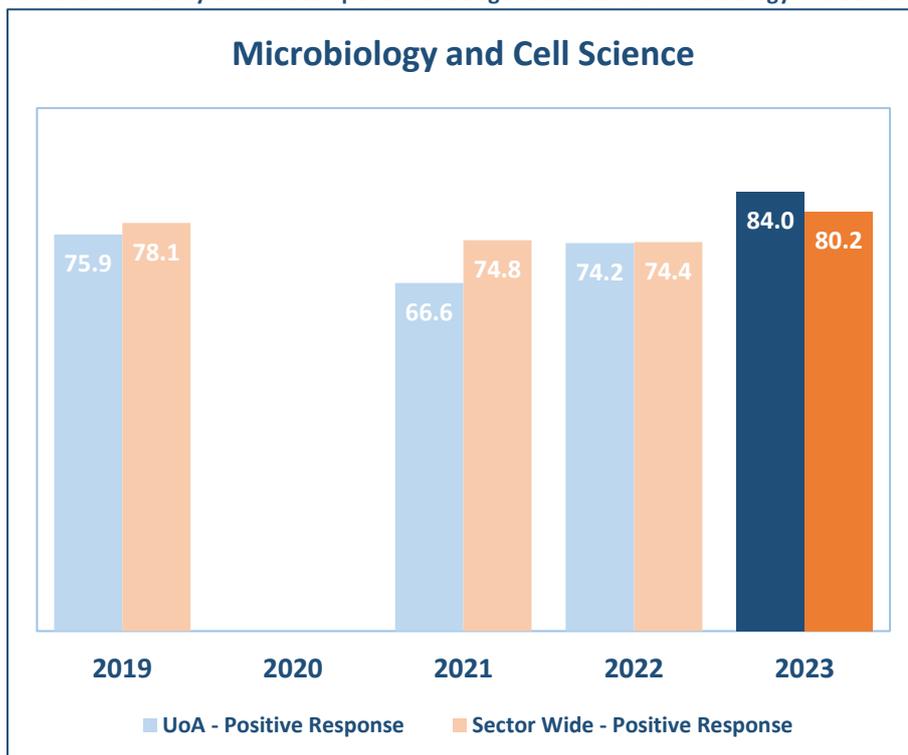
The University of Aberdeen scored 84.0% for positive response in 2023 for Microbiology and Cell Science, which is a positive gap of 3.8 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 40*). This was Aberdeen's highest score for the past 5 years.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Molecular Biology, Biophysics and Biochemistry

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	78.6	83.8	72.2	74.8	83.9
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.0	77.3	71.9	72.7	80.1

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
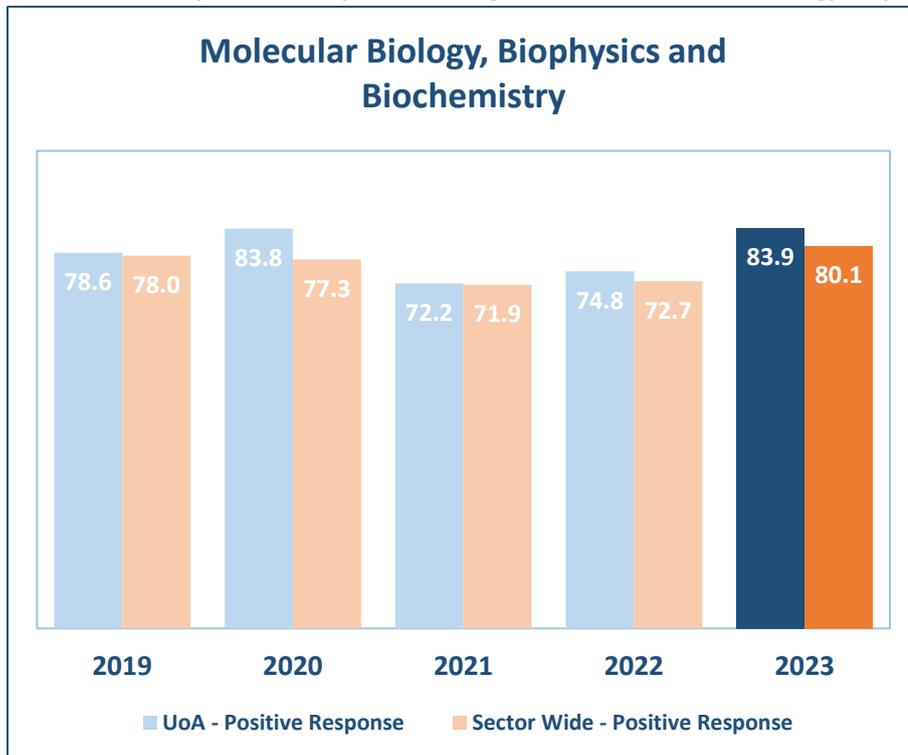
The University of Aberdeen scored 83.9% in 2023 for Molecular Biology, Biophysics and Biochemistry which is a positive gap of 3.8 percentage points compared to the sector. This is Aberdeen's greatest score since 2019 (*see chart 41*).

Music

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	80.2	85.6	75.3	85.7	72.3
Sector Wide - Positive Response	75.5	75.9	71.4	71.6	78.5

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
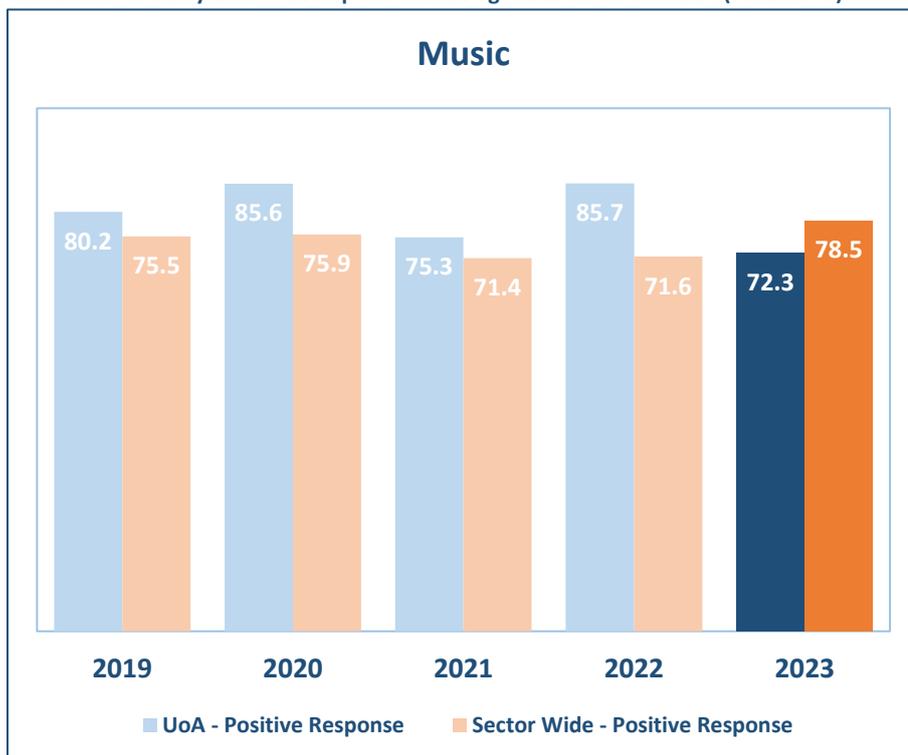
The University of Aberdeen scored 72.3% for Music in 2023, which is a negative gap of 6.2 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 42*). This was the lowest score for Aberdeen of the past five years.

Others in Biosciences

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	80.0	76.3	87.5	86.7	85.9
Sector Wide - Positive Response	77.3	78.1	74.5	74.0	79.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
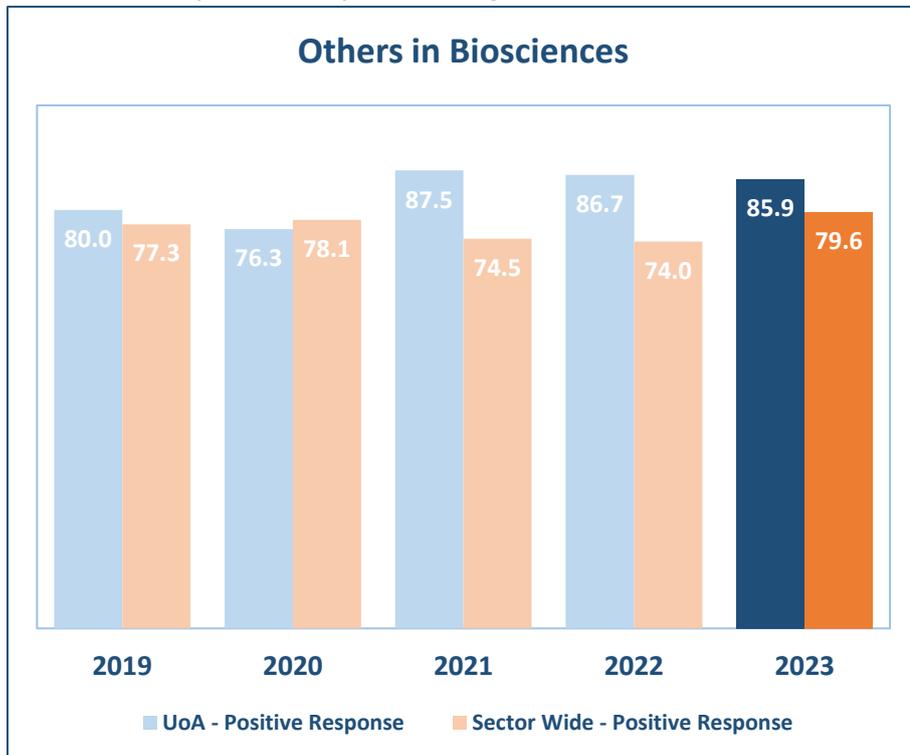
The University of Aberdeen scored 85.9% for positive response in 2023 for Others in Biosciences, which is a positive gap of 6.3 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 43*).

Pharmacology

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	88.8	77.2	82.4	85.2	80.8
Sector Wide - Positive Response	80.9	79.5	74.0	75.3	81.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
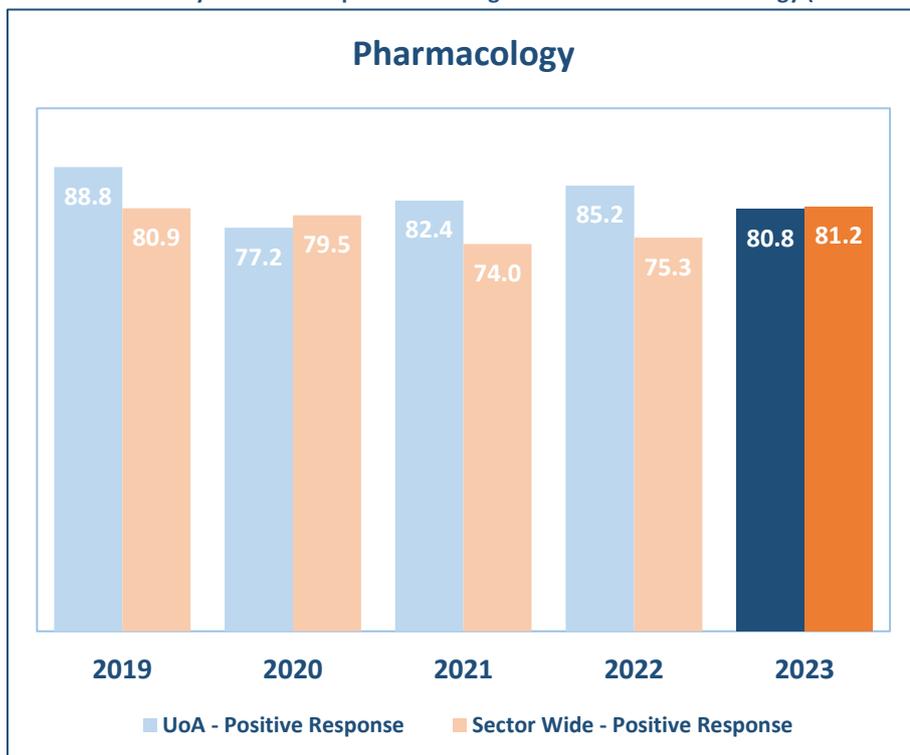
The University of Aberdeen scored 80.8% for Pharmacology in 2023, which is a negative gap of 0.3 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 44*). This was Aberdeen's second lowest score in Pharmacology over the five year period.

Philosophy

- UoA - Positive Response
- Sector Wide - Positive Response
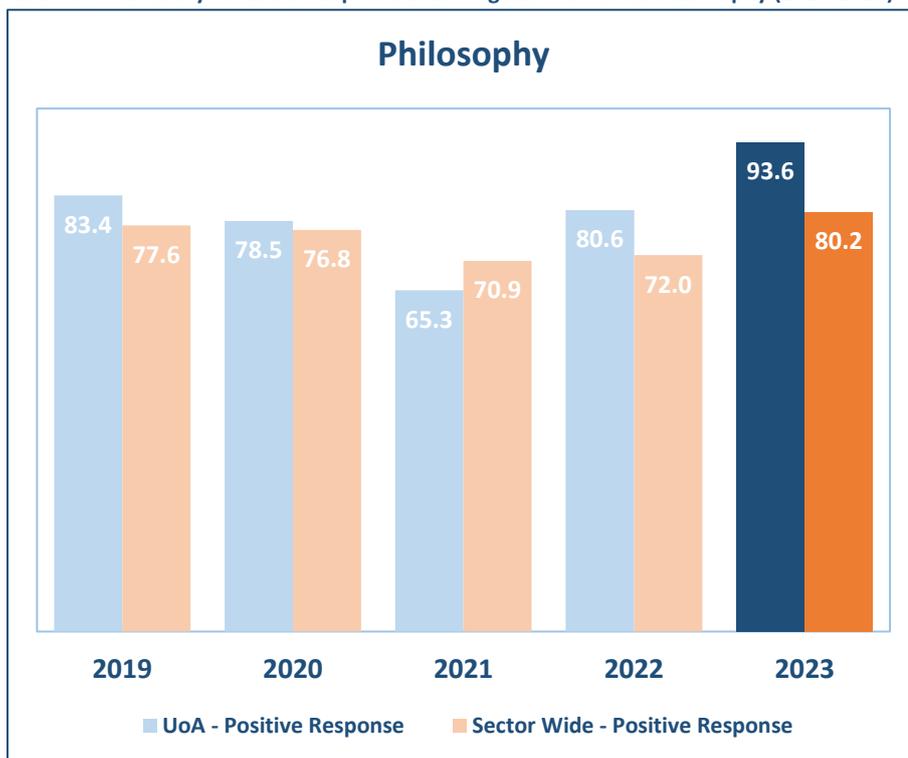
The University of Aberdeen scored 93.6% for positive response in Philosophy for 2023, which is a positive gap of 13.3 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 45*). This was the greatest score for Aberdeen in this period.

Chart 46: University of Aberdeen performance against Sector for Physical Geographical Sciences (2019-2023)

Physical Geographical Sciences

- UoA - Positive Response
- Sector Wide - Positive Response

The University of Aberdeen scored 83.7% for Physical Geographical Sciences in 2023, which is a positive gap of 2.1 percentage points compared to the sector (*see chart 46*).

Physics

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	79.2	77.8	81.6	75.0	90.5
Sector Wide - Positive Response	78.7	79.1	73.3	71.1	80.1

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response

The University of Aberdeen scored the highest score for Physics for the past five years (*see chart 47*). In 2023 the subject achieved a score of 90.5%, 10.4 percentage points above the sector.

Politics

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA - Positive Response	79.1	77.6	72.8	77.5	84.6
Sector Wide - Positive Response	75.9	74.9	69.6	70.8	79.2

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
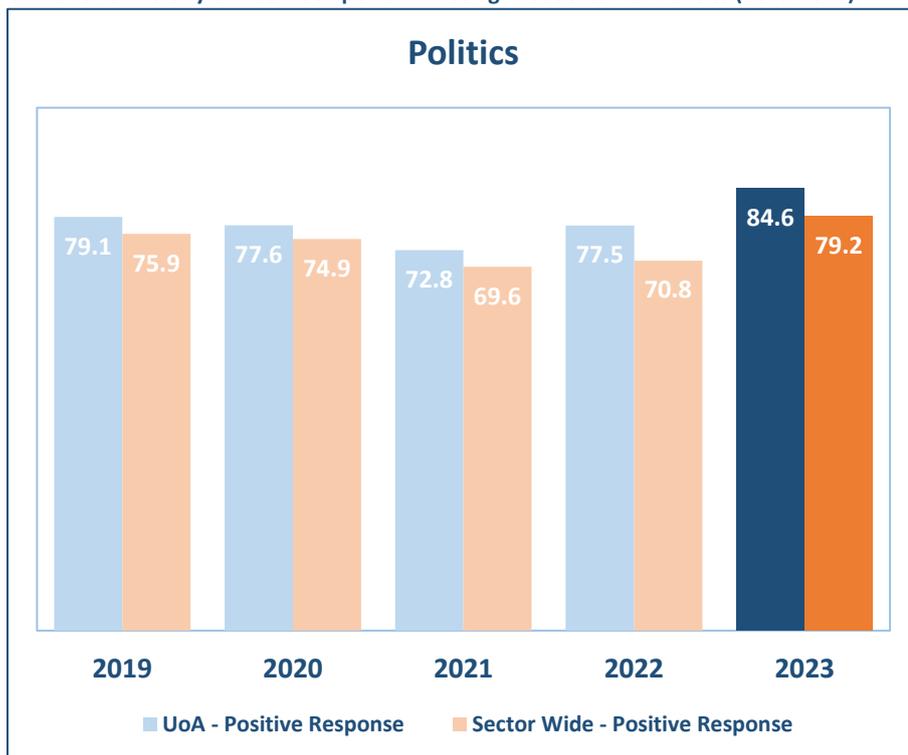
The University of Aberdeen scored 84.6% in 2023 for Politics (*see chart 48*). This is a positive gap of 5.4 percentage points compared with the sector.

Psychology (Non-Specific)

2019: UoA 82.7, Sector 77.6
2020: UoA 81.6, Sector 77.2
2021: UoA 74.6, Sector 70.5
2022: UoA 82.4, Sector 71.8
2023: UoA 82.7, Sector 79.5

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
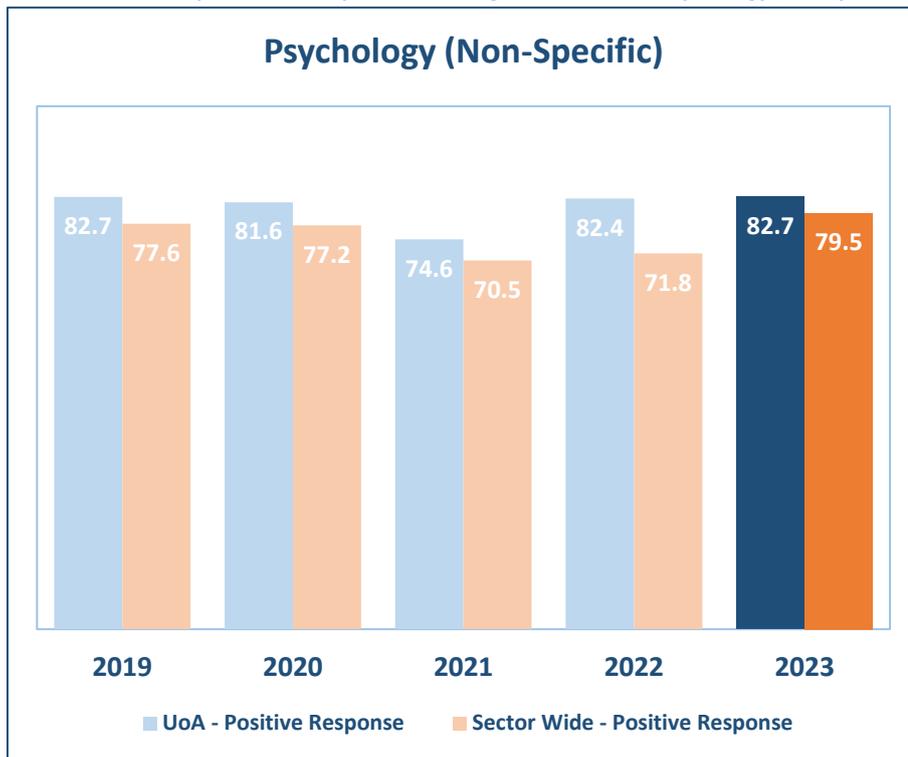
The University of Aberdeen scored 3.2 percentage points above the sector in 2023 for Psychology (non-specific) with a score of 82.7% and has been consistently above the sector throughout the previous five-year period.

Sociology

2019: UoA 79.8, Sector 77.3
2020: UoA 72.4, Sector 76.5
2021: UoA 70.8, Sector 67.8
2022: UoA 75.3, Sector 70.2
2023: UoA 89.7, Sector 78.1

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
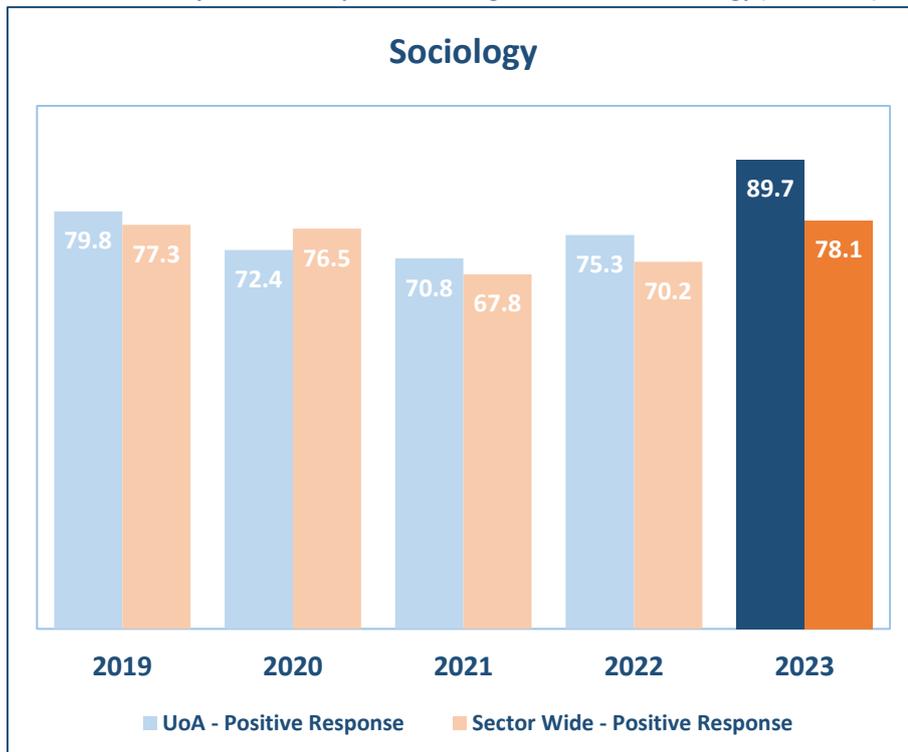
The University of Aberdeen scored 89.7% in Sociology for 2023, the highest score of the past five years. Sociology outperformed the sector by 11.6 percentage points in 2023 (*see chart 50*).

Sport and Exercise Sciences

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
83.7 / 81.7	82.9 / 82.6	76.9 / 75.2	78.8 / 77.1	82.6 / 84.5

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
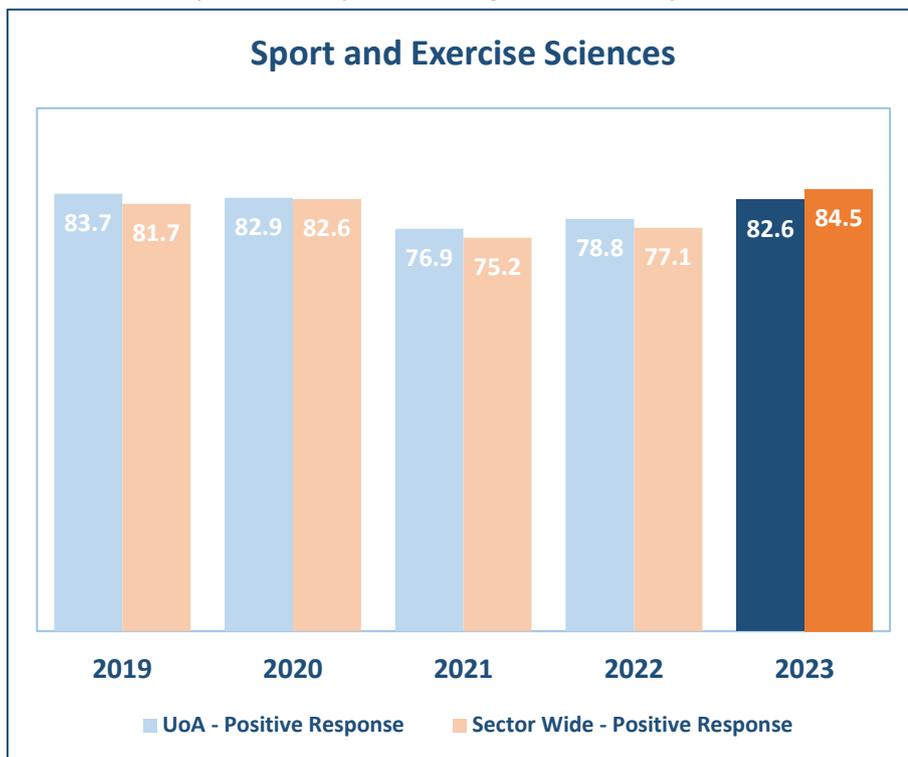
The University of Aberdeen scored 82.6% in 2023 for Sport and Exercise Sciences (*see chart 51*). This was 1.9 percentage points below the sector score of 84.5%, in contrast to Aberdeen's previous marginal outperformance over the sector between 2019 and 2022.

Teacher Training

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
72.1 / 80.3	75.1 / 80.8	69.9 / 74.9	71.1 / 72.8	88.6 / 79.4

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
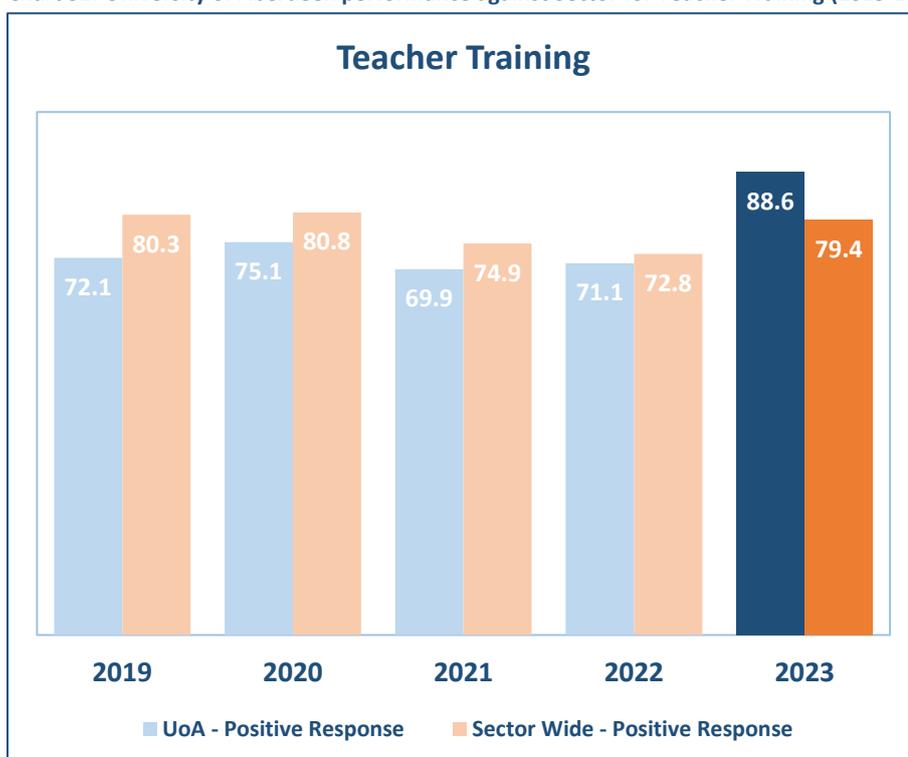
The University of Aberdeen scored by far the greatest Teacher Training score of the past five years in 2023 (*see chart 52*). Aberdeen outperformed the sector by 9.2 percentage points in 2023, in contrast to being lower scoring historically.

Theology and Religious Studies

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA			90.7	90.0	91.8
Sector			80.0	79.6	85.6

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
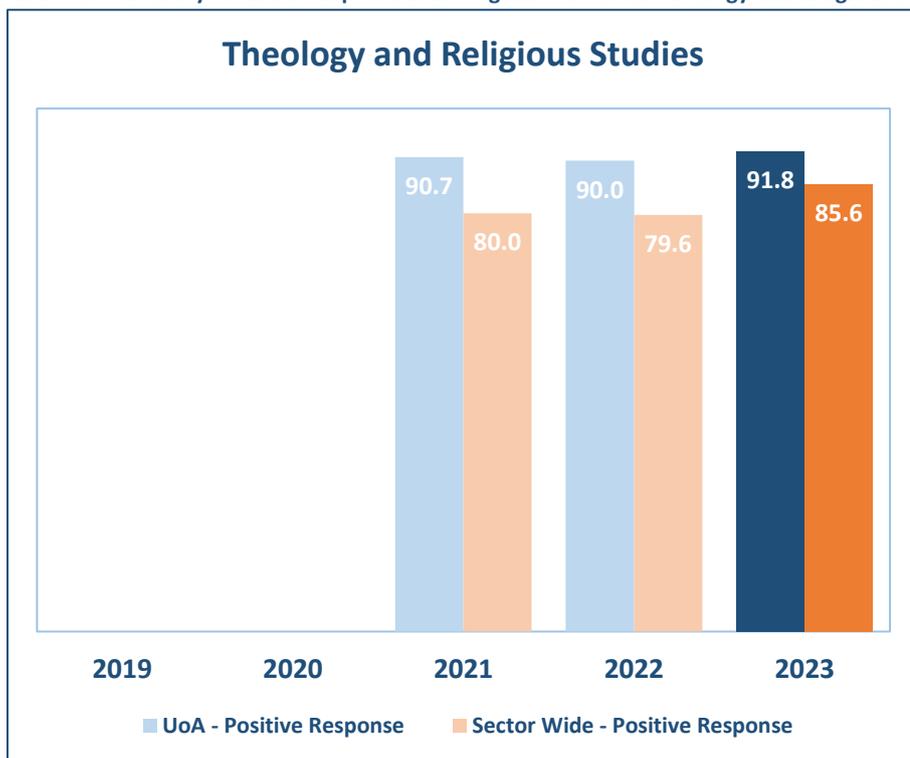
The University of Aberdeen scored 91.8% in 2023 for Theology and Religious Studies (*see chart 53*). This is a positive gap of 6.2 percentage points compared to the sector score. Aberdeen has consistently outperformed the sector for this subject throughout the three years that it has featured in the NSS.

Missing data indicates years in which a subject did not meet the response threshold for inclusion (this can be due to subject recoding or student numbers).

Zoology

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
UoA	82.6	77.2	81.4	82.7	80.4
Sector	78.8	80.1	73.4	73.3	79.3

■ UoA - Positive Response   ■ Sector Wide - Positive Response
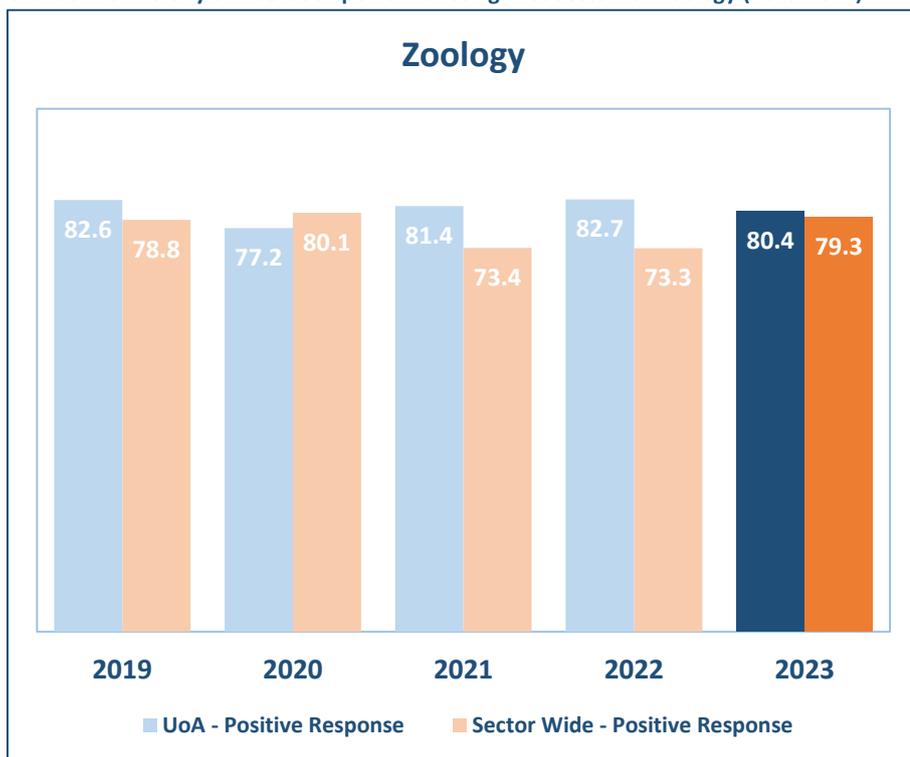
The University of Aberdeen scored greater than the sector for Zoology by 1.1% in 2023 with a score of 80.4% (*see chart 54*); this was the second lowest score for Aberdeen in the past five years.

An overview of the University of Aberdeen's performance for CAH Level 3 with rankings for Positive Response in the UK is presented in Table 4. Table 4 provides the 2022 and 2023 ranks, the change in rank from 2022, the number of institutions offering the subject, and the % agree for positive response. Further detail on School performance at this level can be found in the NSS Power BI dashboard when available.

Table 4: University of Aberdeen performance for CAH Level 3 subjects

Subject (CAH 3)	2023 Rank	2022 Rank	UK Rank Change	No Institutions (2023)	% Agree
BUS					
economics	41	28	-13 ▼	80	77.9
management studies	42	15	-27 ▼	76	78.2
building	27		-	35	73.0
business studies	1		-	90	95.2
finance	18	24	6 ▲	90	87.0
accounting	33	67	34 ▲	99	85.7
DHPAH					
history	61	27	-34 ▼	87	81.1
history of art, architecture and design	1	4	3 ▲	23	96.8
philosophy	1	9	8 ▲	49	93.6
theology and religious studies	6	2	-4 ▼	24	91.8
EDU					
education	10	17	7 ▲	78	91.6
teacher training	8	34	26 ▲	55	88.6
ENG					
mechanical engineering	26	19	-7 ▼	72	79.5
civil engineering	46	40	-6 ▼	60	74.7
electrical and electronic engineering	3	32	29 ▲	68	86.7
chemical, process and energy engineering	31	10	-21 ▼	35	67.4
GEO					
earth sciences	6	1	-5 ▼	27	84.7
physical geographical sciences	18	29	11 ▲	43	83.7
human geography	17	8	-9 ▼	42	84.0
LAW					
law	27	23	-4 ▼	109	81.9
LLMVC					
English studies (non-specific)	2	19	17 ▲	44	91.3
creative writing	5	23	18 ▲	64	91.6
French studies	9	14	5 ▲	33	87.0
linguistics	1	2	1 ▲	31	94.3
music	59	2	-57 ▼	68	72.3
cinematics and photography	41	2	-39 ▼	77	79.3
MMSN					
medicine (non-specific)	4	1	-3 ▼	32	84.4
pharmacology	15	4	-11 ▼	28	80.8
anatomy, physiology and pathology	1	1	0 ■	26	91.4
biomedical sciences (non-specific)	12	3	-9 ▼	83	85.9
microbiology and cell science	6	8	2 ▲	18	84.0
genetics	12	11	-1 ▼	15	75.4
molecular biology, biophysics and biochemistry	13	19	6 ▲	51	83.9
others in biosciences	3	2	-1 ▼	21	85.9
sport and exercise sciences	52	27	-25 ▼	80	82.6
NCS					
physics	4	18	14 ▲	45	90.5
mathematics	6	27	21 ▲	65	89.7
computer science	32	54	22 ▲	105	80.3
PSY					
psychology	32	5	-27 ▼	109	82.7
SBS					
biology (non-specific)	3	18	15 ▲	47	89.5
zoology	17	2	-15 ▼	32	80.4
SOCSCI					
sociology	3	16	13 ▲	101	89.7
anthropology	2	3	1 ▲	20	89.7
politics	20	13	-7 ▼	80	84.6

Note: Yellow highlighting shows where the University of Aberdeen has ranked 1st in the UK

The University of Aberdeen ranked 1st in the UK for five subjects: anatomy, physiology and pathology, business studies, history of art, architecture and design, linguistics and philosophy (*see table 4*).

Another nine subjects ranked elsewhere in the top five in the UK: anthropology, biology (non-specific), English studies (non-specific), others in biosciences, electrical and electronic engineering, medicine (non-specific), physics, sociology and creative writing.

A further seven subjects ranked elsewhere in the top ten in the UK: earth sciences, mathematics, microbiology and cell science, theology and religious studies, French studies, teacher training and education.

This brings the number of CAH Level 3 subjects ranked in the UK Top-10 for the University of Aberdeen to 21 out of 43 subjects.

Chart 55: Positive Response by University of Aberdeen School for NSS 2023
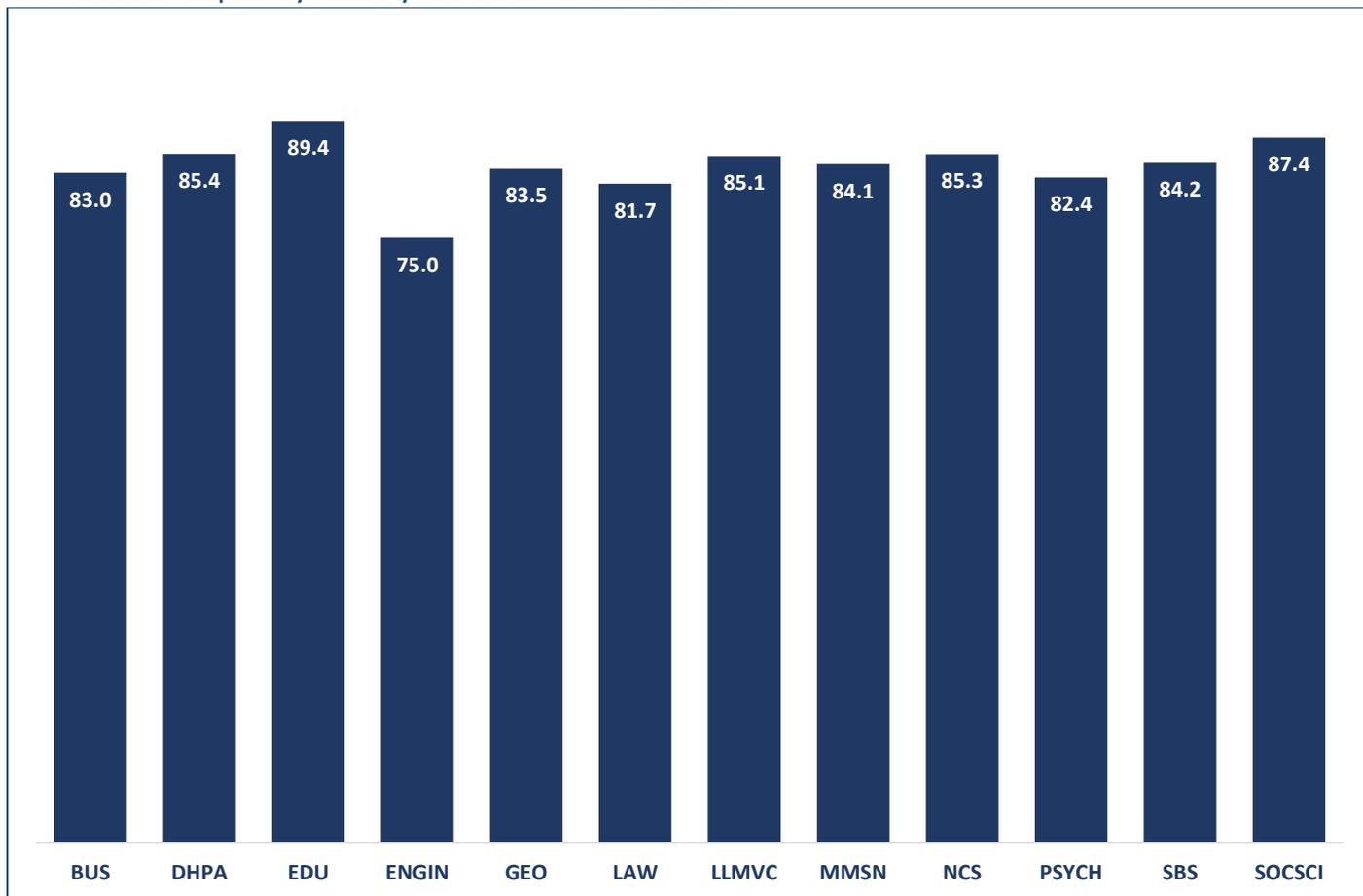
The greatest positive response score across the twelve schools was for Education at 89.4, followed by Social Science at 87.4, and Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History at 85.4 (*see chart 55*).

No Schools scored greater than 90% in 2023. However, this result should not be directly compared with the result of 2022 due to differing questions and reporting methodology.

Eleven of twelve Schools at the University of Aberdeen scored a positive response greater than 80%. The sole school to score less than 80% was Engineering at 75%.

BUS

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
75.8	71.8	75.6	77.3	83.0
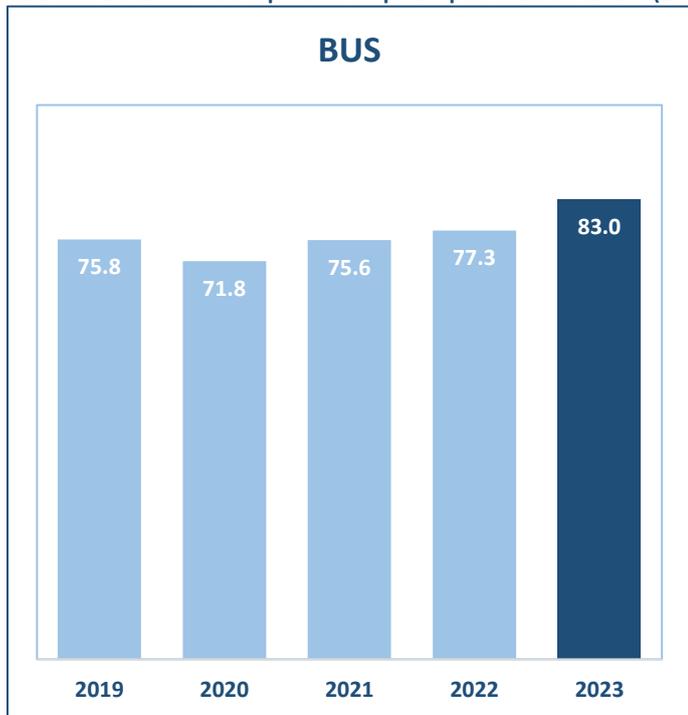
The Business school scored its highest positive response of the past five years at 83.0% (*see chart 56*). Scores have fluctuated around the mid-70%s from 2019 to 2022. The 2023 score was the first in the past five years to exceed 80%.

Chart 57: School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

DHPA

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
81.1	80.5	79.2	80.9	85.4
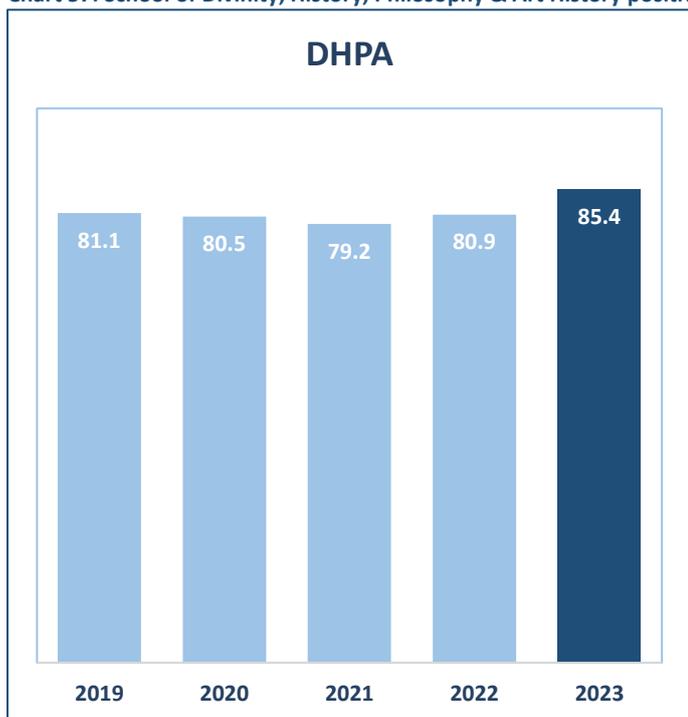
The School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History scored its highest positive response for the past five years at 85.4% (*see chart 57*).

Chart 58: School of Education positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)
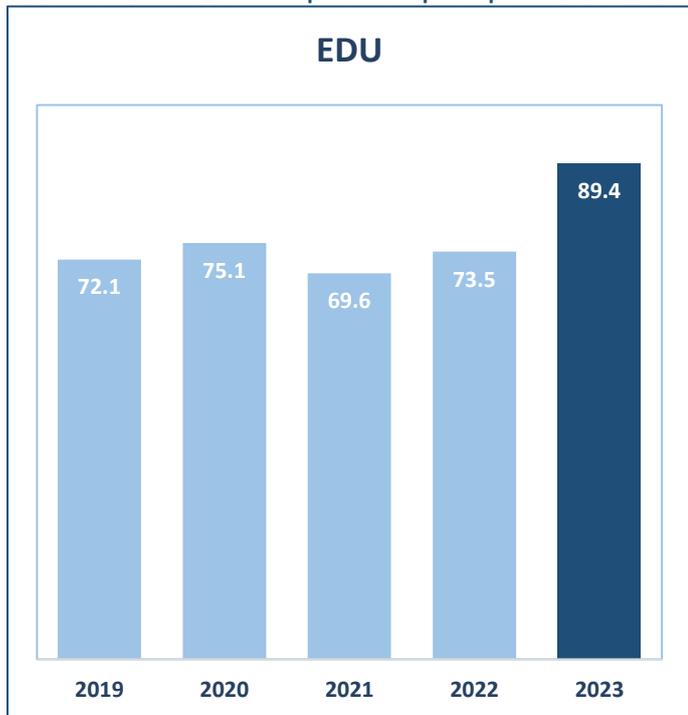
EDU

The School of Education scored its highest positive response of the past five years in 2023, at 89.4%, following an increase of 15.9% points (*see chart 58)*.

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
72.1	75.1	69.6	73.5	89.4

Chart 59: School of Engineering positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)
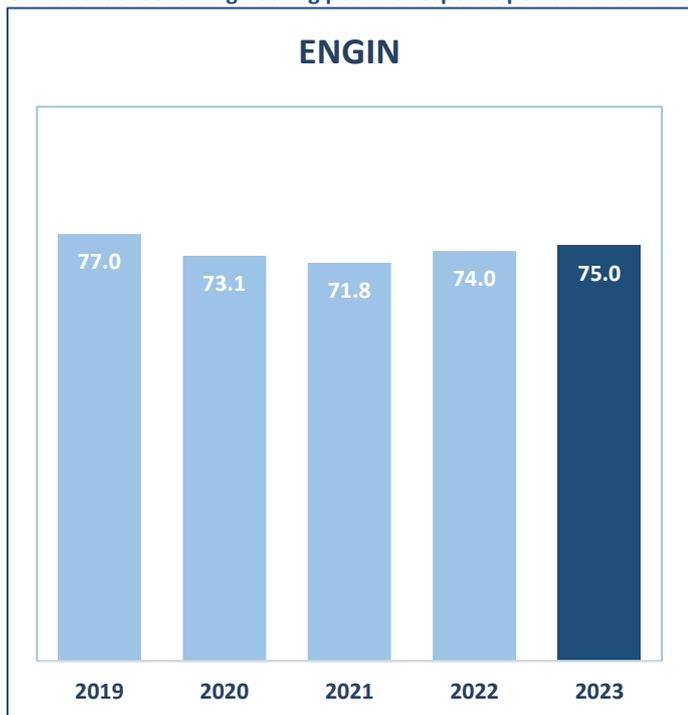
ENGIN

The School of Engineering scored 75.0% in 2023, a minor increase of one point from 2022 (*see chart 59*). This score was the second highest score in the last five years.

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
77.0	73.1	71.8	74.0	75.0

Chart 60: School of Geosciences positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

GEO

| Year	Score
2019	79.2
2020	76.0
2021	76.6
2022	82.2
2023	83.5

The School of Geosciences scored its highest score of the past five years in 2023 at 83.5% (*see chart 60*). This was a minor increase from 2022 at 82.2%.

Chart 61: School of Law positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

LAW

Year	Score
2019	81.1
2020	77.1
2021	75.2
2022	76.1
2023	81.7
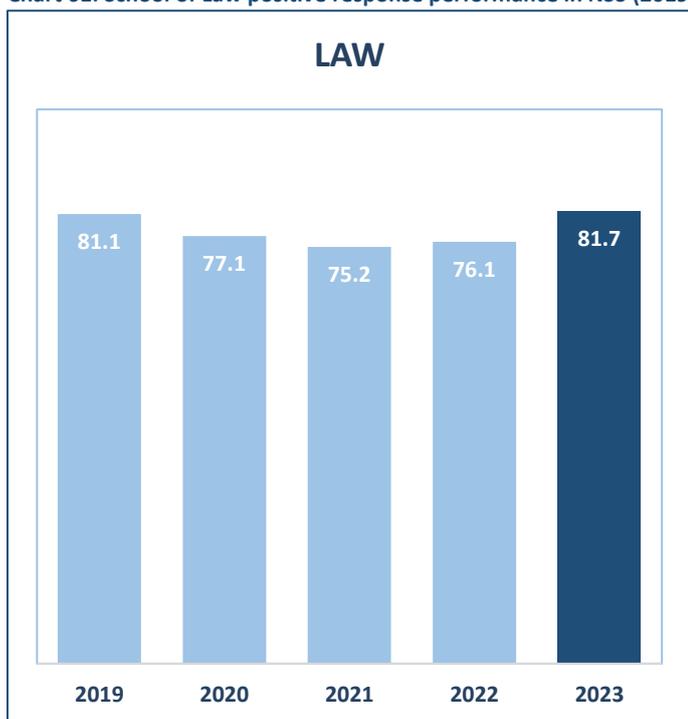
The School of Law scored 81.7% in 2023, the greatest score of the past five years and marginally higher than the second highest score at 81.1% in 2019 (*see chart 61*).

Chart 62: School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

LLMVC

Year	Value
2019	79.3
2020	82.1
2021	77.7
2022	82.3
2023	85.1
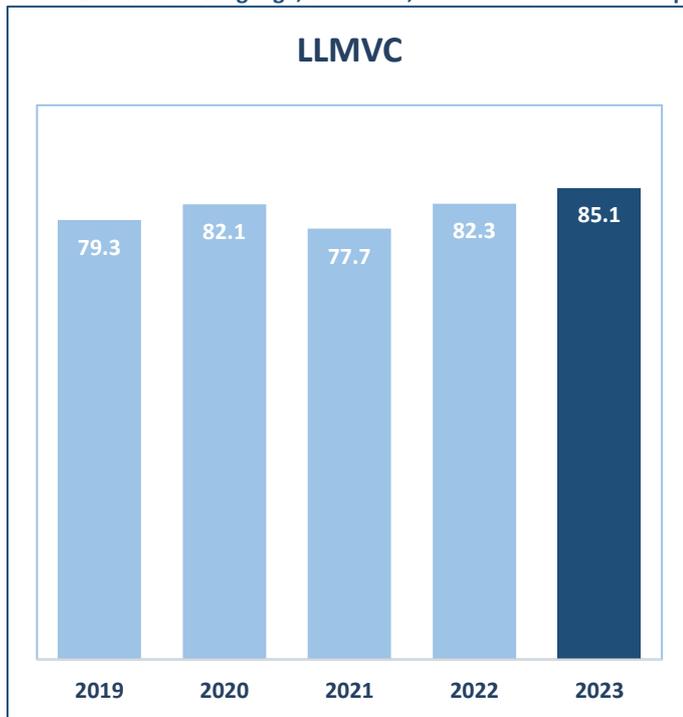
The School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture scored 85.1% positive response in 2023, the highest of the past five years (*see chart 62*).

Chart 63: School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

MMSN

Year	Value
2019	84.2
2020	82.7
2021	77.4
2022	79.9
2023	84.1

The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition scored 84.1% in 2023, marginally the second highest score of the prior 5 years (*see chart 63*). The highest score was 84.2% in 2019.

NCS

77.4	79.8	76.3	72.5	85.3
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
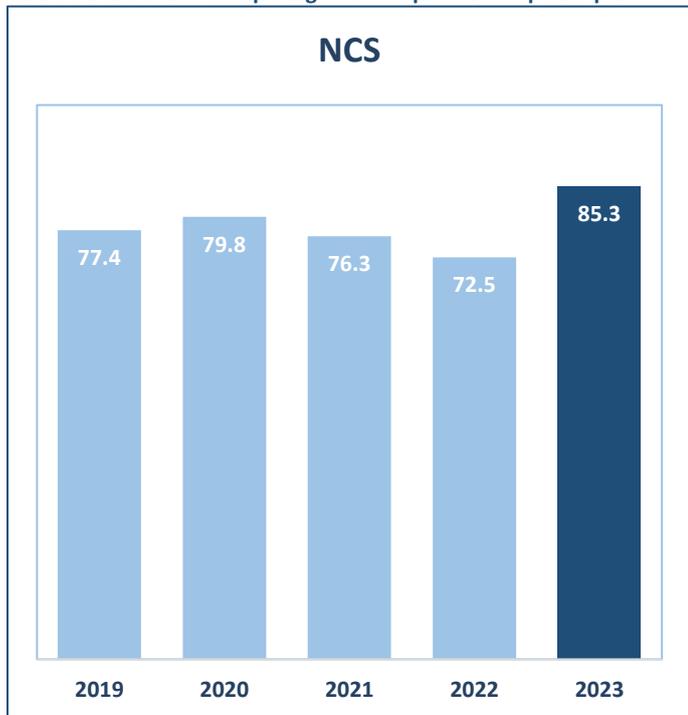
The School of Natural & Computing Sciences scored by far its highest score of the past five years in 2023 at 85.3% (*see chart 64*). The second greatest score was 2020 at 79.8%.

PSYCH

82.9	82.5	73.0	82.5	82.4
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

The School of Psychology scored its second-lowest score of the past five years at 82.4% (*see chart 65*). However, this was negligibly different from all years except the lowest-scoring, 2021 at 73.0%.

Chart 66: School of Biological Sciences positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

SBS

81.2 81.1 78.9 76.9 84.2

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

The School of Biological Sciences scored its highest score of the past five years at 84.2% in 2023 (*see chart 66*). This was slightly higher than the next-greatest at 81.2% in 2019.

Chart 67: School of Social Science positive response performance in NSS (2019-2023)

SOCSCI

79.4 76.2 72.0 77.4 87.4

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023
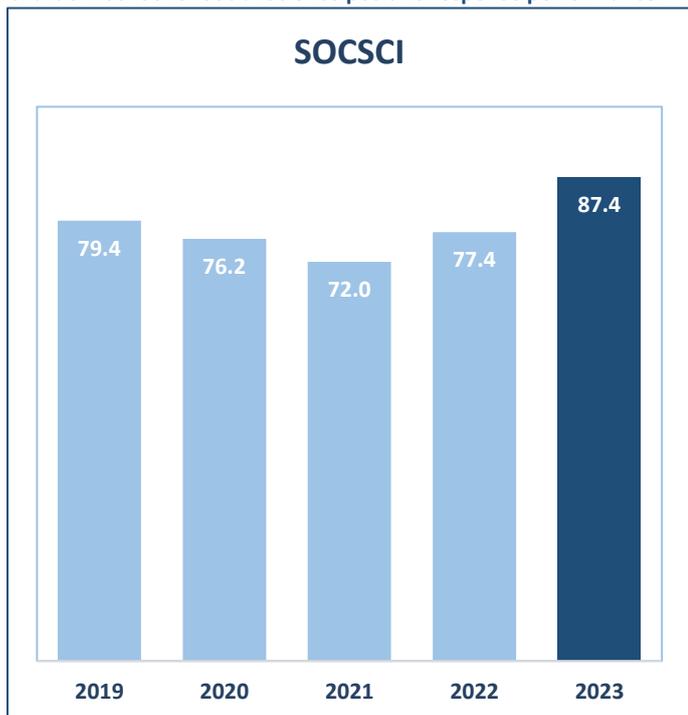
The School of Social Science scored the highest score of the past five years in 2023 at 87.4% (*see chart 67)*. This was 8% greater than the next highest at 79.4% in 2019.

NSS 2023: University of Aberdeen overall performance in overall satisfaction

National Student Survey 2023 Overall Satisfaction

'Overall satisfaction' is based on positive responses to **Q28. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.**

Overall Satisfaction 84.7% ▼ (down 0.9 pp from 2022)

Year	Overall Satisfaction	Overall Satisfaction (UK Rank)	Overall Satisfaction (UK Rank excl. England)	Overall Satisfaction (Scottish Rank)
2023	**84.7**	**N/A**	**2nd**	**2nd**
2022	85.6	4th	3rd	2nd
difference	-0.9		1	
movement	▼		▲	■

Table 5: University of Aberdeen performance in the National Student Survey 2023 for overall satisfaction compared with 2022.

The University of Aberdeen's % Agree score for overall satisfaction has fallen by 0.9% between 2022 and 2023 (*see table 5*). The University of Aberdeen ranked 2nd of participating UK universities (i.e. excluding English institutions) in 2023, a one-place increase from 3rd place in 2022 compared to the same group of institutions. However, Aberdeen remained ranked 2nd in Scotland between 2023 and 2022.

Chart 68: University of Aberdeen performance for NSS overall satisfaction (2019-2023)

The University of Aberdeen marginally reduced by 0.9% in overall satisfaction score from 2022 to 2023. This is the second lowest score since 2019 (*see chart 68*).

Please note that a UK rank for overall satisfaction is no longer available due to the discontinuation of this question in England.

Chart 69: University of Aberdeen School performance in Overall Satisfaction for NSS 2023
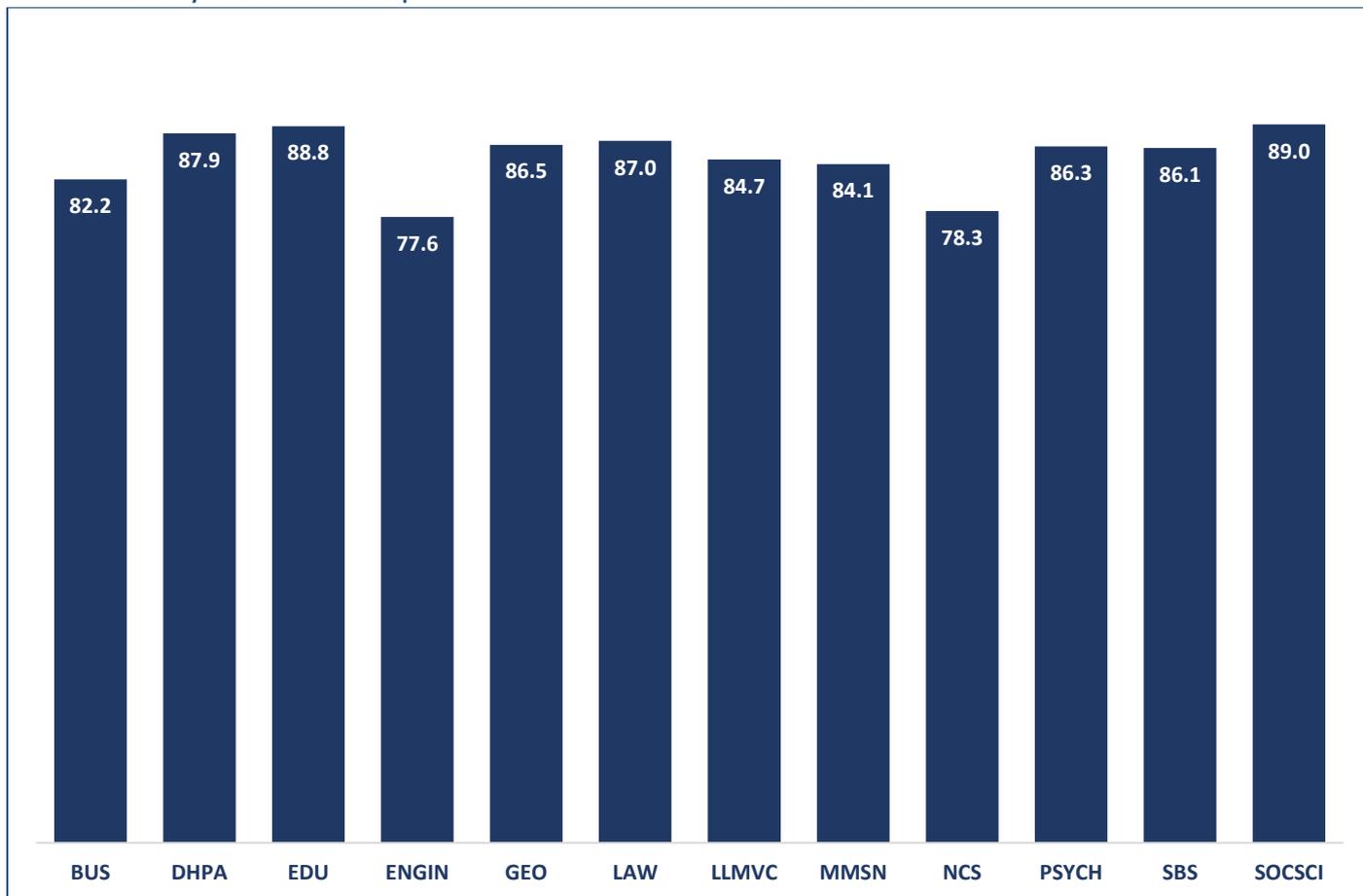
Across the twelve Schools at the University of Aberdeen, the greatest score for overall satisfaction in 2023 was the School of Social Science at 89.0% (*see chart 69*). This was marginally greater the School of Education at 88.8% at second highest scoring. However, no Schools scored greater than or equal to 90% in 2023.

Ten of the twelve Schools in total scored greater than 80%, placing only two marginally outside this. The Schools of Engineering and Natural & Computing Sciences scored 77.6% and 78.3% respectively. The difference between the maximum (Social Science) and minimum (Engineering) School scores was 11.4%.

BUS

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
84.6	78.2	82.9	80.3	82.2
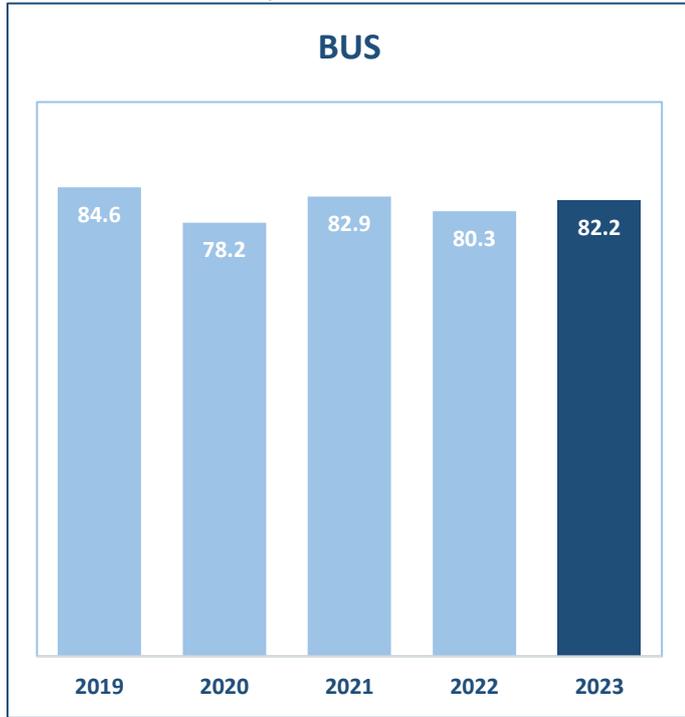
The Business School scored 82.2% overall satisfaction for 2023 (*see chart 70)*. This was third highest at 2.4% lower than the maximum score of 84.6% in 2019.

Chart 71: School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History performance in NSS Overall Satisfaction (2019-2023)

DHPA

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
88.8	90.3	87.2	92.9	87.9
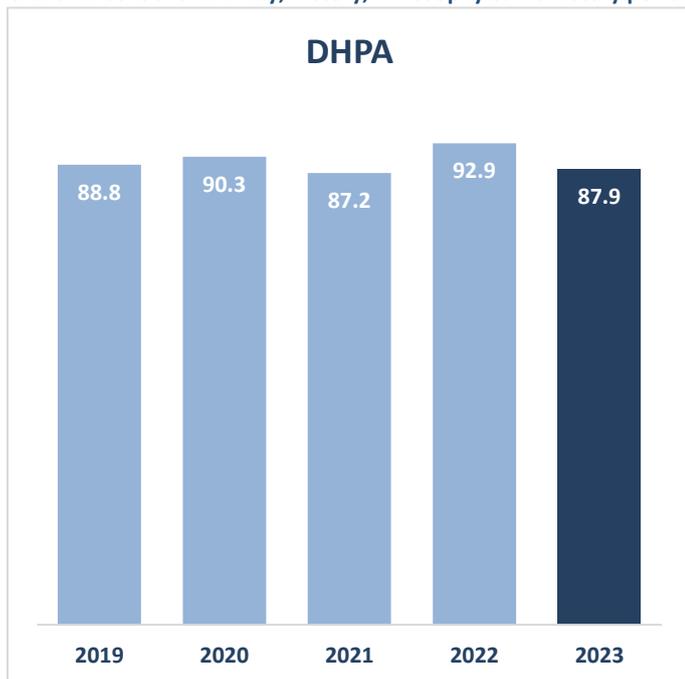
The School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History scored second lowest of the past five years at 87.9% (*see chart 71*). This score was five points lower than the peak of 92.9% in 2022.

Chart 72: School of Education performance in NSS Overall Satisfaction (2019-2023)

EDU

72.0	71.1	76.9	75.0	88.8
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
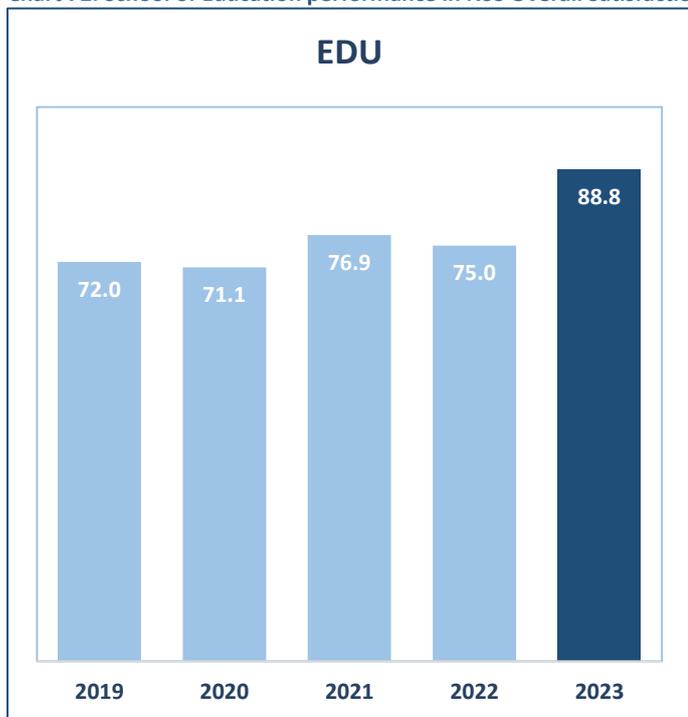
The School of Education scored its highest score of the prior five years in 2023 at 88.8% (*see chart 72*). This was 17.7% greater than the lowest reported score of 71.1% in 2020.

Chart 73: School of Engineering performance in NSS Overall Satisfaction (2019-2023)

ENGIN

81.3	80.8	80.5	87.5	77.6
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
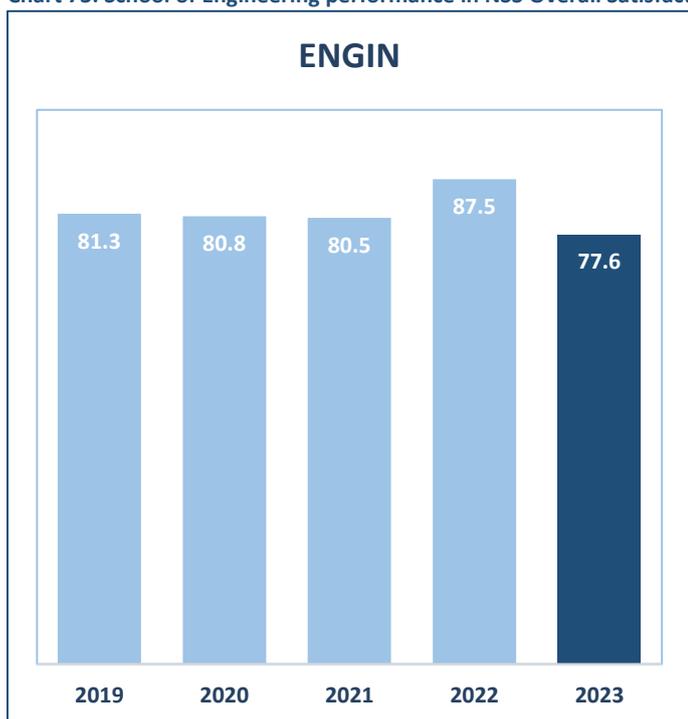
The School of Engineering scored its lowest score of the past five years in 2023 at 77.6% (*see chart 73*). This contrasts with its maximum score of 87.5% in the previous year.

GEO

Year	Score
2019	86.0
2020	86.1
2021	82.9
2022	92.9
2023	86.5

The School of Geosciences scored the second highest score of the past five years in 2023 at 86.5% (*see chart 74*). This contrasts with its maximum score of 92.9% from the previous year.

LAW

Year	Score
2019	92.2
2020	93.8
2021	90.2
2022	90.5
2023	87.0
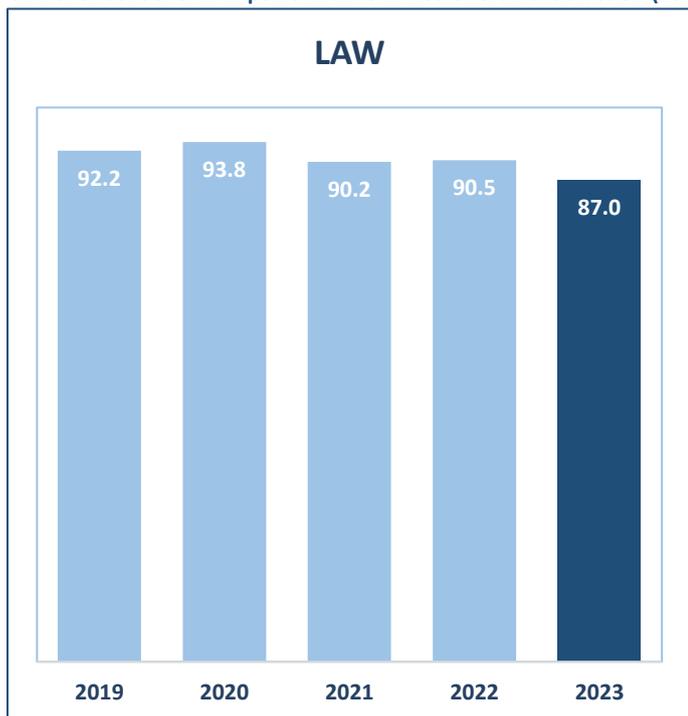
The School of Law has achieved a score of 87.0% in 2023 for overall satisfaction (*see chart 75)*. This was the lowest score of the past five years at 6.8% lower than the maximum score from 2020.

LLMVC

Year	Score
2019	85.3
2020	92.1
2021	88.9
2022	86.8
2023	84.7
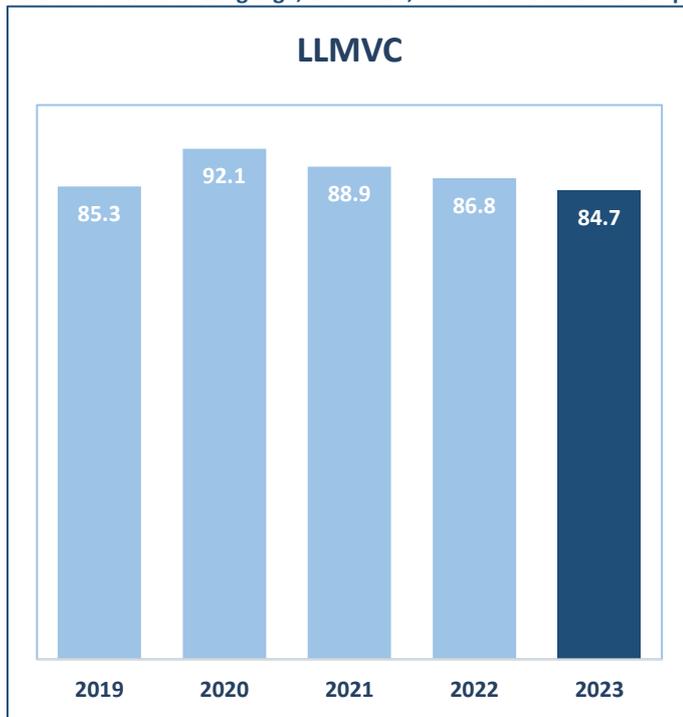
The School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture scored 84.7% in 2023, the lowest score of the past five years (*see chart 76).*

MMSN

Year	Score
2019	94.0
2020	89.9
2021	86.1
2022	87.7
2023	84.1

The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition scored 84.1% in 2023, the lowest score of the past five years.

Chart 78: Natural & Computing Sciences performance in NSS Overall Satisfaction (2019-2023)

NCS

Year	Score
2019	82.3
2020	84.8
2021	84.7
2022	79.5
2023	78.3

The School of Natural & Computing Science scored 78.3% in 2023, the lowest score of the past five years (*see chart 78*).

Chart 79: School of Psychology performance in NSS Overall Satisfaction (2019-2023)

PSYCH

Year	Score
2019	91.0
2020	95.6
2021	85.7
2022	96.3
2023	86.3

The School of Psychology has had a variable score over the past five years (*see chart 79*). The 2023 overall satisfaction score was 86.3%, 10 points lower than the maximum of 96.3% in 2022.

SBS

Year	Score
2019	90.9
2020	87.5
2021	85.2
2022	81.0
2023	86.1

The School of Biological Sciences scored 86.1% overall satisfaction in 2023, an increase from the previous year (*see chart 80).*

SOCSCI

Year	Score
2019	86.9
2020	90.7
2021	81.0
2022	88.9
2023	89.0
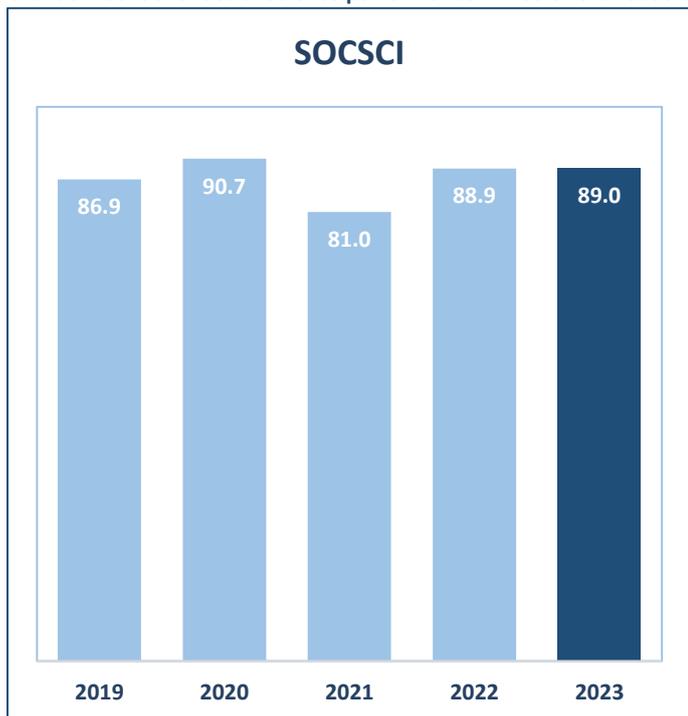
The School of Social Science scored a second-highest score of 89.0% in 2023, marginally behind 2020 at 90.7% (*see chart 81).*

SECTION THREE: RESPONSE RATES

NSS Response Rates

Chart 82: University of Aberdeen performance for Response Rate (2019-2023)
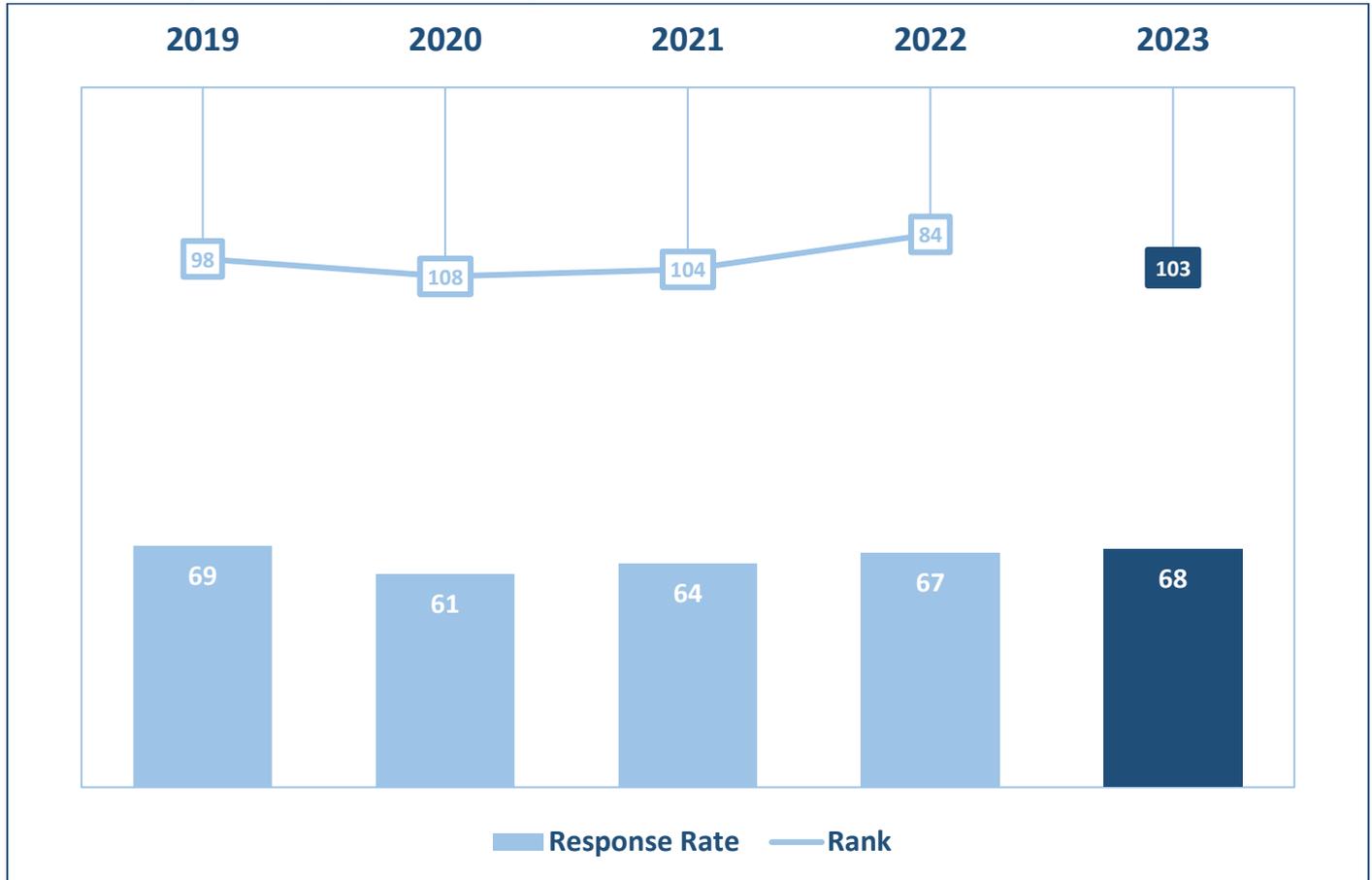
The University of Aberdeen increased by one percentage point in response rate from 67% to 68% in 2023; this was the second-greatest score for the past five years (*see chart 82).* This was contrasted by a drop of 19 places in response rate ranking from 84th to 103rd.

Expanded report

This report is an initial report on the headline National Student Survey results, and will be followed by an expanded version that will include analysis of the following additional areas:

- Demographic analyses: Age, Disability, Ethnicity, Gender, IMD
- Qualitative analyses of students' comments
- Optional bank questions
- Estimated impact on league tables

It is intended that the expanded version of this report will be made available no later than 31st August 2023.

NSS Results Dashboard

A Power BI dashboard will be made available to Schools for their use. The Dashboard includes the following information:

Overall Results:

Headline	Main headlines for 2023
Summary 2022	Scoring, rank and quartile showing change against 2022 (all questions)
Rolling Five Years	Scoring, rank and quartile (user has option to choose year)
Ranking List	Listing of universities ranked (allows user to view our performance against other universities). The user has option to choose year and question to view.

Subject Results:

Subject Analysis	Bar chart displaying scores allowing user to compare Aberdeen's performance against other institutions (user has option to choose subject and question).
Subject Score	Heatmap giving an overview of Aberdeen's scoring by School and Subject for all questions.
Subject Rank	Overview of Aberdeen's ranking by School and Subject for all questions (rank is colour coded by quartile)
Subject Details	Scoring and Rank by School and Subject (user has option of choosing question or group of questions)
Highlight 100%	Overview of Aberdeen's scoring by School and Subject for all questions highlighting those which have scored 100%
Top Ten Ranking	Overview of Aberdeen's ranking by School and Subject for all questions highlighting those which are ranked within top 10.

Chris Souter, Linda Murdoch, Lisa Gove, and James Buchanan
Directorate of Planning and Governance

APPENDIX

For ranking purposes, the University of Aberdeen is currently for 2023 ranked out of the 121 UK higher education institutions as listed below, which represent institutions included in the most recent Guardian University Guide. Please note that although this list includes the University of Cambridge and University of Oxford, these two institutions have not ordinarily participated in the National Student Survey in recent years. However, the University of Oxford has been included in NSS 2023. Please note that because inclusion in the Guardian University Guide changes year-on-year, there will be slight changes to the list for each previous year.

- 10000291 Anglia Ruskin University Higher Corporation
- 10000571 Bath Spa University
- 10000824 Bournemouth University
- 10000886 University of Brighton
- 10000961 Brunel University London
- 10000975 Buckinghamshire New University
- 10001143 Canterbury Christ Church University
- 10001282 University of Northumbria at Newcastle
- 10001478 City, University of London
- 10001726 Coventry University
- 10001883 De Montfort University
- 10002718 Goldsmiths' College
- 10003270 Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine
- 10003614 University of Winchester
- 10003645 King's College London
- 10003678 Kingston University
- 10003861 Leeds Beckett University
- 10003863 Leeds Trinity University
- 10003956 Liverpool Hope University
- 10003957 Liverpool John Moores University
- 10004048 London Metropolitan University
- 10004063 The London School of Economics and Political Science
- 10004078 London South Bank University
- 10004113 Loughborough University
- 10004180 Manchester Metropolitan University
- 10004351 Middlesex University
- 10004797 Nottingham Trent University
- 10004930 Oxford Brookes University
- 10005337 Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
- 10005343 Queen's University of Belfast
- 10005500 The Robert Gordon University
- 10005553 Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
- 10005790 Sheffield Hallam University
- 10006022 Solent University
- 10006299 Staffordshire University
- 10006566 The University of West London
- 10006840 The University of Birmingham
- 10006841 The University of Bolton
- 10006842 The University of Liverpool
- 10007137 The University of Chichester
- 10007138 University of Northampton, The
- 10007139 University of Worcester
- 10007140 Birmingham City University
- 10007141 University of Central Lancashire
- 10007143 University of Durham
- 10007144 University of East London
- 10007145 University of Gloucestershire
- 10007146 University of Greenwich
- 10007147 University of Hertfordshire
- 10007148 The University of Huddersfield
- 10007149 The University of Hull
- 10007150 The University of Kent
- 10007151 University of Lincoln
- 10007152 University of Bedfordshire
- 10007154 University of Nottingham, The

- 10007155 University of Portsmouth
- 10007156 University of Salford, The
- 10007157 The University of Sheffield
- 10007158 University of Southampton
- 10007159 University of Sunderland
- 10007160 The University of Surrey
- 10007161 Teesside University
- 10007162 University of the Arts, London
- 10007163 The University of Warwick
- 10007164 University of the West of England, Bristol
- 10007165 The University of Westminster
- 10007166 University of Wolverhampton
- 10007167 University of York
- 10007713 York St John University
- 10007759 Aston University
- 10007762 Glasgow Caledonian University
- 10007764 Heriot-Watt University
- 10007767 University of Keele
- 10007768 The University of Lancaster
- 10007772 Edinburgh Napier University
- 10007774 University of Oxford
- 10007775 Queen Mary University of London
- 10007776 Roehampton University
- 10007780 The School of Oriental and African Studies
- 10007783 University of Aberdeen
- 10007784 University College London
- 10007785 The University of Bradford
- 10007786 University of Bristol
- 10007788 University of Cambridge
- 10007789 The University of East Anglia
- 10007790 University of Edinburgh
- 10007791 The University of Essex
- 10007792 University of Exeter
- 10007793 University of South Wales
- 10007794 University of Glasgow
- 10007795 The University of Leeds
- 10007796 The University of Leicester
- 10007798 The University of Manchester
- 10007799 University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- 10007800 University of the West of Scotland
- 10007801 University of Plymouth
- 10007802 The University of Reading
- 10007803 University of St Andrews
- 10007804 University of Stirling
- 10007805 University of Strathclyde
- 10007806 University of Sussex
- 10007807 University of Ulster
- 10007814 Cardiff University
- 10007823 Edge Hill University
- 10007833 Wrexham Glyndŵr University
- 10007842 The University of Cumbria
- 10007843 St Mary's University, Twickenham
- 10007848 University of Chester
- 10007849 University of Abertay Dundee
- 10007850 The University of Bath
- 10007851 University of Derby
- 10007852 University of Dundee
- 10007854 Cardiff Metropolitan University
- 10007855 Swansea University
- 10007856 Aberystwyth University
- 10007857 Bangor University
- 10007858 University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- 10008640 Falmouth University
- 10014001 University of Suffolk
- 10006427 University for the Creative Arts
- 10000385 Arts University Bournemouth, the

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**REPORT FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
21ST AUGUST 2023**

1. **Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 03 May 2023**
    1.1: Minutes approved
    1.2: No outstanding actions

2. **Welcome and Chair's Update**
    Nick Edwards (NE) welcomed those attending the meeting online and in person. NE introduced the agenda.

3. **Pastoral Support Review TFG – update**

    Jason Bohan (JB) introduced the paper, which is an update on progress and a request for any thoughts or comments as to whether the work is on the right track. The two main actions JB inherited when he took on the role within SSEC were to look at the website, which was very complex, with staff and student pages interlinked and hard to navigate. Following a review, the website is now more user-friendly. Additionally, JB had an action to address the delivery of pastoral support for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programmes.

    The old website is still online but the paper provides a link to the new website, for comparison and comments. The old staff and student pages will be removed and replaced by one pastoral support website, which summarises how it is delivered across UG and PG programmes, while there is also a password-protected staff page full of useful resources.

    On the PGT pastoral support review, it wasn't possible to extend personal tutor support to PGT students, so JB spoke with schools about current support to find out what is working well and what can be improved. It was felt a lot of work was happening, but it needed to feel more cohesive. Key ideas included ensuring there are named contacts for students rather than an individual or a generic departmental contact, and also ensuring a proactive communications strategy with students as key stakeholders able to provide their input.

    The Student Union representatives expressed disappointment the University could not find the resource to allocate Personal Tutors to PGT students and noted the significant problems faced by international PGT students, especially those who arrive late.

    Several members of the committee noted that Programme Coordinators are not a like-for-like replacement for Personal Tutors, especially as the numbers are much higher. Duncan Stuart (DS) said all the information is sent to incoming PGT students through a comprehensive range of communications, but these rely on the incoming student reading the information they have been sent. Similarly, some schools have tried running a 2nd induction event around week 3, but reported that engagement was very low.

NE concluded by saying the TGF will be wound up but will now become a Senior Pastoral Support & Guidance Forum as a formal group that reports into SSEC. JB said it was long-running TFG and it needed to come to an end, but the new forum will pull all this work together and develop this work going forwards to improve the PGT experience.

4.   Student Absence Policy

JB introduced the agenda item and the background, which is that the Student Absence Policy and associated policies and procedures require some adaptation, due to Old Aberdeen Medical Practice no longer offering letters to students for absences including classes, exams and other assessments. As such, the Absence Policy needs to be flexible to cover instances where a student is unable to obtain a medical letter through no fault of their own.

The main changes to the policy are around an expansion of acceptable forms of evidence and discussion around allowing students more scope for self-certifying.

Lesley Murdoch (LM) noted that from a Student Support Services perspective, a move away from the insistence on medical evidence was seen as a positive development. Also, it will be beneficial to allow the schools to have more discretion, rather than referring students to the Student Support team to have the same conversation they already had with their school, to then get a letter of support as evidence.

John Cavanagh from the School of Engineering noted that students cannot be expected to read the policies and felt sometimes school staff did not fully-understand the policies. NE added that often students would only look up a policy if they were absent, so that left a potential gap where students may sit any assessments when unwell, as they are unaware of the policies and procedures.

On the discussion around what constitutes "good cause", JB suggested it would possibly make more sense to have a list of circumstances which do not constitute good cause, rather than trying to create an exhaustive list of circumstances which do meet the criteria.

NE suggested point 1.5 was worth looking at again, as the wording appears to suggest the implementation of a 'fit to sit policy', but said he was not sure this document was the right place for such a statement and was wary of anything which made it sound like a formal 'fit to sit' policy was in place. JB summarised the discussion as being broadly positive, with some concern around the phrasing of 'fit to sit' which may need amending.

5.   NSS Initial Report

JB noted the NSS seems quite different this year, with changes in questions and reporting processes. JB will be visiting schools to follow up on school-specific feedback. NE said it is always easier to digest once the numbers have been broken down by category to give more detail.

6.   Survey Season Proposal

DS introduced the agenda item and paper, noting the focus of the surveys is generally on all student surveys, or those which go to large student of students. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of learning and teaching questions were added to the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey. Some questions will be added to next survey, on areas like immigration and equality, diversity and inclusion. The survey is already seen to be lengthy, so the size will be reduced where possible. The teaching and learning question will now be removed, but there is a proposal to have learning and teaching as a stand-alone survey, which will run at the same time as other academic surveys, in the first two to three months of the year.

The potential for survey fatigue was discussed, with DS noting that all questions in all surveys are assessed to ensure there is a clear reason for asking the question and that we only gather data we can action. There were several questions about breaking down the results with more granular detail and these queries will be followed-up on as an action from this meeting.

7. **Reflection on final report of SSEC Task and Finish Group**

NE introduced the paper on the new code of practice on student discipline, which is mainly for information. This has now been updated on the University website and has been reconfirmed through the E-Registration system. Also, on the website, there is a guide for students on the policy to break the information down and be more manageable, especially for those wishing to make a report based on areas the code covers. There will be more work on this in terms of publicity and the TFG has now finished, but the code will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis.

8. **Student Monitoring and Engagement TFG**

JB offered his thanks to everyone involved in the Monitoring and Engagement TFG as it's been a very large piece of work, ongoing since 2021. The main update is on the old IT systems in place which added significantly to staff workload. The TFC drew up a list of recommended updates and the list was then revised based on feedback. The list now includes 10 updates which have now been approved, so the TFG will remain in place to oversee this work.

9. **Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation Internal Data 2021/22**

JB introduced the paper, which is based on all students and run internally. Non-continuing rates are up from 3.2% in the previous year to 5.1% in 2021/22. As the data is broken down by school, it's a very useful report for identifying trends, and also trends across cohorts. There is also some data relating to disability, ethnicity and gender. The data will be used by schools to develop their action plans, especially for those school performing less well in this area.

Graeme Kirkpatrick from the Student Union said the non-continuation rates within the School of Engineering are high and consistent with how the school scores across other metrics such as the NSS. JB said the school was unusual in that non-continuation rates were high in Year 3 as well as Year 1. JC said within Engineering there has been a bigger drop-out rate at the

start of Year 3 as the engineering discipline becomes more specific rather than general. The course also gets a lot harder at level 3, but the issues are being addressed.

The committee then discussed the challenges of obtaining useable data on non-continuing students, as they often do not engage, and many leavers do not go into any detail on their reasons for non-continuation. Where useable data exists, there was a request for this to be broken down into areas such as disability and widening access categories, to identify trends.

10.   **AOCB**

No other items for discussion.

11.   **Further information**
10.1: Further information may be obtained from Nick Edwards, Co-Chair, (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk), Jason Bohan, Co-Chair (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk) or Stevie Kearney, Clerk, (steven.kearney@abdn.ac.uk).

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEWS TO 2028

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper provides an overview of the schedule for forthcoming Internal Teaching Reviews until academic year 2027/2028. The schedule has been updated following changes to the previously agreed schedule.
>
> This paper is provided for **information**.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	Quality Assurance Committee	23 August 2023
	University Education Committee	29 August 2023

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The Quality Assurance Committee is invited to **note** the ITR Schedule to 2028.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24 and Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland (QAAS) Guidance on Institution-Led Review within the Quality Enhancement Framework advises that *'All aspects of provision are expected to be reviewed systematically and rigorously on a cycle of not more than six years to demonstrate that institutions meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and the standards set out in part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015)'.*

4.2   Each year, a number of Schools undergo the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process, according to the indicative schedule published in advance. We endeavour to ensure that all Schools are reviewed within the relevant timeframe and that this is before the maximum six year deadline. Schools, therefore, are reviewed on a cycle based on 5 academic years, as opposed to six. This is to ensure compliance with the SFC and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) regulations.

4.3   As previously published, the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture was due to be reviewed in AY 2022/23, and the School of Education was due to be reviewed in AY 2023/24. Due to unforeseen circumstances, both reviews have been postponed to the following academic year, which remains compliant with the SFC and QAA guidelines.

4.4   The Schedule is appended as **Appendix A**.

5.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Liam Dyker (Acting Assistant Registrar, Academic Services) on liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk.

1 June 2023
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

SCHEDULE OF FORTHCOMING REVIEWS

Date of Review	School	Period Under Review
AY 2023/2024		
Autumn (Oct 2023)	School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture	2017/2018 – 2022/2023
Spring (Mar 2024)	School of Biological Sciences	2018/2019 – 2022/2023
AY 2024/2025		
Autumn (Oct 2024)	School of Engineering	2019/2020 – 2023/2024
Autumn (Nov 2024)	School of Education	2018/2019 – 2023/2024
Spring (Mar 2025)	School of Natural and Computing Science	2019/2020 – 2023/2024
AY 2025/2026		
Autumn (Nov 2025)	School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (Medical Sciences)	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
Spring (Feb 2026)	School of Law	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
Spring (Mar 2026)	School of Social Science	2020/2021 – 2024/2025
AY 2026/2027		
Autumn (Oct 2026)	School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (Medicine and Dentistry)	2021/2022 – 2025/2026
Spring (Feb 2027)	School of Geosciences	2021/2022 – 2025/2026
Spring (Mar 2027)	School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	2021/2022 – 2025/2026
AY 2027/2028		
Autumn (Nov 2027)	Business School	2022/2023 – 2026/2027
Spring (Mar 2028)	School of Psychology	2022/2023 – 2026/2027

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STUDENT MONITORING ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT TFG UPDATE

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update on progress made by the Student Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Considered by	SSEC	21st August
Further consideration by	UEC	29th August

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

SSEC is invited to **note** the establishment of the digital project group and progress of the monitoring group activities.

4.   BACKGROUND

The Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group (the TFG) was established in Autumn 2021 with a remit to 1) propose the enhanced new approach to student monitoring and engagement process; and 2) review existing processes and systems and identify areas for present improvement.   The TFG has representatives from academics, school professional services leads and school staff who carry out the monitoring process, Registry, eLearning, Directorate of Digital and Information Services, student support (including visas, disability and careers), Qatar Director of Studies, other AFG colleagues, students and Business Improvement.   The wide composition was to ensure that all relevant voices were heard in identifying challenges in the current processes and systems and university wide needs for the future. the TFG identified that there was need to enhance IT systems supporting monitoring, absence and engagement processes and to establish a community of practice to share good practice and develop streamlined and consistent practices across the institution.

The student monitoring system runs throughout the academic year to identify students who may be experiencing difficulties with their studies and to ensure that students remain on track for their degree. This is often referred to as the C6/C7 process (codes that are applied to individual student records in the Student Records System). The monitoring process is key to supporting students. It does involve, however, a significant amount of manual processing by staff to identify these students before we can try and support them to get back on track. This is largely due to the number of separate systems that are used to monitor students which requires duplication of work, cross-checking etc. In addition students can be confused by the process or the language used (i.e. what is a C6?) and they may have to advise of their absence, for example, via more than one system or to separate areas of the university, and separately respond to multiple C6 notices relating to the same events.

Supporting students through their learning journey is a key component of the Aberdeen 2040 Education Strategy "Our education is open to all. We will provide an environment in which all students can achieve success, whatever their background or personal characteristics" (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/2040/education-research/index.php). It is also integral to the Inclusive strand of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy ie the university will "Care for the wellbeing, health and safety for our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential" https://www.abdn.ac.uk/2040/inclusive/index.php

5. **Update on Monitoring, Absence, and Engagement TFG activities**

5.1 IT enhancements to My Timetable and Student Records Systems

An initial business case was presented to the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) in January 2023 detailing a list of IT enhancements recommended by the TFG. This list was revised based on feedback provided by members of DSC and informed by subsequent conversations with key stakeholders (DDIS, Student Support, Registry, SAM's, TFG). Key changes made have been to revise the list of recommended IT improvements to focus on activities that are considered deliverable in the 23/24 academic year as judged by stakeholders (DDIS and Registry), and re-prioritised by TFG, school staff (who took part in the original process reviews in Spring 2022) and SAMs.

A business case was approved at the May 2023 meeting of the Digital Strategy Committee for the establishment of a Project to deliver ten enhancements to My Timetable and the Student Records System. The project will alleviate staff workload in a number of areas and ensure a more joined up view of individual students' engagement on courses and programmes by improvements to My Timetable and Student Records Systems. This will enable more effective student support to be provided, more effective monitoring and subsequently a positive impact on continuation rates whilst also addressing staff workload concerns.

The Digital Strategy Committee approved the business case with the scope of the project being to deliver the desired enhancements defined in Table 1 of the Business Case.

Table 1: List of IT improvements to be made to My Timetable and SRS

MyTimetable
Download "students on course" list indicating attendance, in excel format so that the file can reformatted/analysed for various purposes
Report on who hasn't attended a teaching session; eg easier to see which teaching session a student has attended if different from the one they were allocated to
QR codes being available via a report from MyTimetable, rather than having to copy the code to a word file to obtain them and also automated naming of codes (have to manually name them at present)
Highlight those with a student visa so that is easier to monitor them
Other improvements to MyTimetable, eg, a "hover" over the authorised absence symbol that gives the reason for the absence
Being able to email students directly from MyTimetable to flag their absence (and cc Personal Tutors into the email) so that warning emails can be sent
Student Records System (SRS)
The auto-trigger for a C7 should trigger 2 days after the C6 deadline to ensure that students receive the letter on the 3rd working day as it is an overnight run
System to pull through the name of the school (cost centre associated with the course code) so that students do not have to work out which School to contact

Ensure that a student does not receive a C7 if they have withdrawn after receiving a C6
Correct interface quirk between MyCurriculum and SRS to ensure a student is not reinstated in error (previous Registry suggestion)

- A project has been established with Jason Bohan as Project Sponsor and Russell Moffatt as Project Manager. The Senior User is Carol Lawie (School of Law) with James McIntosh (DDIS) as Senior Supplier.
- The project is scheduled to deliver the desired enhancements throughout the 23/24 academic year.
- The cost for delivery is substantive within a Digital context: over £226K.
- There are a number of risks associated with the project, more so arising if it is not taken forward. These relate to rates of non-continuation, but also the University's ability to monitor continuation rates as the student population grows, and to intervene where needed; meaning real impacts on the student population.
- The project will require input from multiple stakeholder groups across the University, but more importantly, the benefits delivered will positively impact students, and staff involved in delivering and supporting education.
- Project Board membership is being finalised and board meetings scheduled.
- A User Group is being formed using established TFG, school and directorate contacts, who will be consulted regularly throughout the enhancement development and delivery and will provide greater detail on the desired enhancements so that precise requirements can be coordinated by the Senior Supplier.

5.2 Community of Practice

A community of practice session is to be held on August 24th and will be attended by academic and professional services staff who are directly involved in student monitoring, absence and engagement. The purpose of the meeting is to share good practice, promote consistency across Schools to ensure equity of experience for students studying across Schools; identify continuing challenges and potential solutions; revise the content of C6/7 emails to ensure clarity of communication; consider PGR monitoring issues. The community of practice will meet 1-2 times a year as required.

6. **Academic Workload Engagement Exercise**
The Academic Workload Engagement Exercise (May 2023) identified a number of factors whereby the Class Certificates (C6/C7) system was routinely described by respondents as being a significant contributory factor to staff workload pressure. These issues were also identified by the TFG consultation with Schools which identified the IT enhancements which are required to alleviate staff workload pressures. The consultation also revealed that pressures were not felt equally across all Schools where different practices operation. The community of practice workshop aim to share good practice which will in addition help to reduce staff workload pressures.

7. **NEXT STEPS**
- The committee is asked to note the current direction of travel on the actions outlined in this paper.
- It is recommended that the TFG continues for the duration of the digital project to allow TFG members to input into the ongoing work and complete the activities of this strand of the TFG's remit. Once this project is completed it is envisaged that the current TFG will be disbanded, however the status of future work (for example, revising the longer list of IT of proposed enhancements) will then be revisited.

- It is recommended that the Community of Practice continues to meet 1 to 2 times a year organised by the Dean for Student Support and Experience

8.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ENHANCEMENT THEMES YEAR 3 REPORT

End of Year 3 Report for: University of Aberdeen

UEC/290823/018

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ENHANCEMENT THEMES YEAR 3 REPORT

The details in Table 1 showcase a range of projects funded through our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) over the course of the Theme (of which there were 21 in total). The most positive aspect does not relate to a single project, but rather the collective impact and atmosphere created by the sum of all the projects. These have made a significant impact across the University of Aberdeen and the wider sector reflected by broad dissemination through publications (5, including a Wonkhe blog on resilience and a book chapter on widening participation), conference presentations (17), posters (9) and Theme Leaders Group webinars (2). The most challenging issues have centred around timing of the projects and the recruitment of participants for surveys and focus groups. However, lessons learned through these projects will inform and fine tune future endeavours to ensure maximum success and impact. The most important factor across all the projects was the involvement of students as interns in driving the research and co-creating content and resources. Indeed, the value of student contributions has never been as evident than across this portfolio of work. The momentum created has meant that in the Resilient Learning Communities Theme, over 75% of these LTEP projects have been led by staff with no prior experience of Enhancement Theme work, a value which was below 30% previously.

As well as the LTEP projects, the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group is nearing the end of its phase 1 work when the Group will launch a set of resources to support colleagues across the University to take forward the Senate-approved roadmap for its decolonising work. The national Antiracist Curriculum Project resources are embedded within the University's resources enabling access to important resources which will support our work.

Table 1: Evidencing effectiveness and reporting impact						
Cumulative descriptor of institutional /cluster/Student-Led Project activity over RLC Theme period	Which overarching RLC Theme questions (1-5) were prioritised?	Evidence of effectiveness in addressing chosen RLC theme priorities	Suggested outcomes and impact measures used to assess effectiveness (refer to Theory of Change model Appendix 1)	Challenges	Made most difference?	Hindsight
LTEP project 1: Staying and getting on. Developing strategies to support widening access students in their medical studies through discursive workshops with staff and students.	2, 5	Significant engagement from both staff and students – owing to staff interest, an additional workshop was organised. The workshop style of	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Focused activity and data collection on how to support widening access students in Medicine. 2. Staff and student workshops to develop and discuss intervention/support	Time has been the most challenging issue – the project team had to run the workshops to coincide with five year groups and assessments. This	The student interns have been valuable to the process in terms of design, and development of an evidence-based and theory-informed	Being too flexible with student interns might lead to delays in project delivery and we have since developed clear tasks with

		data collection (where issues relating to widening access students were discussed with staff and students) appeared to be appealing to both groups – conversations were fruitful, and all participants were engaged. The method would be transferable to other student populations within the university.	approaches. 3. Creation of an evidence-based and theory-informed intervention strategy to support widening access students in MBChB.	has meant both data collection and analysis has been compressed to a period of four months. In addition, training student interns and monitoring progress is a time-consuming process despite their enthusiasm.	intervention strategy, which will be integrated into our approaches to supporting widening access students. This project was a participatory activity, and this has been enhanced by their input – it has been more relevant to the target population as a result.	prescribed end dates to ensure delivery on time.
LTEP project 2: Building Resilience Through Timely and Effective Feedback. Creation of a report to inform development of a collection of resources for students to help them use feedback and make the pedagogy in our practice more transparent.	1, 2, 4	Engagement with staff around their desire to support and be supported in assessment and feedback practices. This has also highlighted some differences in practice across the school, therefore, the project has presented an opportunity to align practices to make them more consistent, which should enhance the student experience.	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Development of resources explaining to students where to find their feedback in Turnitin and advice on what to do with feedback. 2. Development of a school statement explaining the pedagogical approach to assessment and feedback. 3. Provision of assessment information at course level to explain why an assessment has been chosen, and how it links with intended learning outcomes/skills/attributes. 4. Development of short	There were some issues with student interns due to health issues. However, by adapting the approach we were able to continue to produce resources and outputs.	Funding for student interns allowed collection of data that otherwise would not have been possible, and enabled development of resources. Together this has prompted consideration of school approaches to assessment and feedback.	Did not set clear timescales for project milestones and this would have been useful for monitoring purposes during the academic year.

3

		Whilst the project suggested that assessment and feedback practices are largely effective in the School, the project also highlighted that students needed support in developing their resilience by understanding why they were doing specific types of assessment and how to use/interpret feedback. This will help students develop resilience and be more independent in their learning and use of feedback. Clearly articulating what we do and why, will further help support staff to support their students with their learning.	guides for staff to support marking and providing constructive feedback.			
LTEP Project 3: Developing the resilience of advanced entry students through evaluation of support for staff and students. Project aiming to enhance the academic resilience of advanced entry students.	1, 2, 4, 5	The project team has constructed a toolkit of resources and guidance on developing and evaluating resilience of advanced entry students. The work is still ongoing with	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. A workshop for staff (academic and professional services) and other individuals involved in supporting advanced entry students across the sector and developing an institutional Community of	Further data will be gathered from the new cohort of students in 2023/24 to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the toolkit.	Funding for a student intern to allow the majority of the evaluation to be completed and to enable more student insights into the project.	On hindsight the textbook chapter authoring was a substantial (but worthwhile) commitment.

		evaluation of the toolkit currently being completed and a workshop planned for early summer. However, one of the most positive aspects to date has been the opportunity to engage another student intern and get their insights into the project to date. The level of engagement in the wider sector has been very positive. The researchers have also authored a textbook chapter and have presented the research at the University's Annual Academic Development Symposium, QAA TLG group, SCAPP Conference and presented a poster at the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning (HETL) conference whilst also taking part in two panel discussions related to the book chapter at	Practice. 2. Evaluation of the toolkit of resources for advanced entry students created using a previous award. 3. Interview sessions with staff working with advanced entry students to gain their insights and share practice around advanced entry student support.	Evaluation will be an ongoing task to maintain the relevance of the toolkit content. Further it was decided that running a staff workshop during teaching time was going to prove difficult, so this aspect has been deliberately delayed until the summer.		

		the QAA and European First Year Experience (EYFE) conferences.				
LTEP Project 4: Understanding and enhancing the employability of care-experienced/estranged students. Project aiming to develop a greater level of understanding of the needs of care-experienced and estranged students relating to employability and skills development, and the University changes to target and address these needs.	1,2,4,5	The project has achieved impact by developing a much deeper understanding of the needs of care-experienced and estranged students regarding employability and skills development. Furthermore, impact will be evident through closer consideration of the needs of groups such as these when planning mentoring and work experience initiatives.	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Increased knowledge about the needs of advanced entry students. 2. Use of the knowledge gained to put initiatives in place to support development of student resilience. 3. A programme of targeted contacts from the Careers and Employability Service directed to identified care-experienced and estranged students. 4. Currently developing a group to look (nationally) at how university careers services can more effectively meet the needs of care-experienced/estranged students.	Ensuring that as many students as possible are reached within this context to make sure the best possible understanding of the issues and concerns of this group.	The funding to recruit an intern to undertake the research work, which otherwise would not have been possible.	Would rethink the project activity in May - June as this added unnecessary time pressures to reach students before they left for the summer vacation period.
LTEP Project 5: Investigating ways of improving accessibility of mathematical texts in education. The project investigated various ways of increasing accessibility of texts using mathematical symbols and language created	2, 5	Impact of the project is evident through the development of guidelines around making mathematical texts more accessible. These have been disseminated widely through presentations across the Scottish HE	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Development and dissemination of guidelines relating to accessibility of mathematical texts created using LaTex. 2. Expansion of guidelines across disciplines that utilise Mathematics at the	Limitations uncovered in terms of various suggested solutions to accessibility investigated in the project.	Employment of a student intern to drive many aspects of the research work. This accomplished substantial development in our understanding and identified	n/a

using LaTex.		sector, and have resulted in further funding being secured to support future phases of the project.	University of Aberdeen, to increase accessibility in line with legal requirements. 3. Dissemination of findings and guidelines across the UK sector.		limitations in some of the suggested solutions available.	
LTEP project 6: Supporting international PGT students to overcome language barriers. Project aimed to investigate language challenges facing international PGT students and develop initiatives to support them.	1, 2, 4, 5	Impact evident through presentation of preliminary results at the Higher Education Teaching and Learning International Conference in June 2023.	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Establishing and developing a link between the School of Psychology and language Centre to develop understanding around language barriers to PGT students. 2. Translation of the above integrated approach into a language support package to support international PGT students 3. Publication of the findings in a peer-reviewed article.	Participant recruitment has been challenging perhaps because of timing of the project and call for participation.	The funding to recruit two interns has been invaluable to the project and its progress.	Adapt intern hours to maximise the efficiency of input to the project.
LTEP Project 7: Understanding taught postgraduate students' learning experience and the development of resilient learning skills. Project aiming to investigate how PGT students develop essential resilience skills to efficiently overcome academic and personal challenges, anxiety, and	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	A mixed methods approach was used to explore how postgraduate taught students' academic resilience is related to their educational background, academic and personal challenges and their learning expectations. The impact will be created by using the	Impact Activities/Outputs: 1. Focus group and survey used to investigate PGT student learning experiences of the current MSc Psychology programme. This focused on negative and positive aspects, and areas where support might be provided. 2. All of these findings are being used to review,	For the focus group study, international students are less likely to share their opinions (perhaps due to cultural differences). Difficult to recruit sufficient students to complete the questionnaire.	Intern students are great. Both worked efficiently and independently.	Would not invite both native and non-native students to attend the same focus group. The native students were more likely to lead the discussion and discourage the non-native students from

pressure by evaluating their learning experience and expectations.		learning generated to guide academic approaches to teaching and supporting postgraduate taught students.	evaluate and develop the current programme.			sharing their opinions.
		Attending the national theme meetings is very helpful. The feedback received and questions discussed with other staff helped with the design of the project, and to reflect on other teaching activities.				
		Presented a poster at the University's Annual Academic Development Symposium and presented a poster at the international Higher Education Teaching & Learning Conference 2023.				

Our approach to the Resilient Learning Communities Theme employed a collaborative, communicative and co-creative model, involving individuals across our Institution and engagement widely across the broader sector. Here, our organisational approaches facilitated engagement of staff and students in innovative and varied types of work associated with the Theme. The output from these initiatives was broadly disseminated internally and externally, creating impact within and outside the University of Aberdeen. As a result, it is clear that ALL aspects described in Table 2 worked in concert to deliver our engagement and outputs related to the Theme, where their integration was vital to creating maximum impact across the sector. We have also learned through this experience that careful consultation with staff around timing and workloads is central to the success of such initiatives. One of the biggest challenges was engaging new faces with the theme, as year on year we often have had the same individuals contributing. However, throughout this Theme we have used varied approaches to communication, dissemination and support to promote the Theme and work surrounding it, to engage the breadth of the University community (staff and students), which has successfully led to a substantial increase in the numbers of individuals involved (e.g., >75% of applicants for LTEP funding for this Theme had not previously been associated with an LTEP award).

	Table 2: Ways of working/engaging in the Resilient Learning Communities Themes work				
Theme process	**Activities' description**	**Positive aspects/difference made**	**Challenges**	**Changes made during process**	**Hindsight - could be improved by:**
Supporting staff and students to engage with Theme activity	**Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP).** A scheme developed to provide funding for initiatives related to the Enhancement Theme. An LTEP network was established for this Theme to facilitate discussion, practice sharing and collaboration across project teams.	Each project had its own defined output in terms of a resource, toolkit, set of guidelines. The full range of projects can be found here. Collectively, the projects have impacted aspects of the University of Aberdeen strategic vision for 2040 (Aberdeen 2040). Establishing the LTEP network created a thriving Community-based approach that helped share practice, stimulate discussion and seed collaborative partnerships.	Evaluation of project outputs and impact (individual and collective), but this was very well supported by QAAS Evaluation Consultants and their workshops/drop-in sessions.	At the end of every LTEP cycle the application process is reviewed and refined by the judging panel, taking in to account any feedback received from applicants. Establishing the LTEP network was an invaluable change, as it created a proactive forum for the LTEP project teams to discuss and advance their projects.	Coordinating development of an LTEP mentorship programme where experienced LTEP projects teams support new projects.

| Effectiveness of organisational and management structures | In terms of organisation and management of the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme work, we established:

1. The Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group with oversight of the University of Aberdeen approaches to the Theme.

2. The Resilient Learning Communities Community of Practice, an informal forum to air and share around various emerging areas and topics relating to the Theme.

3. The LTEP network, a network for LTEP project groups to discuss challenges, solutions, and progress around their projects.

Materials discussed in all of the above channels feed into the established University of Aberdeen governance structure, specifically the University Education Committee (UEC) and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). | 1. The Steering Group successfully established and oversaw the direction of University of Aberdeen work related to the Theme and ensured it aligned with University and sector-wide goals and objectives.

2. The Community of Practice engaged large numbers of staff (academic and professional services) and students in relevant and proactive discussions around key challenges and areas for practice sharing and potential collaboration.

3. The LTEP network provided an excellent forum to maximise collaboration and outputs relating to the LTEP projects. | Ensuring the cascade of information is established early in the Theme and maintained over the 3-year period.

It is always a challenge to get new faces involved, but this was successfully achieved through communication, dissemination and promotion of activities/opportunities. | The combination of these changes in organisational and management structure have created a formal framework around the University of Aberdeen Enhancement Theme work. The overarching Steering Group provided the strategic oversight within which the Community of Practice, and the LTEP network, was introduced to provide an informal group which facilitated discussion and dissemination of specific projects and their progress. Not only did this serve as a useful vehicle for sharing practice within the University of Aberdeen, it also served to promote channels for collaboration and dissemination outside the University. | Have these in place from the outset (or even prior to the beginning of the Theme).

Link these structures to the mentorship programme outlined above. |

Evaluating activity and projects	**QAA evaluation resources and interactive workshops & the evaluation of the LTEP-funded project interventions.** Staff from across the University participated in several interactive workshops delivered by the appointed QAA (Scotland) RLC evaluation consultants. These sessions focused on the use of focus groups in data collection, designing effective surveys, and using creative evaluation methods. Drawing upon these sessions, which have been offered over the past three years has been extremely valuable to deepen our understanding of robust evaluation methods.	Specifically, the sessions have helped to define the methods and approaches to evaluate the funded RLC LTEP projects, which are a distinctive feature of the University's enhancement-led approach. We have also gone beyond the specific Enhancement Theme activities and used the evaluation methodology to inform the evaluation of other education-related activities. For example, the session, 'Fantastically Active Focus Groups' provided practical guidance for the University's new strategic assessment and feedback programmatic level review project, where focus groups are a key part of the methodology. The 'Sensational Survey' session exercise, 'The Biscuit Challenge' was also adapted and used in an action research session for our PGCert in Higher Education Teaching & Learning	Staff from the Institutional RLC Steering Group attended these sessions, along with academic staff and several student interns. There was certainly an appetite from staff and students to attend these interactive workshops, that said the timing was not always conducive for more individuals to participate.	As a result of participating in the evaluation sessions, the RLC executive team has expanded our knowledge and confidence in evaluation approaches and refined our LTEP evaluation approach this year by devising a revised end of LTEP project evaluation form. This form asks clear questions linked to the Theory of Change model and aligns with the QAAS evaluation report tables herein.	It would have been helpful to deliver a short practical exercise based on the 'Sensational Surveys' session at one of our LTEP Projects Group Meetings to help cascade the positive aspects of this session more widely across the University.

		programme, which is undertaken by our academic staff.			
Disseminating outcomes and findings internally and externally	**1. The main internal vehicle for dissemination of LTEP projects was the University's hybrid Annual Academic Development Symposium** (27/04/23), an internal hybrid event with external speakers and guests with the Theme 'From Surviving to Thriving: Building Resilient Learners Through Assessment and Feedback'. **2. The main external channel for LTEP projects was this year's international Higher Education Teaching & Learning (HETL)** conference hosted by the University of Aberdeen after winning a competitive bidding process.	1.The Symposium provided an opportunity for 180+ staff to share practice in person, online and a mixture of both. Participants exchanged practices and ideas through a range of parallel sessions and learnt about other initiatives from the 30+ poster submissions available to view throughout the day. The event concluded with an Expert Panel discussion on all aspects of resilient learning, feedback and assessment, a short presentation from this year's Principal's Teaching Excellence Award winner. All sessions included contributions from University of Aberdeen students representing all levels of study. The Symposium created a collegiate, engaging environment for staff and students at and beyond the University to network and collaborate.	1. Whilst the Symposium attracted record numbers, it still has limited reach to the wider staff audience. The challenge, as ever, is to encourage more staff to engage with sharing practice in this way. 2. As an international conference, it was not possible for all staff who wanted to attend, to be funded to do so.	1. Inclusion of students from all levels, who had intern or institutional roles, in all aspects of the Symposium. 2. It was decided that central institutional funding, ear-marked for enhancement activities, would be offered to enable LTEP project awardees to attend and contribute to HETL.	1. To review and discuss the timing of the Symposium, as some staff were still teaching and therefore unable to attend. 2. Student interns who had worked on LTEP projects were offered funded places to attend HETL. In future, this offer would have been made earlier so that more students could attend.

		2. The HETL conference welcomed participants from around 20 countries to three days of extensive sharing, debate, and discussion. The conference themes and overall approach embedded enhancement at its heart and actively sought contributions that aimed to enhance practice. One of the keynotes, delivered by the Vice-Principal Education (and Deputy Theme Leader) and the Student Theme Leader shared the ET history, evaluation approaches, and future for enhancement in Scotland which created interest and ongoing conversation. The HETL conference provided an excellent opportunity for UoA staff to share their LTEP projects with an international audience, at the same time learning about innovative practice from across the world.			

| Collaborating with other institutions/other organisations | **Micro-credentials Collaborations & the Exchange of Enhancement-led Practice, Tools, and Learning**:

During the past three years we have collaborated with individuals and institutions, to build capacity and assure micro-credentials standards through partnership working as an active member of the Scottish Micro-credentials Tertiary Network.

Over the duration of the RLC theme our staff and students have also presented at the annual enhancement conferences, and this year's international HETL conference. | The findings and outcomes from the Year 1 micro-credential collaborative cluster alongside our activities from the Year 2 & 3 Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials has enabled the University to build expertise in this area for our own 'On-demand' short courses. In addition, we have been able to share our experiences in this area with other institutions through our contributions to the resource, QAA Micro-credentials Characteristics Statement and the soon to be published Micro-credential Good Practice Guide with its three UoA case studies. These cover a student-facing resilience short course, a staff upskilling teaching course and a CPD micro-credential for external businesses.

At the Enhancement Themes Conference events, several of the LTEP project leads disseminated their key | Having collaborators separated geographically can make sharing ideas and managing priorities in a collaborative project a challenge. | The University has been keen to showcase LTEP projects and activities relating to the RLC Enhancement Theme, this has offered the opportunity to discuss key issues and challenges in developing staff and student communities of learning. Given we are celebrating 20 years of enhancement, the Centre for Academic Development decided to prepare a podcast to share our enhancement-led learning and development during this entire period, a change to our plans and a welcomed addition. A further resource incorporated student interns sharing their experiences of working on LTEP projects in a similar style of podcast. Both podcasts can be found on our institutional Enhancement Themes webpages. | With hindsight it would have been helpful to measure website traffic to the 3 UoA micro-credential case studies on the QAAS Enhancement Themes website. This would have permitted a better analysis of impact. |

		project findings and resources to diverse audiences. This has resulted in new innovative approaches to accessibility and decolonising the curriculum practices being discussed and adopted in other institutions.			

Report Author:	Professor Steve Tucker
Date:	30/06/23

Resilient Learning Communities

End of Year Report

Financial Annex Year 3 (for completion by institutions only in relation to the Year 3 Grant Agreement funding)

Activity	Estimated cost	Actual Cost
University's Annual Academic Development Symposium (April 2023) – captioning recordings, catering, posters printing, keynote fees and expenses, external contributors' expenses	£3000	£4056
Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme funds*	£2000	£14000
Travel/Conference attendance	£1000	£1000
Total	**£6000**	**£19056**
* Additional £12K from University of Aberdeen budgets	£12000	
Total	**£18000**	**£19056**
Overspend (taken from Centre for Academic Development internal budget)		**£1056**

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