

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 1:05pm**, in the **Court Room, University Office** and by **Microsoft Teams**.

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

AGENDA

FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Approval of the Minute of the Meeting Held on 16 January 2024** *(UEC/050324/001)*
2. **Matters Arising** *(UEC/050324/002)*
3. **Risk Register** *(UEC/050324/003)*

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

4. **Update on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM)**
(Oral Item)

Members of the UEC will **receive an update** on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM), held on 29 February 2024.

5. **Student Surveys Update**
 - (i) Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) *(UEC/050324/004)*
 - (ii) National Student Survey (NSS) *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will **receive updates** on the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) and the National Student Survey (NSS).

6. **Support for Study Policy** *(UEC/050324/005)*

The Committee are invited to **discuss** the proposed amendments to the Support for Study policy.

7. **Student Withdrawals Report 2022/23** *(UEC/050324/006)*

The Committee are invited to **discuss** the paper providing data on withdrawal rates for on-campus degree students during the 2022/23 academic year.

8. **Graduate Attributes and Skills** *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will **receive an update** in regard to Graduate Attributes and Skills.

9. Induction, Transition and Employability Week (ITEW) *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will **receive an update** on the ITEW.

10. Work-based Learning Courses and Ideas *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will **receive a short presentation** on Work-based Learning Courses.

11. Updated Delivery of Education Principles *(UEC/050324/008)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **discuss** the paper providing updated on the Delivery of Education Principles.

12. Update on Work on Generative AI in Education *(UEC/050324/009)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the update on work on Generative AI in Education.

13. Academic Integrity Resources *(Oral Item)*

Members of the UEC will **receive an update** on Academic Integrity Resources.

14. Online Education Forum *(UEC/050324/010)*

Members of the Committee are asked to **discuss** the update on the Online Education Forum.

15. Retention Policy for Videos in Panopto *(to follow, UEC/050324/011)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the paper on the Retention Policy for Videos in Panopto.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday 13 May 2024 at 1:05pm, in the Meeting Room 1 in the Sir Duncan Rice Library and by way of Microsoft Teams.

17. Items for Information – see overleaf

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

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

17. FOR INFORMATION

17.1 Minutes from the UEC sub-committees meetings:

- (i) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(UEC/050324/012)*
- (ii) Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) *(UEC/050324/013)*

17.2 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results *(UEC/050324/014)*

Members of the Committee are asked to **note** the Postgraduate Research Experience (PRES) results.

17.3 Video on Academic Integrity *(to follow, UEC/050324/015)*

Members of the Committee are asked to **note** the paper providing an update on academic integrity.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of the Meeting held on 16 January 2024

Present: Ruth Taylor (**Chair**), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Stuart Durkin, Bill Harrison, Ken Jeffrey, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Helen Knight, David McCausland, Rona Patey, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Sai Shradda S Viswanathan, Susan Stokeld, Steve Tucker, Asha Venkatesh, Josh Wright, with Simon Bains, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Rob Cummings, Nick Edwards, Tracey Innes, Gillian Mackintosh, Rhona Moore (*from minute 10.1*), Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, and Liam Dyker (**Clerk**) in attendance.

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Brian Henderson, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Rhiannon Ledwell, Anne-Michelle Slater, and Emma Tough.

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2023

(copy filed as UEC/160124/001)

- 1.1 The Committee was content to approve the minute of the previous meeting held in October.

MATTERS ARISING

(copy filed as UEC/160124/002)

- 2.1 Decolonising the Curriculum Assessment Review Timelines (*minute 8.2 refers*): It was noted that this action is complete, and that information is issued annually with respect to the timing of assessment changes generally, which is communicated to Schools at the start of each academic year. It was noted that, whilst there are deadlines for the change of assessment (June for term 1, November for term 2), assessment changes can be identified at other points in the year and then managed through University processes.
- 2.2 Graduate Outcomes School-Level Data (*minute 12.1.1 refers*): It was noted that this action is complete, and that the information can be found on the Graduate Outcomes Dashboard.
- 2.3 Artificial Intelligence Tools (*minute 7.2 refers*): It was noted that this action will be removed from the action log, as it is an ongoing action.
- 2.4 Future Academic Year Structure Implementation (*minute 8.1 refers*): An update was provided in this regard, to which it was noted that this action is complete.
- 2.5 Undergraduate vs Postgraduate Taught Skills (*minute 10.4 refers*): It was noted this action is complete, and it is included in the paper related to Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills.
- 2.6 NSS Data (*minute 11.2 refers*): It was noted that this action is complete.
- 2.7 Copyright Literacy Steering Group Terms of Reference (*minute 13.1 refers*): It was advised that this action is in progress, and the Terms of Reference will follow to a future meeting, following consideration at University Research Committee.

RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/160124/003)

- 3.1 The Committee heard an overview of the Risk Register, with specific interest in the risks pertinent to Education. It was noted that the risk pertinent to the Marking and Assessment Boycott had been removed, as it is now complete, with updates provided to other actions.
- 3.2 Discussion ensued regarding the risk posed to the teaching estate as a result of recent challenges within the Fraser Noble building. Following discussion, it was agreed that the action would be added to the risk register and it would be discussed at a future risk workshop as to which section of the risk register it belongs. **Action: Chair / Clerk**

ABERDEEN 2040

(i) ABERDEEN 2040 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/160124/004)

- 4.1 The Committee heard an overview of the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan for Education. It was noted that the updates will be discussed at a future meeting of the Senior Management Team.

(ii) ABERDEEN 2040 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

(copy filed as UEC/160124/005)

- 5.1 An overview of the proposed Graduate Attributes and Skills was provided to the Committee, noting that the paper was presented for approval prior to further consideration and approval at Senate.
- 5.2 Some members raised issues in relation to potential system changes, notably (i) the Curriculum Management System (CMS), and (ii) the MySkills system. In relation to the CMS, it was advised that work is ongoing to determine whether the Graduate Attributes can be changed within the system institutionally or whether there will be a cost involved. In relation to MySkills, it was advised that the tender for the careers system would be reviewed in due course, which may have an impact for the MySkills system.
- 5.3 In respect of mapping Graduate Attributes to courses, it was suggested that the expectation should not be that all courses must map to all Graduate Attributes, and that staff should be encouraged to reflect within Annual Course and Programme Reviews as to which Graduate Attributes are appropriate.
- 5.4 The Committee was content to approve the proposals for onward consideration at Senate, subject to minor amendments.

(iii) ABERDEEN 2040 CURRICULUM

(copy filed as UEC/160124/006)

- 6.1 A summary of the paper was provided to the Committee, noting its basis on the discussions which took place at the Education Awayday in November 2023. The Committee was advised of the next phase of strategic work, as identified within the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan.. It was advised that the paper included a summary of the key themes which arose as part of the discussions.
- 6.2 The Committee noted the proposed next steps which would be available for the new Vice-Principal (Education) to consider. **Action: Incoming Vice-Principal Education**

(iv) DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM: COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

(copy filed as UEC/160124/007)

- 7.1 An overview of the proposed approach in relation to the next steps for the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group was provided to the Committee. The Committee was advised that the Steering Group has delivered on the remit of the group, and that implementation of the Decolonising the Curriculum work is underway. It was suggested that a Community of Practice including the existing Decolonising the Curriculum Leads be established to replace the Steering Group. It was noted that the Decolonising the Curriculum Leads will continue to report via, and liaise closely with, the School Education Committees.
- 7.2 Clarity was sought in relation to a role descriptor for the Decolonising the Curriculum Leads, to which it was advised that a role descriptor did not exist and that Leads were selected by their relevant Heads of School based on their interest and expertise in the area. The distinction between the Decolonising the Curriculum Leads and Race Equality Champions was highlighted.
- 7.3 The UEC was content to approve the proposed approach in the establishment of a Community of Practice and that this would be taken forward with immediate effect. **Action: KK**

UPSCALING WORK-BASED LEARNING UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/160124/008)

- 8.1 A summary of the update provided in respect of upscaling work-based learning was provided to the UEC. It was noted that the work associated with work-based learning has been lagging, due to resource challenges. The Committee was advised that the paper provides a summary of the activities which have been ongoing and an emphasis on the commitment to work-based learning. The courses available offered centrally were highlighted to the Committee.

GO ABROAD UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/160124/009)

- 9.1 The Committee heard a summary of the update provided in relation to Go Abroad and Student Mobility. The UEC noted that the International Experience Task and Finish Group had been paused pending the development of guidance from Universities UK International regarding the definitions of international experience. The UEC discussed the data provided in respect of incoming and outgoing student mobility. The Committee was advised that the Go Abroad team is reviewing opportunities for expansion and development within the Schools for student mobility. The impact of any decision taken in respect of modern languages provision was noted in relation to Go Abroad.
- 9.2 The Committee discussed opportunities for international experience which may not be included in the data, as they are not managed centrally, such as the intercampus exchanges between Aberdeen and Qatar, and exchange opportunities in Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition.

ACADEMIC YEAR STRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION: UPDATE ON INDUCTION, TRANSITION AND EMPLOYABILITY WEEK

(copy filed as UEC/160124/010)

- 10.1 The Committee heard a summary of the paper providing an update on planning for the Induction, Transition and Employability Week (ITE Week) as approved as part of the Future Academic Year structure. It was noted that planning currently included discussions with Careers and Schools in relation to centrally delivered and School-delivered sessions. The UEC noted a working group will be established to take forward the development of the ITE Week. It was noted that there would be differences in approach for new and returning students, with the current work focusing on returning students. It was suggested that initially activities should be

delivered centrally primarily. It was noted that the Welcome Week Planning Group would be consulted as part of the next steps in taking forward the development of the ITE Week.

- 10.2 Clarity was sought in relation to the communication of the ITE Week for returning students to ensure that students are aware there will be activities to return to Aberdeen for. Further clarity was sought regarding the type of engagement we expect from students, whether all students were included and whether it will be optional. It was suggested that there must be value in the activities which students will undertake, and that all students would be offered the opportunity to engage. Some members highlighted the importance of engagement with student societies as part of induction. It was noted that timing and communication would be important particularly for January start students.
- 10.3 Discussion ensued regarding late arriving students and the ability to engage with the ITE Week activities. It was suggested that sessions should be delivered in a hybrid format which would allow in-person and online engagement.
- 10.4 It was suggested that personal tutoring should be included as part of the ITE Week, in particular the prospect that personal tutor meetings should be scheduled as part of MyTimetable. In response, it was agreed that this was a useful suggestion, and that further discussion will take place to discuss its feasibility.
- 10.5 The UEC noted that the paper would be updated based on the discussion at UEC prior to it being taken to Senate, and that the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee would be responsible for taking this work forward, and progress reports will follow to the Committee in that regard. **Action: J Barrow**

ONLINE EDUCATION UPDATE

(copy filed as UEC/160124/011)

- 11.1 The UEC heard an update in regard to Online Education and the proposed establishment of the Online Education Forum. The Committee noted the disestablishment of the Online Education Development Committee. The Committee was advised of the new Online Learning Design Service to support Schools with the development of online courses and programmes, and which will help to ensure consistency across all online provision. An event due to take place in February 2024 was highlighted in relation to encouraging support and development of online education provision. The Committee was advised of the intention to review the Principles for the Delivery of Education to include more explicit reference to online and blended modes of delivery.
- 11.2 Concerns were raised in relation to the challenge with obtaining feedback from online students. The Committee was content to approve the recommendations contained within the paper.

EDUCATION DATA

(i) NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY – PLAN FOR 2024

(copy filed as UEC/160124/012)

- 12.1 A summary of the preparations for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 was provided to the UEC. It was noted that the survey would be launched at the end of January, and that the key questions which will be asked is summarised in the paper. It was highlighted that results are expected in Summer 2024. Schools were thanked for clarifying their launch dates for the survey.
- 12.2 Discussion ensued regarding the checking of data. It was noted that a significant amount of checking is required, and a plea was made for more nuance within University systems to avoid the associated workload. It was advised that the Dean for Student Support & Experience would follow this up. A concern was raised in relation to the data being used in relation to student

population. Clarity was sought as to whether this had been rectified for NSS 2024. It was advised that this would be actioned separately, and that the Dean for Student Support & Experience would follow up. **Action: JB / RP / EB**

- 12.3 Concerns were raised in relation to the response rates for Course Evaluation Forms, and a concern that students are experiencing survey fatigue. Some members noted the proactive means of addressing this such as utilising dedicated class time to allow students to respond to the Course Feedback forms. In response, it was suggested that demonstrating the University is listening to student feedback and closing the feedback loop is likely to increase student participation if students can see the impact. It was agreed that further work would take place to address this issue. **Action: JB**

(ii) APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS DATA 2022/23

(copy filed as UEC/160124/013)

- 13.1 The Committee heard a summary of the paper, noting the trends which date back to academic year 2015/16. The UEC noted that the number of submissions has risen, with peaks in certain Schools. The Committee noted the large volume of cases related to C7 appeals, and in particular, the ongoing work to review the Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals which seeks to alleviate the number of these appeals. The time commitment associated with appeals and complaints cases was highlighted to the Committee.
- 13.2 It was suggested that the appeals and complaints policies should be reviewed in relation to group cases, particularly in relation to their handling at School-level. **Action: ST/GM**

(iii) ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE DATA 2022/23

(copy filed as UEC/160124/014)

- 14.1 An overview of the academic discipline data for academic year 2022/23 was provided to the Committee, noting the summary of trends. The Committee noted that most of the instances of academic misconduct relate to plagiarism, but there are a growing number of contract cheating cases.

(iv) EDUCATION DATA REPORTING SCHEDULE

(copy filed as UEC/160124/015)

- 15.1 The Committee noted the Education Data Reporting Schedule, which had been compiled by colleagues in Planning.

VICE-PRINCIPAL (EDUCATION) AND CHAIR OF UEC

- 16.1 The Committee heard an oral update from the Chair in relation to the new Vice-Principal (Education) and Chair of UEC. The Committee noted it was the Chair's final meeting and the Chair expressed her thanks to all members for their support and work during her tenure. In response, the Committee expressed its thanks to the Chair for all her work during her time as Vice-Principal and Chair of UEC.

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(copy filed as UEC/160124/016)

- 17.1 The Committee approved, by routine approval, an amendment to the UEC Remit and Composition.

MINUTES FROM THE UEC SUB-COMMITTEES

18.1 Members of the Committee noted updates from the UEC Sub-Committees as follows:

- (i) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) *(copy filed as UEC/160124/017a)*
- (ii) Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) *(copy filed as UEC/160124/017b)*

INSTITUTIONAL LIAISON MEETING DOCUMENTATION

19.1 The Committee noted the submission to QAA Scotland for the University's upcoming Institutional Liaison Meeting.

ACADEMIC STUDENT SURVEYS

(copy filed as UEC/160124/018)

20.1 The Committee noted the paper on Academic Student Surveys.

NEW AND REVISED GUIDANCE FOR GENERATIVE AI IN EDUCATION

21.1 The Committee noted the following new and revised guidance for Generative AI in Education:

- (i) [Quick Guide on Acknowledging the Use of GenAI Tools](#)
- (ii) [Quick Guide on Assignment Notes, Drafts and Versioning](#)
- (iii) [Student Guidance on Use of GenAI tools in Education](#)
- (iv) [Staff Guidance on Use of GenAI tools in Education](#)

UNIVERSITY CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

(copy filed as UEC/160124/019)

22.1 The Committee noted the annual report from the Careers and Employability Service.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 1:05pm in the Court Room, University Office and by way of Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
13.1	Circulate Terms of Reference of the Copyright Literacy Steering Group so that appropriate representatives can be nominated.	S Bains	In progress

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
3.2	Addition of risk regarding teaching estate in light of concerns regarding Fraser Noble.	Chair / Clerk	In progress
6.2	Progression of next steps in relation to Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work.	Incoming Vice-Principal (Education)	In progress
7.3	Progression of the establishment of the Decolonising the Curriculum Community of Practice, and dissolution of the Steering Group.	K Kiezebrink	In progress
10.5	ITEW Paper to be updated further to UEC discussion, and update reports to be presented back to the Committee for information, via EEC.	J Barrow	In progress
12.2	Follow up regarding the effective use of University systems in relation to the compilation of data.	J Bohan / R Patey	In progress
12.2	Follow up in relation to the correction of student population data.	J Bohan / E Bain	In progress
12.3	Follow up regarding closure of the feedback loop in providing information to students.	J Bohan	In progress
13.2	Appeals and Complaints Policies to be reviewed to include further detail regarding group cases.	S Tucker / G Mackintosh	In progress

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**ABERDEEN STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY
STUDENTS VIEWS ON UNIVERSITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of the paper is to provide an overview of the results of the 2023 Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) for information.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by		
Further consideration by	University Education Committee	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The **UEC** is invited to view the survey results in 4.10 and departmental actions on feedback and pass to UEC for information.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1. The Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) is conducted annually to collect feedback from all registered students at the University of Aberdeen. Scheduled in October for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, and in November for postgraduate research students, the survey aims to address student non-academic feedback in advance of the National Student Survey (NSS).
- 4.2. Consultation was undertaken with stakeholders, such as Digital Information Services, Library, Career and Employability Service, Planning, as well as with Online and Qatar Campus teams, and the Postgraduate Research School. This collaborative approach ensured the survey gathered valuable and actionable insights.
- 4.3. The survey routes the student by type (*UG, PGT, PGR*) and by campus (*Aberdeen, Online, Qatar*) to ensure students get a relevant and tailored question set for them.
- 4.4. Students are given the opportunity to provide additional qualitative feedback on all topics. It is important to acknowledge that the qualitative entries in the reports remain unedited, though names have been redacted.
- 4.5. Students are asked questions relating to belonging, sport and wellbeing, support services, communication, digital services, library, careers service, orientation, and School induction.
- 4.6. In total, 1808 responses were submitted, representing an overall response rate of 12%, a decrease of 1.74% on 2022 (13.74%).
- 4.7. The full report and individual School reports (available in section 4.9) have been shared with Heads of School. Schools have been invited to review the ASES reports and incorporate any pertinent insights into their School Action Plans when reviewing NSS results.
- 4.8. Results have also been shared with Professional Service departments, the Qatar and Online Campuses, Students' Union who were asked to review the reports and submit a minimum of one key action that has been implemented or is planned to be introduced as a result of the

student feedback in the ASES. Some actions have already been identified and are detailed in section 5.0 Departmental Actions on Feedback.

4.9. Schools, Qatar and Online campus reports can view via the links below.

- [**ASES 2023 OVERALL REPORT**](#)
- [School of Business](#)
- [School of Biological Sciences](#)
- [School of DHPA](#)
- [School of Engineering](#)
- [School of Education](#)
- [School of Geosciences](#)
- [School of LLMVC](#)
- [School of Law](#)
- [School of MMSN](#)
- [School of NCS](#)
- [School of Psychology](#)
- [School of Social Science](#)
- [Qatar](#)
- [Online](#)
- [Postgraduate Research School](#)

5.0 DEPARTMENTAL ACTIONS ON FEEDBACK

5.1 Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing (EEW)

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
Theme: Communication Welcome emails were cited as not overly helpful for PGR students.	EEW will collaborate with PGR School to review program information and details of the academic journey for PGR students.
Theme: Welcome Experience Lack of awareness about pre-registration events Awareness and poor scheduling of School inductions	Analyse the necessity of pre-registration events, which were initially introduced to address COVID-related needs. EW will continue collaborating with schools for promotion, but late information receipt may limit promotional efforts.
Theme: Orientation Not specific to Qatar or Online campus Too long	EEW will explore the possibility of organising separate University online orientation for Aberdeen, Qatar, and online students to ensure streamlined and relevant content. EEW and DDIS teams will jointly review UG/PGT digital security topic, alongside a review of all other modules.
Theme: Social media Little desire for private Facebook Groups	EEW will review the relevance of existing Facebook communities and consider retiring those that no longer serve a specific purpose, unless they are essential, such as those related to accommodation.
Theme: Social media Preferred channels	EEW will adapt their social strategy, targeting Instagram as one of the primary channels for students and exploit stories, Threads, and Guides.
Theme: Buddy Scheme	A new format of the Buddy scheme will be launched for September, moving to a group model catering for up to 15 new students.
Theme: Student Mental Health More comprehensive and long-term solutions for students with enduring mental health difficulties	More promotion of established links with NHS Services.

5.2 Directorate of Digital and Information Services

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
<p>Theme: Collection development: Students are concerned about the high costs of textbooks and materials. They suggest expanding the eBook collection and adding course-specific materials. Involving students in the selection process is seen as a way to enhance the library's offerings.</p>	<p>DDIS are aware of some outstanding requirements for content which remains too expensive to purchase, unfortunately textbooks fall into this category.</p> <p>The Reading List Service team work closely with schools to encourage requests for essential reading to be flagged so that material, where affordable, can be added to our collections.</p>
<p>Theme: Group and individual Study Space Students requested more study space, both for groups and individuals. Noise levels in SDRL were a particular concern.</p>	<p>The Floor 2 refurb in SDRL has provided additional group study spaces. This has been designed to draw the noisier groups down from the quieter floors to introduce zoning of floors. (Silent Study, Quiet Study and Collaborative Zones).</p>
<p>Theme: Digital Accessibility</p> <p>Students faced difficulties accessing online resources, including issues with the Primo interface, broken links, and outdated information.</p> <p>Accessibility concerns were raised regarding difficulties logging in and navigating online platforms.</p>	<p><u>Primo</u> Investigating adding Primo to Quick Links on all University pages.</p> <p>Recent UX improvement work has increased the visibility/contrast of the log in button and added a secondary login prompt.</p> <p>While certain issues like automatic logouts and broken links from supplier source records are beyond our control, DDIS will make efforts to rectify reported broken links.</p> <p><u>Navigating different platforms</u> DDIS are working to incorporate single sign on as many systems as possible to enhance user experience.</p> <p><u>Accessibility</u> Accessibility tools within classroom pcs are configured by default. The list will be reviewed to see if anything else can be added.</p> <p>DDIS has optimized the website for accessibility, including screen reader compatibility, colour palette choices, and regular scanning with QA Tool, Siteimprove. Dark Mode is being developed as part of a broader project to transition to a new UoA Design System.</p> <p>Additionally, a new menu system will soon launch with a new Content Management System, enhancing findability on the extensive website.</p>
<p>Theme: Sensory and Environmental Concerns Concerns on the absence of a 24/7 library option, was cited as an obstacle for studying during critical periods.</p>	<p>Data on 24/7 library usage doesn't justify year-round extended hours due to cost and sustainability concerns. DDIS will, however, continue to monitor usage.</p>
<p>Theme: Improved Communications Some students lacked awareness of key library services, including reading lists, Primo, and borrowing procedures.</p>	<p>DDIS believe some further engagement with Schools to ensure accurate student signposting. For example, APA published materials are available within the Library Collections.</p> <p>DDIS will also consider timeliness in providing tutorial and guide links. A Library chat service is being explored for potential implementation.</p>

<p>Theme: Digital Security Some comments addressed Cyber Security training, focusing on course content and the timing of mandatory annual renewals.</p>	<p>The University provides two types of Information Security Training: mandatory annual training for staff and PGRs (with a separate Data Protection course), and information security training for students.</p> <p>The UG/PGT orientation (digital security section) will be reviewed in 2024.</p> <p>The content and timing of the mandatory training for PGR students and staff is reviewed annually. with DDIS addressing this with the PGR School.</p>
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5.2 Student Advice and Support Office (SASO)

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
<p>Theme: misconceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling service is difficult to access. • limited appointments • needs more promotion. • all services are on King's campus. • process to receive counselling could be streamlined. 	<p>Enhance Promotion of University Counselling Service (UCS):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boost promotion efforts for UCS, outlining available services, operational procedures, and appointment arrangements. 2. Address common misconceptions by clarifying UCS policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCS offers unlimited counselling sessions. • In-person sessions available every Wednesday at Foresterhill, widely utilised. • UCS does not provide crisis intervention; medical response required for emergencies. 3. UCS team is developing a concise description of counselling services for website inclusion within a week. 4. Coordinate with EEW wellbeing team to amplify UCS visibility among students. 5. Share UCS policies and procedures overview with Student Support. 6. Provide brief service outline in staff Ezine for wider awareness.
<p>Theme: Counselling delivery Counselling should be available in booked blocks, or 3 appointments with reminders sent.</p>	<p>The Counselling Service's book-at-the-point-of-need system allows students to be seen with a minimal wait – usually within a few days of their first enquiry. This approach will not suit everyone, but the UCS will not be reintroducing blocks of sessions, as this will inevitably lead to many weeks, or even months, of waiting for a first session. UCS do make an exception in rare cases where clinically assessed client need and/or risk suggests that offering a block of sessions would be advisable.</p> <p>All clients already receive an emailed reminder on the morning of their planned session. There is only a requirement to complete a self-referral form <i>once</i> per academic year, regardless of the number of sessions arranged – these two points raised may be another area where a more widespread understanding of how the UCS works could be helpful to students using our service.</p>
<p>Theme: Dissatisfaction Feeling invalidated or feeling rushed through appointments</p>	<p>It's very unfortunate that these students have not had the experience they wanted at the UCS. From now on the UCS team will let all students they meet with know that if the student has encountered any problems while using the service, or feels that something should have happened differently, then they would greatly welcome the chance to address the issue/s and improve things where they can. UCS</p>

	will encourage all students using the service to share any feedback they have with their counsellor/with an alternative counsellor/with the HoS/with another member of staff within the University.
Theme: Additional Services Offer more wellbeing activities or conversation circle therapy	The UCS team have recently been discussing the therapeutic benefits of offering group therapy sessions and may decide to introduce some groups later this year.
Theme: Resident activities and events There was a strong sense that residents were keen to engage in activities geared towards getting to know people in their blocks	Feedback has been shared with the Student Resident Assistant team and will be discussed with the Students' Union, when preparing events for the term ahead and for the next academic year.
Theme: International student experience	The team took some feedback from international students and their experiences and have fed this into the discussions of our Student Support International working group for their consideration, having created this group in late 2023 to focus on reviewing general way our support impacts this group.
Theme: Services or support not geared towards PGR or online students	SASO will consider how they can work more closely with the PGR School to address. In terms of online, SASO will also give some thought to ensuring that services are inclusive and clearly highlighted as being open for online learners.
Theme: Cost of living and money matters	There were comments around cost of living and money matters which have prompted SASO to consider how they can better promote the hardship funds and support for money matters. This has been discussed with the money team as an action and will be considered in the planning for National Student Money Week 2024.
Theme: processes to access support for disabled students	SASO reflected that some of these have already been enhanced and streamlined in the first term but have continued to consider how they can make it easier for disabled students to quickly access the support they need to engage with their studies. SASO have already streamlined their initial contact process, reducing the requirement for students to always complete the online contact form, in the hope of achieving this. They also now follow up with disabled students receiving support to review this on a rolling basis.
Theme: Campus accessibility	Comments should be fed through the Reimagining the Campus discussions for consideration.
Theme: Dissatisfaction about the full return to on-campus learning	There was quite a lot of negative feedback about the return to fully on campus learning and assessment, which is reflective of the discussions SASO have had in the services with students. This isn't specific to support services, but has been their experience when support students, especially those who are disabled, carers, lower income, rural, etc.
Theme: Selection of appointment times available	The service will be introducing Microsoft Bookings this term, which will address these comments and hopefully improve the experience.
Theme: Negative comments	The team have recognised a couple of the negative comments, having since managed the concerns through the relevant frontline complaints processes, when case reviews have been conducted to inform learning.
Theme: Positive comments	There were some positive comments around the support services, and support generally from lots of different departments. SASO particularly highlighted a comment from a returning student commenting that they felt support services had improved since they previously studied here, and another PG who noted they felt the services were better

	than at their UG institution. This provided context in comparison.
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5.3 Online Campus

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
Theme: Teaching and course delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of flexibility e.g. lectures all scheduled during the working day Lack of interactivity 	The Online team will incorporate this feedback into their action plan and ensure that accurate expectations are set for the online study experience. If necessary, guidance will be communicated through OEDC School Representatives, who can also provide feedback on the adoption of these measures.
Theme: Quality of course content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and accessibility of content – poor audio, lack of closed captions/transcripts on recordings 	The Online team will develop a best-practice guide and distribute it through School channels. The aim will be to enhance the quality of online study materials, thereby improving the overall experience for students across online courses.
Theme: Online materials Library access – online materials	Online team to share library processes for making reading lists available online ahead of the September term. This proactive approach aims to ensure that necessary materials are readily accessible to students at the beginning of the academic term.
Theme: Assessment and feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient information regarding assessment and exam dates Lack of communication, slow to respond to queries. Timeliness and quality of feedback 	<p>The Online team will collaborate closely with the e-Learning team to address this feedback effectively.</p> <p>Additionally, the Online team will develop a best-practice guide and distribute it through school channels.</p>
Theme: Belonging and experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of community, one way learning Students felt detached and isolated from both the student community and staff School Induction should be tailored to online students 	<p>The Online Team will conduct a thorough review of the onboarding communications they directly send out, encompassing both the initial welcome email and subsequent follow-up check-in email.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Online Team will collaborate with EEW colleagues to ensure that online-specific activities are integrated into Welcome Week events.</p>
Theme: Orientation Orientation is not specific to Online campus	The Online Team will partner with EEW to investigate the feasibility of arranging a separate orientation program tailored specifically for online students. This initiative aims to deliver streamlined and relevant content that meets the unique needs of online learners.

5.1 Qatar Campus

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
Theme: Orientation Orientation is not specific to Qatar campus	The Qatar campus will collaborate with EEW to explore the feasibility of organising a separate orientation specifically for Qatar students. This aims to ensure that the content is streamlined and relevant to the needs of students based in Qatar.
Theme: Orientation Lack of completion of Orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion during MyCurriculum registration: AFG will look to Integrate information about orientation and its benefits into the MyC registration process so it ensures that individuals are aware of it right from the start when they're engaging with the appropriate systems and support. Announcements during the first week of classes: AFG will liaise with faculty to making announcements during the first week of classes, as it's a time when

	<p>everyone is likely to be present and attentive. Enlisting faculty also emphasises its importance within the academic community and encourage participation.</p> <p>By implementing these strategies, AFG will be looking to increase awareness and participation in orientation, ensuring that all members are equipped with the necessary information and resources for a successful experience.</p>
Theme: satisfaction of support services	To expedite response times and enhance support services for students, AFT are recruiting a new Student Services Admin Officer (UoA) who will have access to UoA systems.
Theme: social activities	<p>AFG are working closely with the Students' Union to ensure that in-person events are aligned with student interest and add to the overall student experience.</p> <p>AFG will explore available online events offered by UoA that students in Qatar can participate in.</p>
Theme: <u>Wellbeing and Inclusion</u>	<p>The Disability and Wellbeing Officer is presently engaged in developing a Wellbeing podcast series. This initiative aims to invite both staff and students to share their insights and experiences on various aspects of wellbeing.</p> <p>Additionally, the Student Events Officer has successfully negotiated student discounts at several local gyms, offering students an opportunity to enjoy these benefits. They are in communication with the AFG Marketing department to discuss the creation of a student discount brochure.</p>
Theme: <u>communications</u>	Work with UoA to ensure that students in Qatar do not receive communications that are UoA specific
Theme: <u>Inductions</u>	To work with PG Programme Leader to include an icebreaker session during induction

5.2 Students' Union

Feedback from ASES	Comment / Planned Actions
Theme: Campus orientation Improve Aberdeen campus orientation	Work with University and ambassadors to ensure SU services including Union Brew and Students' Union Building are being included especially during move in weekends.
Theme: Social media Instagram most referred choice	Review SU social media channels used e.g. 50% prefer Instagram, only 11% YouTube & 10% Facebook & TikTok
Theme: Welcome Week Offer non-drinking events Promote events minimum of 1 month in advance. Review variety of events- welcome Ball/ceilidh, Fayre durations/times, quiz, games night etc.	<p>Promote specific events that do not include any alcohol or suitable for -18yrs or mature students in marketing materials.</p> <p>Release schedule in advance to maximise awareness and increase attendances. Also include promotion of sports & societies upcoming events on website.</p> <p>Ensure inclusive and promote LGBTQ+ welcome, PG and family events etc. Review days, times and locations of events inc increasing use of Hillhead/Halls of Res, Foresterhill and online events.</p>
Theme: Wellbeing & Inclusion High fees/ simplify admissions process/ bank accounts/ Passport/ documentations / PhD orientation	Progress with Borderless Campaign e.g. UK Hostile Environment and Polices; Culture - Monitoring and interpretation of UKVI policy; Induction/Arrival; Funding/finance; Academic misconduct; Academic Structures; Academic Flexibility and Access and understanding of non-academic support.
Theme: Regular student feedback	Promote /relaunch the ideas function on SU website to receive regular feedback and engagement from students as

So many additional comments received, offer this opportunity all year round to all students	to how we can improve their lives while at university including reviewing Class Rep system.
Theme: Mental Health Support services to be more accessible	Reviewing the resources and signposting students accordingly including self-care. Launch and promote Mental Health Agreement (MHA) including appointment of student welfare champions.

6 FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Morag Beedie, Marketing & Engagement Manager, Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing Team; morag.beedie@abdn.ac.uk or Duncan Stuart, Assistant Director of People and Head of Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing; d.stuart@abdn.ac.uk.

31 January 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SUPPORT FOR STUDY POLICY REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper presents the Committee with an updated revised draft of the Support for Study Policy (the **Policy**) for approval.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Student Support & Experience Committee (SSEC)	September 2023 November 2023 February 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	Senate	March 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Committee is invited to consider and discuss the updated draft of the Policy, for onwards approval by Senate. The current policy can be found in the [AQH](#), and the draft revision in Appendix A.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1** The Policy was introduced in November 2016, following approval by Senate. Student Support Management Team (**SSMT**) have responsibility for operating the Policy, with the Head of Student Support Services having overall oversight for cases supported under it.
- 4.2** The Policy provides a useful and supportive framework to work with students whose engagement is impacted due to significant health or personal challenges, and in recent years it has allowed for positive proactive support to be delivered to students at risk, and swift reactive support to be discussed and delivered to those who may have otherwise been unable to engage positively in University life and/or continue with their studies.
- 4.3** As agreed at SSEC, a working group of SSEC members and key stakeholders have met twice to feed into the review and consider the changes presented by SSMT in the previous draft. A revised draft has been prepared, based on these discussions and feedback.
- 4.4** The draft Policy has been included with general comments highlighting key changes which have been made following consultation with the working group, key stakeholders and SSMT. Due to the volume of changes made, especially when compared to the current Policy, a tracked change version would have been unreadable and has not been provided.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE INITIAL DRAFTS

- 5.1** The initial draft was shared with the working group and SSEC for comments and input and a summary of their main comments, and changes made following these, are noted below:

- The language used in the Policy has been considered carefully, to seek to balance the supportive nature of the processes flowing from it, whilst maintaining the formality of a University policy.
- The language used in the Policy has been amended to reflect that the reader may be a staff member or a student.
- The format and processes flowing from the Policy have been amended to fall into line with amendments made recently to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic) (The **Code**), to allow for greater consistency and clarity.
- The structure of the Policy has been reformatted to make each section clearer, with possible outcomes sitting within each Stage, rather than at the foot of the Policy.
- Additional context has been added around when the Policy does and does not apply, making it clear that usual monitoring, engagement, and progression exercises should continue, and that the Policy will only be considered when concerns are directly stemming from personal/health issues experienced by the student (recognising these may have impacted engagement and/or progression).
- The list of other policies which interplay with the Policy has been amended, with further clarity provided around movement of cases between policies.
- The Prevention section of the Policy has been revised to provide greater clarity around responsibilities of the Schools/departments, and those of Student Support. This section has been reworded to remove the terminology around “stage” and has been drafted as “guidance” to reiterate that the intention is not to over-engineer or formalise standard support discussions, but to provide a framework around cases which require additional guidance or intervention.
- Language around pastoral support has been amended to reflect all students – previous versions didn’t adequately represent PGT and PGR structures/processes.
- Further detail has been added around support for students who take a break from studies following intervention under the Policy, with further clarity around how an interruption will be arranged, and the route for returning to study in a supported manner thereafter.
- An appeal section has been added, aligned with the appeals section in the Code.
- Clarity has been given to where responsibility for the Policy ultimately lies, with clearer guidance to staff around making relevant referrals. The updated Policy will be paired with updated staff and student guides which give anonymised examples of how and when to refer cases under the Policy.

6. ACTION REQUIRED

- 6.1 The UEC is invited to consider and discuss the draft revision to the Support for Study Policy, as presented in Appendix A.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is being finalised.
- 7.2 Guidance notes will be developed for both staff and students, to help support implementation of the updated Policy.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Jemma Murdoch, Deputy Head of Student Support Services (j.murdoch@abdn.ac.uk) and Nick Edwards, Deputy Director of People and Head of Student Support Services (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk).

27 February 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Support for Study Policy

This policy outlines the processes the University can follow when there are concerns that a student's health, or personal difficulties, are affecting: their ability to participate fully and effectively in their studies; or impacting on their engagement in university life or with the university community. Early interventions and support are fundamental elements to supporting positive outcomes for students. This policy provides initial, informal, prevention guidance aimed at reducing the need for escalations and interventions by more formal actions. Where concerns are acute, or this early intervention is unsuccessful, this policy further provides details of how to escalate the situation for consideration by the Student Support Management Team. Intervention or escalation under the Policy will be managed by Student Support, in collaboration with Schools and/or the relevant Professional Services team(s) as appropriate.

Version 2

Launched on XXXXXXXX 2024

Review date XXXXXXXX 2026

1. When does the Policy apply?

The University is committed to supporting our students with all aspects of their student life and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression and wider university experience. This policy is a supportive way of assisting students whose interactions at the University, and beyond, are giving cause for concern.

This policy can be applied in a range of situations, including where:

- Concerns are raised about a student failing to engage positively with their studies and/or the wider learning environment, even after inclusion adjustments have been explored and implemented.
- A student has multiple monitoring flags on their record and the School(s) has/have identified that there are underlying support needs.
- A student is disrupting the teaching, learning or support of other students and/or the wellbeing or studies/work of other students and staff.
- A student is disrupting the living environment or impacting on the experience and/or the wellbeing of other residents in University Halls of Residence.
- A student is unable to participate independently and safely in wider elements of university life e.g., socialising, extracurricular activities on campus, placements (work/clinical), field trips, part time employment, engagements with the Students' Union (AUSA) or living in University or PBSA accommodation.
- A student has spent a significant period, or is receiving ongoing care, in hospital, due to underlying medical difficulties, or a mental health crisis.
- The University receives a report of a serious incident involving a student (e.g., from the Police, a private student accommodation provider, or from a friend/family member of the student) which is likely to impact on their studies.
- A student is returning to their studies, following a break, and it has been identified that support extending beyond inclusion adjustments would be beneficial to the student, in the initial period following their return.

Ultimately decisions on the application of the policy will be guided by the Student Support Management Team (**SSMT**) through the operation of the Student Case Management Group (**SCMG**) which has responsibility to consider student support cases and progression under this policy.

This policy works alongside other formal University regulations, policies, and procedures. The most common policies it may interplay with are:

- [Code of Practice on Student Discipline \(Academic\)](#)
- [Code of Practice on Student Discipline \(Non-Academic\)](#)
- [Policy on Fitness to Practise](#)
- [Unacceptable Actions Policy](#)
- [Policy on Drugs and Alcohol Misuse \(Students\)](#)
- [Student Monitoring procedures](#)
- [PGR Engagement policy \(PGR Code of Practice\)](#)

At any time during a process being progressed under this policy a decision can be taken to proceed under another policy if it is deemed more appropriate. In cases where there has been behaviour which would be deemed as misconduct under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic) (**The Code**), the SCMG reserve the right to apply any one of the outcomes available to an Investigator under the Code as part of an outcome under the Policy.

2. When does the Policy not apply?

This policy does not seek to replicate or take precedence over other University policies and should not be used in place of the relevant policies for monitoring of student engagement and/or progress. Stages 2 and 3 of this policy will only apply when concerns raised directly result from a student's personal and/or medical circumstances.

3. Who does the Policy apply to?

This policy applies to all University students who are registered/enrolled on a full-time or part-time programme, including distance learning students. The policy will apply to individuals regardless of their level of study and may be applied should they move to a new programme or level of study. It will also apply to applicants holding an offer of study, and to students who are taking a break from their studies and planning their return in the current or following academic year.

4. Who has oversight and responsibility for cases under the Policy?

The Policy is overseen by SSMT, who have overall responsibility for this policy, coordinated by the Head of Student Support Services.

The initial prevention guidance highlights the responsibility of all staff working with and/or supporting students, across the University, who can implement support under the Policy without the need for input from other staff.

Staff across the University can refer any cases of concern to the SCMG for consideration across various policies and processes, which may include intervention under this Policy. If progressing under the Policy, the intervention and escalation stages will be led by a member of the SSMT, in collaboration with the School(s) and/or other Professional Services department(s) as appropriate.

Whilst this policy has been developed with prevention and early intervention in mind, it is not necessary to work sequentially through each stage. At the discretion of the SSMT or Head of Student Support Services it may be determined that a case should progress immediately to any stage. This could be because the case has already been progressed under the Policy before, or due to the severity of the situation and its impact and/or risk. The Policy can also be initiated at any point for students who seek to return to study following a break, including those who have not been supported under the Policy before or to those who have previously been on a different programme of study at the University.

5. Summary of the stages of the Policy

The policy has three sections: informal prevention guidance; a formal intervention stage; and a further formal escalation stage for cases of higher risk/urgency, or ongoing concern which has not been addressed through the earlier sections.

6. Prevention Guidance

Supportive conversations

This guidance section of the Policy is intended to provide an opportunity to staff across the University who have concerns of a low level to discuss these with the student and ensure that adequate support is in place.

It can be used where a student's actions, lack of engagement with their studies, or wellbeing is causing concern, but not presenting any immediate crisis or putting themselves or others at risk. There is no formal process for having a discussion with the student at this stage. Conversations are likely to be progressed by academic staff delivering teaching to the student, staff monitoring student engagement, personal tutors, Research Supervisors, staff in university accommodation or members of a student facing service. Concerns in relation to engagement should be raised as early as possible, when it is possible for a student to re-engage with their studies.

It is acknowledged that staff will discuss support with students on a regular basis and this guidance is not designed to formalise or inhibit such conversations, but to provide a structure to explore emergency concerns with a student in a supportive environment.

If a member of staff has concerns about a student and needs guidance on how to approach a conversation about them, they should contact Student Advice & Support on 01224 273935; or by emailing student.support@abdn.ac.uk. The team is available from 0900-1700, Monday to Friday. The team can also provide staff with details of services that can support students, and relevant information for signposting.

During a supportive conversation under the Policy, staff should clearly outline the concerns with the student, and allow them the opportunity to share their perspective. Staff should take the opportunity to discuss and explore support with the student and make suggestions regarding appropriate support services. Details of the University support services are available on the [website](#) and in the staff guidance on the Policy.

7. Next steps under the Policy (Prevention)

Following any conversation about support under the Policy, staff will follow up with the student in writing, outlining the discussion shared and the support options that were raised. Any expectations will also be clearly documented: e.g., attendance at follow-up meetings, actively seeking support from another service, or a change in behaviour. It may be that no further action was required, but a follow up should always be sent signposting to support services.

Further guidance around approaching supportive conversations with students can be found on the pastoral support [website](#).

If there are continuing concerns (for example if the student does not attend or engage positively with the meeting or take appropriate action following it) then it may be considered appropriate to refer the case to SCMG for review and consideration under the Policy. This should be clearly highlighted in an email to student.support@abdn.ac.uk. In the referral, staff should include details of the conversations which have already taken place with the student. The referral will be reviewed by the SCMG, and appropriate next steps agreed on the case. You will be informed on any input needed as the case progresses.

8. Intervention Stage

Engagement/Support agreements

A meeting with the student about continuing/significant concerns may be considered if the student is unable to engage positively with their studies and/or university life following an initial meeting, and significant concerns continue. This stage may also be considered if the concern raised is too serious to be dealt with as an emerging/low level concern using the Prevention guidance in the policy.

The purpose of a meeting under this stage is to provide a supportive environment in which concerns can be discussed with the student and any actions to support the student to re-engage positively with their studies and/or student life can be developed and agreed. This stage will be managed by a member of Student Support staff, and any meeting conducted will include 2 members of university staff. Where an earlier conversation has already taken place under the Policy, it is hoped that in most cases the staff member involved in the initial meeting will remain involved during this to ensure a consistent and supportive approach for the student.

In the invite to a meeting at this stage of the policy, the student will be given clear information about the reason for the meeting, along with a copy of the policy, and any relevant information relating to the concern. Students will be given written notice of the meeting and will be expected to attend it. Students will be invited to take a supporter to any meeting at this stage (page 7).

During a meeting at this stage, the concerns will be outlined to the student, giving them the opportunity to share their perspective and discuss their experiences. Support opportunities will be explored and agreed, wherever possible, and a clear agreement will be drawn up collaboratively between the staff involved and the student. As part of the agreement, a review date will be agreed. In most cases, students will continue to be supported under an agreement for at least the rest of the relevant academic term.

9. Next steps under the Policy (Intervention)

Following a meeting at this stage, the agreement will be shared with the student in writing, along with clear information about the relevant support services and details of any follow-up meetings. The agreement will be shared with other university staff/departments, as deemed appropriate by the member of staff leading this stage of the process. In the sharing of the agreement, Student Support will outline the expectation of reporting under the agreement with the relevant department(s).

All students supported under an agreement will be assigned a lead member of staff in Student Support who will meet with the student as outlined in the agreement. Where possible, this will be the same member of staff who led the meeting on behalf of Student Support. The Adviser will report to the SCMG at the review date with recommendation to conclude or extend the agreement. The Adviser will also report to the SCMG with any escalations or concerns during the period of the agreement. The Adviser will liaise with the relevant academic and support departments, regarding engagement under the agreement, during the period of the agreement.

Following a meeting under this stage of the Policy, the lead member of staff may refer the case back to the SCMG for consideration under a different policy. The lead member of staff may also determine that a further meeting or more information is required before an engagement agreement can be drawn up. In these cases, the outcome of the meeting will be communicated in writing to the student, with clear guidance about the next steps. In some cases, the outcome of a meeting at this stage will be agreement that no further action is required. This will be confirmed in writing to the student.

10. Escalation Stage

Support for Study Review Panel

A Support for Study Review Panel may be initiated if:

- Previous stages of the Policy have not resolved the concern, or a student is not able to engage fully with an agreement under the Policy.
- Concerns are established as being more severe than originally anticipated.
- A risk assessment conducted by SCMG has deemed that the concern is so serious that immediate escalation is deemed suitable by the SCMG or Head of Student Support Services.
- A student's health and/or wellbeing are significantly affecting their ability to engage with studies, placements (work/clinical) or impacting on their engagement in university life, University accommodation, or with the university community.
- There is immediate risk to the student and/or others.
- There is consideration by the SCMG that an outcome under the Policy may result in disruption to the student's registration, i.e., suspension/withdrawal.

Where possible and appropriate, the staff involved any earlier meetings will be included in the composition of the Support for Study Review Panel for a consistent and supportive process.

The panel should appropriately represent departments/services in contact with the student. The panel must include three members of staff, including the Convener. Additional staff may be asked to attend to provide insight into the situation, and this may include external parties at the discretion of the Convener.

The following staff may convene a Support for Study Review Panel:

- Director of People or their Deputy
- Head of Student Support Services or their Deputy
- Dean for Student Support & Experience
- Any Vice Principal

In the invite to a meeting at this stage of the policy, the student will be given clear information about the reason for the meeting. They will be provided with information about the composition of the panel, and a copy of the Review Panel papers which will include an outline of the concern(s), copies of any relevant emails or meeting notes from earlier stages of the process, and a copy of the student's record card. An invite and documentation will be shared with the student and the panel, wherever possible, 3 working days prior to the meeting. The Review Panel will also receive a copy of the referral from the SCMG, where relevant.

Students will be invited to include a written statement and/or any relevant evidence in advance of the Review Panel meeting. Students will be invited to take a supporter to any meeting at this stage (section 12). Student engagement in the meeting is strongly encouraged. If a student chooses not to attend, or is unable to engage fully in the meeting, the process for proceeding in their absence is outlined below (section 13).

During a meeting at this stage, the concerns will be outlined to the student, giving them the opportunity to share their perspective and discuss their experiences. Previous support agreed, including any agreement drawn up, will be discussed in detail. The panel will have the opportunity to ask the student questions relating to their experience of studying/University life and explore

mitigating circumstances. The meeting is intended to explore all possible support, both internally and externally to the University.

Review Panel meetings under the Policy will follow a similar format and structure to those conducted under the Code, and further details about procedures to be followed can be found in the appropriate section of the Code.

11. Next steps under the Policy (Escalation)

Following the Review Panel, the panel will meet to consider the decision. The decision of the Support for Study Review Panel will be notified to the student in writing, with clear reasons and with any agreed action points, within 5 working days of the decision.

The possible outcomes of a Review Panel may include:

- No further action.
- If a student has shared that they are disabled or have a medical condition for which they have not been receiving study-support due to no prior sharing, they will be referred to Student Advice & Support for a meeting to discuss reasonable adjustments and support. This may include the implementation inclusion adjustments, and/or referral for specialist study-related support e.g., specialist study skills and/or specialist mentoring.
- The drawing up of an Engagement Agreement, or revision to an existing Agreement, under the Policy.
- An exclusion from areas of the University's campus where issues have arisen (e.g., University student accommodation, the Students' Union Building, or the Library). The period of exclusion will be confirmed with the student in the outcome, and the Panel will consider mitigations to reduce any detrimental impact on the student's ability to engage with their studies or with support services during any exclusion period.
- A recommendation to explore alternative study mode options, e.g. part-time study.
- An interruption to studies for the duration of the current academic year, which will be reviewed before the following academic year commences. If approved academically, any request for readmission from a student who has been withdrawn under the Policy will be at the discretion of the Panel or, at their discretion and delegation, the Head of Student Support Services.
- A referral to any relevant Fitness to Practice processes, which may include a recommendation for an Occupational Health Review meeting for students studying Medicine, Dentistry, or other Allied Health programmes.

12. Supporter

Students have the right to be accompanied to meetings at every stage under the policy. This could be a peer, family member or friend, for the purpose of moral support. The supporter will not be expected to speak on behalf of the student or represent their own views or opinions in the meeting. Students will be asked to provide information about anyone attending a meeting with them in advance. If a student wishes to have representation during the meeting, they can request this support from the Students' Union. The Students' Union can provide independent advice, assistance, or representation for students at every stage under the Support for Study Policy, including accompanying them to or representing them at meetings. Initial enquiries can be directed to the Students' Union Advice team by telephone: 01224 274200; or by email: ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk. The University will not provide legal or other representation for any party involved in the proceedings brought under this Policy.

13. Proceeding in a student's absence

Where a student cannot attend the first offered time for a meeting under the Policy, they can ask for an alternative time to be offered on a different day. Given the importance of meetings under the Policy, attendance at meetings required under it will take precedence over all other University activity. If the student is unable to attend the rescheduled meeting, the case can be considered, and a decision reached in the absence of the student. The student will be invited to provide a written statement in advance where this is the case.

Although every effort will be made to ensure that the student is able to engage with meetings under the policy, the meetings at any stage may proceed in a student's absence where there is evidence that they cannot effectively engage in the process, or this is reasonably considered by the University to be in a student's best interests e.g. where there is a concern that attending a panel meeting would be detrimental to the student's mental health and wellbeing.

Where a student is invited to a meeting under this policy and does not attend, and does not provide advance notice of their inability to attend, the meeting may proceed in their absence at the discretion of the Head of Student Support Services or their Deputy, or the Convener of a Support for Study Review Panel, as long as, in line with policy, they have received appropriate notice of the date and time of the meeting.

Any notes of the meeting, together with copies of any relevant documents, and the reason for the decision to proceed will be provided to the student.

14. Interruption to Studies – an outcome under the Policy

Where it is recommended that a student interrupts their studies under the Policy, the case will be reviewed when the student applies for readmission.

Where it is recommended that a student takes a break from their studies under the Policy, the implications on their funding, housing, and student visa (where applicable) must be considered by the Panel and any relevant advice or information must be shared with the student in a written outcome.

Students who are recommended to take a break from studies will be allocated a Student Support Adviser as a named contact to discuss practical matters relating to funding, housing, etc.

15. Interruption to Studies – students unable to engage with the University in the management of their wellbeing

For any student who is unable to engage with their studies and/or to interact with the University in the management of their wellbeing due to personal or medical circumstances (e.g. hospitalisation, being under the care of a Compulsory Treatment Order (CTO), under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, engagement in criminal justice processes, other serious personal reasons), the University will put an appropriate interruption of studies in place. The University will liaise with the Emergency Contact of all students in this position and will liaise with the Emergency Contact until such a time that the student is able to re-engage.

SCMG will liaise with the Emergency Contact, the relevant academic department(s), Registry, and the Immigration team (where relevant) to establish the appropriate interruption period for any student unable to engage with the University due to health/personal reasons, which would usually be until the start of the next academic year. If a student's engagement has not been impacted prior to the point

they have become unable to engage, it may be possible to return to studies after a short break, however the student's ability to return to their studies at a particular time will be determined depending on their ability to achieve the learning outcomes for each course they are registered for.

16. Return to study after an interruption

During a break from studies under the Policy, a Student Support Adviser will check in with the student via email to offer support and highlight any upcoming readmission and/or funding deadlines. When a student expresses a desire to consider readmission, the Adviser will meet with the student to discuss next steps, and practical matters to consider, which may include arrangements to meet with relevant staff in the School or support services such as the Student Learning Service, Student Support Services, etc.

When a student is returning to study following an interruption recommended under the Policy or due to being unable to engage with the University in the management of their wellbeing, the student may be asked to provide evidence that the issues that presented concerns have been addressed. This could include evidence of having received appropriate medical or other support that may also be ongoing. Where relevant, students charged or convicted with a relevant criminal offence during their interruption will need to provide information about the charge or conviction to studentconduct@abdn.ac.uk. The readmission to study will be reviewed by the Student Case Management Group (SCMG).

Following review, a meeting will be arranged with a member of the SCMG to discuss a possible return to studies.

If students have any concerns about providing evidence to support their readmission, they should contact the Head of Student Support Services.

17. Monitoring after a return to study

Once a student has returned to study, both Student Advice & Support and the School/s will have a role in monitoring the wellbeing of the student for a review period of up to six months. During the initial meeting with Student Advice & Support/SCMG as noted in section 16, this will be discussed, and any appropriate follow up meetings will be agreed. Student Support will liaise with the School regarding any specific monitoring requirements. If any concerns re-emerge, these will be raised promptly with the student. The student is expected to engage with meetings arranged by their School/s or Student Advice & Support during this review period.

18. Appeals

It is hoped that decisions made under the Policy will be in collaboration with the student and their supporters/support teams. A student can appeal against an outcome under stages 2 and 3 of the policy, but only if there are valid grounds to appeal. The possible grounds for appeal, which must be evidenced when making an appeal are:

- the University's procedures were not followed (without the reported parties' prior approval); or
- the person or body making the decision did not have the authority to do so; or
- the person or body making the decision did not act impartially; or
- the penalty imposed was unreasonable, that is, that it is one which no reasonable person, properly advised, would have imposed under this Code.

If a student wishes to appeal an outcome from stage 2, this should be sent to student.support@abdn.ac.uk within 5 working days of receiving the outcome email, and the appeal will be reviewed by the SCMG. An appeal against a decision of a Review Panel must be made in accordance with the prevailing University appeal process available on the University website. This process is managed by the Academic Services team.

When an appeal is received by Registry, a Case Officer for the appeal will be appointed and receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged. On receipt of the appeal, a Grounds to Proceed panel, composed of the Case Officer and two senior academic or administrative staff members (depending on the nature of the case), will review the case to determine whether there are grounds for the appeal to proceed. If the appeal is deemed not to contain grounds to proceed, the appellant will be advised of this outcome within 5 working days of receipt of the appeal. The appellant will be informed of his or her right to seek independent review of the University's decision by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. If the Grounds to Proceed Panel consider that the appeal should proceed, the original case lead/Panel will be asked whether they wish to review their decision. If they do not wish to amend the original decision taken, the matter is to be referred to an Appeal Panel, in accordance with the University's Policy and Procedure on Student Appeals. The people who form the Appeal will not be the same as those involved in the original decision.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STUDENT WITHDRAWALS REPORT – REPORT UP TO END JULY 2023**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This report provides an overview of UG and PGT student withdrawals between September 2022 and the end of July 2023 for **on campus degree students** only, compared to the same time period in 2021/22, 2020/21 and 2019/20. There are relatively consistent patterns across both UG and PGT, with rather little variation between months and years.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	n/a	
Further consideration/ approval required by	Student Support Committee	tbc

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

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

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Withdrawals are defined as students who have themselves formally withdrawn or have been formally withdrawn by the university (e.g., as a result of the non-returners exercise). This is distinct from non-continuing students as these are simply students who are not active in the following academic year – e.g. a student can withdraw in year but return the following year. In this example, such a student would be a withdrawal but not count as non-continuing.
- 4.2 This paper presents withdrawals in the 2022/23 academic year on a monthly basis until the end of July 2023, with comparative point in time data for the previous three academic cycles. It disaggregates the withdrawal data between undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and considers them as both an absolute full person equivalent (FPE, with the headcount split across Schools where appropriate due to split programmes¹) and as a percentage of the registered student population for that category. It also considers withdrawal data by School and by reason for withdrawal in the appendix.
- 4.3 The student population considered is restricted to students on programmes where delivery is given as being “on campus” where the qualification aim is at degree level. This paper therefore excludes online and transnational delivery, and sub-degree qualification aims such as certificates and diplomas as well as those without a formal qualification aim. This is to focus on a consistent student population for comparison.

5. UNDERGRADUATE (UG) WITHDRAWALS

- 5.1 Between September 2022 and the end of July 2023, a total of 465 UG students (from an undergraduate population of 9456) withdrew from study, slightly lower than in the same period in the previous year (see table 1). By percentage of the student population, the pattern is also largely consistent between months and years. The overall UG withdrawals within the time period

¹ In the case of a joint honours, students are split 50/50 between the contributing Schools. In the case of a major/minor honours, students are split 67/33 between the contributing Schools.

are shown below, along with the proportion of the registered student population that represents. Colour bars are shaded to indicate the range of values in the time period. The amber colouring represents the full person equivalent numbers, whereas the red colouring represents the percentage of the registered student population that has withdrawn.

Table 1: Cumulative monthly undergraduate withdrawals as FPE and as percentage of on campus registered population.

	Year	2019/20				2020/21				2021/22				2022/23							
		Full Person Equivalent				As % of registered population															
UG	by end September	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.3%	0.6%	1.3%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.8%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end October	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end November	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end December	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end January	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end February	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end March	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end April	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end May	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end June	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end July	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end September	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end October	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
	by end November	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%
by end December	26	55	124	174	225	241	250	272	281	305	0.1%	0.5%	1.2%	1.8%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%	2.7%	2.9%	3.2%	

5.2 The full person equivalent and proportion of students withdrawing in September was, however, higher in 2022/23 than it was previously 2020/21 and 2021/22 (see Table 1).

Table 2: Individual monthly undergraduate withdrawals as FPE.

UG	Year	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
	2019/20	26	29	43	26	50	51	16	9	22	9	24
	2020/21	6	37	49	18	18	40	32	33	21	30	37
	2021/22	6	35	63	38	37	61	68	53	39	29	70
	2022/23	20	68	32	51	48	33	49	44	48	24	48

5.3 In the previous two years UG Withdrawals were at their highest levels in November during this period. In 2022/23 the highest level of withdrawals was in October.

Table 3: Undergraduate withdrawals as FPE and as percentage of on campus registered population at School level.

School	Full Person Equivalent				Percentage of Registered Population			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Business	27	22	44	60	2.5%	2.0%	3.9%	5.3%
DHPA	19	22	41	34	3.2%	4.0%	7.2%	6.4%
Education	16	14	20	24	3.4%	2.9%	4.0%	5.2%
Engineering	44	61	88	50	4.8%	7.2%	11.8%	7.5%
Geosciences	11	12	18	17	3.0%	4.5%	7.0%	6.6%
Law	24	26	37	36	2.7%	2.7%	3.4%	3.1%
LLMVC	35	26	55	41	3.9%	3.3%	7.0%	5.7%
MMSN	29	52	52	59	1.6%	2.8%	2.7%	2.9%
NCS	23	29	46	35	4.9%	5.4%	8.8%	6.7%
Psychology	27	19	35	32	3.6%	2.7%	4.8%	4.4%
SBS	19	12	28	32	4.0%	2.6%	5.3%	6.0%
Social Science	31	27	36	45	3.4%	3.6%	4.7%	6.0%
Grand Total	305	321	499	465	3.2%	3.5%	5.2%	4.9%

5.4 We see variation between Schools and years in the numbers of withdrawals with little clearly defined pattern in most cases (see Table 3). However, the School of MMSN has the lowest rates of undergraduate withdrawals at around 1.6%-2.9%, followed by the School of Law (2.7%-3.4%). The School of Engineering had the highest rates of withdrawals at around 4.8%-11.8%.

Table 4: Undergraduate withdrawals as FPE by reason for withdrawal

Reason	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Academic failure	1	5	2	2
Deceased				1
Excluded	1	1	5	1
Financial reasons	6	7	5	6
Health reasons	116	112	143	142
Into employment			7	6
Other personal	58	35	68	109
Other Reasons	66	88	119	80
Trans other inst	27	29	27	24
Written off lapsed	30	44	123	94
Grand Total	305	321	499	465

- 5.5 The most common reasons are, in order of magnitude, 'Health Reasons', followed by 'Other Personal', then 'Other Reasons' (see Table 4). This pattern is similar to previous years with 'Health Reasons' being the most common, followed by either 'Other Personal' or 'Other Reasons'. These categories, however, could potentially cover numerous individual circumstances, and from this data it isn't possible to identify systematic reasons for withdrawal across the institution.

Table 5: Undergraduate withdrawals as FPE by Fee Region.

UG	REGION	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	HOME/EU	264	265	433	377
R/UK	30	37	39	56	
OVERSEAS	11	19	27	32	

- 5.6 Undergraduate withdrawals by fee region are largely consistent year on year (see Table 5). Home/EU withdrawals have decreased in 2022/23 whereas R/UK and Overseas withdrawals have increased.

Table 6: Undergraduate withdrawals as FPE by Programme Year.

Programme Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1	114	121	228	201
2	72	65	92	125
3	70	79	104	92
4	45	43	60	43
5	4	13	14	4
Grand Total	305	321	498	465

- 5.7 In each of the academic years the highest volume of UG withdrawals at this stage have been among students in their first programme year (see Table 6). The volume of withdrawals in the fourth programme year (typically a student's Honours year) is the lowest among the four main programme years.

6. POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT (PGT) WITHDRAWALS

- 6.1 Between September 2022 and the end of July 2023, a total of 120 PGT students (from a population of 2,771) withdrew from study, which is significantly lower than in the same period in the previous year (see Table 7). By percentage of the student population, the pattern also reflects the reduction in postgraduate withdrawals with a decrease from 9.8% in the previous year to 4.8% in 2022/23. The overall PGT withdrawals within the time period are shown below, along with the proportion of the registered postgraduate student population that represents. Colour bars are shaded to indicate the range of values in the time period. The amber colouring represents the full person equivalent numbers, whereas the red colouring represents the percentage of the registered student population that has withdrawn

Table 7: Cumulative monthly postgraduate taught withdrawals as FPE and as percentage of on campus registered population.

PGT	Year	2019/20				2020/21				2021/22				2022/23																			
		Full Person Equivalent	by end September	4	8	13	15	26	31	36	39	40	44	46	1	8	12	14	20	35	60	236	287	34	41	47	54	72	82	101	105	114	117
As % of registered population	by end September	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.7%	1.2%	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%	0.9%	1.6%	2.2%	2.8%	3.0%	3.7%	3.8%	0.1%	0.6%	1.0%	2.5%	3.7%	5.6%	7.0%	8.0%	9.0%	9.5%	9.8%

6.2 For individual months the volume of PGT withdrawals in 2022/23 significantly increased in September compared to the previous three years. (see Table 8).

Table 8: Individual monthly postgraduate taught withdrawals as FPE.

PGT	Year	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
	2019/20	4	4	5	2	11	5	5	3	1	4	2
	2020/21	1	7	4	2	6	15	12	13	6	15	2
	2021/22	4	14	12	42	36	56	43	29	28	16	7
	2022/23	34	7	6	7	18	10	19	4	9	3	3

6.3 We see variation between Schools and years in the numbers of withdrawals with no defined pattern in most cases (see Table 9). However, we can see that there is a marked decrease in postgraduate taught withdrawals in 2022/23 in the Business School with a drop to 49 withdrawals whereas the previous year was at 157 withdrawals at this stage. Some percentages for individual Schools may appear to inconsistent year on year, but this is due to a difference in the population (e.g. Business and Social Science).

Table 9: Postgraduate taught withdrawals as FPE and as percentage of on campus registered population at School level.

School	Full Person Equivalent				Percentage of Registered Population			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Business	9	25	157	49	1.3%	3.3%	15.3%	5.6%
DHPA	2	2	4	2	5.6%	5.3%	9.5%	5.4%
Education	1	1	3	3	5.3%	5.9%	8.1%	6.0%
Engineering	6	9	9	1	3.2%	4.6%	3.6%	0.5%
Geosciences	4	7	6	11	2.4%	4.7%	3.4%	6.5%
Law	2	5	14	5	0.9%	3.0%	7.7%	2.7%
LLMVC	3	8	15	3	1.9%	5.1%	9.3%	2.1%
MMSN	9	7	21	22	3.3%	2.5%	4.7%	4.1%
NCS	5	1	14	8	3.9%	0.7%	6.1%	3.1%
Psychology	2	6	3	2	2.9%	9.5%	2.8%	2.1%
SBS	2	5	14	3	2.4%	5.8%	11.9%	4.1%
Social Science	1	7	27	11	0.9%	5.6%	16.3%	8.9%
Grand Total	46	83	287	120	2.1%	3.8%	9.8%	4.3%

- 6.4 The most common reason for withdrawals at this stage of the academic year is 'Other Reasons', which accounted for just under half of PGT withdrawals in 2022/23 (see Table 10). This is followed by withdrawals that are categorised as 'Other Personal'.

Table 10: Postgraduate taught withdrawals as FPE by reason for withdrawal.

Reason	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Academic failure	2	2		
Deceased	1		1	
Excluded			4	1
Financial reasons	3	2	6	2
Health reasons	7	6	15	8
Into employment		1	1	
Other personal	28	38	44	43
Other Reasons	2	8	208	59
Reason Unknown			2	
Result not known			1	
UKBA breach-reg'n withld				1
Written off lapsed	3	26	5	6
Grand Total	46	83	287	120

- 6.5 Postgraduate taught withdrawals by fee region show a marked decrease in Overseas withdrawals in 2022/23, which explains why postgraduate taught withdrawals have decreased overall (see Table 11).

Table 11: Postgraduate Taught withdrawals as FPE by Fee Region.

PGT	REGION	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	HOME/EU	23	25	29	13
R/UK	8	11	9	8	
OVERSEAS	15	47	249	99	

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This analysis of withdrawal data is presented for the comparable 11 months of the last four years, and indicates that, for undergraduate, there hasn't been a significant shift in students withdrawing from the previous year. This year's analysis saw the highest number of withdrawals in October. As previously stated, the School of MMSN has the lowest rates of undergraduate withdrawals at around 1.6%-2.9%, followed by the School of Law (2.7%-3.4%). The School of Engineering has the highest rates of withdrawals at around 4.8%-11.8%. The decrease in undergraduate withdrawals in 2022/23 can be attributed to the decrease of Home/EU withdrawals.
- 7.2 The reasons for withdrawal captured in the student record are relatively imprecise, classifying the 'why' into twelve possible categories. Within these categories there are three main reasons for Undergraduate withdrawal – 'Health', 'Other Reasons', and 'Other Personal'. These categories, however, could potentially cover numerous individual circumstances, and from this data it isn't possible to identify systematic reasons for withdrawal across the institution. Further insight may, however, be possible with more detailed qualitative analysis of individual cases. The capture of case-by-case withdrawal information varies across Schools and there isn't currently a central resource of collated data.
- 7.3 At Postgraduate taught level the reasons for withdrawal were mostly in the category of 'Other Reasons'. Again, the ambiguous classification of reasons behind withdrawal highlights the lack of specific information available for analysis, and the comment from 7.2 above also applies.
- 7.4 There has been a decrease in postgraduate taught withdrawals in 2022/23 after the previous rise observed in 2021/22. Postgraduate taught withdrawals by fee region showed a marked rise in Overseas withdrawals in 2021/22, which explains why postgraduate taught withdrawals rose overall in 2021/22. A key subgroup within this category was observed to be seven Overseas withdrawals in the Business School who have reported Bangladeshi as their ethnicity.
- 7.5 It will be possible to analyse withdrawal data against any demographic information we hold in the student record (for example gender, ethnicity or disability), with the caveat that as categories are

drilled down into more granular categories, the already small numbers become further reduced and therefore can lead to an inability to draw clear conclusions from the data. It is noted that the demographics data does not currently include widening access but is planned to be covered in the future.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Monthly monitoring from Directorate of Planning & Governance with 6 monthly reports to the Student Support and Experience Committee to inform institutional and School action planning. The Institutional action plan will be developed in the second half-session.
- 8.2 Other areas that may be included in the institutional action plan include (but are not limited to): exploration of early warning signs (e.g. richer discipline specific data for schools; analysing demographic data such as widening access, disability, etc; identifying at-risk students via monitoring data); community building as a means of reducing withdrawal; developing School – Student Support strategy to provide early intervention; review of school student support communications.
- 8.3 Future areas of consideration for monitoring will be around protected characteristics related to gender, ethnicity and disability. It is anticipated that this will be available later in this academic year, and that this will also support other initiatives such as the Race Equality Charter application.
- 8.4 Access to PowerBI for Schools so that they can monitor student withdrawals on a live basis. These PowerBI reports additionally cover other student populations such as online students and sub-degree programmes.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk), Jason Boham, Dean for Student Support and Experience, Personal Chair (jason.boham@abdn.ac.uk), Chris Souter, Head of Data and Business Intelligence (chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk) and Lisa Gove, Planning Analyst (lisa.gove@abdn.ac.uk).

15 December 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Closed*

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper provides the background to, and an overview of, the Principles of Education and the [associated web pages](#). These Principles should apply to different modes of teaching, whether in person, online or hybrid.

Members of the UEC are asked to **discuss** the paper.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

This paper is provided for **discussion** of the following:

- Whether the updated Principles of Education are still relevant, appropriate and encompass all aspects and modes of delivery of teaching, learning and assessment.
- What, if any, additional information would be valuable on the webpages, including relevant examples/case studies and possible approaches.

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The Principles for the Delivery of Education were first introduced as the Principles of Blended Learning at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, they have been updated and enhanced into the five Principles described in Section 6, which were launched in AY 2022/23.
- 4.2 The naming convention throughout this paper refers interchangeably to the full name of the Principles for the Delivery of Education, and the more informal title of the Principles for Education. Principles of Blended Learning refers to the version of these Principles that was originally developed in the second half of AY 2019/20 and which applied in AY 2020/21 and, with revisions, in 2021/22.

5. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 5.1 The Principles of Blended Learning were originally developed in 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, by a workstream of the Blended Learning Implementation Task & Finish Group (BLITFG), as a toolkit to support staff in making the transition to a blended delivery model (see UCTL/210520/005).
- 5.2 A revised version for the [Principles of Blended Learning](#) for AY 2021/22 was approved at UEC in May 2021 (see UEC/250521/005b), which reflected the commitment of the University to deliver more on-campus teaching than in the previous AY as a result of the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

- 5.3 After BLITFG was dismantled, the Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education TFG was established in October 2021, with the purpose of building on the [evaluation of blended learning](#) to develop and evidence-based framework for the Delivery of Education which aimed to enhance the student learning experience (see UEC/170222/008, UEC/130422/007a, UEC/100522/004 and UEC/230622/007).
- 5.4 The Delivery of Education TFG published its [final report](#) in June 2022, setting out a new set of Principles for the Delivery of Education, for AY 2022/23.
- 5.5 During the AY 2023/24 and with the establishment of the Online Education Forum, the Principles of Education were revisited and revised to recognise all modes of delivery (online, in-person or hybrid) for teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, some wording referring specifically to in-person delivery was updated.

6. UPDATED PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION 2023/24

- 6.1 The Principles of Education webpages list five Principles, which are detailed and described below. In addition, the web pages list one further element, titled Evaluation and Review. Along with each Principle, a set of possible approaches is also provided. The landing page for the Principles of Education gives a brief description of their purpose and stresses that they are equally applicable to in person, online or hybrid learning and teaching practices.
- 6.2 **Principle 1: Nurture active learning**
Active learning involves both guided and independent learning and should be designed with the achievement of learning outcomes as a focus. Provide active learning opportunities for students to encourage deeper learning, making effective use of in-person or live web conferencing sessions to engage and interact with your students. Try to complement live (synchronous) sessions with activities students can complete within their own schedule by a certain time/date (asynchronous).
- 6.3 **Principle 2: Design in opportunities for community building**
Provide opportunities for students to create connections with other students, with staff, and with others (e.g. employers, internationally) in person on-campus and online in the virtual learning environment.
- 6.4 **Principle 3: Assessment should be authentic, building in integrity, and be efficient**
Provide assessment that tests learning outcomes, where appropriate is 'authentic' (reflecting or recreating real-life situations and/or enabling students to demonstrate the applicability of their learning to various discipline contexts and scenarios), tests skills and thinking (rather than solely based on fact recall) and is streamlined to avoid over-assessment.
- 6.5 **Principle 4: Provide timely and meaningful feedback**
Provide feedback at an appropriate time for students to benefit from it, in accordance with the 3-week timeframe, focusing on developmental next steps that can be actioned by the student.
- 6.6 **Principle 5: Accessibility & inclusivity**
Provide teaching, learning and assessment that ensures that students are not disadvantaged or directly/indirectly discriminated against, with the aim of providing students with the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Alongside our inclusivity and accessibility in Education Framework the University is also committed to decolonising the curriculum.
- 6.7 **Evaluation & Review**
Wherever possible, ask colleagues to review your learning and teaching practices and participate in self-reflective review of your own practices as well. Likewise, consider feedback from your students and externals, to assist you with continually reviewing and updating your own practices.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTINUED UPDATES

- 7.1 UEC is invited to discuss the current Principles of Education, consider whether they are still relevant and if they apply to all modes of delivery.

- 7.2 Our recommendation would be to maintain the current set of Principles of Education but, going forward, to ensure that the set of possible approaches listed within each Principles is kept up to date, providing a variety of methods and ideas that are equally applicable to in person or online delivery.
- 7.3 The next stage of development is to link these possible approaches to practical examples of good practice from our own community. If anyone has any suggestions, we encourage them to get in touch.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean of Educational Innovation (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk), Catherine Ogilvie, eLearning adviser (online) CAD (catherine.ogilvie@abdn.ac.uk), Isabella Fausti, eLearning adviser CAD (isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk).

27 February 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
UPDATE ON THE USE OF GENAI IN EDUCATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update regarding the University's approach to supporting staff and students with the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in Education. This paper provides a summary of current and future work in this area.

The University Education Committee is invited to note this GenAI update paper for information.

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 provided with this paper for information only.

4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

We are continually refining our approach to supporting staff and students with the integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in education, reflecting the evolving landscape. Our approach comprises the following four strands:

- Incorporating GenAI tools into applications designed to support learning, teaching, and assessment.
By integrating these tools into our VLE and associated applications, we aim to enhance the overall educational experience and foster innovation and efficiencies in teaching approaches.
- Supporting staff and students in navigating the integration of GenAI in education.
This support encompasses training, resources, collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and guidance to facilitate appropriate utilisation of GenAI tools within educational contexts.
- Conducting thorough investigations into the attitudes of both staff and students regarding the integration of GenAI in education.
This research informs our strategies and ensures alignment with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.
- Contributing to internal and external AI Groups
By contributing to internal and external groups we will ensure that we have the appropriate mechanisms in place to lead the universities response to GenAI in education

We propose that over the next academic year we will provide an update to UEC on each of these four strands.

4.1. Incorporation of GenAI tools in applications that support Learning, Teaching & Assessment

Following extensive consultations with staff, the Blackboard Learn AI Design Assistant was implemented on the 21 December 2023, so that staff could explore their potential use from Term 2 onwards. All features were implemented except for the image generation feature. Continuous updates are made to the AI Design Assistant, incorporating it into existing workflows where it can potentially support staff by doing some of the “heavy lifting”, based on the crafting of appropriate prompts by staff. These updates are made available to staff at opportune times, with the exception of image generation features which continue to be remain disabled until it is appropriate for this feature to be reviewed and discussed.

We are committed to evaluating their effectiveness following the conclusion of Term 2 to assess their impact and gather insights for further enhancement.

4.2. Supporting staff and students in navigating the integration of GenAI in Education

The latest update of the guidance for staff and students on the utilisation of GenAI in education was completed in January 2024 ahead of term 2 beginning, with an update provided to the UEC on the 16 of January. These guidelines will undergo a further review and revision process two weeks prior to the commencement of term 3. This periodic review ensures that the guidance remains current, relevant, and aligned with the latest evidence and developments in the field of GenAI in education.

We are working on updating the guidance for staff on the appropriate handling of student data including the onward sharing of students assessments. This guidance will make it very clear that any submission of student work to 3rd party external AI detection tools by staff is in breach of our regulations.

A series of discussions were facilitated by the Library Digital Skills team in November and early December on the topic of “Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conversations at the Library” which were targeted at different stakeholders (PGR students, UG and PGT students, Staff with a research focus and staff with teaching focus).

As part of our ongoing discussion panel series facilitated by CAD, we hosted our first joint discussion panel for research and teaching staff entitled “Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools: Impact on Academic's Educational and Research Practice”, aiming to bring together the different aspects of academic staff work.

4.3. Research on the attitudes of staff and students to the integration of GenAI in Education

We continue to seek funding opportunities for carrying out research on the attitudes of staff and students to the integration of GenAI in Education in order to inform policy and practice. To date we have been successful in obtaining funding internally, and from the Advance HE Collaborative Development Fund 2023-24.

Study 1: Exploring Students' Attitudes towards Generative AI and Assessment Practices at University

Funding: Internally funded project

This research initially was designed to inform the ongoing work to enhance provision of support to enhance academic integrity by minimising the engagement of student with contract cheating by exploring the experiences views of university students on the barriers and facilitators to engaging with assignment writing services and their views on what approaches would be most effective in the prevention of engagement with such services. It is now being expanded to include an investigation into the attitudes of students towards generative AI and assessment practices within the university setting.

Progress: ethical approval granted, data collection is complete, transcription and analysis underway.

Study 2: Towards Inclusive Intelligence: A Comprehensive Examination of GenAI Attitudes Among Higher Education Stakeholders

Funding: Advanced HE Collaborative Development Fund 2023-24

This research explores the attitudes and perceptions of diverse higher-education (HE) stakeholders towards the integration of GenAI in academic settings. While the sector has primarily focused on the implications for academic integrity, this study proposes a broader examination of education, including instructional methodologies and delivery approaches. This work is being led by Aberdeen university in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University, University of Dundee and Heriot-Watt University

Progress: Two student research interns appointed, ethics application submitted

Study 3: GenAI in Tertiary Education

Funding: Carnegie Trust

Progress: Awaiting formal confirmation of funding award, ethics application submitted

4.4. Contributing to Internal and External Groups

Internal Groups: AI@ABZ Working Group

The AI@ABZ Working Group, chaired by Brian Henderson, has been established. The remit of the group is as follows:

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive University AI strategy and related policies that aligns with the University's mission, 2040 strategy and values.
- Establish clear guidelines and policies for AI project initiation, implementation, and monitoring.
- Help inform the requirement for appropriate systems and data structure in support of AI deployment.
- Helps ensure that AI projects are ethically sound, transparent, lawful, secure and accountable.
- Champion the use of AI and foster a culture of collaboration and innovation among stakeholders.
- Within the oversight and agreement of DSC, provides funding for AI related projects and oversees resultant work.

- Provide training and support to academics, professional services staff, and students to enable responsible and meaningful use of AI for research, education and administration.
- Monitor and evaluate AI projects to ensure they meet the University's goals and objectives and meet legal/regulatory requirements.
- Regularly review and update the AI strategy, policy and guidelines to reflect new developments and best practices.
- Monitoring the AI regulatory landscape with respect to impacts on AI and ensuring the working group is kept up to date on developments to inform communications and the work above.

External Groups: Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education Network

The Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education Network (ScAITEN) is a Scotland-wide group for those leading on artificial intelligence in learning and teaching in their institutions. It was established by Heriot-Watt University. The network has representation from all Higher Education (HE) institutions in Scotland and is working to include Colleges. The group serves to co-ordinate and share practices around artificial intelligence (AI) in learning and teaching. It also undertakes collaborative research and events. The network's current objective is to position Scottish Tertiary Education as open, ethical and innovative in the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in learning and teaching.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

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

[28 February 2024]

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ONLINE EDUCATION FORUM UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update on the Online Education Forum.

Members of the UEC are asked to **note** the paper.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	UEC	16 January 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by		

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Following the first meeting of the Online Education Forum, members of the UEC are invited to **note** the updates provided.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Further to the approval of the establishment of the Online Education Forum by the UEC on 16 January 2024, membership was finalised (see Annex A) and the first meeting was held on 21 February 2024.
- 4.2 The first meeting started by discussing the revised [Principles of Education](#) from an online delivery perspective. It was agreed that collating examples of good practice and case studies within each of the five Principles would be helpful for those who are new to teaching online, and also to encourage more consistency within different courses. It was also suggested that, as part of Principle 5: Accessibility & inclusivity, it should be highlighted which practices are mandatory to ensure students are not being discriminated against.
- 4.3 The Forum then discussed what sort of support Schools would benefit from in order to expand and enhance their online offering. It was suggested that sub-groups of the Forum to carry out some of this work and then present it at a later meeting. Some suggestions included:
- Doing a sector review to see what is being done at other institutions and help drive standards up.
 - Embedding more online-specific guidance and resources within the Programme Management Process.
 - Setting up a peer review or buddy system for those who would like to get feedback on their online course from a trusted colleague.
- 4.4 An open session on “Developing and Delivering Online Education” took place on 8 February, with staff and students of online courses from across different disciplines presenting on their teaching and learning experiences, followed by an overview of the support available for those who are contemplating delivering an online course. Further events will be arranged for the future, with current topic suggestions being inclusivity and

accessibility of online courses, making online courses more engaging and interactive for students and monitoring engagement aligned to on campus processes.

- 4.5 The Forum considered the first draft of a new institutional extension policy currently being developed, focusing particularly on how it would impact the online learning experience. This highlighted the importance of embedding the perspective of online education from the start when developing a new policy or guidance.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean of Educational Innovation (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk), and Isabella Fausti, eLearning Adviser (isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk).

27 February 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
ONLINE EDUCATION FORUM
REMIT AND COMPOSITION

1. COMMITTEE TITLE

Online Education Forum

2. DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT

January 2024

3. CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA

Chair: Dean for Educational Innovation

Clerk: Academic Services and Online Education

4. PURPOSE

A Forum to enable focused discussion in regard to the delivery of online education, the pedagogic approach, the associated online student experience both academic and non-academic and the support of staff delivering online provision.

5. REMIT

The Online Education Forum support the delivery of a high-quality student learning experience for all online learners aligned with consistent institutional pedagogic approaches to the delivery of online learning. In doing so, the Forum will:

- Inform the principles to underpin the University's approach to the delivery of online education;
- Consider ways to enhance the academic student experience provided to online learners to ensure it meets their particular needs;
- Consider the non-academic needs of the online learners to ensure that they are appropriately supported and feel part of the wider University community;
- Review feedback from online learners (e.g. from the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey) and identify areas for improvement
- Ensure that consideration is given to issues of accessibility and inclusivity in the delivery of online education;
- Ensure that staff involved in the delivery of online education feel supported and informed;
- Promote the sharing of good practice from online education to inform on campus delivery and vice versa.
- Ensure that there is active representation of the online learning community.

Members' Responsibilities:

Each academic member will ensure that they consult with their own School, through their School Education Committee and other forums, on relevant matters, and provide feedback into the Forum which represents the views of their School.

6. COMPOSITION AND QUORUM:

Chair: Dean of Educational Innovation

Membership: Dean for Student Support & Experience

Academic representative from each School (ideally someone who has responsibility for, or close involvement in, the delivery of online education)

AUSA Representative

Head of Online Education

Development Officers (Online Education)

Representative from the Centre for Academic Development

Representation from the Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing Team

Marketing Manager (Online Education)

Clerk (from Academic Services and Online Education)

ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP

7. MEMBERSHIP

Chair/Dean for Educational Innovation	Kirsty Kiezebrink
Dean for Student Support & Experience	Jason Bohan
Academic representative from each School:	
Biological Sciences	Martin Barker
Business	Yakubu Abdul-Salam
Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	Katy Hockey
Education	Charlaine Simpson
Engineering	Nina Nikora
Geosciences	Joshua Wright
Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture	Chris Gray
Law	Gloria Alvarez
Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition	Leone Craig
Natural and Computing Science	Bill Harrison
Psychology	Kevin Allan
Social Science	Johan Rasanayagam
AUSA Representative	TBC
Head of Online Education	Rob Cummins
Development Officers (Online Education)	Jane Melhuish and Ian Clarke
CAD Representative	Catherine Ogilvie
Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing Team	Duncan Stuart
Marketing Manager (Online Education)	Susan Bryce
Clerk:	Isabella Fausti

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

Formal reporting line: University Education Committee
 Interface with other committees: SSEC

In addition to formal meetings of the Online Education Forum, the group will also organise open sessions to provide space for sharing of good practice in regard to online education.

9. FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

The Group will meet at least five times per year preceding each meeting of UEC. Additional meetings may be arranged, as required.

Meetings between 10am – 4pm in accordance with University Policy.

10. PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

Cognisance will be taken of the University's Publication Scheme and Agenda papers will be made available on web pages/StaffNet where possible.

11. DATE ESTABLISHMENT OF GROUP APPROVED/RECORDED BY UMG:

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Retention Policy for Video Content in Panopto

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper outlines the current practice for managing video content (including audio) within Panopto and makes a recommendation for implementing a Panopto Video Retention Policy for AY 2024-25. Panopto is our institutional video platform that is primarily used to support learning and teaching.

This paper is for discussion and approval.

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 committee is invited to discuss and approve the following:

Implementing a Panopto Video Retention Policy from AY 2024-25 onwards, that states that video and audio content older than 6 years and which has not been viewed in the last 4 years will be permanently deleted from Panopto.

4. DISCUSSION

It is essential that the University implements a Panopto Video¹ Retention Policy from AY 2024-25 onwards. The policy would ensure we remain within our contracted storage limits as well as enhance security, limit exposure to legacy video content and facilitate the discovery of new video content.

Currently, videos in Panopto that were created more than 3 years ago and have not been viewed in the last 13 months are archived. Archived content is still available for playback and can be restored to active storage automatically by staff or students with access, with up to 2 days' notice. Archived videos continue to use storage space on Panopto, although archive storage is less expensive than active storage.

To remain within the University's contracted storage limits, it is necessary to delete old video content. Storing videos for longer than is necessary also has implications for the University's sustainability agenda, as it contributes to increased electricity consumption (and thus carbon emissions) and increased manufacturing resources and waste.

To ensure the University stays within its allocated storage limits, while allowing capacity within the archive to allow for future fluctuations in storage demand, it is proposed that video older than 6 years and which has not been viewed in the last 4 years be permanently deleted from Panopto.

¹ Video includes video and audio content stored on Panopto

For example, a video recorded or uploaded to Panopto in September 2024, will be available on MyAberdeen for 3 years in active storage, then will be moved to the archive for a further 3 years (unless it is still being viewed), before being permanently deleted in 2030. These conditions ensure that any video still being viewed will not be archived or deleted.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, Centre for Academic Development (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk) and Gavin Innes (gavin.innes@abdn.ac.uk), eLearning Adviser, Centre for Academic Development.

[29 February 2024]

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EMPLOYABILITY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE (EEC)

Minutes of the meeting held 20th February 2024.

Present: John Barrow (Co-Chair), Tracey Innes (Co-Chair), Lenka Mbadugha, Helen Pierce, Amir Siddiq, Monika Gostic, Ijeoma Obiagwu, Lindsay Tibbetts, Alyson Young, Oliver Hamlet, Rafael Cardoso, Rhiannon Ledwell (Vice-President for Education of the Students' Association), Alisdair Macpherson, Alisdair McKibben (Clerk)

Apologies: David Green, Alan Macpherson, Stuart Durkin, Danielle Grieve, Susan Halfpenny, Lucy Leiper, Heather May Morgan, Jenna Stuart

**AGENDA
FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Approval of the minutes (December 5th, 2023) (EEC/200224/001)
Minutes Approved.

2. Matters Arising including review of Action Log (EEC/200224/002)
There are no outstanding actions.

ACTION: AMcK to reorder action document to show outstanding/most recent first.

3. Update from Careers

Tracey addressed challenges posed by upcoming staff changes, particularly Janice's departure, which will impact career support for the Law School and School of Biological Sciences. Proposed interim plan involving temporary caretakers until September and emphasised retaining a caseload approach for targeted support. Tracey highlighted the importance of flexibility and collaboration, seeking feedback from school representatives to tailor services effectively. Suggestions included one-on-one discussions and workshops for collaborative problem-solving, aiming to finalise plans by May or June for next academic year.

ACTION: AMcK to connect Skills Champions and Careers Adviser School Leads to propose a meeting between the parties to review current Employability Offerings within the Schools.

4. Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills

John provided an update on the approved Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills framework, focusing on content development for where My Skills platform will sit amidst ongoing platform transition due to tender processes. Significant consideration is being given to embedding MySkills within Blackboard and ongoing work happening to review functionality of MyAberdeen to allow for this.

5. Upscaling Work-based Learning

The committee discussed the progress and challenges in upscaling workplace learning. Updates included the approval of proposed web-based learning courses, specifically interdisciplinary project team courses and internships preparation courses. Concerns were raised about course scheduling conflicts, particularly for joint degree students. The discussion also touched on course design variations across different schools and the need to streamline assessment requirements. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the changing

landscape of work experience programs, including the reconfiguration of internship offerings due to resource constraints. Overall, the meeting emphasised the need for a flexible approach to curriculum design and delivery to accommodate diverse student needs and program requirements.

For information: The HESA Data Future Project, focusing on Placement Reporting, was discussed. It was noted that there is a new requirement from HESA to centralise all placement data. As a result, efforts are underway to identify the optimal location for storing this data.

6. Induction, Transition and Employability Week (ITEW) (EEC/200224/003)

The discussion centred on the planning and implementation of the Induction, Transition, and Employability Week (ITEW) at the University of Aberdeen. The week aims to incorporate employability-focused activities into the existing welcome week. The conversation emphasised the need for student involvement in shaping ITEW activities, with suggestions ranging from skills workshops to alumni engagement sessions. Members proposed creating a student-led group to develop a program of sustainable activities, considering both on-campus and online delivery methods. The challenges of engaging returning students, coordinating events, and integrating ITEW into timetables were discussed, highlighting the importance of effective communication and planning. Considerations for future iterations of ITEW, such as spreading activities over multiple weeks, were also explored.

7. AOB

No other business raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 23rd April @ 14:05. Microsoft Teams | **Location:** QA-AUSA Union Building Rm 101 and by way of Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on Thursday 15th February, 2024

Present: Jason Bohan (Chair), Erin Ferguson, Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan, Rhiannon Ledwell , Jemma Murdoch, John Cavanagh, Wendy Lowe, Melanie Viney, Tim Baker, Kelsey Pierce, Mary Prior, Jackie Tuckwell, Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Charlotta Hillerdal, Sally Middleton, Duncan Stuart, Lucy Leiper, Helen Pierce, Steve Tucker, Lindsey Tibbetts, Heidi Mehrkens, Margaret Jackson, Stevie Kearney (Clerk), Morag Beedie (Guest), John Barrow (Guest).

Apologies: Nick Edwards, Lyn Batchelor, Martin Mills, Susan Halfpenny, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Martin Barker, Katrina Foy, Jenna Stuart, Iain Grant, Lesley Muirhead.

Welcome

- 1.1 Jason Bohan (JB) welcomed committee members to the meeting and welcomed new member, Peter Henderson from NCS and guests Morag Beedie (MB) and John Barrow (JBar).

2) Approval of the minute of the SSEC held on 27/11/2023

(copy filed as SSEC 15022024-002 Minutes 27-11-23)

- 2.1 Minutes of the last meeting approved.

3) Review of Action Table from meeting held on

- 3.1 Graeme Kirkpatrick (GK) to update at next meeting on the KPI discussion with Iain Grant. Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan (SSV) said no comments had been received on the Welfare Committee as yet but asked for any other comments on the Welfare Committee to be emailed through.

4) School of Psychology Neurodiversity Update

- 4.1 Madge Jackson (MJ) introduced the update on the School' of Psychology's neurodiversity work and shared slides with the committee. MJ summarised the neurodiversity framework models of the medical model and the social model. The medical model pathologises while the social model gives a wider context. The school is looking at how they can ensure students reach their potential. The work in this area ties in with the work of the Disability Team and the adjustments put in place. The aim is to be as inclusive as possible and address wider wellbeing issues. Often students struggle to get a medical diagnosis and find difficulties with their studies but don't

know why. The overarching aim is to “Foster and maintain a neuroinclusive learning, research and workplace culture” which aims to support students and staff. The school is looking at the support in place already but will look at other universities too for best-practice. Research will include student voices as well, to ensure they are at the centre of the policy.

Attrition rates are high amongst neurodivergent students. The school has developed an internal structure to support this target group. The school’s consultancy board includes three PGT students and they meet twice a term for student input on the challenges they face and support which can be put in place. This board is in the process of creating a charter which will feed into the University’s diversity strategy.

To make the school more inclusive, the terminology used is being reviewed with students and a terminology guide is being developed which MJ is happy to share with other schools. Reporting processes are being reviewed to encourage more students to share information with their school and language use is central to this process. The school is also looking at how they can reduce anxiety around oral presentations and removing any uncertainty for students is central to the school’s work. Visibility around neurodiversity is also key to the school’s plans and a neurodiversity group is being developed, along with events to support and encourage students to engage with the support on offer.

Tim Baker (TB) said he would be happy to be involved for his school. TB mentioned a lot of students have adjustments, especially where they do not have a diagnosis, so asked how we can ensure consistency across schools. MJ said this was the aim, but it was a long-term cultural change and a forum for all schools is being created to encourage as much input as possible, but there is a recognition of diversity of approaches.

Heidi Mehrkens (HM) asked if MJ could assist in advising personal tutors. MJ is happy to assist and will be in touch with HM to follow up. JB said it would be good to have some simple guidelines for all personal tutors around opening up conversations and consistency of language. JB and MJ to follow up on this point.

Action: JB and HM MJ to discuss guidelines for all personal tutors

Wendy Lowe (WL) asked around moving on from presenting the medical model as the polar opposite to the social model, when she feels this is not the case. WL wondered if it’s possible to present the two models as being more aligned. MJ agreed the polarisation is unhelpful but it’s useful if people realise there are two models and the strengths of both. WL noted that historically the medical model is stigmatised.

JB noted the paper on provisions later in the meeting will add to the discussion around the use of language.

5) Induction, Transition and Employability Week

- 5.1 John Barrow (JBar) introduced himself and the agenda item known as ITEW for discussion and input. In the September Senate meeting the new three term structure was approved and the Welcome Week enhancements are central to these plans. The aim is to run the ITEW in September and January, starting in the 2024/25 academic year.

JBar asked for group members to get in touch if they would like to be involved in the planning process. The key question is whether activities should be school specific or University-wide. JBar said there were plans within Careers around University-wide events such as entrepreneurship activities. Much of the activity could be focussed on years two to five, as first year students have a lot of other considerations when arriving at the University. JBar suggested more of a slow burn of introducing activities rather than lots of activity at the start of their studies.

John Cavanagh (JC) agreed it was a good concept. JC suggested entrepreneurship work at University level would work well as it would create opportunities for students to collaborate across schools rather than solely within their own schools. School-specific activities could be more appropriate as students near graduation.

Lindsay Tibbets (LT) noted that a lot of students in years 2 to 5 often don't arrive for Welcome Week and accommodation is often unavailable at that point. Academic writing would be an area to include. LT asked how online students would be included and if a school slot would still happen in Welcome Week.

JBar said the school slot could be protected as feedback indicated this was something individual schools favour. Online vs on campus is also being considered to ensure inclusivity for all students. On accommodation and arrival dates, any activities in Welcome week would fit best at the end of the week, when more students will have returned to Aberdeen and online students will be engaging.

TB said a lot of students in their school don't return until teaching starts as they are working and need the income, so asked how those students can be engaged in Welcome Week activities. JBar said many of the skills students develop in their employment are central to their development and there could be a link between part-time work and Welcome Week development activities.

Sally Middleton (SM) noted there could be a lot to take on board for articulating students, who may prefer online activities. JC noted there is a danger of penalising less affluent students, who need to maximise income and work throughout Welcome Week and thus miss any scheduled activities.

6) Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results

- 6.1 Lucy Leiper (LL) introduced the PRES item, which last ran in 2017, prior to the 2023 survey. The most recent survey got a good response rate, but the next survey is

expected to have a lower number of responses across the sector. The response rate was 21%, which is lower than the sector average of 36%, but the survey opened late which limited response times. This year's survey has opened earlier, and this should be reflected in the overall response rates.

Overall, the University did well in the results, with overall satisfaction at 81%, which is ahead of the sector average. Areas for improvement are around gender, sex, ethnicity and disability, while first generation scholars and those from widening access backgrounds generally score below the University average on overall satisfaction.

LL reported the results for trans students were the area of most concern for the University and schools are working hard to ensure additional support is put in place. On ethnicity, we did better than the sector average, particularly for students who identify as black.

On the data arranged by school, LL noted that response rates were low in some schools so that results should not be taken as a measure of the quality of delivery. Sector-wide, students are looking for more opportunities to develop research communities across universities.

Here at the University of Aberdeen, orientation has been revamped to create more of a cohort model and sense of community, with dates moved for key events, based on feedback. There are plans for a PGR Community Fund for PhD students with ideas on how to create a better sense of community and belonging. The proposed intercultural event which was due to take place in January has now been moved to May.

On culture, the new disability guidance is now in place and has been a really big, significant project, working with Lesley Muirhead in the Student Advice & Support Team.

The Development Trust has also provided funding for a project designed to increase resources for supervisors to reflect the diversity of the PGR student population. The budget is being looked at to see if more can be done to promote work experience opportunities and this is being considered at Dean and Senior Management level. Additional work has gone in to increase awareness of the Careers Service and to provide more resources specific to PGR students.

JC asked about a specific point on racism, with regard to a reported increase in antisemitic incidents reported across schools and universities in the UK. LL noted that the paper presented today doesn't include the free text comments, and we may see some feedback on this point when the free text responses are updated.

7) Support for Study paper

- 7.1 Jemma Murdoch (JM) updated the committee on key points on the revised Support for Study policy, with clarity a key consideration in the redraft. Key changes are highlighted in the paper, especially around the use of language and the balance between providing a supportive policy which also works within the University's regulations. A student-facing guide will be produced to sit alongside the more formal policy document. Action Plans have been renamed Engagement Agreements, to ensure buy-in to the process and collaboration. An appeals section has also been added, aligning with the University's Code of Practice and more clarity has been provided on when the policy applies and when it does not.

LT welcomed the guidance for schools but asked if there would be reflection on yesterday's judgement in relation to duty of care in the case at Bristol University. JM said the court ruling in relation to Bristol will have implications for all universities in terms of making reasonable adjustments and assessment methods. Our approach is more flexible now in terms of students not being able to get diagnoses, while we can also do in-house screenings. JM noted that referral to Student Support by schools was central when providing support and meeting our obligations under law, to ensure students receive all the support required. JM said the case outcome didn't change each university's duty of care, as the judge did not rule on that point.

MJ asked if students need a diagnosis in order to have reasonable adjustments. JM said no, as interim adjustments can be given, but generally a diagnosis is preferred for longer-term support and the Adviser will use their judgement to establish what support is required and if a screening would be helpful, or referral to NHS.

TB asked what happens in terms of an appeal if a student doesn't get a diagnosis and disagrees with the outcome. JM said students would initially be encouraged to speak with the Student Support Management Team and it would be reviewed through the Student Case Management Group. If the student was still dissatisfied, they could follow the formal appeals process.

The committee has approved the paper and it will now progress to further committees and Senate.

8) Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) results

- 8.1 The agenda item was introduced by Morag Beedie (MB) who noted the paper includes links to school-specific data. The response rate was slightly down at 12% and satisfaction rates are similar to previous reports. The qualitative data is particularly useful and will be shared with schools to inform action plans. Professional Services teams have already reviewed the data and identified actions which can be implemented now and other longer-term plans. Online and Qatar students noted welcome activities seemed to be geared more to on campus students and actions will be implemented to improve this area of work. The buddy Scheme is being developed to improve the

student experience for new students. Feedback will also be provided to students for transparency.

ACTION: School reps to ensure the data is reviewed at school level and any actions arising are to be reported back to MB.

9) Student Withdrawals Report 2022/23

- 9.1 JB presented the Student Withdrawals Report, which contains data for the last three academic years. At Undergraduate Level, withdrawal rates are 4.9% for the last year compared to 5.2% in 2021/22, although this is still higher than the average over a longer period. For Postgraduate Taught students, withdrawal rates fell to 4.8% in 2022/23, from 9.8% the year before.

There is some variation across schools, and this is being looked at by individual school management teams. The main issue is around not getting much information on why students withdraw from study, as most tick the “other” box on the withdrawal form and do not provide further detail.

JB invited comments from the committee and noted the report data feeds into the Education Acton Plans each school has and their strategies for addressing non-continuation rates.

LT said the Business School identified spikes based on recruitment from individual countries. It’s important to target students who are coming for legitimate reasons, rather than those seeking to claim asylum. LT also said significant problems exist for students with unreliable sponsors who are unable to pay agreed amounts, or for students who cannot get money out of their home country due to restrictions on currency transfers and are thus impacted by currency devaluations.

Kelsey Pierce (KP) asked if the withdrawal form could be revised so we get more useful data on why students withdraw, as a large number just tick the “Other – personal reasons” box. JB noted that this was a good point and was already being looked at.

SM asked why Widening Access wasn’t a category which was included in the data and JB said he would speak to the Planning Team to see if this data can be provided.

Action: JB to speak to planning to see if widening access data can be added to the withdrawals report

10) Review of Study-Related Provisions

- 10.1 JM introduced the agenda item relating to work by Lesley Muirhead (LM), who has updated the paper which came to SSEC in September. These updates are noted in the paper provided to SSEC. Terminology has been considered and the aim is to reflect the social model, with ‘inclusion’ and ‘adjustment’ used as terms, instead of ‘disability’

and 'provisions'. The paper outlines plans to expand adjustments to a wider group of students with protected characteristics. The Disability Coordinators title has been changed to Inclusion Coordinator and an updated list of provisions has been added, to ensure less need to use the free text section.

JB added that it's important to note that the new adjustment codes are not new in the sense that it is support which was previously in place, but the new codes make it easier to use, with more clarity. JM noted a guide will be provided to schools and the application of provisions will still come down to academic judgement at school level.

Peter Henderson (PH) asked about the adjustment for poor spelling and grammar in relation to non-subject-specific terms. PH also asked about the use of software for spelling and grammar and the difference between software such as Microsoft Office and services like Chat GPT. JM said she would ask LM to get back to PH on that point.

ACTION: LM to contact PH for further discussion

TB asked about the provision of high-quality captions and his understanding of the way these were provided to students last term, but the budget couldn't support this work, so the policy was changed, which was a move he disagreed with. TB asked if there are ways to ringfence the commitments made to students and avoid changing policies for financial reasons rather than best practice.

JB agreed it was disappointing to lose the high-quality captioning but the bill the University was facing was around £100k per year. Looking at what other universities do, automatic captioning is standard for a lot of universities and where these are not of a high enough quality, there is some money ringfenced within the University to provide high quality captions.

WL mentioned the challenges faced at school level when changes happen, such as the captioning issue raised by TB. WL asked if the new adjustments had been shared with schools and JB confirmed this had already been done. JM added that IT are ready to implement the revised adjustments as soon as they get confirmation.

JC asked if more can be done at policy level to support those who are visually impaired. JB noted a lot of work has been done to ensure documents are accessible, but this is an area for improvement. JM said it can be very difficult to make adjustments, but the Student Support team generally works very closely with visually impaired students.

LT noted attendance can often be poor for student parents, if they have a child who is ill, while they also struggle to get parked on campus as they arrive later if they have to go via nursery first, which causes lateness for class. JM said any students impacted by these issues should contact Student Support to look at support options.

ACTION: JB asked for any feedback on the revised adjustments to be sent to LM by March 4th at the latest and SK to add a reminder to the SSEC Teams channel.

11) AOCB

- 11.1 JC asked who to speak to about reserved staff parking and JB said he will feedback to the Estates Team.

12) Date of Next Meeting

- 12.1 The date of the next meeting of the Committee is Thursday 25th April at 10:05am, via Microsoft Teams or in person, University Office, Court Room.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2023**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

This paper presents a summary of the University of Aberdeen results of the Postgraduate Research Experience 2023 survey, with comparison to sector averages.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

All papers but in particular those for Senior Management Team should explain:

- *Which groups/committees have considered the paper/issue already*
- *Which groups/committees will need to consider the paper from this point forward*

Where further information is needed, for example, to report particular comments received from other groups/committees, this can either be provided under the box below or elsewhere in the paper as appropriate.

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	PGRC	04/12/2023
Further consideration/ approval required by	SSEC	15/02/2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The University Education Committee is invited to note the data and proposed actions.

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is coordinated by Advance HE and enables institutions to gather information about the experience of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs).
- 4.2 The survey focuses on students' experiences of:
- supervision
 - resources
 - research community
 - progress and assessment
 - skills and professional development
 - wellbeing
- 4.3 PRES results can be used to benchmark the University of Aberdeen's postgraduate provision against others in the global higher education sector.
- 4.4 PRES runs annually between February and May. The UoA last ran PRES in 2017 and launched the 2023 survey in April 2023. A response rate of 21%, representing 316 responses was received. Whilst this is below the sector average, the decision to run PRES was made very late allowing for the survey only to open late April (compared with Feb-May across the sector).

- 4.5 The overall satisfaction of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) at the University with was 81% which is above the global sector which at 79%. This ranks the UoA 33rd out of 100 for overall satisfaction. UoA reported 79% satisfaction in 2017 which aligned with the sector average (79%) which is unchanged in 2023.
- 4.6 Aspects of best practice (with most agreement relative to the benchmark), were on supervision, campus working space and access to resources. Research culture and PGR community are areas for improvement.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Stuart Piertney, Dean for Postgraduate Research (s.piertney@abdn.ac.uk) and Lucy Leiper, Postgraduate Research School Manager (l.leiper@abdn.ac.uk).

29 January 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open



POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY

20

23

BACKGROUND

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is coordinated by Advance HE and enables institutions to gather information about the experience of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs).

The survey focuses on students' experiences of:

- supervision
- resources
- research community
- progress and assessment
- skills and professional development
- wellbeing



It also considers students' motivations for taking their programme.

PRES results can be used to benchmark the University of Aberdeen's postgraduate provision against others in the global higher education sector.

PRES runs annually between February and May. The UoA last ran PRES in 2017 and launched the 2023 survey in April 2023. A response rate of 21%, representing 316 responses was received. Whilst this is below the sector average, the decision to run PRES was made very late allowing for the survey only to open late April (compared with Feb-May across the sector).

PRES 2024 will launch in February 2024 and run until May 2024.

SUMMARY

PRES 2023

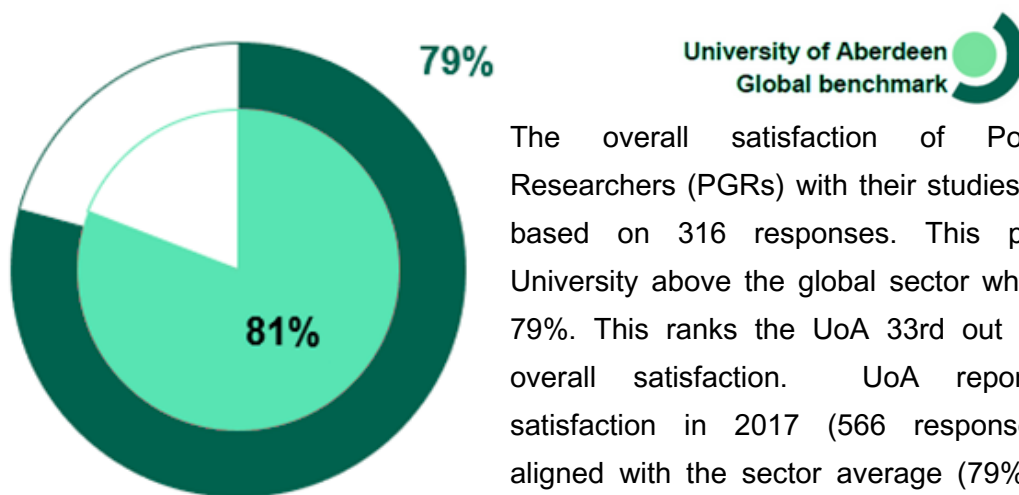
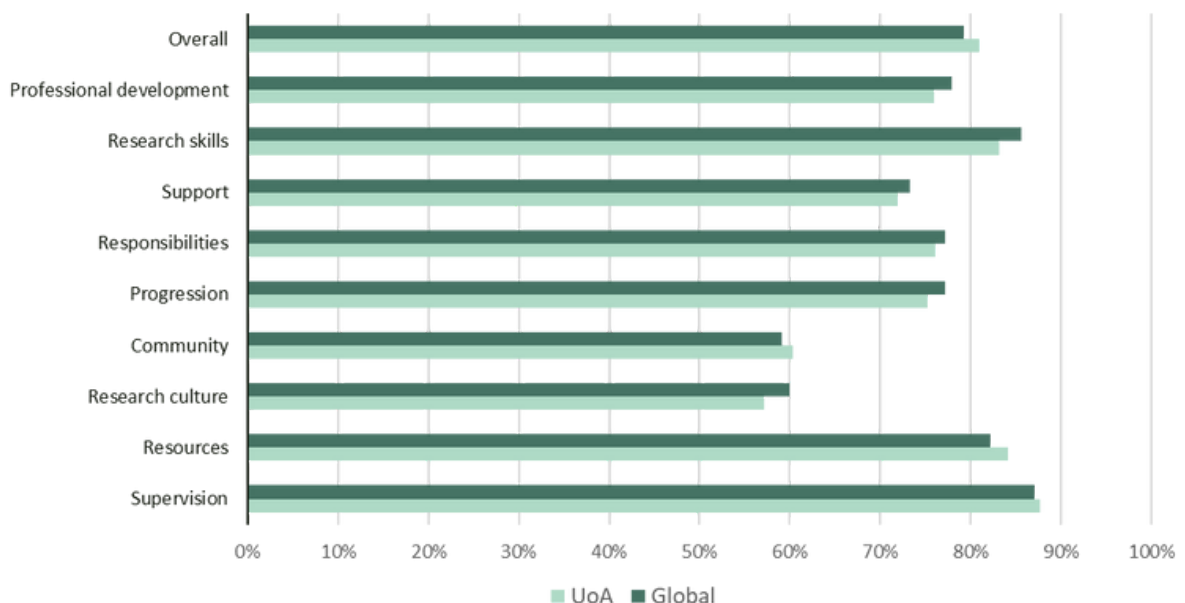


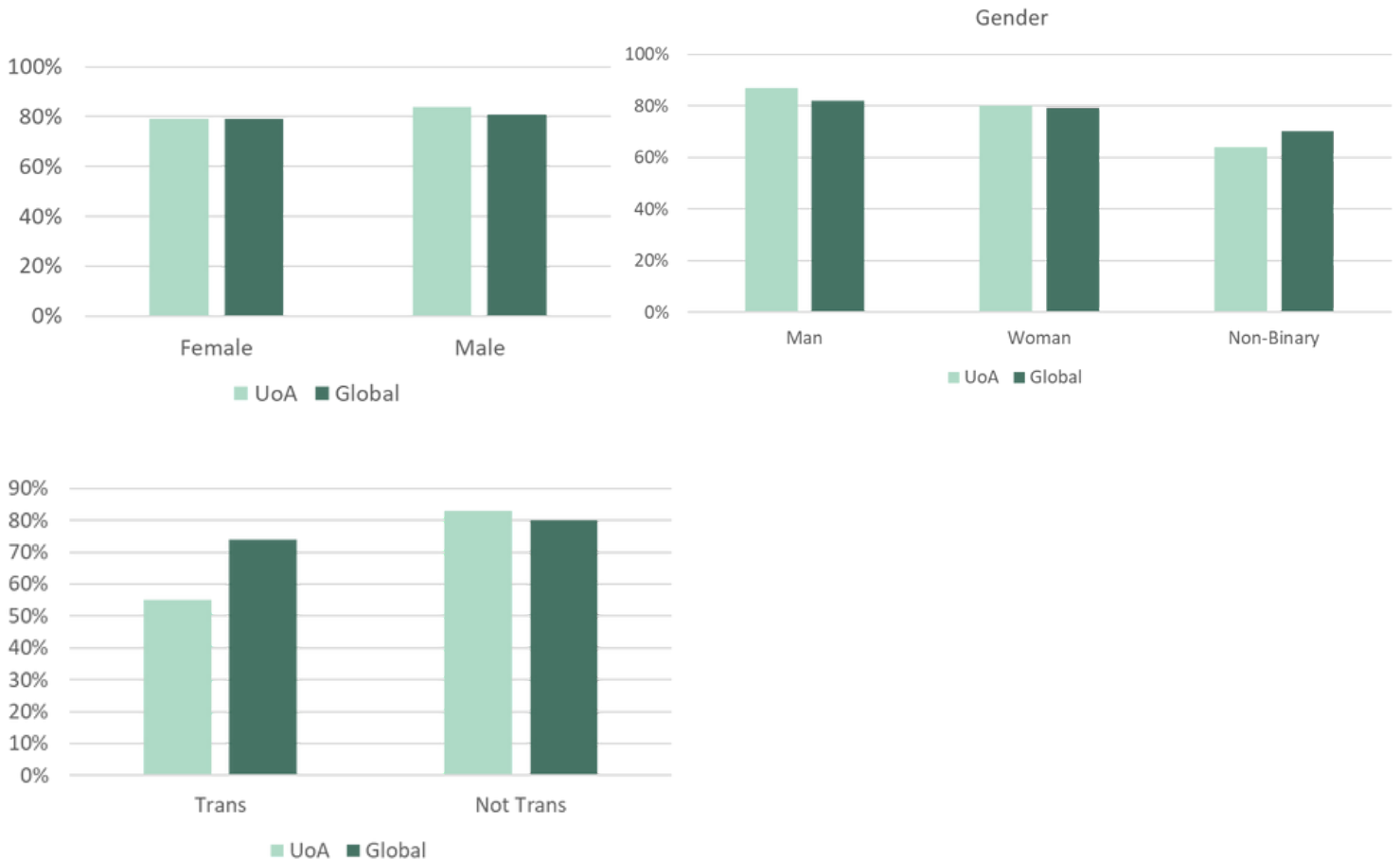
Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

The overall satisfaction of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) with their studies was 81%, based on 316 responses. This places the University above the global sector which reports 79%. This ranks the UoA 33rd out of 100 for overall satisfaction. UoA reported 79% satisfaction in 2017 (566 responses) which aligned with the sector average (79%) which is unchanged in 2023.

Aspects of best practice (with most agreement relative to the benchmark), were on supervision, campus working space and access to resources. Research culture and PGR community are areas for improvement.



DEMOGRAPHICS



There is a difference between the sex categories, as 84% of male PGR students express overall satisfaction, while 79% of female PGR students report the same.

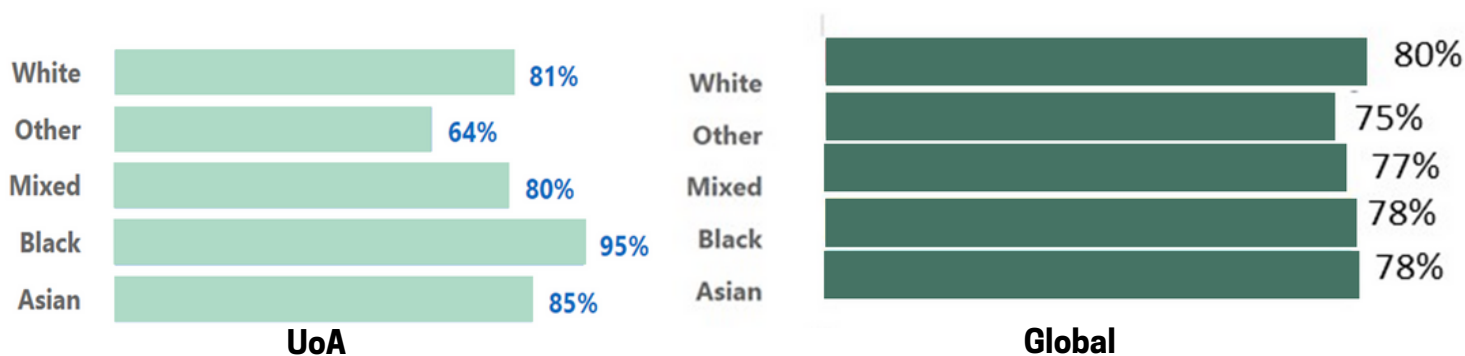
PGR students who identify as being men have a higher level of overall satisfaction than for those who identify as being women. The level of overall satisfaction among students who identify as being non-binary is much lower than for the other two categories at just 64%.

Students who declare that they have a transgender history have a lower level of overall satisfaction in comparison to their colleagues without transgender history (55% compared with 83%). The level of satisfaction of trans individuals is much lower in the UoA than the global benchmark (74%).

Within these groups (female, woman, non-binary and trans) satisfaction with research culture and community is repeatedly lower than that reported by male, man, binary and non-trans groups.

DEMOGRAPHICS

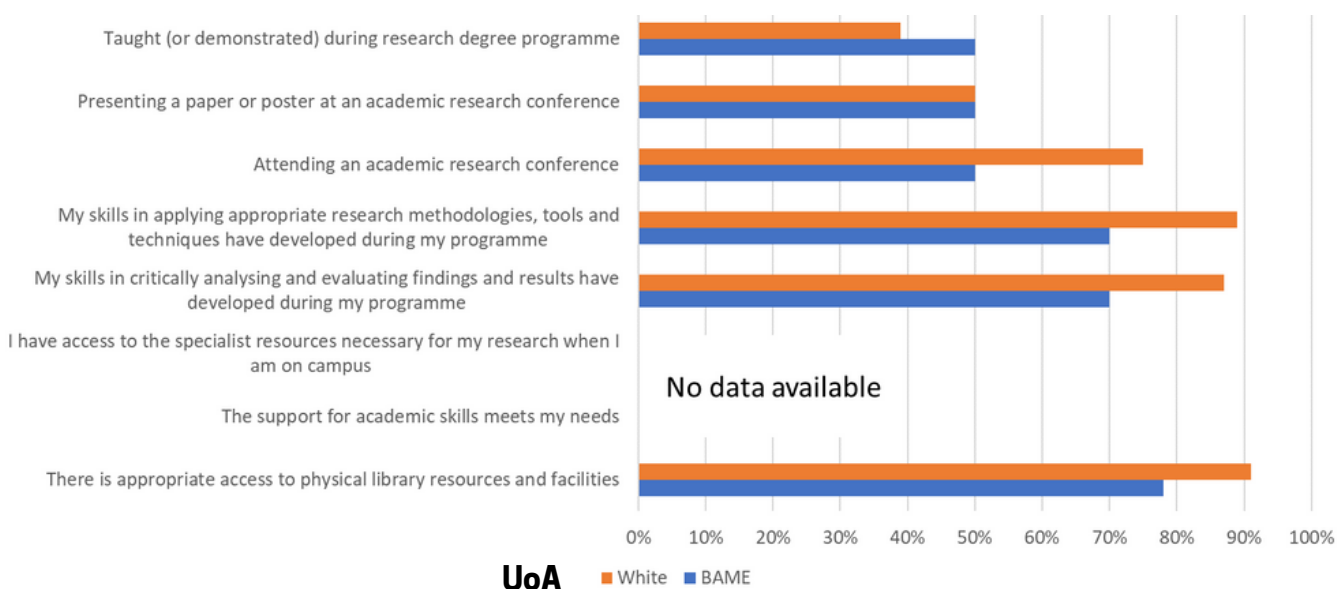
Overall satisfaction by Ethnicity.



PGRs with Black or Asian backgrounds have a higher level of overall satisfaction than for their White contemporaries at 95% and 85% respectively, whilst those from a Mixed background report a level of overall satisfaction close to the mean for White PGR students. Those identifying as being from an Other background (which covers two categories – Arab and Other) have a markedly lower level of overall satisfaction at just 64%.

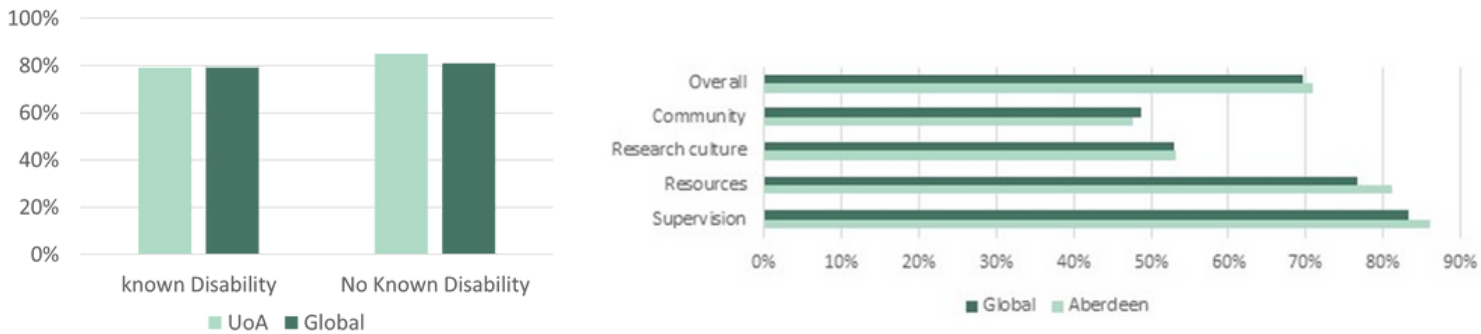
PGRs with Black background report significantly higher satisfaction at UoA than globally at 95% compared to 78%.

The sector reports specific gaps in the experience between PGRs from white and minority backgrounds particularly around access to development opportunities and skills development. Whilst the UoA does not see the same imbalance in relation to teaching, it is clear from the data below that there is a gap in access to academic conferences and acquisition of research skills.

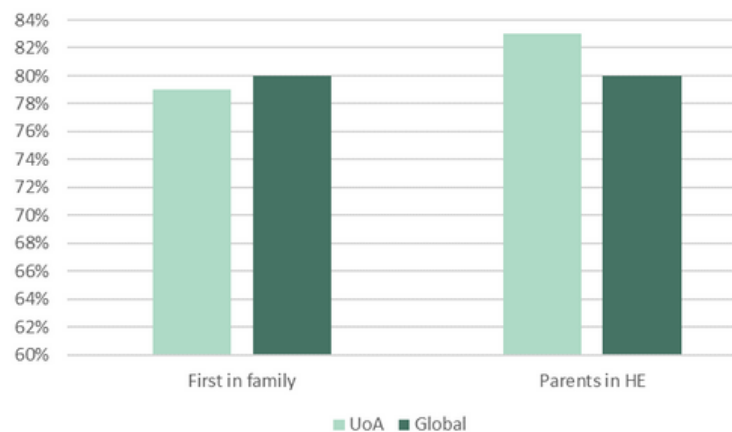
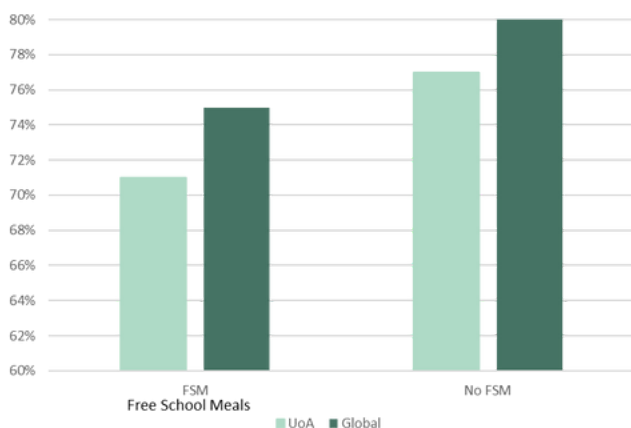


DEMOGRAPHICS

Overall satisfaction by Disability and Social Background

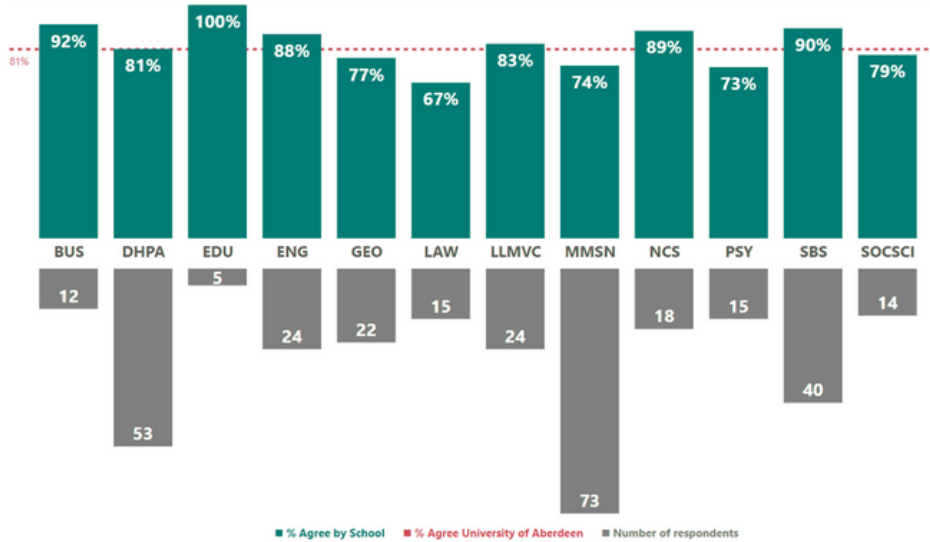


Compared to the global benchmark, PGRs at the UoA with a known disability report less overall satisfaction (71% than those without a disability (85%). As with other metrics (UoA and global), this is more noticeable in relation to culture and community. Satisfaction with supervision and access to resources however both exceed the global benchmark. There is no difference in overall satisfaction in terms of whether a PGR student is the first in their family to go to university. However, there is a gap within the UoA and across the sector where PGRs who received free school meals (a perceived indicator of less well off background) were less satisfied overall than those who did not, which is a significant finding. The UK PRES report indicated this gap is consistent across all areas within the survey.



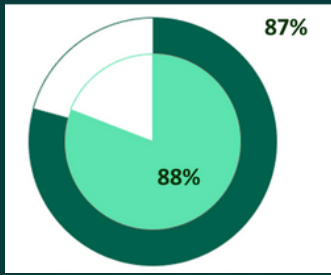
DEMOGRAPHICS

University of Aberdeen performance for overall satisfaction by School, 2023.



University of Aberdeen performance for overall satisfaction by year on programme 2023.

FOCUS ON:



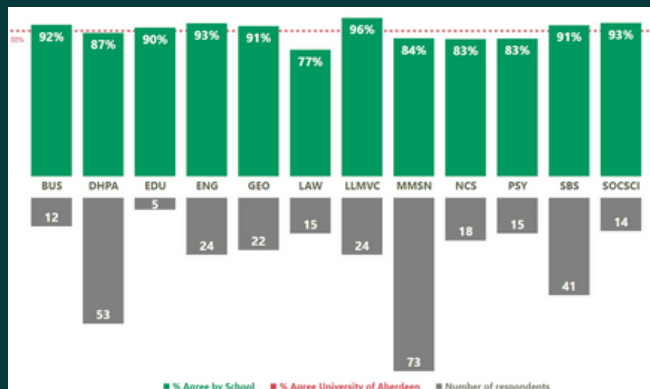
01 — Supervision

UoA reports 88% for % Agree against the questions in the section on supervision (increased from 86% in 2017). This compares favourably against sector performance which indicates that the sector has consistently scored around 87% for supervision over the five most recent years.

Supervision questions relate to skills and knowledge to support projects; identification of training needs; contact and feedback.

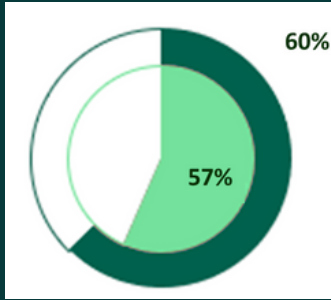
The highest % Agree scores* for supervision are found in ENG, LLMVC and SOCSOI. The lowest % Agree scores are found in LAW, NCS and PSY.

The UoA exceeds the sector across most parameters for supervision which indicates wide-ranging satisfaction with supervision support particularly around subject expertise, training and contact. Of course institutionally we know there are areas where supervisory issues exist and where students feel this needs improved.



*% highest - 5 or more % points above University score. % lowest score - 5 or less points below University score

FOCUS ON:



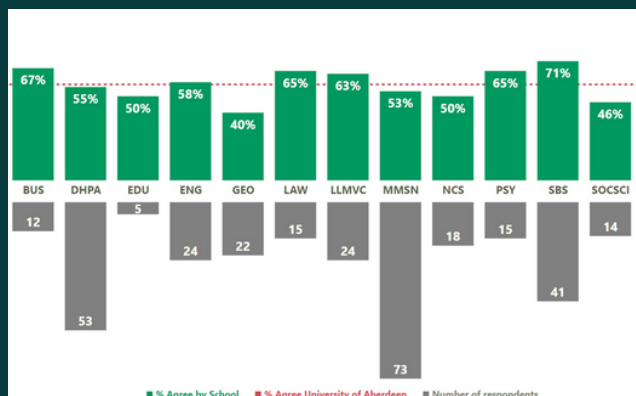
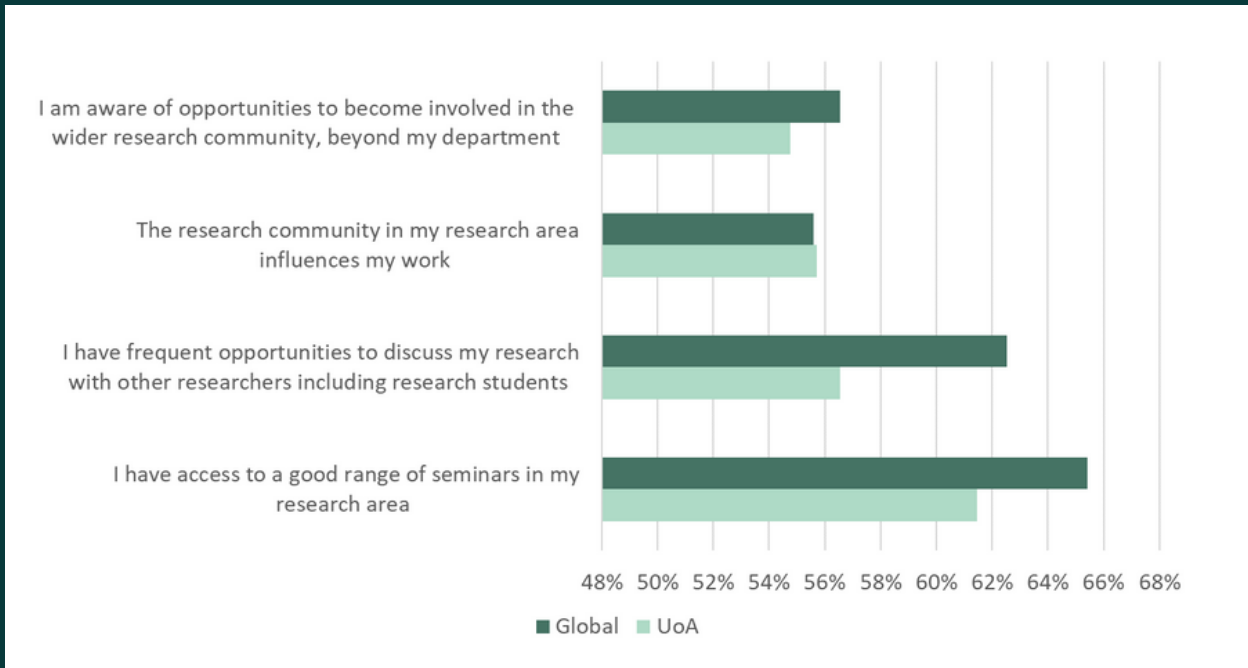
02 — Research Culture

UoA reports 57% for % Agree against the questions in the section on research culture. Although the sector figure is higher at 60% both values are well below other focus areas.

Research Culture in PRES questions relate to research seminars and opportunities to discuss research with other researchers. However, we would argue that within the UoA this is too narrow a view of research culture and one that doesn't fully align with the emerging People, Culture and Environment elements of REF 2029.

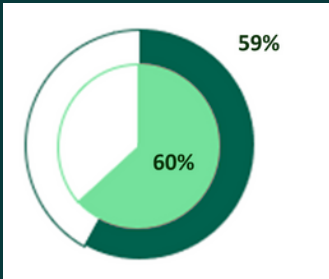
The highest % Agree scores for research culture are found in BUS, LAW, LLMVC, PSY and SBS. The lowest % Agree scores are found in EDU, GEO, NCS and SOCSCI.

The UoA falls significantly behind the sector in relation to access to discussing research with other researchers (it is not clear if this refers to researchers within or across their discipline) and around access to the range of seminars within their research area.



*% highest - 5 or more % points above University score. % lowest score - 5 or less points below University score

FOCUS ON:



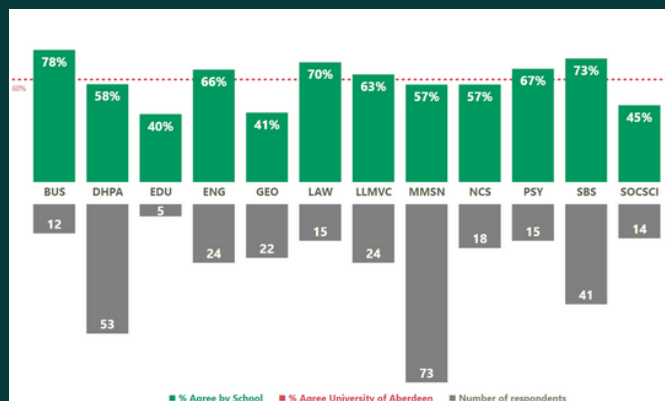
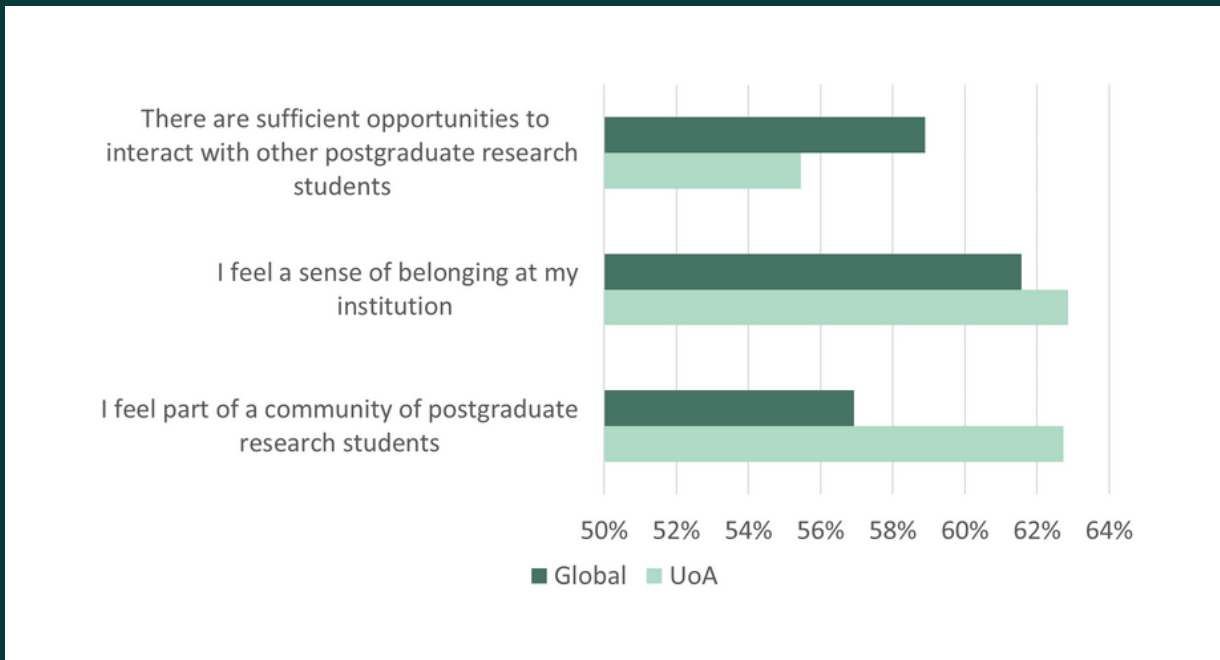
03 — PGR Community

UoA reports 60% for % Agree against the questions in the section on community. This places the University just above the sector score of 59%.

PGR Community questions relate to sense of belonging and opportunities to interact with other PGRs.

The highest % Agree scores for community are found in BUS, ENG, LAW, PSY and SBS. The lowest % Agree scores are found in EDU, GEO and SOCSOCI.

Responses related to satisfaction with feeling part of a community are significantly lower across the sector. Aberdeen is behind the sector in relation to opportunities to interact with other PGRs (57%) but performs better in relation to a sense of belonging (63%) and feeling part of a community (63%).



*% highest - 5 or more % points above University score. % lowest score - 5 or less points below University score

FOCUS ON:

05 — Training and Development

A key element of the wider experience of postgraduate researchers is the availability of training and development support and opportunities that span research and discipline specific skills to broader professional and transferable skills.

In the PRES survey training and development data spans a number of different categories including:

- Research Skills, (eg methodologies, critical analysis, creativity, integrity)
- Professional Development (eg networking, project management, communication)
- Skills Training and Career Advice (transferable skills, career guidance, development opportunities).

Within the UoA % satisfaction with training and development is slightly behind the sector across different measures, most notably around agreeing a personal development plan which records 38% agreement compared with the sector average of 46%.

Whilst the UoA is above sector average in relation to receiving careers advice, this relates to only 35 % (compared with sector 32%) of respondents indicating this is available. It should be noted that the survey does not indicate the source of the careers advice and if this refers to supervisory teams, Careers Services or both. The UKRI New Deal for PGRs cites the importance of providing advice and to PGR students about the full range of careers paths open to them.



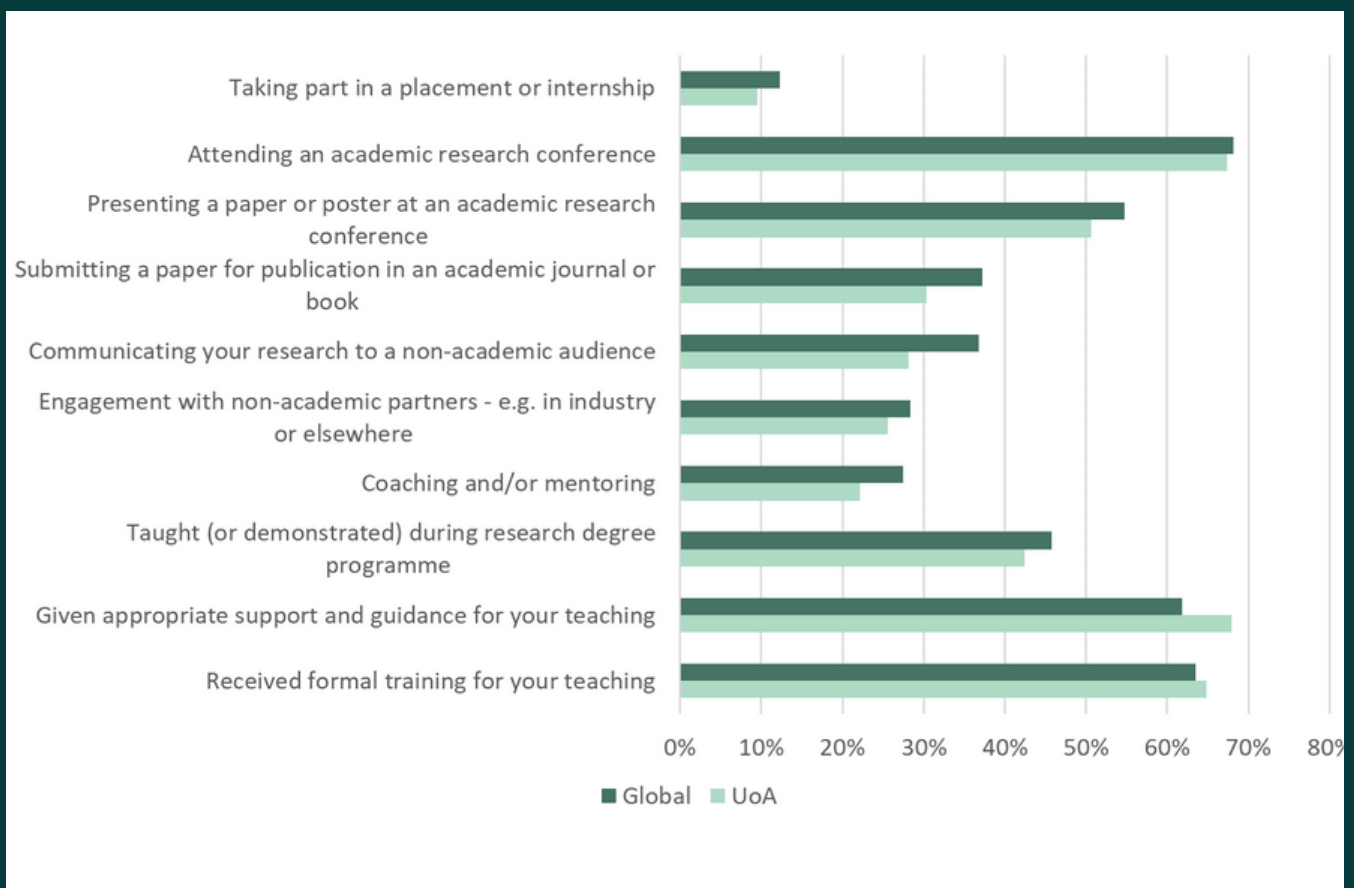
FOCUS ON:

05 — Training and Development

Additionally the PGR experience is related to the opportunities provided and taken up by PGRs. This can include showcasing research, sharing skills with others through coaching or engaging in direct career preparation such as internships and placements. Opportunities to teach or demonstrate are also seen as a valued aspect of the experience.

Respondents indicate below a range of activities undertaken including presenting research posters, publishing research, teaching and attending conferences. However, only 9% of respondents report they have had the opportunity to undertake a placement or internship.

Given the recently announced UKRI New Deal for PGRs specifically references internships as a core part of PGR development and their importance as a mechanism to support the porosity of skilled people between academia and the wider private sector, the UoA must focus on improving in this area.



PROGRESS AND ACTIONS

FOCUS AREA	ACTIVITY/ PROJECT	STATUS
COMMUNITY	Improved induction and orientation information and events - focused on community building to foster sense of belonging. Feedback from PGR community is positive. ASES indicated timing of event was problematic for many so decision made to move timing to early Oct, Feb, June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete • Confirmed change of timescale for orientation events
	PGR Community Fund - PGR led initiative to establish and maintain community activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget dependent
	Intercultural event for PGRs to celebrate our diversity and to encourage networking across disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Experience Funding secured for event in Jan 2024
CULTURE	Working with Student Support and Experience to develop new guidelines for PGRs and Supervisors for supporting disabled PGRs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines approved by PGRC and SSEC and to be live in December 2023
	Introduction of PGR specific Inclusive adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved by SSEC and in operation
SUPERVISION	Project to explore new and multifaceted challenges for supervisors related to increasing the diversity of the PGR population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Experience funding secured for project, due to begin Feb 2024
	Supervisor Development Masterclasses on EDI topics including Setting expectations, Supervising Neurodiverse PGRs, Trans awareness, Active Bystander and Ally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduled for Feb 2024 and onwards
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Increase number and range of funded internship/placements for PGRs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD - requires investment
	Focus groups with PGRs to inform Researcher Development Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete
	Peer mentoring for PGRs - virtual mentoring scheme piloted in 2021 with Wellbeing Team - format needs revised for PGR buy in and engagement was limited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not started
	Increase career workshops for PGRs and raise awareness of Careers Service for PGRs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place and ongoing