**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT SUPPORT
COMMITTEE**

Minute of the meeting held on 03 February 2022

Present: Abbe Brown (Chair), Nick Edwards (Chair), Lyn Batchelor, Morag Beedie, Heather Branigan, John Cavanagh, Katrina Foy, Alison Jenkinson, Lucy Leiper, Wendy Lowe, Dawn McCartie, Heidi Mehrkens, Russell Moffatt, Jemma Murdoch, Carolyn Porter, Fiona Ritchie, Duncan Stuart, Chris Souter, Julie Timms, Jacqui Tuckwell, Melanie Viney, Zeray Yihdego and Lesley Muirhead (Clerk) in attendance.

 Apologies: Tim Baker, Jaye Carr, Martin Barker, Ivana Drdakova (first hour of meeting), Oghenamega Erivona, Grainne Ferrigan, Garry Fisher, Bryony Garford, Iain Grant, Charlotta Hillerdal, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Ondrej Kucerak, Martin Mills, Mary Pryor, Emma Richards (first hour of meeting), Steve Tucker.

Welcome and Chairs' Update

1.1   The Chairs opened the meeting and welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the Student Support Committee (SSC).

1.2   Nick Edwards (NE) advised that approval has been provided for a number of new posts within Student Support Services to enhance the Adviser roles, the support around the disability and accessibility areas, and the duty areas of the service which are currently provided to students on a daily basis. This a positive and welcome development and announcement of the changes will be provided in the next few months. Discussion will be had at future SSC meetings about the 'wish list' Schools and Directorates may have in relation to the work of Student Support in light of the new resources and the opportunities this will bring.

1.3   Members of staff, including NE and Duncan Stuart (DS), are currently visiting the Qatar campus to work with the team in relation to the student journey and it is hoped that regular visits can take place, as was happening prior to the pandemic, to help progress plans for phase 2 of the Qatar developments.

1.4   Abbe Brown (AB) highlighted the work of the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG). AB presented the 'emerging recommendations' to Senate on 02 February and valuable discussion was had on this. The next phase will involve focus groups to which colleagues and students have already expressed an interest in attending. AB noted that if anyone else would like to attend, places are still available; the groups will take place on 10 and 17 February. The TFG will then reflect further on the recommendations to be made. A report will be provided to SSC on 21 March, in the first instance.

Approval of the Minute of the SSC held on 08 December 2021
(copy filed as SSC/030222/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee approved the Minute of the meeting of the SSC held on 08 December 2021.

Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES)
(copy filed as SSC/030222/003)

3.1   Members of the Committee received the paper about the ASES. AB and Morag Beedie (MB), Graphics & Marketing Manager, Student Experience, introduced the paper. The Student Experience Team have drawn together the results and shared the information with Schools and Directorates and responses are now being received from Schools and Directorates on the required actions. The SSC will continue to discuss the ASES and space will be provided on the agenda for the next meeting for sharing practice. MB shared some results of the papers and actions which have been identified.

3.2   MB advised that the ASES annual survey gathers information from all University of Aberdeen students including students studying online and at the Qatar campus. Questions are related to the courses they are studying, teaching and learning, and gathers information about their experience of services such as IT, Student Support and registration. The Schools, Directorates, Online Teams and Qatar have all been provided with the results and some actions have already been identified.

3.3   Some of the 'headline' results were shared in relation to teaching and learning. Students were asked to state their agreement on a number of areas; 91% of UG and PG students strongly agreed or agreed that their course was intellectually stimulating, 80% of UG and PG students strongly agreed or agreed that their views and opinions about their course were valued by staff. Sub questions were asked in relation to 'belonging and experience' and 91.4% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they felt physically safe in the campus study environment and 76.2% strongly agreed or agreed that the University cares for their health and wellbeing, including mental health. 87.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their University experience has not been affected by any protected characteristics and 76.2% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they know how to contact the University's support service for advice and support. 72.8% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they feel part of the University of Aberdeen community; however 14% remained neutral and 13% disagreed. Some questions about orientation were asked and 53% of students agreed that they had completed orientation; the online orientation process is managed by the Student Experience Team. 88% of students agreed that the information and advice included in the orientation was useful, 85% of students agreed that they were satisfied with their experience of the University orientation. Students were provided with the opportunity to submit some free text feedback about orientation and general themes in relation to this highlighted that there was some general confusion about

whether they had completed orientation; part 1 of orientation is available on the University website to everyone prior to registration. Once students have completed registration, part 2 of orientation is available on MyAberdeen. Another emerging theme was that it took students a very long time to complete part 2 of orientation; in particular, the section on graduate attributes. Students were asked about their experience of School inductions or welcome events and 50.4% agreed that they received a School induction or welcome event; Schools will have the opportunity to share actions in the March meeting of the SSC.

3.4   MB highlighted that once all Schools, campuses and professional service departments have had the opportunity to review the results and identify any actions based on specific feedback to their area, the Student Experience Team will look to close the feedback loop by promoting any changes and improvements through the University's feedback website. This information will also be shared on social media and through the current student e-newsletters.

3.5   Some actions have already been identified as 'quick wins' and implementation of these actions has already taken place. MB detailed a few examples; some students stated in the qualitative data that there was a lack of awareness of support services available related to wellbeing and inclusion; focus groups with liberation forums and academics are being arranged to identify opportunities to enhance the support available to both staff and students on wellbeing and inclusion matters, some additional information will be provided to frontline staff to better support students in wellbeing and inclusion matters and the Student Experience Team are going to produce a series of videos on getting to know your liberation forums and student support services.

Feedback was also received about students having a lack of a sense of belonging. With the aim of sharing successes of the student body and to promote a sense of belonging and pride of the University, the Communications department are attempting to actively produce more video content on the University's successes which will be shared across all channels. The Student Experience Team also have some initiatives including the Community Champion campaign, in which they will start collecting student successes and highlight these through social medica channels.

There was also a lack of community identified in the feedback received. To help with this, wellbeing, equality and diversity events which take place at the Kings College campus will be replicated at Foresterhill, and details of the events will be shared with colleagues at the Qatar campus, allowing them to run similar events.

As a result of the feedback received in relation to the orientation being too long and confusing (which was especially cited by returning students), the Student Experience Team will review all content for new and returning students and look to reduce this for September 2022; SSC will be provided with a breakdown on the plans, including those about 'drip-feeding' information throughout the year to

students in relation to orientation. PGR student information will also be reviewed and refined for October 2022.

Some students also stated a lack of awareness of School induction and whether they had received an induction. New student communications will be delivered differently; the Student Experience Team have changed the order that new student on boarding information will be sent out to ensure that school-specific email information is the last information students receive, allowing schools more time to organise their inductions so that the Student Experience Team can send out more tailored emails to each student and invite them to their School induction. The Team will continue to work with Schools and the Welcome Week Planning Group on new student communication to ensure that the University website is as up to date as possible.

3.6   Growing the ASES response rate and engagement will only improve the feedback and quality of the feedback. The questions will continue to be reviewed and refined to ensure that we receive actionable data; the Student Experience team will engage with relevant departments to ensure that the questions are the right ones to ask.

3.7   The impact of Covid-19 meant that there were limited opportunities for face to face engagement with students. Restrictions permitting, going forward the Student Experience Team will look to undertake further in-person engagement.

3.8   NE highlighted that last year the University was fifth in the National Student Survey (NSS) and we rose 14 places in overall satisfaction to reach this point. The ASES provides an insight into where this may have come from. It is good to see an acknowledgement of the requirements to build community feeling and an awareness of services. More resources will help the Student Advice & Support Team to progress the more proactive elements that can undertaken to engage with the community. Closing the feedback loop is essential to demonstrate to students the action that we are taking as a result of the feedback that they and colleagues share in these forums.

3.9   John Cavanagh (JC) noted that from one perspective you can look at the numbers and acknowledge that these are positive but from his perspective they are not positive; there are some serious areas highlighted that 10% of students do not agree with, including the fact that courses are intellectually stimulating, as well as areas relating to bullying and racism. JC acknowledged that it isn't possible to get this to 0% but he's not convinced that we should necessarily be happy with these results even though there are areas in which students positively agree at levels of 80% and above.

3.10   AB noted agreement and explained that we are at the noting phase of considering the results. The results have been provided to Schools and Directorates and her sense is that we should note where we have done well but we can always improve further and there is an expectation that this is what we will continue to see across the full wealth of points which have been identified. MB agreed with this and noted

that the action points from the Schools and Directorates will feed into the SSC. The most important action from the Student Experience Team's perspective is that we communicate to students that their feedback will be actioned through the website, social media and various communications.

3.11   Zeray Yihdego (ZY) agreed with JC's concerns around the numbers, particularly that around 24% of students do not know about Student Support Services. ZY asked what we can do about this and suggested advertising Student Support Services on the main page of the University website from time to time. ZY acknowledged that there is information available but that students may struggle to navigate the information. The second figure which caused concern for ZY was that only around 50% of students agreed that they received a School induction. ZY noted that this will have implications for students' awareness of support services, processes and the support available from their Schools. Something needs to be done to improve this in the near future.

3.12   NE explained that we are always looking at how to promote activities and noted that we need to consider whether students are unaware of services and have tried to access these, or have they never needed the services and did not know that they exist; we need to consider this and ensure that students can access the right support at the right time. This is an ongoing piece of work and there will be action that can be taken to proactively target the promotion of services to the right students. NE advised that there will be consideration as to how Schools can best be supported to publicise their inductions.

3.13   NE shared that one of the statistics of most concern to him was that only 53% of students indicated that they had completed orientation.

3.14   AB and Jemma Murdoch (JM) highlighted plans for promoting awareness of services. There have been discussion with AB, JM and the Wellbeing Team around working with members of Student Support Services and Academic staff to 'drip feed' information more slowly, certainly in the first semester, so it is not all provided at once at the beginning, students are not overwhelmed with information and it is then forgotten. JM noted that she is confident that all students are provided with the right information but in terms of the students actually engaging with this and remembering the details, the numbers will likely be small. It is difficult for Student Support Services at events such as Open Days as there is a specific cohort of students, who know they need to engage with Services, such as disabled students, but most students do not have foresight that they are going to experience difficulties and/or require support in their time at University (whether significant or not) and the aim is therefore to try to support students to understand and engage with knowing which services are there when they need them and how to access this support.

3.15   NE highlighted that all staff need to be empowered to know where to effectively sign post students.

3.16   MB highlighted that actions are being made by the Student Experience Team to refine the information for returning and new students and to ensure that they are signposted to the correct places. It has been identified that some staff are unsure where to sign post students. The Team is looking at creating a resource for staff to ensure we all know what information students have been provided and who they can be referred to for relevant support.

3.17   The next ASES will be sent to students in November 2022. A refining process will be taking place with Schools to ensure the questions are correct prior to this.

Action: Clerk

Update from Code of Practice Task and Finish Group
(copy filed SSC/030222/004)

4.1   Members of the Committee discussed the paper on the work of the Code of Practice TFG. NE introduced the paper and advised that it was a summary of the progress of the work of the TFG. The paper highlights the key areas that the group has identified to take into consideration for the code. It also outlines the key topics that the current code does not effectively cover. The TFG are currently working on a draft of the new code of practice. A meeting of the group will soon take place to finalise the direction of travel. It is hoped that a first draft of the new code of practice will be available later in February or in early March, to be presented through the Committee structure to Senate for an initial academic view, so that it can then be refined and finalised and be in place for new academic year.

4.2   Some of the areas identified for the new code, which are not currently covered, are how the University can better link up with AUSA around the process and policies that they follow in regard to complaints. Social media is not considered under the current code, which was written in 2012. Issues and cases around Gender Based Violence (GBV) and how we can better support victims in the process will be considered by the TFG in conjunction with Fiona Drouet, the Emily Test charity, and the work that NE undertakes with the Scottish Government's Leadership Group linked to GBV.

4.3   AB noted that the paper looks great. NE noted that Isla Callander from the Law School is representing the GBV and Sexual Harassment Strategy Group on the TFG and she will be added to the composition of the TFG.

4.4   NE noted that resource will be considered by the TFG to ensure that individuals undertaking investigations and decision making receive training. They will consider where this training will be sourced and where the support for progressing cases will come from.

4.5   No comments were received from members of the Committee.

Update from Monitoring Task and Finish Group
(copy filed as SSC/030222/005)

5.1   Members of the Committee discussed the paper on the work of the Monitoring TFG. AB introduced the paper and advised that the TFG has met twice and the work is progressing well. The group will meet again later in March. The work has been divided into two main strands, 'principles' considering what should we be monitoring and why; this work has involved discussion and benchmarking. The other area which Marion Malcolm has been leading on, focuses on what we do now in terms of monitoring, absence and engagement. It has been identified that the potential for streamlining and adopting new practices is high. Many areas have been identified as potential areas of 'learning' for Schools. The meetings that Marion has been undertaking should be completed in the coming weeks and it is planned that the strands will be drawn together, to identify 'quick wins' we can implement straight away and looking beyond this, to identify how we may wish to change the system and how we might deliver this more effectively.

5.2   ZH asked if the group is looking at the connection between monitoring and absence and the Personal Tutor (PT) support system. AB confirmed that the TFG are looking at how this is working in all of the Schools and how this process could be improved. The reports of the two TFGs will hopefully reduce duplication and inefficiency in the process.

Class Representative Review
(copy filed as SSC/030222/006)

6.1   Members of the Committee discussed the paper on the Class Representative Review. AB introduced the paper and advised that it was a summary of the progress of the work of the review. The current system has existed for a long time and can work extremely effectively but it has not been reviewed for a significant period of time. Questions have been raised about the current process and if it can be delivered more effectively, in particular, how can we make better use of existing and new technology.

6.2   One of the areas identified of key importance in the NSS is responding further to the student voice. AB is working closely with AUSA and Ondrej Kucerak (OK), and the work is being supported by SPARQS (Students Partnership in Quality Scotland).

6.3   Phase 1 of the review has been completed; AB and OK have met with all School SAMs and Education Leads, which was very productive, and identified that some excellent practice is going on and a variety of approaches are being followed. A report is being prepared which draws together all of the different processes identified. This will stimulate discussion on whether a single approach should be adopted and whether this may streamline the process. Consideration will be given to whether this would be helpful to students who study across different Schools, or whether there are strong reasons for different approaches to continue and if flexibility may be of value.

6.4   After completion of the initial mapping phase, which is staff focussed, AB and OK are looking to engage directly with students to learn what they think of the process and how it can be developed further. They will then look to develop some possible new approaches which will be discussed further with staff and students.

6.5   AB advised that IT systems such as Unitu are being considered to support the process to work effectively. DS advised that there are complications in the way our Schools are set up which makes it difficult for Unitu to work effectively. This is one of the reasons why the use of this system has been deferred for now. It is being considered and one of the Schools has volunteered to test the system. Unitu have provided feedback and our IT Team are now looking at things from their side. It is hoped that an update can be provided soon.

6.6   The review is in the early stages and reports will be provided to the SSC.

6.7   No comments were received from members of the Committee.

University of Sanctuary

7.1   Members of the Committee were provided with an oral update on the University of Sanctuary by AB. The University of Sanctuary is an initiative which reflects strong engagement by the University to support displaced people, for example asylum seekers and refugees. It is part of a wider City of Sanctuary initiative. SMT committed over a year ago to the University working towards membership of the initiative. A wide group of staff and students across the University is continuing to work on this area. We also have a wider Community of Practice, which meets quarterly where expertise is shared and guest speakers are invited.   The focus of this is twofold; it is about embedding awareness, respect and action for displaced people in everything that we do and in order to embed this, it involves us taking new approaches. There is also an external engagement angle in which we are working with GREC (Grampian Regional Equality Council) who undertake a significant amount of work with Syrian New Scots and in recent months we have been working with Aberdeen City Council in relation to refugees from Afghanistan.

7.2   A draft application has been completed which we hope to submit soon. Once the application is submitted, University of Sanctuary will provide feedback and we will work together on this.

7.3   A fine detail of focus at present is in relation to scholarships; we need to demonstrate that we offer Sanctuary Scholarships. The Development Trust have raised, and continue to raise, funds and this has been dedicated to Sanctuary Scholarships. We also have some existing Sanctuary Scholarships which have been termed 'Shining Lights' that we have delivered over the years to students recommended to us through CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics), which also covers students.

7.4 We are aiming to formalise and make clear the support that the University can offer, such as free accommodation including for families. AB is working with Jacqui Tuckwell (JT) on this and a case will be made to SMT about this. Fee waivers are also being considered. If these elements were covered by the University then the funding available from the Development Trust could be used for course-related costs (such as the purchase of books and IT) and daily living expenses. AB recently met with the Heads of School and she is trying to identify exactly how the fee waiver could be approached. There is a tremendous amount of good-will do this. It is hoped that this work will be finalised as soon as possible.

7.5 AB is continuing to work with Schools to learn about relevant courses and research projects. In the coming weeks a paper will be produced for SMT building on their approval to progress, for approval to make the University's application to become a recognised University of Sanctuary and to sign up to the City of Sanctuary charter.

7.6 Anyone who would like to be involved in the work is welcome and can email the University of Sanctuary email account: sanctuary@abdn.ac.uk. Staff can also contact AB directly.

7.7 ZY noted that it is a great initiative which he fully supports and welcomes. He highlighted a student case in which one of the School's supported the admission of a student who is now doing very well in their studies. ZY advised that the scheme needs to be promoted and further awareness of this should be raised within the University community and the Admissions Team so that cases are treated sensitively and the student's circumstances taken into consideration, without compromising our quality etc.

7.8 AB agreed in relation to the importance of communication. AB highlighted the vast amount of information on the University website in relation to the support available and improvements have been identified, which should hopefully make our flexibility around areas such as the documentation required for entry qualifications more visible. AB noted that there is more work to be done.

Inclusion and Accessibility in Education Framework
(copy filed as SSC/030222/007)

8.1 Members of the Committee discussed the paper on the Inclusion and Accessibility in Education Framework. AB introduced the paper and advised that it was a summary of the progress of the work undertaken on the Framework. The aim of the Framework is to try to make more visible, to prioritise and to support colleagues to provide an inclusive and accessible educational experience for everyone. A wide approach has been taken and includes recruitment activities and events. The Framework does not create anything new in itself but it is a stimulus to new practice and sharing.

8.2 At present the Framework includes an inclusion and accessibility checklist, there is guidance on captions and on etiquette for online communications. It also includes

the EDI and Religion Policies. It provides the relevant information in one place on the website.

8.3   The events taking place which relate to the Framework are advertised on the webpage; the first event was delivered by Rona Patey in which she shared the experience of the Medical School who worked with a student who wished to change a class as a result of a clash with Yom Kippur. This has proved to be a very effective and constructive forum to explore the challenges that many colleagues are experiencing in taking new approaches to the work we do. More events are planned; the next one will consider the experience of a colleague in reviewing their reading list and Kirsty Kiezebrink will be exploring approaches to alternative methods of assessment. Another session will explore the experience of supporting a disabled student in a lab; this will include discussion on how the School made this work and the challenges that were presented and overcome.

8.4   The other resource which has been developed is a Reflection Document which has roots in Equality Impact Assessment. It provides a process to review an activity such as a course/recruitment event, to consider factors related to inclusion and accessibility, with the aim of identifying improvements/actions that can be made. The document is available at: www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/Accessibility%20and%20Inclusion%20Reflecti on%20Document.docx

8.5   The information is live and is in the early stages; feedback is welcome. One piece of feedback received already has requested clarity on what the framework is and is not; the framework is not one document; it is a wider drawing together of resources. Work is being undertaken to make this clearer.

8.6   The Framework will be considered by SSC once per year to discuss the progress, although it will be reviewed more frequently. It will also be shared with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC).

8.7   No comments were received from members of the Committee.

Action: Clerk

Student Withdrawals Report
(copy filed as SSC/030222/008)

9.1   Members of the Committee discussed the paper on the Student Withdrawals report. Chris Souter (CS) introduced the paper on student withdrawals in the current academic year, which measures how the students have withdrawn this year compared to the previous two years. For the purpose of the report the data was restricted to students studying on-campus programmes; this is to avoid results being skewed by new and emerging methods of delivery when comparing data directly with previous years. UG and PGT student data was considered.

9.2   The timing of withdrawal was considered; the highest level of withdrawals was identified in November.

9.3   Withdrawals were considered on a School by School basis; if students are studying across two Schools, they will account for 0.5 in each School. Not many clear patterns were identified at UG level but the Business School have been identified as having the lowest rate of UG withdrawals, followed by MMSN, compared to the Institutional average.

9.4   The main reasons for withdrawal were identified as health and 'other' reasons for UG students. No further data is available to identify what the 'other' reasons are. This is perhaps a further area the University needs to understand.

9.5   Most withdrawals for UG students are from the 'Home/EU' fee paying category.

9.6   Most UG withdrawals occur in stage 1. There has been a spike this year in stage 3 students withdrawing compared to previous years.

9.7   For PGT students there has been a large spike in withdrawals in December this year compared with previous years.

9.8   There is no clear pattern across the University in the number of withdrawals for PGT students but this year there has been a large spike in the number of PGT students withdrawing in the Business School, with low withdrawal rates in previous years.

9.9   There has been a large spike noted for withdrawals as a result of 'other' reasons for PGT students this year.

9.10   Most PGT students who have withdrawn this year are from the 'Overseas' fee paying category. On further investigation the numbers seem to represent a group of students registered with the Business School who have registered their ethnicity as Bangladesh. This may require further investigation/explanation for a fuller understanding.

9.11   There has not been a large increase in the overall withdrawal number this year; it may be slightly increased. The reasons for withdrawal can be unclear as students can select 'other' reasons which do not require them to specify the exact reasons.

9.12   In the future, we can look to expand the analysis to include withdrawal data against demographic information so we can report against protected characteristics. That would be a useful step to consider.

9.13   There is hope that Schools would be provided access to a PowerBi dashboard so that they can monitor and analyse the data in the areas of interest.

9.14   AB noted that she invited the Bangladeshi students to meet with her. Most of the students had their visas reported due to lack of engagement and not residing in Aberdeen (many students were living elsewhere in the UK). There are lessons to be learned from this in terms of recruitment and how we support students when they are here.

9.15   AB highlighted the next steps and the importance of including equality data and considering how we work with Schools going forwards.

9.16   NE clarified that students in the position of not residing in Aberdeen were given the option to come to Aberdeen to engage now that in-person teaching had resumed or they were given the option to return home and have their visa reported.

9.17   FR advised that the Business School have seen a massive shift in student engagement, particularly from the Bangladeshi students. They are also starting to see information come in about the January starts and a large number of the late starts are also from Bangladesh. The School are tightening up on the process; all students with multiple C6s are contacted and offered support. They are also tightening things up from an immigration point of view, working with Shona Carr and the Student Immigration Compliance Team. They are envisaging that they will continue to see high numbers of students withdrawing. They are aware that the Law School are also experiencing similar issues and are closely monitoring the situation.

9.18   Alison Jenkinson (AJ) noted that the paper was really helpful and commented that it is useful that some of the data has been provided as a percent of registered population as this takes into consideration the changes in composition of our programmes, particularly around online and the new and emerging methods of delivery, but also our on campus composition and numbers are changing over too. This allows us to think about the Brexit effect and whether the home/EU data may change over time. It also highlights that our numbers in PGT are much greater, so if we look at it as a percentage of population, this at times, can be much more informative than the hard numbers; although we need to recognise that the hard numbers are individuals so the information is very important. One of the reasons to consider this is that there may be cases at UG level where a particular School has a very high intake of students in first year in one year, so a large number leaving at third year may actually still proportionally be similar to previous years. There may be an argument for some more granularity around proportions in some of the data but what has been provided is very helpful. CS agreed with AJ's comments and advised that part of the reason why he restricted the way the data was displayed was that Student Records only supply data in terms of the withdrawals that have actually happened, so he was required to back-track to work out the total population for UG and PG and therefore express the percentages. What CS is aiming for going forwards is to get the whole data set including the non-withdrawals and the withdrawals together and he can then easily work out the percentages of the population. This will be helpful when considering the data in relation to areas such as protected characteristics.

9.20   Lucy Leiper (LL) asked about PGR withdrawals and whether we are also interested to look at the numbers of students withdrawing and the reasons for these withdrawals. LL completed a very quick calculation and advised that 5% of the population of the PGR population withdrew from the time period of September-December. NE advised that we are definitely interested in this and asked if these figures are reported elsewhere. LL confirmed that are not. It was agreed that it would be good for these figures to be tied in to this work. CS advised that this can be considered in the future but the way the data is presented may need to be considered as the nature of PGR students is different to those following taught programmes; the pattern of withdrawal may therefore be different.

9.21   Figures will be provided to the SSC in relation to withdrawals every three months and we can then consider how we incorporate the PGR figures.

9.22   AB asked what we will do with these figures. How do we take the information on board when considering why students are withdrawing and what can we do (when possible) to prevent this from happening? It was agreed that colleagues think and reflect on this for the next meeting. AB highlighted the ongoing readmissions work and the Resilient Learning Communities "Community of Practice", which looks at specific situations and consider how students could be supported early on. This will be added as an agenda item for the next meeting and colleagues are welcome to use the SSC MS Teams site to highlight thoughts on this area in the meantime. This ties in with the work of the Monitoring and Pastoral Review TFGs and other Student Experience work which has been undertaken to support particular teams. This particular focus on the high level data is helpful and consideration should be given to what we should do with the information.

Action: Clerk

AOCB

10.1   NE advised the committee on the work being undertaken on the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Strategy Group. We have recently signed up to the Emily Test Charter pledging to take the Emily Test in a year. More information will be shared in the next few weeks and the University community will be engaged with an aim of explaining what the Emily Test Charter is. It is linked to GBV in the Scottish Higher Education Sector and is a charity led by Fiona Drouet, whose daughter Emily died when she was a student studying with us. NE has been working with Fiona Drouet on a number of projects over the last couple of years. The charter was launched late last year as something that the sector can get behind to champion good practice in relation to GBV within and outside the University community. We're hoping to hear back in response to our application later in the month. NE will update everyone on the next steps we'll be taking.

10.2   Fiona Ritchie (FR) asked about whether additional support has been considered/implemented for late start students, mainly postgraduate taught students (PGT). FR reported that the Business School have increasing numbers of

students starting late and anecdotally they seem to struggle as they miss induction and the first few weeks of teaching. They often find that there is less engagement with students in this position and it is felt that they do not perform as effectively as their peers (although data is needed to evidence this).

AB has undertaken a lot of work around this as this has been identified as an area of concern for a while. For now some steps have been implemented; communications went out to students in November and December to make it clear that they should not arrive late. Systems have been put in place to ensure that students are clear that if they do not arrive by a particular time this will make it a lot harder for them to be permitted to commence their studies late; the deadline has now passed so if a student wishes to arrive late, they require the approval of Ruth Taylor to do so. This may reduce the number of students affected but it is appreciated that this can still be a challenge. Communications have tried to be clear about the requirement to participate in online orientation and to join the University community online when the student is unable to physically attend. Attempts have also be made to highlight Student Support Services. English Language has been highlighted as an area of concern and in-sessional English language courses are available. Schools have been encouraged to apply C6s more often, so that it is clear to students about the engagement requirements early in the term. It is a live conversation that AB is continuing to work on. In the undergraduate system, if there are concerns about a student's performance in the first half session, they are contacted around this time to discuss that (if there are C7s). It is being considered whether this system should apply to PGT students. Plans are in place and consideration has been given to providing information about the expectations to check emails and MyAberdeen etc., perhaps in students' first language, in video format.

AB advised that discussions have taken place with colleagues across the Schools in relation to this area and comments and feedback are welcome.

ZY agreed that this was an important area for consideration. He highlighted a student case who has missed classes due to Visa issues. AB advised that there is a process the student needs to follow to study online; she will provide ZY with the relevant form.

Action: AB to provide form to ZY

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

11.1   No comments were received from members of the Committee.

Reflection on Aberdeen 2040 Updates on Operational Plan

12.1   AB advised that there is ongoing work on decolonising the curriculum.

Reflection on SSC Task and Finish Groups

13.1   No comments were received from members of the Committee.

Date of Next Meeting

14.1   The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday 21 March at 11am, by
        Microsoft Teams.