UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Tuesday 20 November 2024 at 2:05pm**, by **Microsoft Teams**.

Ms Isabella Fausti, Administrative Officer
(isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk)

AGENDA

FOR DISCUSSION

1.   Approval of the Minute of the Meeting Held on 1 October 2024   *(UEC/201124/001)*

2.   Matters Arising/Actions   *(UEC/201124/002)*

3.   Substantive Items

3.1   Microcredential Digital Badges: Milestone Pilot   *(UEC/201124/003)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the proposals discussed in the paper, to support a pilot of microcredential digital badges platform Anthology Milestone during 2025.

3.2   National Student Survey (NSS) Options   *(UEC/201124/004)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the options for the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2025.

3.3   Academic Student Survey Season   *(UEC/201124/005)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the proposals for the Academic Student Survey Season.

4.   Governance / Standing Items

4.1   Sector Updates   *(Oral Item)*

4.2   Risk Register   *(UEC/201124/006)*

4.3   Updates from the Education Deans

4.3.1   Dean for Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development

(i)   Update on the Portfolio review   *(Oral Item)*

5.   Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 1:05pm, in the Court Room, University Office, or by Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 1 October 2024

Present: Jo-Anne Murray (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Julie Bray, Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Jacqui Hutchison (in place of Helen Knight), Ken Jeffrey, Kirsty Kiezebrink, David McCausland, Stuart Piertney, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Miles Roetherl, Steve Tucker, Asha Venkatesh and Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Scott Carle, Robin Cummins, Nick Edwards, Isabella Fausti, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Rhona Moore, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton and Emma Tough (Clerk) and Morag MacRae (Minute Secretary) in attendance

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Nigel Beacham, Alison Jenkinson, Colin Lumsden, John Mynott, Michelle Pinard, Anne-Michelle Slater, Debbie Dyker and Ian Robotham.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 MAY 2024
(copy filed as UEC/011024/001)

1.1   The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC), including members who were new to the Committee. Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 13 May 2024 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS
(copy filed as UEC/011024/002)

2.1   Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 13 May 2024 as follows:

(i)   The Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship reported that the name of Induction, Transition and Employability Week had changed to Get Set Week for new students. The name of Welcome Week remains the same for returning students, and there are now two streams of communications for new students and returning students.

(ii)   The Dean for Student Support reported that training on the new institutional Extensions policy had not yet been completed, but there were plans to provide bespoke training in response to specific feedback from Schools. He also stated that the non-continuation data had been fed back to the Directorate of Planning.

(iii)   The Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement reported that the action referring to the Marking and Moderation policy was now complete. He also reported that the action regarding the involvement of Library Services in the Internal Teaching Review process would be discussed as part of a wider conversation surrounding ITR.

(iv)   The new Vice President for Education reported that the Students Association was currently in the process of electing the Student Education Committee, and as such it was not yet in place.

**THE [TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK](#) (TQEF) AND
THE [TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW](#) (TQER)**

3.1   Members of the UEC heard a presentation from the Dean for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement on the updated quality arrangements for Scotland. The presentation detailed the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and its six principles, as well as the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and the requirements thereof.

3.2   Members queried the Internal Teaching Review (ITR) process, and to what extent Schools could input into that aspect of activity. The Dean responded that the Schools' experiences of ITR would be positively received. Members also mused that the closer relationship between universities and colleges should improve widening access targets. It was remarked that the Student Recruitment and Admissions team are successful at enabling students to start their University career, but that less focus was placed on their degree award. Conversations had taken place with the Directorate of Planning, but it was suggested that members of School staff needed to speak to the Directorate to ascertain how useful information for School use could be obtained.   ***Action: S Tucker***

3.3   It was reported by the Clerk that discussion was ongoing surrounding the policy update schedule, and that Academic Services would need to reflect on it in terms of individual Schools.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2024 RESULTS
(copy filed as UEC/011024/003)

4.1   The Dean for Student Support provided a summary of the paper on the National Student Survey (NSS) results and related information. The Chair congratulated everyone on the Schools' recent successes and noted that there was a need to consider the forthcoming academic year. The Dean reported that only key people had access to the NSS information, but other staff could be granted access should they require it.

4.2   Members of the Committee discussed the results, with the following queries being raised:

   (i)   It was questioned whether the University could provide an AI-generated summary of the data, and additionally some Schools requested an unredacted version of the comments made. It was reported that the University could only undertake this in-house, not through an AI tool freely available on the web. There were also concerns about the Planning process, and GDPR implications for the University.
   (ii)   A concern was raised regarding joint degrees, and the potential confusion of data with no discipline being mentioned.
   (iii)   It was noted that concerns were raised about the feedback-related scores, and the number of assessments which do not provide quality feedback to suggest ways in which students can improve. The Marking and Moderation procedures should go some way to negate this issue.
   (iv)   It was also commented that there may be EDI implications on providing actionable feedback, such as staff or student neurodiversity.

GRADUATE OUTCOMES
(copy filed as UEC/011024/004)

5.1   The Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship gave a summary of the paper on Graduate Outcomes. He outlined the main highlights of the document, which detailed whether graduates of the University were reported to be undertaking further study or in employment.

5.2   It was commented that the University needs to further consider the international student experience, as there is a 4.9% disparity between UK domiciled students versus non-UK domiciled students. It was ascertained that within the UK, there were likely more responses given due to measures taken (e.g. phone calls) that would not happen if the student were living abroad. Nevertheless, the Committee noted that the University needs to support our international graduates. It was suggested that the Committee would be grateful to see the response rates breakdown from the Directorate of Planning.   ***Action: J Barrow***

ONLINE EDUCATION
(copy filed as UEC/011024/005)

6.1   The Chair gave a summary of the paper on the proposed strategy for online education. She outlined the main facets of the proposal, and the expansion of Online Education including the use of satellite campuses in target market countries.

6.2   Members of the Committee discussed the proposal, with the following queries being raised:

(i)   It was commented that it was equally important that the online student experience is of a high standard, in comparison with the on-campus experience, in terms of Students' Association involvement and opportunities to be a class representative.

(ii)   It was queried whether the use of a satellite campus was a common model for online education. The Chair responded that the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions had experience of employing satellite campuses, but that it was key to work with Schools to determine what is a successful approach.

(iii)   It was asked whether there had been any consideration of potential EDI implications, and it was noted that the postgraduate research student experience may suffer most severely due to visa restrictions. It was also commented that the language used was important, as postgraduate researchers are distance learners, whereas postgraduate taught are online learners. The Chair noted that the issue of postgraduate research distance learning would be kept under close monitoring.

SECTOR UPDATES/RISK REGISTER
(copy filed as UEC/011024/006)

7.1   The oral updates on the Higher Education sector, along with the Risk Register, are to be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

GRADES JOURNEY: TRANSPARENCY AND ENHANCING THE RETURN OF GRADES TO SRS
(copy filed as UEC/011024/007)

8.1   The Dean for Educational Innovation provided a summary of the paper on the Grades Journey, and the related enhancement of returning the grades awarded to the Student Records System (SRS).

8.2   There was general support for the paper and its contents, although there was some objection to the terminology of use of the word "grade" versus "mark". The reason for not displaying the component grades of assessment on MyAberdeen was queried, with the final overall grade being available through the Student Hub portal. It was also commented that the University should stop grading out of 22 as it leads to miscalculations by students. The Dean noted the comments and told the Committee she would investigate.
                     Action: K Kiezebrink/ S Preston

8.3   It was noted that all comments would be required by 22 October 2024.

Action: Directors of Education

REPORT AND REQUEST TOOL OF USE WITH MONITORING AND EXTENSION REQUESTS;

COMPUTER ASSESSMENT WORKING GROUP;

MYSKILLS ENGAGEMENT

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM POLICY

(copy filed as UEC/130524/009)

9.1   These oral items are to be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee. The paper on Sustainability in the Curriculum Policy is to be approved by way of circulation.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1   Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 5 November at 1:05pm in the Court Room, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
2.1 (ii)	Confirm process concerning extensions for Tier 4 students	J Bohan	**In progress** Plans to provide bespoke training in response to specific feedback from Schools on this issue and others
2.1 (iii)	Consider Library Services becoming part of the support staff session during the Internal Teaching Review process	S Tucker	**In progress** Ongoing discussions regarding the structure of ITR are taking place
2.1 (iv)	Consult with Student Education Committee to ask what reassurance could be provided to students with regards to the Marking and Moderation policy	M Roetherl	**In progress** Further update expected once the Student Education Committee is in place
3.2	Arrange for School Directors of Education and School Administration Managers to have a meeting with relevant staff from the Directorate of Planning	S Tucker	
5.2	Contact the Directorate of Planning to request a response rates breakdown on the Graduate Outcomes	J Barrow	
7.1	Updates to the Risk Register (Education) following Committee discussion.	J Murray	**In progress.** This will be discussed at the next meeting of UEC on 20 November 2024.
8.2	Investigate the Grades Journey with CAD staff	K Kiezebrink/S Preston	**In progress.** Brief oral update will be provided but the updated paper will follow at the next cycle.
8.3	Provide comments on the return of grades proposal by 22nd October 2024	Directors of Education (on behalf of SEC)	**Complete.** Deadline passed.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MICROCREDENTIAL DIGITAL BADGES: MILESTONE PILOT

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper seeks approval from the University Education Committee following approval at the Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, and prior to approval at the Digital Strategy Committee. Approval is for releasing funding and to expand the remit and composition of an existing Project Board to support a pilot of Anthology Milestone, a platform for delivering microcredential digital badges, during 2025. The Project Board shall be responsible for preparing a detailed evaluation of the pilot and developing a business case for future funding.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	EEC	22/10/2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	DSC	TBC

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The **University Education Committee** is invited to approve the proposal prior to approval from the Digital Strategy Committee for the release of funding and expansion of the remit and composition of an existing Project Board and Team to deliver this initiative.

4.   DISCUSSION

The University does not have a platform for awarding microcredential digital badges. Such a platform can bring several benefits, particularly in supporting the skills, employability, and entrepreneurship agendas. Below are the primary advantages of piloting such a platform:

1. Supporting Employability
   - **Recognition of skills**. Students can earn verifiable credentials that recognize specific skills and competences which are not reflected in traditional degrees. These microcredentials are portable and shareable on professional platforms such as LinkedIn.
   - **Transparency for employers**. Employers can view detailed information about what a microcredential digital badge represents, including skills acquired, awarding criteria, valid from and until, if applicable.
2. Supporting Lifelong Learning
   - **Stackable credentials**. Microcredentials can be stacked, leading to a larger qualification with time. This promotes lifelong learning and flexible education pathways.
   - **Flexibility and accessibility.** Learners can earn microcredentials at their own pace, often through online courses.
3. Promoting Entrepreneurship
   - **Validation of entrepreneurial skills.** Microcredentials can be awarded for entrepreneurial skills such as innovation, business planning or startup creation.
   - **Collaboration with industry**. The platform could enable collaboration with industry partners to co-create microcredential digital badges for skills highly valued by employers and entrepreneurial ventures.
4. Increased Visibility and Reputation

- **Institutional differentiation.** Offering microcredential digital badges positions the University as an innovation leader in Higher Education, enhancing reputation both nationally and globally.

Anthology have a product for awarding microcredential digital badges, including verifiable credentials, that is hosted in their European Data Centre. The product is called Milestone and can be integrated into our institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Blackboard (MyAberdeen). Milestone can also integrate with Training & Development Manager, an addition to Blackboard which is being piloted in AY 2024-25. The Training & Development Manager pilot, which was approved by DSC in June 2024, is to support revenue income from non-credit bearing online courses and early engagement with potential learners as part of engagement and conversion activities.

Finances & Procurement

Milestone is an annual licence with a one-off implementation fee in year 1.

Annual License – Institutional licence (15,000 users)	£17,698 (excl. VAT)
Implementation Fee	£5,537 (excl. VAT)
Pilot Cost	£23,235 (excl. VAT)
Pilot Total Cost (incl. VAT)	**£27,882 (incl. VAT)**

Funding for the pilot has been identified.

Project Board and Team

Due to the tight timescales, following approval, a Project Board and Project Team needs to be established to deliver:
- Solution Implementation during 2025
- Post Implementation Evaluation
- Development of any future Business Case

Apart from the Sponsor and Senior User roles, all other Project Board and Team roles that are applicable to the Milestone pilot are already part of the Project Board and Team for the Training and Documentation Manager (TDM) pilot. Due to the similarities in the outcomes of the Milestone and TDM pilots, and to utilize resources efficiently and effectively, we propose that the remit and composition of the existing Project Board and Team for TDM is expanded to include Milestone, and for John Barrow to be added as a Co-Sponsor and Tracey Innes, Head of Careers, to be added as a Senior User. We also suggest adding Gavin Innes, Senior eLearning Adviser, as additional Project Support for the implementation of Milestone.

The timing for expanding the remit and composition of the Project Board for TDM aligns with the Milestone pilot, as the technical implementation of TDM has taken place, and the first course will have been delivered through TDM. Relationships and communications between the TDM Project Board and Anthology have also been established, enabling an efficient implementation, in terms of resource, for Milestone.

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Jo-Anne Murray, VP Education (jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk), John Barrow, Dean for Employability & Entrepreneurship (j.barrow@abdn.ac.uk) and Ian Robotham, Interim Director (i.robotham@abdn.ac.uk).

22 October 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Part Closed (Commercial Figures)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCTION COMMITTEE

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) OPTIONS

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper sets out options for the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2025. The University is required to submit its preferences to Ipsos by 29 November 2024.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The University Education Committee is invited to approve the recommendations in section 5.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   The Scottish Funding Council and Ipsos published on 23 October 2024 arrangements for the National Student Survey 2025 and action required from participating institutions. Institutions are required to carry out three key tasks in preparation for the survey by 29 November 2024:

- Review/update their relevant NSS provider contact details on the NSS extranet. These updates have been made for the University of Aberdeen.
- Submit their completed 'My survey options' through the NSS extranet, including preferences for survey start week, optional questions, and details of any prize draws.
- Populate the institution's NSS 2025 sample templates with the requested contact details for all students on the target list, i.e. students eligible for NSS 2025.

4.2   The NSS 2025 will launch nationally on 08 January 2024 and fieldwork will take place between 09 January and 30 April 2025. Participating institutions can decide when to start the survey during the first five weeks. Last year, in the NSS 2024 Survey, the University chose to commence the NSS Survey in Week 4.

4.3   Providers in England are not required to promote the NSS 2024 survey to their students. Providers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are still required to promote the survey.

4.3   For 2025, the core questions in the survey remain the same as for the 2024 survey. Providers may also choose up to six banks of optional questions and may include up to two additional questions specific to the provider. Providers are asked to agree with students' unions their choice of optional banks of questions for inclusion. Providers should submit their choice of optional banks and additional questions to Ipsos. Last year, in the NSS 2024 Survey, the University chose to the optional bank questions as follows (see Appendix 1 for a full list of available questions):

B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)
   1. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.
   2. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.
   3. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.

B7. Course Delivery
   1. Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.

2. The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.
3. The delivery of my course has been stimulating.
4. My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.
5. Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities
1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B15. Employability and skills
1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.
3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

B16. Environmental sustainability
1. My institution encourages good environmental practice.
2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability.
3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability.

B17. Student safety
1. I feel safe to be myself at university/college.
2. My institution takes responsibility for my safety.

4.4 The University is in the process of populating the NSS 2025 sample templates with the requested contacts details for all students on the target list for 2025 eligible for participation in the survey. This data will be submitted by the deadline of 29 November 2024. As part of this process this year we will again include a short consultation with the Schools to verify the students being submitted. Due to the tight timeframes involved in generating the lists and the submission date, school verification will likely take place after the submission of the population to Ipsos, within a two-week window in early December. Please note that whilst we must submit the submission list by 29 November we can review and make changes to the lists prior to the launch of the NSS in January 2025, thus giving Schools more time to review and verify the lists. Planning will contact Schools in early December with student lists for checking and request that Schools review these promptly.

4.5 Results are expected to be published in July 2025, with 09:30 on 09 July 2025 being the provisional intended publishing date and time. Only data that conforms to NSS publication thresholds (at least 10 student responses and 50% overall response rate) will be made public. If no data is made available for a particular course on which students were surveyed, this means that the data did not meet this publication threshold.

5. **RECOMMENDATION**

The University Education Committee is invited to approve that:

1. The starting date of the NSS Survey in 2025 is Week 4 (week commencing 27 January 2025, with initial email sent out on Thursday 30 January 2025) as this aligns well with the opening of term on 20 January 2025 after the Christmas break and the start of teaching on 27 January 2025.
2. The optional questions for NSS 2025 are the same as in 2024 so as to create continuity and build up consistent data over a number of years to understand trends.

6.   **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Jo-Anne Murray, Vice-Principal Education (jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk), Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experience, (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk) Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Strategic Planning, Project & Corporate Governance (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk) and Chris Souter, Head of Data and Business Intelligence (chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk) .

05 November 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: *Open*

APPENDIX 1 - Bank of Optional Questions

B1. Personal Development
1. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.
2. My communication skills have improved.
3. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)
1. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.
2. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.
3. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.

B3. Careers
1. As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.
2. Good advice is available for making career choices.
3. Good advice is available on further study opportunities.

B4. Course Content and Structure
1. All of the compulsory modules are relevant to my course.
2. There is an appropriate range of options to choose from on my course.
3. The modules of my course form a coherent integrated whole.

B5. Work Placements
Did your course involve any work placements?
a. Yes (ask all questions in this section)
b. No (skip this section)
1. I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements.
2. My placements were valuable in helping my learning.
3. My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course.
4. My placements have helped me to develop my general life skills.
5. The taught part of my course was good preparation for my placements.

B6. Social Opportunities
1. I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.
2. I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.
3. I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

B7. Course Delivery
1. Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.
2. The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.
3. The delivery of my course has been stimulating.
4. My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.
5. Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.

B8. The Physical Environment
1. Security has been satisfactory when attending classes.
2. My institution provides an appropriate environment in which to learn.

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities
1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B10. Workload
1. The workload on my course is manageable.
2. This course does not apply unnecessary pressure on me as a student.
3. The volume of work on my course means I can always complete it to my satisfaction.
4. I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn.

B11. Assessment
1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.

2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

B12. Learning Community
1. I feel part of a group of students committed to learning.
2. I have been able to explore academic interests with other students.
3. I have learned to explore ideas confidently.
4. Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued.
5. I feel part of an academic community in my college or university.

B13. Intellectual Motivation
1. I have found the course motivating.
2. The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.
3. The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

B14. Entrepreneurial opportunities
1. If I was interested in starting my own business, I know where I could find support in my institution.
2. My Higher Education experience has helped me develop skills that could help me run my own business in future.
3. As a result of my Higher Education experience, I am more likely to consider running my own business in the future.

B15. Employability and skills
1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.
3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

B16. Environmental sustainability
1. My institution encourages good environmental practice.
2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability.
3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability.

B17. Student safety
1. I feel safe to be myself at university/college.
2. My institution takes responsibility for my safety.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACADEMIC STUDENT SURVEY SEASON

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This is a paper providing updated information relating to Student Surveys. This paper is provided for **discussion**.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

UEC is invited to discus and approve the recommendations in Section 4.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The University gathers feedback year-round to capture students' perspectives on both academic and non-academic experiences. Student survey results serve as a valuable resource for informing decisions about service delivery.

3.2 In 2023 the university introduced the Academic "Survey Season" for the delivery of large-scale educational surveys. The surveys are conducted during the second semester, providing students with a dedicated timeframe to share their feedback on academic-related matters.

3.3 Survey Season comprises of the following:

- National Student Survey (NSS)
- Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES)
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)
- Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES)

3.4 In addition, the New to UoA survey will be sent in January, to new January intake, asking for feedback on welcome experiences.

3.5 As agreed by SSEC and UEC in 2024, no additional surveys will be distributed to large student cohorts during the Academic Survey Season timeframe. This dedicated period enables a cohesive marketing and promotion strategy, encouraging students to contribute to positive changes that enhance teaching and learning—benefiting both current and future students.

See Appendix 1 for 2025 timeframes.

3.6 NSS, UES, PTES, and PRES data will be analysed by the Data and Business Intelligence team (Planning Directorate) and shared with Schools via Power BI dashboard (NSS only) and summary report. Schools are expected to utilise this data when developing their individual School Education Action Plans.

3.7 A communication and marketing plan is currently being developed for the surveys by the Student Experience team, ensuring that they are promoted to the appropriate cohort of students. This aims to encourage student responses and highlight the benefits of sharing feedback on their academic experiences.

3.8 The communication and marketing plan will focus on building awareness of Survey Season and promoting all related surveys and opportunities. A variety of student focused marketing channels will be utilised throughout the live phase, including pre-launch emails, the Student Update eNewsletter, social media, VLE announcements, and both print and digital

materials. The main focus will be on student-led change promoting the *You Shape UoA* tagline. The Survey Season artwork concept is shown in Appendix 2.

3.9   As part of this plan, updated Staff Resources will be available for Schools to actively promote Survey Season as well as the individual surveys. Resources will include PowerPoint slides to use in lectures, posters, suggested text to use in VLE announcements and various digital graphic assets. Schools are expected to plan their own marketing plan to encourage engagement with the individual surveys by their own students.

3.10   Students will be emailed an introductory email prior to survey launch which includes a GDPR notice and initial information about the survey that is relevant to them.

        Emails are sent 1-2 weeks prior to launch from:

        - NSS: Ipsos
        - UES: UoA
        - PTES: Advanced HE
        - PRES: Advanced HE

3.11   Students will receive a monthly targeted email encouraging them to complete the survey until the survey has been completed. In addition, Ipsos contact non-completers via email and phone calls to encourage participation.

3.12   School Leads will also receive an introductory email that will include guidance and briefing on Survey Season, and what can be done at School level to support. This will include links to the Staff Resources on the website.

3.13   School leads will receive regular information on response rates.

3.14   Closing the Feedback Loop. An important aspect of the marketing plan is to communicate to students how their feedback has been used to enhance the student experience. To support the communication and marketing plan's focus, the fortnightly student e-Newsletter (*the Student Update*) will be utilised to deliver targeted messaging on what each School has implemented as part of their actions on student feedback from 2024 Survey Season and the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey.

3.15   To support the advertising campaign and to raise student awareness of School activities that will enhance the student experience, Schools will be asked to provide short articles for inclusion in the Student Update describing how student feedback has impacted practice, in a 'You Said, We Did' type communication.

        The Student Update e-Newsletter is delivered to all students by School and cohort. The Student Update e-Newsletter is built using a content management system that enables content to be tailored to individual students on a student level (UG, PGT, PGT), year of study, as well as School specific. This means that every student will receive a Student Update every fortnight during term time that is relevant to them and their School.

        To assist Schools, templates have been created for guidance. See Appendix 3 for content block examples that include Institutional activities in response to student feedback which will be included in the campaign, as well as some School specific examples. During the live period of Survey Season, these messages will be cycled through ensuring the messaging is dynamic and different in each Student Update.

3.16   All Schools are asked to provide three articles or relevant pieces of content using the examples in Appendix 3 as a basis and submit these through the central **communications content submission form**. Content should be submitted by Friday 20 December 2024 using the current student option and include the relevant School information.

3.17   To further encourage engagement and response rates, the surveys will be incentivised with University of Aberdeen branded sustainable water bottles upon completion.

3.18   Demonstrating a commitment to closing the feedback loop across the institution is key to fostering student engagement in the feedback process. This commitment not only supports the communication and marketing efforts but also ensures that students feel valued and recognised, knowing their voices contributes to meaningful enhancements across their academic and campus experience.

3.19   The institutional "You Said, We Did" webpage for students webpage will be branded with Survey Season graphics during the live period and updated to showcase actions taken based on their feedback. This page has already been updated with actions on feedback to the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey.

Additionally, the "You Said, We Did" webpage will have a searchable function available which will direct students to the survey applicable to them if they are unsure of which is applicable and relevant to them.

4.   RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   To support the continued monitoring of the academic related experience for all years of students, the following timeframe for the launch of the Academic Survey Season is recommended. Also see Appendix 1 for a visual representation.

Survey	Target audience	Open Date	Closing Date
National Student Survey (NSS)	Final year UG	27 January 2025	30 April 2025
Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES)	UG 1-3 years	27 January 2025	30 April 2025
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)	September 2024 intake	3 February 2025	13 June 2025
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)	January 2025 intake	3 March 2025	13 June 2025
Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES)	PGR students	3 February 2025	16 May 2025
New to UoA Survey	January 2025	20 January 2025	28 February 2025

4.2   To allow for students in the January 2025 intake to fully experience academic matters and be able to provide meaningful feedback, they will be targeted slightly later (see dates above).

4.3   As previously agreed at SSEC and UEC in 2024, no other surveys to large cohorts of students will be promoted during this period.

4.4   All Schools to submit a minimum of 3 examples of how student feedback has been acted on within their School by 20 December 2024. These examples will be used, alongside generic improvements. Content to be submitted through the central **communications content submission form**.

5.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from **Morag Beedie, Marketing and Engagement Manager, Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing or Jason Bohan, Dean for Dean for Student Support and Experience.**

6. **APPENDIX**

Appendix 1

Figure 1 below shows the schedule of pre-approved student surveys. Any surveys not detailed below should be submitted through the [survey request process](#).
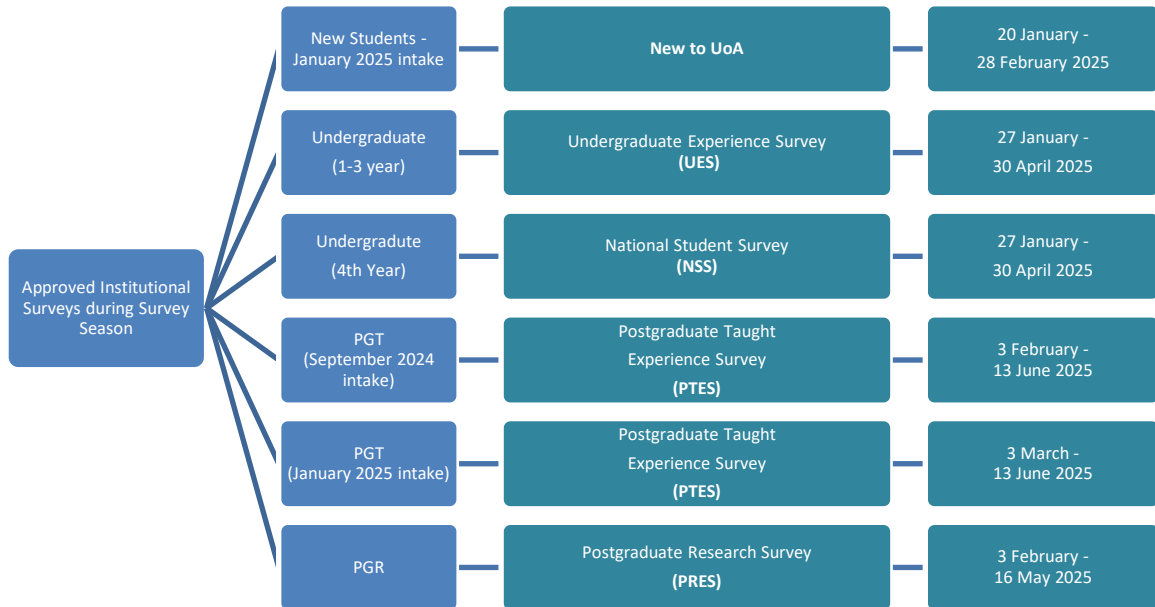

Figure 1: Academic student survey schedule.

APPENDIX 2

Images below shows the Survey Season marketing concepts

School eNewsletter content
To ensure engagement in the eNewsletter are as high as possible, a strict character limit of 70 words is in place and content may need to be edited accordingly. However, should larger articles be submitted, full content will be directed to news articles via a link for more information.

- **Example 1 – School specific content: You Said, We Did**
  In the School of XX, our goal is to create the best possible learning environment for our students. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us achieve this goal. Student feedback has shaped lots of changes in our School, including:

  - Change 1
  - Change 2
  - Change 3

  Survey season is your chance to influence decisions that affect your education. Share your views.

- **Example 2 – You Said, We Didn't**
  In the School of XX, our goal is to create the best possible learning environment for our students. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us achieve this goal. You asked us to:

  - Change 1

  However we didn't make this change because:

  - Reason 1

- **Example 3 – Institutional changes**

  You shape UoA: Share your views in Survey Season

  You said: That you wanted a simpler and more student-friendly student attendance and engagement system

  We did: We worked closely with students and schools to enhance the whole attendance and engagement process, to make it more student friendly and created a central, easy to use Report and Request tool on the Student Hub to allow you to easily reply to attendance and engagement emails.

  Student feedback leads to real change in the School of XX, and now is the time to share your views in Survey Season.

- **Example 4– Institutional changes**

  You shape UoA: Survey season is open now

  You said: You wanted a clear and straightforward way of requesting coursework extensions.
  We did: We worked closely with students and school to create the University of Aberdeen Extension Policy. This is used by all Schools and explains when you can ask for extensions and how long they can be for. To make it easier to request extensions we set up the central Report and Request Tool on the Student Hub where you can submit your request.

Did you know that the University's new tool for requesting extensions was launched as a result of student feedback? Your feedback shapes real change and now is the time to share what matters to you.

Survey Season is now live, giving you're the opportunity to share **your views on your student experience**.