

## ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK

### SECTION 5

#### STUDENT GUIDANCE AND LEARNER SUPPORT

This Section of the Academic Quality Handbook should be of general interest to all students, and of particular interest to staff involved in the provision of support to students.

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## 5.1 Student Charter

- 5.1.1 The Student Charter is a guide to the services provided by the University and indicates in which University documentation a prospective student, a current student or a graduate can find more detailed information about those services. The Charter can be accessed via the Registry's Web site<sup>1</sup>.

## 5.2 Student Affairs

- 5.2.1 [The](#) Student Affairs Directorate aims to provide appropriate services to students which will support their physical, psychological, emotional and professional needs throughout their University life, thus optimising their student experience and enabling them to realise their full potential. The Directorate consists of 3 sections: Campus Services, Student Support and University Sport, the Director of Student Affairs also acts as the official link between the Students' Association and the University.
- 5.2.2 The University recognises that a well-developed system of student support is vital to students' ability to gain the best from their studies. A comprehensive range of student support services is provided, brief details of which are given below. The University's home Web pages carry up-to-date information at: [www.abdn.ac.uk/central/students/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/central/students/)
- 5.2.3 The Head of Student Support acts as line-manager for the University Counselling Service and the Student Advice and Support Office, which includes the Student Support Adviser, International Student Advisers and the Disability Advisers. The Head of Service is co-located in the Hub with the Student Advice and Support Office.
- 5.2.4 Student Support staff liaise with members of the academic staff, with office-bearers of the Students' Association and with representatives of relevant outside organisations. Student complaints on non-academic matters are received by the Head of Student Support.

## 5.3 Academic and Personal Support

- 5.3.1 For regulatory and administrative purposes, each undergraduate student is under the aegis of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate), with postgraduate students being assigned to the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) [Section 3 refers]. These committees are responsible also for maintaining an appropriate system of student academic and personal support.

## 5.4 Advisers of Studies and Regents

### Advisers of Studies

- 5.4.1 The cornerstone to the University's support services for undergraduate students is the allocation of each student to an Adviser of Studies (or Regent in the case of medical students). The *Advisers of Studies Job Description* is provided in Appendix 5.1.
- 5.4.2 While the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate) has overall responsibility for the advising/student support system, the day-to-day student administration for each Area of Study is undertaken by the Registry, in conjunction with relevant Director of Undergraduate Programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/>

- 5.4.3 All students have a meeting with their Adviser at the beginning of the session to have their curriculum approved. Details of these appointments are provided to students during the Summer vacation with their Joining Instructions (Section 6 refers).
- 5.4.4 Advisers are expected not only to give curricular advice but also to be available to give guidance to students on other issues they may wish to raise, referring them to more specialist agencies where this seems appropriate. Advisers are also provided with a handbook approved by the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate), which contains an explanation of degree regulations, University policies and procedures, information and contact numbers for the specialist support agencies: accommodation, careers, chaplaincies, financial and grants problems, health, language tuition (including English for overseas students), legal advice, the SA, student welfare, etc. and, in some Areas of Study, subject specific information.
- 5.4.5 Students who are reported as 'at risk' through the system for monitoring students' progress (Section 6, sub-section 6.6 refers) will be referred to their Adviser where there are academic issues which need to be discussed.
- 5.4.6 Students who have been deemed withdrawn from two or more courses in the Winter Term (Section 6, sub-section 6.13 refers) are asked to meet either their Adviser and/or the Directors of Undergraduate Programmes in early January to discuss their progress.
- 5.4.7 Advisers are also informed by the Registry if any of their advisees are "at risk" of failing to satisfy the end-of-year progress requirements as a consequence of their performance in the first half-session examinations. Students "at risk" are asked to meet their Adviser in February/March to discuss their position. Advisers must submit a First Half-Session Progress Report form after meeting an advisee to indicate any arrangements in regard to remedial or other support or guidance.

### **Regents**

- 5.4.9 In Medicine, a Regent system operates to provide non-academic support for undergraduate medical students. A job description for the role of Regent is available from the College of Life Sciences & Medicine Office.

## **5.5 Supervisors of Postgraduate Students**

- 5.5.1 Since most postgraduate students are based predominantly in a single School, all postgraduate students, whether they are following a taught programme of study or are registered for a research degree, are assigned a supervisor by their parent School, who is responsible for providing guidance and learner support.
- 5.5.2 Further details are provided in Sections 6 and 8.

## **5.6 Codes of Practice**

- 5.6.1 The responsibilities of the teaching staff, Heads of School, and supervisors of research students, *and also the responsibilities of students*, are outlined in three *Codes of Practice* which are appended:-

Appendix 5.2: *Code of Practice on Undergraduate Teaching*

Appendix 5.3: *Code of Practice: Postgraduate Taught Students*

Appendix 5.4: *Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Students*

## **5.7 Communication with Students**

- 5.7.1 Students receive a University e-mail account as part of the University's e-registration process. Students are advised, on admission, that the University will normally use e-mail to communicate during term-time. They are informed that it is their responsibility to check their e-mail on a regular basis and to ensure regular house keeping of their e-mail inbox. Students are informed that failure to check their e-mail or failure to receive e-mail due to being over quota or due to non-delivery of an e-mail forwarded to a non-University e-mail account will not be accepted as a ground for appeal (see section 5.24).
- 5.7.2 When students complete e-registration, they also gain access to their Student Portal. This can be accessed via the world wide web from anywhere in the world and enables them to:-
- access their academic record including course enrolments, qualifications and prizes
  - update their personal details (including address details)
  - see details of their Teaching and Examination Timetables
  - access their examination results
  - apply for August re-assessments (resits)
  - see details of books they have on loan from the Library
  - view their Finance account with the University
  - read important messages relayed to them via the Message Board
- 5.7.3 The development of the Student Portal is an ongoing project and further enhancements are planned for the future.

## **5.8 Wardenial Support**

- 5.8.1 Details of student accommodation are described below. The University guarantees a place in Halls for all first time students whose applications are received by the published closing date and all students in University-managed properties have access to a well-developed system of wardenial support. Each site has a team of Wardens, with Senior Wardens at Hillhead and Crombie-Johnston responsible to the Community Liaison Officer, who effects liaison with specialist support services, as required. They attend training on issues such as conflict resolution, health and safety, drugs awareness, mental health issues and their induction includes information on support services within the University. Wardens offer initial support to residents on a variety of issues and can point students in the direction of appropriate professional help. They organise events on site to help residents settle into University life and foster a sense of community. They also deal with discipline and can help residents resolve flat and other interpersonal disputes.
- 5.8.2 The wardenial system is currently under review.

## **5.9 The Students' Association (AUSA)**

- 5.9.1 The student voice is an important element in developing our welfare services and the Students' Association makes a vital contribution to policy and practice in this area. Altogether there are six sabbatical officers: students given leave from their studies to look after students' interests or, more commonly taking up office after graduation. The Vice-President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities) will act on any student's behalf on academic matters such as academic appeals and appeals to a Students' Progress Committee, and may accompany students to disciplinary appeal hearings if

asked. Further details on the activity of the AUSA can be accessed via their Web pages<sup>2</sup>.

- 5.9.2 Under the terms of the Education Act 1994, students may exercise the right not to be a member of the Students' Association as set out in paragraph 22(2)(c) of the Act (see Appendix 5.24). Students wishing to exercise this right should contact the Assistant Registrar (Student Information Systems) for further information.

## **5.10 Welfare, Financial and Term-Time Employment Advice**

- 5.10.1 As part of the Student Advice & Support Office, the Student Support Officer provides free, confidential and independent advice about problems with grants, finance, housing, legal issues, University procedures, DSS benefits, etc., while the Disability Advisers and the International Student Advisers provide relevant support (the latter, particularly on immigration). The Money Advice Officer, located in the Students' Association (SA) offices, provides independent assistance with personal budgeting, debt management, and general financial advice. The SA's *Joblink* provides counselling on term-time employment and keeps lists of vacancies and work opportunities.

## **5.11 Class Representatives**

- 5.11.1 The University operates a system of *Class Representatives*, which is co-ordinated by the AUSA. They are nominated by the students, and generally one class representative is identified for each course at undergraduate level and at least one for each programme at postgraduate level.
- 5.11.2 Class representatives are the main point of contact between the student body and the teachers with respect to a particular course, and will be members of the relevant School Staff:Student Liaison Committee. Training for class representatives is provided by the Students' Association in liaison with the national Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) service.

## **5.12 Disabled Students**

- 5.12.1 The University welcomes disabled students and is committed to improving access to its courses, facilities, buildings and social life. It is University policy to consider applications from disabled students on the same grounds as apply to all candidates. The University's Disabilities Advisers are part of the Student Advice and Support Office.
- 5.12.2 It is also policy to take specific disabilities, including dyslexia, into account when making arrangements for teaching and learning, and the assessment of a student's performance. The onus is on a student to notify the University (through their Adviser of Studies, Student Support Officer or the Registry) at the earliest opportunity. Each School has a School Disability Co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring that arrangements for students studying in their School, as notified to them by the Student Advice and Support Office, are implemented.
- 5.12.3 Details on arrangements for disabled students can be found in the *Undergraduate and Postgraduate Prospectuses*, and in the University's *Disability Statement* (Appendix 5.5), which takes account of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Prospective students are welcome to contact the Disability Advisers for informal discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ausa.org.uk>

5.12.4 The following documents have been produced to assist students with disabilities and those responsible for admissions and examination arrangements:-

Appendix 5.5: *Information for Disabled Students with Medical Conditions (Disability Statement)*

Appendix 5.6: *Policy on permitting disabled students to tape-record lectures*

Appendix 5.7: *Flow Chart on procedures for disabled students with medical conditions*

Appendix 5.8: *Procedures for Disabled Students*

Appendix 5.9: *Recommendations Concerning Students with Dyslexia*

5.12.5 Examination arrangements for disabled candidates are summarised in Section 7.

### **5.13 University Sport and Exercise Team**

5.13.1 The University's Sport and Exercise Team consists of highly qualified and experienced staff including sports scientists and physical education teachers who provide excellent sporting and health and fitness-related services for students. The team provides first-class instruction of exercise classes, from Pilates through to specialist sports conditioning, for all levels of participant. The team also boasts a diverse range of sporting expertise, including Strength and Conditioning (coaching for the Scottish and Grampian Institutes of Sport), extensive experience in coaching a variety of sports from recreational to elite level. The team also works closely with student sports clubs and the AUSA's Sports Council.

5.13.2 Aberdeen Sports Village, a new £28 million flagship sports facility has now opened, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and supported by **sportscotland**. These first-class sports facilities, backed up with an array of excellent services, provide the ideal venue for a range of activities, available to all students, at all levels.

Facilities in the Sports Village include:

- Full size indoor football pitch
- Indoor athletics area (135m running straight with throwing and jumping areas)
- Large sports hall
- 4 squash courts (2 glass backed)
- Large fitness suite and performance gymnasium
- 2 studios
- 400 metre indoor athletics track and stadium
- Floodlit water based hockey pitch
- Performance and Wellbeing Centre (with physiotherapy clinic)
- Crèche, café and spectator seating

The Sports & Exercise Team provide exercise classes that cater for a wide range of tastes and levels of ability, from novice to advanced, including lunchtime and evening classes such as aerobics, circuits, sports conditioning, boxfit, body conditioning, step and studio cycling.

5.13.3 Other available facilities include: King's Pavilion and Playing Fields – the King's Pavilion contains a swimming pool and changing facilities. The attractive outdoor playing fields boast two rugby pitches, a lacrosse pitch, an artificial cricket wicket, as well as a single tennis court and three additional courts which double as a floodlit training area during winter: Balgownie Playing Fields (situated two miles from the King's campus in the Bridge of Don) play host to football and shinty teams, providing extensive pitches and changing rooms: Hillhead Centre (situated appropriate one mile from King's Campus next to Hillhead Halls of Residence) has an exclusive stadium grass football pitch, full-sized sand-dressed synthetic pitch and an

impressive sports pavilion: Boathouse on the banks of the River Dee which serves the thriving rowing club: Climbing bothy in Royal Deeside.

#### **5.14 The Rocking Horse Nursery**

5.14.1 The aim of the Rocking Horse Nursery is to provide nursery facilities for the children of staff and students. It operates on a non-profit, cost-covering basis. There are currently 47 full and part-time places for children aged 0-5 and places are split approximately half and half between the children of staff and students. The Nursery is supervised by professional, qualified staff, who report to a Board of Trustees which includes within its membership the President of the Students' Association. The Nursery's telephone extension is 3400.

#### **5.15 The Old Aberdeen Medical Practice**

5.15.1 The Old Aberdeen Medical Practice is provided by a group of local general practitioners. It is maintained by four doctors and support staff who offer full medical treatment under the National Health Service. Consultations with medical staff can generally be accommodated within 24 hours of seeking an appointment and a 24 hour emergency service is operated. A part-time psychiatrist is attached to the Practice and there is frequent liaison with clinical psychologists and mental health specialists and voluntary organisations.

#### **5.16 The Chaplaincy**

5.16.1 The University's full-time Chaplain is committed to serving the whole University community, irrespective of individual religious outlook. The Chaplain offers student support in terms of spiritual needs and, by means of liaison with the Hospital Chaplain, also visits students who have been admitted to hospital. There is also a number of Honorary Chaplains, appointed by denominations to serve the interests of their students. Inter-faith dialogue is actively pursued by the Chaplaincy, which also holds information for local and national support for other faiths. A prayer room is provided for Muslim students and a Mosque is located nearby in the Spital. The Catholic Diocese supports a full-time Chaplain to RC students from its Chaplaincy in the High Street. During term, the University Chapel provides Sunday services for all members of the community.

#### **5.17 The University Counselling Service**

5.17.1 The Counselling Service provides counselling for students and staff and offers support in addressing issues such as eating disorders, relationship and family matters, etc. The Counselling Service also runs workshops on topics such as Assertiveness, Relaxation, and Coping with Exams, which are free and open to any student.

## **5.18 The Student Accommodation Service**

5.18.1 Starting University is an exciting experience, meeting new people, new friends, the first taste of living independently. The University has around 2,500 spaces to offer first-time students, with a wide range of self-catering and catered, shared on en-suite facilities:

- Affordable, accessible, value for money accommodation
- A community build with a real focus on the full living experience as a student.

5.18.2 Further details of student accommodation are available on the Student Accommodation Web pages<sup>3</sup>.

## **5.19 The Careers Service**

5.19.1 The Careers Service is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Hub in Elphinstone Road (extension 3601). The main aims of the Service are as follows:-

- to work in partnership with Colleges, Schools and University Central Services to develop the career potential and employability of our students and graduates, and to support the career development of University staff;
- to provide guidance interviews for students and graduates ranging from discussing career options and targets and exploring specific career ideas to identifying courses of action to realise goals;
- to offer students and employers an efficient vacancy service, to inform employers about the University, and to market the University to them;
- to keep the University and its academic staff informed about the first destinations of its graduates, and the state of the market for graduate employment.

5.19.2 The Service maintains a Careers Information area within the Hub and a virtual careers library hosted on our web site tailored specifically to University of Aberdeen students. These resources contain a wide range of material on occupations, postgraduate research and training, and employment opportunities. .

5.19.3 The Service produces a regularly updated Web page<sup>4</sup>, designed to inform students about its activities - details of career talks, the careers fairs, vacation work opportunities, postgraduate course/awards details etc.

5.19.4 A range of workshops are offered by the Service. These include: CV Writing, Application Forms, Interview Technique and Teaching as a Career.

5.19.5 Talks and workshops can also be delivered in Schools, in consultation with the academic staff. The Careers Service has developed a credit-bearing careers education course suitable for all students at undergraduate level 2. For further details on ED2549 please contact our employability Adviser located within the Careers Service/

5.19.6 The Careers Service Is developing in collaboration with Central University Services a range of activities designed to support the co-curricular activities of students. These include an electronic portfolio tool to support students' personal development planning (PDP), a co-curricular award scheme called Students Taking Active Roles

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/accommodation/where/>

(STAR) work related learning and study and work abroad. For further information on all of these activities designed to enhance students' employability please see the Careers Service web site.

## **5.20 The Registry**

5.20.1 The Registry is in day-to-day contact with students and provides a range of advice and information in regard to student loans and tuition fees, financial assistance, progress, examinations, awards and degree regulations, graduation and appeals procedures. Staff may also refer students to other support services.

5.20.2 Details of various aspects of student academic administration undertaken by the Registry are provided in Sections 6, 7 and 8. The main responsibilities of the Section's various offices are summarised in Section 11. Further details of the services and facilities can be accessed via the Registry's Web pages<sup>4</sup>.

## **5.21 Student Learning Service**

5.21.1 The Student Learning Service (SLS) works with students at all levels of undergraduate and postgraduate study to enhance their learning strategies. SLS offers workshops, individual study advice sessions and tailored in-course workshops in collaboration with academic staff. Topics include: academic writing, critical thinking, presentation skills, time-management and exam preparation. SLS also offers a range of online study resources for students.

## **5.22 English Language Support**

5.22.1 All non-native English-speaking students are welcome to consult a member of the English Language team in the Language Centre. English language-related enquiries are also welcome from members of the academic and administrative staff.

5.22.2 Courses/workshops/tutorials are run throughout the academic year on academic writing and communication skills in particular.

5.22.3 The annual four-week Pre-session Intensive Course in English for Academic Study is based in the Language Centre and runs immediately prior to the start of the academic year. It concentrates on developing the skills and language necessary for academic study in the University. Students must hold an unconditional offer from the University to attend this course..

5.22.4 Students whose level of English is below the entry requirements of the University can attend a number of pre-entry full-time courses ranging from a year-long Foundation Course to shorter 12-week and 6-week summer school courses.

5.22.5 In addition, there are General English courses offered at a variety of levels as well as Business English and IELTS preparation classes. Fees are payable for these courses.

5.22.6 Further details of all these courses can be found on the Language Centre website.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry>

## **5.23 Information Technology**

- 5.23.1 The Directorate of Information Technology (DIT) is responsible for the provision of information and communication services within the University.
- 5.23.2 Further information on the services are detailed in Section 11, sub-section 11.2, which includes details of Service desks. On-line information can also be obtained by accessing the Service Catalogue at the DIT Web pages<sup>5</sup>.

## **5.24 Appeals/Complaints/Student Discipline**

- 5.24.2 Full details on students' progress and academic appeals, and on complaints and student discipline are provided in Section 6 [sub-sections 6.13 and 6.14, respectively]. The following appendices refer:-

- Appendix 5.18a: *Policy on Academic Appeals*  
Appendix 5.18b: *Guidance Notes for Students Concerning Academic Appeals*  
Appendix 5.18c: *Academic Appeals to the Senate: Form for submission*  
Appendix 5.19a: *Policy on Student Complaints*  
Appendix 5.19b: *Guidance Notes on Student Complaints*  
Appendix 5.20: *Status of Students Pending the Outcome of Consideration of (a) an Academic Appeal; (b) Representations Against Discontinuance of Attendance/Suspension or Termination of Studies/Termination of Candidature for an Award; or (c) a Complaint*  
Appendix 5.21: *The Payment of Expenses Incurred by a Successful Appellant or Complainant: Guidance Note*

## **5.25 Making Your Opinions Known (including non-academic complaints)**

- 5.25.1 Universities cherish freedom of speech and the responsible expression of all opinions. There are many formal and informal channels of communication within the University through which students can make their views known to academic staff and to the University authorities. AUSA represents the interests of students on University decision-making bodies, and will advise individuals how best to make their views heard if informal approaches seem not to have worked. Students also elect the Rector every three years. He or she holds one of the most senior positions in the University, chairs the University Court, and has a special responsibility to look after student interests. The Rector or his/her Assessor (representative) can be contacted through the Students' Association. Regular surgeries are normally held during term-time.
- 5.25.2 Any complaint about a prospective student's contacts with the University, including non-academic complaints about the *Undergraduate* and *Postgraduate Prospectuses*, should be addressed to the Academic Registrar, University Office, King's College, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX.
- 5.25.3 The method for registered students to make an academic or a non-academic complaint is set out in the University's *Policy on Student Complaints* and accompanying *Guidance Notes* [Appendices 5.19a and 5.19b].
- 5.25.4 Advisers, supervisors, the Student Advisory Service or the Students' Association will assist students if they are unsure how to pursue a complaint. There are specific procedures for dealing with academic appeals and representations against termination of study or candidature for an award (sub-section 5.24 refers).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/dit/>

5.25.5 Complaints by members of the public are dealt with in line with the *Policy on Complaints by Members of the Public* (Appendix 5.25).