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UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

UK Quality Code 2024: Institutional Mapping

Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential

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PRINCIPLE 10: SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL

Introduction

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (Quality Code) articulates the principles of UK higher education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. The Quality Code is a sector-led reference point which can be used in a range of flexible ways. It enables providers to evaluate their policies and practices with reference to Sector-Agreed Principles and it aligns with key international reference points including the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG).

The Quality Code is comprised of two key elements: (i) sector-agreed principles; and (ii) key practices. Sector-agreed principles identify the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience. Key practices set out how a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the sector-agreed principles. There are 12 principles and each has a set of key practices which providers can follow to demonstrate how they are adhering to that principle.

Under the theme, implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards, **Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential** outlines the key practices in relation supporting students through their studies, both pastorally and academically. The Quality Code sets out the following: *Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements.*

In undertaking this mapping to the UK Quality Code, a number of stakeholders were consulted across the University to ensure that the information presented is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Additionally, it should be noted that the information contained within each section of the mapping is current as at time of publication. Further updates to the UK Quality Code Mapping will follow on an annual basis and will be overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

Key Practices

Key Practices	University Commentary	Supporting Documentation
(a) Accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information is offered to students and the staff supporting them throughout the learning journey about the provider, programme of study, wider opportunities for development and availability of support services.	<p>The University is now well into the implementation of the new strategic plan with a longer-term strategic vision for Education and Research. Aberdeen 2040 is comprised of four related, but distinct themes: inclusive, interdisciplinary, international and sustainable. Within the inclusive strand, there is a large emphasis on the wellbeing of our students and staff; as well as a focus on their development both personally and professionally. Alongside this, the University has been progressing with an implementation plan, covering the first 5 years, which outlines key actions associated with the strategic goal which are reviewed and amended annually. Progress toward the achievement of the strategic plan is closely monitored by means of Key Performance Indicators, both linked to the Strategy and SFC Outcome Agreement.</p> <p>In line with the University's strategic commitment to inclusivity, the University drives forward the Wellbeing Strategy for both staff and students. Now in its final year, significant progress has been made towards meeting the aims set out in the strategy. Most notably, in the past 12 months, the launch of the University's suicide safer commitment, the relaunch of Safezone and the launch of the Dignity at Work and Study Toolkit. The University continues to work closely with the Students' Union to deliver the Student Mental Health Agreement (SHMA) Key aspects of the current action plan include conducting a student wellbeing training audit and enhancing the wellbeing training offering available.</p> <p>The Student Support & Experience Committee, a sub-committee of the University Education Committee, has responsibility for the development and implementation of strategy and policies to enhance students' probability of success in all aspects of their student experience and address gaps which appear more likely for specific groups of students. The Committee has representation from every School and relevant colleagues from professional services, which allows for strategic, collaborative and cross-disciplinary discussions to be held. Its remit was expanded beyond Student Support to include wider experience following an internal governance review allowing the Committee to take an even wider, holistic, view on the issues impacting students and their wellbeing.</p>	<p>Aberdeen 2040 Strategy (Webpage) SFC Outcome Agreement (Webpage) Wellbeing Strategy (Webpage) Student Wellbeing (Webpage) Staff Wellbeing (Webpage) Student Support & Experience Committee (Webpage) Academic Quality Handbook (Webpage) Students – Academic Life (Webpage) Support for Study Policy (Policy) Support and Wellbeing (Webpage) Equality Impact Assessments (Webpage) Inclusion and Accessibility (Webpage) Student Learning Service (Webpage) Personal Tutoring (Webpage) Buddy Scheme (Webpage) Dignity at Work and Study Toolkit (Webpage) Suicide Safer University Commitment (Webpage)</p>

The University's Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) sets out the University's and Students' Union joint commitment to: fostering an environment for open and ongoing dialogue between students and staff; embedding transparency and honesty throughout; recognising and being respectful of different approaches to ensuring the best Aberdeen student experience. The agreement is based on a set of core themes to support organisational objectives, continuity and allows for annual updates in line with Sabbatical Officer priorities.

All Education policies are available to view on the University Webpages, as part of the [Academic Quality Handbook](#). This comprehensive set of webpages covers all aspects of teaching and learning provision, from registration to graduation. Physical copies can be requested where necessary from the Academic Services team. In terms of student-related strategic matters, recent policy reviews have included a new Extensions Policy, review of the Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals, Support for Study Policy, and Digital Assessment Guidance. Additionally, the University has continued its work in relation to international student and PGT experience and recently launched a PGT forum to permit discussion and share good practice. Other such strategic reviews are set up with a particular focus whenever they are required.

In line with all university policies, those associated with student support are subject to assessment under Equality Impact legislation to ensure specific groups of individuals are not obstructed from accessing support within the University and that policies are fair and inclusive. The University operates Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that no group is unduly discriminated against and to ensure activities are carried out in a fair and transparent way. All new policies should be reviewed by means of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure they are fit for purpose in an inclusive environment.

The University operates a [Support for Study Policy](#), which outlines the University's approach to supporting students who may be struggling with their studies due to health and wellbeing issues. Management of cases under the Policy is the responsibility of Student Support Services, and namely the Student Case Management Group, who work closely with Schools to ensure a collaborative and aligned approach to student wellbeing and positive engagement with study.

The University has developed an [Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework](#) which aims to enable inclusion and accessibility to be fully integrated into all aspects of the design and delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. The Framework draws together relevant guidance, policies, resources, support and specialist training relating to accessibility and inclusivity.

The Personal Tutor scheme provides general pastoral support to undergraduate students in matters such as achievement of the Aberdeen 2040 Attributes & Skills (known as the 'MySkills' Framework) to support employability and skills development, Co-curricular opportunities and feedback as well as a pastoral support role. Postgraduate Taught students receive pastoral support from their programme coordinator. Considerable work has been undertaken to enhance the information available to staff and students on the [pastoral support webpages](#). This includes a new staff resource area. To support staff pastoral training we have developed a short online course, training resources for School Senior Personal Tutors for use with colleagues, as well as an in-person Pastoral Support workshop. Slides/resources are also shared with Schools for use on noticeboards and VLEs signposting students to relevant support services.

The [Student Buddy Scheme](#) is open to both UG and PGT students. Additionally, the [Student of Concern](#) form is used to provide an additional route for reporting wellbeing concerns to Student Support. Further guidance for staff in dealing with students in crisis and distress is continually being developed.

The [Dignity at Work and Study Toolkit](#) was recently launched and is a valuable resource for our community which aims to help people understand work and study mistreatment. It included guidance on having conversations, seeking support and reporting incidents.

In addition, the [Student Learning Service \(SLS\)](#) in the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), offers a range of individual and group options for students who may need academic skills development and support, including those who are neurodivergent, incorporating students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs).

Staff from Registry provide an in-person support service for academic-related matters, including registration, progression, appeals and complaints through

	<p>the student Infohub. This service is provided alongside support from other specialist areas including student finance, accommodation and assistance with the Personal Tutor system. In addition to the in-person services, support functions operate both general and topic specific online chat services with resource supporting these services allocated as appropriate throughout the academic year.</p>	
<p>(b) All students are supported at key transition points throughout their journey, with their specific needs and requirements met and their pathways into learning recognised.</p>	<p>The Aberdeen 2040 Strategy places inclusivity at its heart and various groups and individuals are represented on the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee to champion and review approaches to different areas including Gender-Based Violence and Race. These formal meetings are supplemented by network groups for staff on various topics including disability, carers and parents and those from the LGBTQ+ community. Similar groups and liberation fora exist within the Students' Union for students.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to be open and share details of their support needs before arriving at the University (especially those with disabilities) so that the Student Support and Advice team can implement a suitable range of inclusion adjustments to maximise their opportunities to thrive. Staff are dedicated to supporting learning for students who are neurodivergent; facilitating access to assistive technology; and in the routine mentoring of those with long term mental health conditions. Changes were implemented in 2024 to reformat support beyond those with disabilities with a move from 'disability provisions' to 'inclusion adjustments' linked to studies. This means enhanced support can now be made available to other groups, including care experienced students, carers, student parents and veterans.</p> <p>In 2024, the University developed an institution-wide Coursework Extension policy to provide clarity and guidance for students and Schools requiring support with their studies. A central online Report and Request tool has been developed that permits students to submit a request for a coursework extension which is processed by the School. This has greatly standardised and simplified the process of requesting and administering extension requests.</p> <p>Student attendance and engagement is monitored by schools to identify students who may be at risk of failing their studies. The monitoring process was reviewed in 2024 to ensure that the messaging is student centred and supportive in tone and the process streamlined to make it easier for students to respond to school concerns and receive appropriate support.</p>	<p>Aberdeen 2040 Strategy (Webpage) Academic Skills - Student Learning Service (Webpage) Attendance and Engagement with Studies (Webpage) Disability Service (Webpage) Emily Test (Webpage) Equality Network Groups (Webpage) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Webpage) Gaelic Language Plan (Webpage) Gender-Based Violence (Webpage) Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework (Webpage) Peer Support, including Students4Students (Webpage) Policy on Extensions and Penalties for Unauthorised Late Submissions of Coursework (Policy) Race Equality Strategy Group (Webpage) Student Partnership Agreement (Document) Tools and Resources to Support Accessibility (Webpage)</p>

The online Report and Request tool was recently launched to allow students to report absence, request coursework extensions, respond to attendance and engagement emails, as well as to report mitigating circumstances. The tool was developed collaboratively with schools, professional services, and students to ensure that support can be provided throughout the student academic journey.

Training has been rolled out to staff within Student Support Services in relation to Gender-Based Violence initiatives, such as [EmilyTest](#) (including L.I.S.T.E.N. training). EmilyTest is a Gender-Based Violence Charter, which is made up of five overarching principles with over 40 minimum standards which institutions must meet in order to pass the Emily Test. L.I.S.T.E.N is a new risk assessment tool developed by EmilyTest. The tool is designed to give staff across Further and Higher Education institutions the skills to offer in-the-moment support to a victim/survivor of sexual violence or harassment, ensure they are safe and put in place clear next steps for support. In 2024, the University partnered with EmilyTest to co-develop a 'train the trainer' model for L.I.S.T.E.N which is now in operation.

The Buddy scheme offers new students the opportunity to get support and advice help from assigned student mentors who have been in the same position as them. Buddies can share their experiences with new students and provide a safe space for the new students to ask questions at any time throughout the year.

Pre-arrival events such as the Student Panel provide an opportunity for students to hear about the reality of studying at the University directly from a student.

The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) provides a range of workshops and accredited programmes, which include and reflect inclusive practice in the course design process. Workshops which support accessibility (including captioning) are regularly available. Online resources which provide staff with guidance on inclusivity and accessibility when designing and delivering courses are available.

	<p>The prescribed online course, <i>Getting Started at the University of Aberdeen</i>, for all new undergraduate and postgraduate taught students outlines all support services, highlighting where to get assistance when needed. To further support students and underline course content, during Welcome Week, a number of events and activities are run by the Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing team with the aim of transitioning students to University and giving them all the essential information, they need to prepare for university life. These centrally organised events are complimented by school and discipline specific events and activities to ensure students are engaged early with their home school community.</p> <p>In achieving the University's inclusive goals, the Students' Union has significant input into the work of the University, and students sit on most formal Senate and Court Committees as well as informal review/working groups. The University places strong emphasis on the involvement of students on committees and in decision making. Each School has a Students' Union elected School Convener who is the lead student representative for each School. They work closely with the elected class representatives to feed any concerns about courses and programmes to the School. The School Convener (or other student representative) attends School-level committees (e.g. School Education Committee) where they are able to contribute to discussions around academic matters and those relating to the wider student experience. At a University level, Students' Union representatives are also full members of all Education committees including the University Education Committee and the Student Support Committee along with Senate which is the University's main academic decision-making body. This student representation and engagement ensures transparency, while engaging students on the matters that concern them most. The University is therefore able to work collaboratively with students to review and improve services and processes.</p> <p>Additionally, the University is committed to Gaelic, and as such, the Gaelic Language Plan outlines a series of commitments as part of the University's efforts to promote the use and acquisition of the Gaelic language. Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005, public bodies were required to produce a Gaelic Language Plan to assist the national effort to secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland.</p>	
(c) Students and staff are aware of the ongoing academic,	The University ensures clear and effective communication to prospective, current and former students. The recent implementation and review of the	Advanced Entry Students from College (Webpage)

<p>professional and pastoral services and activities available, and students are encouraged to access these opportunities and support throughout their learning journey.</p>	<p>Student Communications Policy ensures that communications are clear, consistent and accessible to all students. The policy includes the Student Pressure Points Matrix which informs campaigns and ensures that messaging is targeted in a timely manner (e.g. wellbeing support during assessment periods) and further supported with School resources to promote messaging alongside central campaigns.</p> <p>For current students, the Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing team manage almost all student communications and ensure consistency in tone and messaging. Where communications to students are provided from the University Senior Management Team, the Communications Team develops those messages in line with the messaging from the Student Experience Team.</p> <p>For prospective students, communications are managed via the Engagement and Conversion team within Global Engagement, Marketing & Recruitment. This helps to ensure consistency of key messaging to all new and prospective students. Social media channels are also managed via the Engagement and Conversion team, with separate accounts for dedicated widening access projects.</p> <p>The University has dedicated social media channels which communicate directly with the student population with relevant information for their studies, including academic and personal support options. These are managed by the Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing team.</p> <p>The University makes use of its webpages to ensure messaging is available to students regarding support opportunities. These can be found on the study webpages, as well as the Students' pages for current and returning students. Widening Access students, and students articulating into the University from Further Education (FE) College, also have their own dedicated web pages with relevant information, advice and guidance. The University aims to target information to the most relevant cohorts of students, including new, prospective and returning, different campuses and online students.</p> <p>Regular, targeted and timely communications about careers and employability enhancing opportunities are sent based on students' responses to career readiness questions embedded annually within the online student registration process. This provides students with information they have told the University</p>	<p>Career Readiness (Webpage) Co-Curricular Activities (Webpage) Communicating With You (Webpage) Enhanced Study Options (Webpage) New Students (Webpage) Student Communication Policy (Policy) Student Life (Webpage) Study (Webpage) Widening Access (Webpage)</p>
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	<p>they would like to be involved in within the academic year, such as entrepreneurship activities, skills development opportunities and other schemes like internships.</p> <p>For University graduates and alumni, the Alumni Engagement team manage communications to ensure that graduates receive up-to-date news, information, events and support that may be available to them. Information is provided on our Careers and Employability Service which is available to all current and former students.</p>	
<p>(d) Staff are appropriately qualified, trained and supported to deliver high-quality learning and support for all students, particularly those with specific needs and requirements.</p>	<p>The University has invested significantly in its support services, including additional resource to support students. This has increased the staffing in the Student Support team and the availability of staff to be able to assist with student needs. The provision of ongoing training and development for all support staff has been vital to ensuring that staff are well-equipped in supporting students.</p> <p>Within Human Resources, the Staff and Organisational Development team supports the personal and professional development of staff. This includes a dedicated training budget which is allocated to various training projects and initiatives to further develop University staff. Recent sessions have included race literacy training for student-focused staff, as well as the ongoing programme of training sessions.</p> <p>CAD is central in supporting the academic and educational development needs of all staff. The student perspective is incorporated into the wide range of courses and professional development opportunities available for staff and PGRs who teach and/or support learning. The Student Learning Service (SLS) within CAD offers a range of individual and group options for students who may need academic skills development and support, including those who are neurodivergent incorporating students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs). New staff at the University who are involved in teaching participate in the 2 half-day course on Teaching and Learning at the University of Aberdeen, which introduces them to the Principles of Education, course design, and Education processes and policies. In addition, CAD offers the course Principles of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PLTHE) for staff and PGRs who teach and/or support learning, which, on successful completion, is professionally accredited by Advance HE.</p>	<p>Centre for Academic Development (Webpage) Cost of Living and Money Matters (Webpage) Counselling Service (Webpage) Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (Webpage) Staff Development (Webpage) Student Learning Service (Webpage) Training and Professional Development (Webpage)</p>

The University Counselling Service provide proactive and reactive support to staff undertaking any role with us, through their “debrief” service which encourages staff to have a half hour chat with a member of the service to discuss a difficult case or seek support following a challenging encounter. The Counselling Service operates without a waiting list, and staff and students can book appointments to suit their availability online. The University also partners with Spectrum:Life, an organisation which provides in-the-moment counselling and support via a Student Helpline and a wellbeing app, available 24/7 from anywhere in the world.

Linked to the Wellbeing strategy, the Wellbeing and Engagement team produce an annual [wellbeing calendar](#) of activities. Each month is broken down into 5 themes targeting events and campaigns around: wellbeing; mental health; safety; study support; and equality diversity and inclusion.

A Mental Health and Wellbeing training audit was conducted in January 2023. It identified what was currently available to staff and students, whether it was fit for purpose and what the gaps are. A new landing page of Training opportunities has been developed and a development timeline identified to enhance the suite of training throughout 2023/24. Phase two, focusing on enhancing the student training offering commenced in early 2024.

A Pastoral support workshop – “Support you to support students” covers all aspects of pastoral support and provides an opportunity to practise skills and network. Training resources are available for School use by Senior Personal Tutors to deliver to new colleagues or for ‘refresher’ sessions at the start of the academic year.

The Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Network has been reviewed and restructured. Whilst the MHFA trained members will continue to be available as a resource, the focus of the network will be shifted to proactively enhance mental health and wellbeing understanding, knowledge, awareness of support provision and encouraging an open and supportive environment in our community (of both staff and students).

A new online resource area has been developed which provides access to resources and a programme of monthly development opportunities.

	<p>The inclusive, responsive and professionally accredited Careers and Employability Service provides accessible careers education, information, advice and guidance services, available to all students and graduates. Service effectiveness and professionalism is reviewed regularly (most recent submission, December 2023) against the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Quality Standard which is a condition of our continued institutional membership.</p> <p>Through the ongoing schedule of policy review, policies and procedures related to student support activities are actively considered and updated reflecting current circumstances.</p>	
<p>(e) Students and staff recognise that activities offered outside the formal curriculum are beneficial for promoting students' sense of belonging, as well as providing opportunities to broaden their skills and achievements, complementing their formal studies.</p>	<p>The University provides a wide range of opportunities to enable students to develop skills to support their academic, personal and professional progression. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribed Online course, <i>Getting Started at the University of Aberdeen</i>, for all new undergraduate and postgraduate students (including Qatar and online campuses), and articulating students who are in their first year at the University. The course highlights and encourages participation in the wide range of opportunities that the University provides. • The MySkills framework allows students to record, reflect upon and enhance their skills. It includes a portfolio tool, skills audit and a wide range of resources to develop their skills. • Achieve (for UGs) and Achieve+ (for PGTs): These are student study support areas designed and delivered by the Student Learning Service, hosted in our virtual learning environment (MyAberdeen) to provide advice and guidance to students on academic integrity, academic writing, maths and statistics skills, study strategies, and support for neurodivergent students. • Careers and Employability Service, which provides bespoke careers advice to students and graduates. • Student Advice & Support Office (including Disability and Inclusion support for learning) • The Student Learning Service, which provides academic skills support to students at all levels of study, including students who are neurodivergent. • Scholarships and Student Funding (including hardship funding). • The Students' Union, including opportunities for students to 'get involved'. • Small projects are funded through the University's Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP), to encourage the introduction of enhancement activities in learning, and teaching and to disseminate 	<p>Students' Union (Webpage) Careers & Employability Service (Webpage) Course Catalogue (Webpage) Disability Services (Webpage) Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme 2024/25 (Webpage) MySkills (Webpage) Scholarships and Student Funding (Webpage) Student Advice & Support Office (Webpage) Student Learning Service (Webpage) Your Employability (Webpage)</p>

	<p>effective practice throughout the Institution and beyond. LTEP aligns with Thematic QAA (Scotland) Enhancement activities.</p> <p>The University communicates our Aberdeen 2040 Attributes & Skills (the ‘Myskills’ Framework) to students through various channels, including the Virtual Learning Environment (MyAberdeen), the University website, and through social media. The prescribed online course, <i>Getting Started at the University of Aberdeen</i>, for new Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate students, includes interactive activities to help them understand and use the MySkills Framework to enhance their skills employability. Launched in September 2024, the MySkills Framework was designed to align with the University’s commitments to sustainability, interdisciplinarity, inclusivity and international as set out in Aberdeen 2040.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to link course Intended Learning Outcomes to the new MySkills Framework to ensure that learning is focused and relevant to the course. These will be detailed to students in course handbooks or the course area in the Virtual Learning Environment.</p>	
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