ANNUAL PROGRAMME* REVIEW

This form should be completed either for a single programme or for a cognate group of programmes that share several courses. To be completed by the programme director/leader and subsequently considered by the primary School Teaching and Learning forum.

- Part A should provide a review of the courses that make up the programme/group of programmes covered by this APR
- Part B should focus on the programme (or cognate group of programmes if appropriate)
- Part C should be completed if the programme is part of any Collaborative Provision with other Institutions/organisations where students are involved. If Schools wish, they can complete a separate APR for collaborative provision.

SCHOOL INFORMATION:		
School: Business	**Programme/cognate group of programmes: Accountancy**	**Academic year: 2023-2024**

A. ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAMME'S CONSTITUENT COURSES

1. **Comment on the pass rates and grade profiles for courses within the programme.** *Identify outlier courses, i.e. those performing better or worse than others. What can be learned from these to help other courses within the programme? Comment on courses with less than average pass rates. What actions are planned to address the low pass rates? Actions could include, for example, changes to previous year's courses to better prepare the students or inclusion of more formative assessments.*

First year course pass rates have improved following the replacement of AC1515 Accounting and Entrepreneurship with separate courses for non-accountancy students (AC1517 Accounting and Entrepreneurship) and accountancy students (AC1516 Accounting Principles). In 2022-2023, the pass rate on AC1515 was an outlier at 67%. In 2023-2024, the pass rates for AC1517 and AC1516 are 85% and 81% respectively. The aim of introducing the dedicated course AC1516 was to enable accountancy students to be treated in a more specialist fashion and better prepare them for future courses. Removing the technical content required for accreditation from the course AC1517 for non-accountancy students appears to have addressed the issue that non-accountancy students find technical content difficult and lack motivation and engagement. Despite the relatively high pass rate for AC1517, potentially influenced by the nature of the assessment (4 x 25% online multiple-choice tests for students to complete in their own time), the distribution of marks shows a very low percentage of A-grades with the majority achieving B and C grades. Expanding the forms of assessment used in AC1517 is subsequently being considered with the aim of expanding the opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning and facilitate differentiation between levels of ability.

The pass rate on second year course AC2530 Financial Accounting 2 has increased from 64% in 2022-2023 to 79% in 2023-2024, with the mean course mark increasing from 10.65 to 12.31. For 2023-2024, the material delivered in AC2530 was rearranged and refocused, and the exam format was changed to include a compulsory question on financial statement preparation. This strategy has potentially contributed to the improvement in student performance.

In 2023-2024, pass rates of 95% plus have been achieved across the four third year core accountancy courses AC3049 Financial Accounting 3, AC3054 Management Accounting 3, AC3560 Audit Practice and AC3561 Taxation. Pass rates and mean course marks are significantly higher than 2022-2023. However, the cohort size has decreased by approximately 20% and student attendance and engagement were considered to be very good in 2023-2024. A pass rate of 100%, with 48% of students achieving a first-class grade in AC3049 Financial Accounting 3 is somewhat unusual in relation to the highly technical financial accounting content assessed at this level. The mean exam mark for this course in 2023-2024 of 16.93 is significantly higher than the 14.88 in 2022-2023. Further, the assessment weighting changed in 2023-2024 from 60% to 70 % exam to be consistent with other courses.

4th year honours courses have all achieved a 100% pass rate. The number of first-class grades across the majority of these courses has increased in 2023-2024.

2. Comment on courses that are causing concern. *Please include courses where concerns have been raised by staff or students at SSLC meetings or by external examiners. What measures could be put in place to address the concerns raised?*

The majority of courses within the discipline received positive feedback at SSLC meetings and via course feedback forms. However, the response rate for the completion of course feedback forms is extremely low and not all courses were represented at SSLC.

Despite improved performance, lecture attendance and active participation in tutorials in course AC1516 Accounting Principles is a course for concern. Students who have previously studied accountancy elsewhere appear reluctant to engage with an introductory course. Providing lecture slides with audio could explain low attendance at lectures. Including computer workshops which introduce the Sage accounting package at level 1 could potentially increase active participation, however adopting this measure depends on the evolving content of AC1516 and the financial accounting stream of courses as a whole.

During the Autumn semester, students were concerned in relation to course AC4528 Dissertations in Accountancy and requested additional engagement between students and supervisors regarding topic selection. The course coordinator addressed concerns by putting on additional weekly office hours where students could drop in, ask questions and discuss individual topics, a course of action which has been appreciated by students. Ensuring a sufficient student-supervisor ratio going forward could alleviate staff and student future concerns.

B. REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME(s)

1. Critically review the programmes. *For instance: Do they continue to meet the subject benchmark statements? How well do all constituent courses work together to provide the core knowledge required? Do they continue to attract and retain students?*

The programme is continuing to evolve in response to the changing professional accreditation requirements of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS) and with the aim of applying for additional accreditation awarded by other professional bodies. Significant changes in relatively recent years include the introduction of a dedicated tax course, reorganisation of auditing and the introduction of specialist honours courses. The specialist honours courses at level 4 continue to provide accountancy students with more choice and the opportunity to obtain knowledge and understanding of a wide range of contexts in which accountancy can be seen as operating, which satisfies the requirements of the subject benchmark statement for accounting.

Changes implemented in 2023-2024 include the following:

- The introduction of AC4539 Contemporary Issues in Accounting offering the opportunity to examine a range of topics that are shaping the nature of the work that accountants do, and which will drive the future directions of professional practice. The flexible syllabus of this course is intended to respond to the dynamic nature of the profession and the need to respond to current events.
- The introduction of a dedicated first level course AC1516 Accounting Principles to enable accountancy students to be treated in a more specialist fashion and better prepare them for future courses which depend on the attainment of technical skills including double-entry book-keeping.
- The reorganisation of material delivered in AC2530 Financial Accounting 2 to provide a focus of external financial reporting and eliminate topic overlaps to facilitate the future modification of course AC3049 Financial Accounting 3 in response to advances in corporate reporting and professional accreditation requirements.
- The introduction of three-hour examinations for stand-alone courses AC3560 Audit Practice and AC3561 Taxation as a pre-requisite to applying for additional accreditation with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

2. What actions have been taken forward this year considering the previous year's feedback from the Course and Programme Review process, External Examiners, Programme Advisory Boards Professional Statutory Body or ITR recommendations (if reviewed within the past 12 months)?

In 2024, ICAS launched a refreshed syllabus to keep pace with advances in technology, data, and sustainability in the accountancy profession. In order to continue to receive the full complement of ICAS exemptions, demonstration and incorporation of new syllabus learning outcomes are required.

Future changes to the programme will ensure that ethics are emphasised as a key attribute of accountants and the accounting profession in meeting the needs of users of accounting information and other stakeholders in wider society who may be impacted by unethical accounting practice. In courses where the focus is appropriate, ethics will be among the range of topics assessed. These courses include AC1011 Accounting and Accountability, AC2530 Financial Accounting 2 and AC3560 Auditing where the ICAS Code of Ethics, the IFAC International Code of Ethics, and the latest FRC Ethical Standard will be covered.

The requirements for non-financial reporting and performance in accordance with relevant standards will be introduced in AC2530 Financial Accounting 2 and fully addressed and assessed AC3049 Financial Accounting 3. Providing assurance on sustainability-related information will be covered in AC3560 Auditing. Changes to these courses will be incorporated for academic year 2025-2026.

3. What is working well within the programme(s)? What is new/innovative?

a) at Course level

- Regular MCQ tests across core accountancy courses continues to encourage continuous engagement.
- Positive feedback was received across the majority of courses in terms of the structure, content, and organisation of learning materials on MyAberdeen.
- The use of an audit simulator in AC3560 Audit Practice provides an innovative experience, develops practical skills, and offers insight to working in the audit profession. Student skills are further enhanced via practice-based exam paper questions linked to the audit simulator, a process which has received external examiner commendation.

b) at Programme level

- Current research and scholarship influence the curriculum, teaching and learning.
- The methods and balance of assessment as well as the assessment criteria continue to be appropriate in measuring student achievement in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the programme as noted by both of the programme's external examiners.

4. What area(s) require, or are intended for, development in the next academic year and how do you intend to address them?

For 2024-2025:

- In response to accreditation requirements, the ICAS code of ethics, the IFAC International code of ethics, and the latest FRC ethical standard will be included in AC1011 Accounting and Accountability as part of the course aim to understand the constitution of Accountancy as a profession and how the accountancy profession is regulated.
- Changes to the coursework element of the honours course AC4035 Audit Theory and Evolution will be introduced with the aim of enhancing generic employability skills, subject specific practical skills, and promoting internationalisation. These changes will involve group presentations and international collaboration between University of Aberdeen students and students at Rhodes University in South Africa through role playing as audit trainees and audit managers facing ethical scenarios.

5. What aspects of Decolonising the Curriculum have been considered as part of the programme? *For instance: has the programme considered the impacts of Decolonising the Curriculum or the Anti-Racist Curriculum? Has the programme engaged with any of the resources made available via the School Race Equality Champions?*

All accountancy courses were reviewed in January 2024 and no changes were identified in relation to Decolonising the Curriculum**.**

6. What aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion have been considered as part of the programme? *For instance: Does the programme take account of the various protected characteristics? Have there been any matters pertaining to EDI which have caused issue on the programme?*

There have been no matters raised pertaining to EDI which have caused issue on the programme.

C. Review of Collaborative Provision *(note that annual reporting for validated partners and TNE partners is more extensive and is described in the corresponding validation agreement. The following applies to non-validated and non-TNE partnerships only)*

1. Where applicable, list the Collaborative Provision agreements (Partnerships) that relate to this programme and the numbers of students involved (add rows as necessary)

Partner Institution	Type of Partnership (see http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/types-of-partnership-3887.php)	Number of students involved

N/A		
2. Comment on the progress students admitted under each partnership have made in their programme and whether any changes to the programme, or arrangements with the partner, need to be made.		
N/A		
3. For each partnership comment on any issues that have arisen as a result of the partnership and critically evaluate the success of the partnership.		
N/A		
D. ISSUES TO BE RAISED AT SCHOOL OR UCTL LEVEL		
N/A		

Sarah Jane Smith

Signed: Date: 28 June 2024

(Programme Lead/Author)

Comments from Head of School*:
A detailed and reflective review of the Accountancy UG offer in Aberdeen. A separate report is being prepared this year to cover MA Accounting & Finance (Qatar). It is good to see that the changes identified last year (AC1515 and AC2530) and implemented for 2023-24 have led to the anticipated improvements in student performance. It will be interesting to see the student response next year to the innovative international collaboration planned within AC4035. Excellent to see that further PSRB accreditations being considered and that changes to assessments have already been made to enable this. The increase in pass rates and mean marks across honours years is noted and will be monitored as part of the School-wide review of performance. It is good to see that initial student concerns around the dissertation were addressed quickly by the course co-ordinator. This is a very important course for both degree awards and NSS and close liaison this year between the programme team and discipline group is encouraged. Concerns relating to the lack of engagement by students in course feedback and SSLC is noted and discussions will be taking place across the School about this wide-spread issue.

I confirm that I have read and agree with the content of this form and, where applicable, support the actions proposed.

Signed: SM Carson .... Date: ...23/8/24....................................

(SM Carson, Director of Quality for Head of School*)

COPIES OF THIS FORM SHOULD BE:

1. CONSIDERED BY THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNING AND TEACHING FORUM
2. UPLOADED TO THE QUALITY AND PLANNING SHAREPOINT SITE BY **31 AUGUST** FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AND **30 NOVEMBER** FOR POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

* Phase Co-ordinator for the MBChB curriculum; Interdisciplinary Degree Programme Co-ordinator, or Vice-Principal (Education) where appropriate.

Updated : October 2023