UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Tuesday 22 April 2025 at 1:05pm**, in the Committee Room 2, University Office, and on **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 26 February 2025**   *(UEC/220425/001)*

2. **Matters Arising/Actions**   *(UEC/220425/002)*

3. **Review of the UEC Remit & Composition**   *(UEC/220425/003)*

    UEC Members are invited to **discuss** and **approve** the Committee Remit and Composition.

4. **University Risk Register**   *(UEC/220425/004)*

    UEC Members are invited to **discuss** the University Risk Register.

5. **Artificial Intelligence in Assessment**   (*UEC/220425/005, to follow*)

    UEC Members are invited to **approve** the paper on AI in Assessment.

6. **Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on Generative Artificial Intelligence and Use of Emerging Technologies in Education**

    (UEC/220425/006)

    UEC Members are invited to **discuss** and **approve** the Scottish Tertiary Education statement on the use of GenAI.

7. **Blackboard Training and Development Manager (Catalog)**

    (UEC/220425/007)

    UEC Members are invited to **discuss** and **approve** the update on the TDM tool.

8. **Update on the Report & Request Tool**   *(Oral Item)*

    UEC Members will hear an update on the Report & Request Tool.

9. **Full-time Undergraduate Non-Continuation Internal Data**   *(UEC/220425/008)*

    Members of the Committee are invited to **discuss** the full-time UG non-continuation data.

10. **Work Based Learning Policy Working Group Update**   *(UEC/220425/009)*

UEC Members are invited to **discuss** the Work Based Learning Policy Working Group update.

11. Entrepreneurship Education update   *(Oral Item)*

UEC Members will hear an oral update on Entrepreneurship Education.

12. Updates on Tertiaty Quality Enhancement Framework
  (i)   Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)   *(Oral Item)*
  (ii)   Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)   *(Oral Item)*

Members of the Committee will hear an oral update in respect of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 1:05pm, in the Committee Room 2, University Office, or by Microsoft Teams.

14. Items for Information – see below/overleaf

Any member of the Committee wishing an item for routine approval or for information to be brought forward for discussion may ask at the meeting for that to be done. Any such item will be taken after item 1.

Declaration of interests: Any member and individual in attendance (including Officers) who has a clear interest in a matter on the agenda should declare that interest at the relevant meeting, whether or not that interest is already recorded in the Registry of Member's interests.

14.   FOR INFORMATION

14.1   Updates from the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC):

(i)   Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025   *(UEC/220425/010)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the updates from the EEC.

14.2   Updates from the Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC):

(i)   Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2025   *(UEC/220425/011)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the updates from the SSEC.

14.3 Update on MyAberdeen Rollover Process for AY 2025-26 and Support Available
                                                                        (UEC/220425/012)

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the update on the MyAberdeen Rollover Process for AY 2025-26.

14.4   Computer-Based and Online Assessments TFG

  (i)   Assessment Taxonomy   *(UEC/220425/013)*
  (ii)   Online Assessment Guidance   *(UEC/220425/014)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the update from the Computer-Based and Online Assessment TFG.

14.5   Examiners' Meetings Procedures   *(UEC/220425/015)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the Examiners' Meetings Procedures.

14.6   PwC Employability Audit Report   *(UEC/220425/016)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the PwC Employability Audit Report.

14.7   AdvanceHE Update   *(UEC/220425/017)*

Members of the Committee are invited to **note** the AdvanceHE Update.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 26 February 2025

Present: Jason Bohan (Chair, in place of Jo-Anne Murray), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, Lyn Batchelor, John Barrow, Nigel Beacham, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Ken Jeffrey, Helen Knight, Colin Lumsden, David McCausland, John Mynott, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Shona Potts, Steve Tucker, Eddy Wifa (in place of Anne-Michelle Slater) and Joshua Wright, with Robin Cummins, Nick Edwards, Tracey Innes, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Rhona Moore, Sara Preston, Ian Robotham, Patricia Spence, Emma Tough, and Isabella Fausti (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Jo-Anne Murray, Harminder Battu, Amudha Poobalan, Miles Roetherl, Anne-Michelle Slater, Asha Venkatesh, Simon Bains, Scott Carle, Debbie Dyker, Graeme Kirkpatrick, and Louisa Stratton.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2025
(copy filed as UEC/260225/001)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting. Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 14 January 2025 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS
(copies filed as UEC/260225/002, UEC/260225/003, and UEC/260225/004)

2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of the UEC held on 14 January 2025 were complete.

2.2 In addition, some outstanding actions arising from the meeting held on 20 November 2025 were noted as follows:

    (i) A SharePoint site is now in place to store the Digital Strategy Committee documentation from this Academic Year and improve its transparency.

    (ii) The action related to reconciling inconsistencies between processes in different committees and choosing one single system is still in progress.

    (iii) All other actions were noted as completed.

MYABERDEEN COURSES' ROLLOVER 2025-26 AND INSTITUTIONAL COURSE TEMPLATE
(copy filed as UEC/260225/005)

3.1 Members heard an update on the rollover process for MyAberdeen course areas, highlighting changes in the way course areas will be created from Academic Year 2025-26. The main recommendations presented to the committee were:

    (i) Following a pilot in AY 2024-25, all MyAberdeen course areas created next AY will use an institutional course template;

    (ii) Course materials from the previous year's course areas will not be copied across during the rollover process;

    (iii) Course areas on MyAberdeen should be made available to students a week prior to the start of teaching.

3.2   A discussion took place and, in response to suggestions made by members of the committee, it was proposed that:
   (i)   Course areas for next AY would be created and made available to course coordinators earlier in the cycle, to ensure realistic timescales for copying content across and updating it in time for the start of teaching;
   (ii) Training and resources on how to effectively copy content from one course area to another would be provided to staff, to ensure the process is streamlined and efficient;
   (iii) A communication plan would be developed to ensure that staff are made aware of the changes in a timely manner.

3.3   The updates were generally well received by the Committee and the recommendations were approved, with the Committee asked to note that the School of Engineering would be happy to approve points (i) and (iii).

COMPUTER-BASED AND ONLINE ASSESSMENTS TFG: ASSESSMENT TAXONOMY
(copy filed as UEC/260225/006)

4.1   The committee discussed the proposals for the creation of a standardised assessment taxonomy, to help both staff and students understand them better. If approved, the taxonomy would be integrated into the university systems so that assessment information is consistent across different systems and programmes.

4.2   It was proposed that, once this new framework has been approved, it could be included in the two-day course for new teaching staff and that Toolkit resources would be developed for both staff and students.

4.3   It was noted that the proposals were presented at the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) meeting, where they were received with support. In order to implement any feedback received, the proposals are due to be approved by the QAC at its next meeting, following which the finalised document will be circulated with the UEC for information.

COMPUTER-BASED AND ONLINE ASSESSMENTS TFG: ONLINE ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE
(copy filed as UEC/260225/007)

5.1   The UEC heard an update from the Computer-Based and Online Assessments Task and Finish Group, which was established by the Exam Planning Group to address concerns raised by staff and students regarding digital assessments, including invigilated computer-based assessments and online assessments, which have become more popular post-COVID.

5.2   Members of the UEC discussed the proposals for School guidance on the delivery of both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments, and on the recommendations related to the use of Respondus LockDown Browser, including exceptions when other software used for the assessment if not compatible with the use of the lockdown browser.

5.3   Clarification was sought on the support that would be provided by IT if there are technical difficulties during invigilated and non-invigilated computer-based assessments. In addition some suggestions were made:
   i.   If a whole class has been affected by an issue in a particular venue, only one report should be made to the ServiceDesk, rather than one for each individual student;

ii. If a technical issue occurs during an invigilated assessment and the invigilator is aware of this, there may not be a need for students to support their claims via the ServiceDesk;

iii. In certain circumstances, such as with issues with home Wi-Fi, the amount of support the ServiceDesk may be able to provide is limited.

5.4 It was agreed that the University agreed role description for the Inclusion Coordinator would be circulated (**Action: JBo**).

5.5 It was noted that the finalised version of the guidance would be presented for approval at the next meeting of the Quality Assurance Committee, following which it will be circulated with the UEC for information.

PGT PORTFOLIO AND PROCESS REVIEW UPDATES
(copy filed as UEC/140125/008)

6.1 Members of the UEC heard an update on the initial results of the PGT Portfolio Review carried out in the last three months of 2024. The findings included five areas of potential risk that require further attention and a list of relevant recommendations for each of these areas.

6.2 A discussion took place, primarily focussing on naming conventions, possible single points of failure in standalone programmes, and the challenges related to interdisciplinary programmes. It was noted that the UG Portfolio Review was now taking place, so there may be some overlap in the areas of potential risk and related recommendations.

6.3 In addition, UEC members also received an oral update on the review of the PMC process. The plan to streamline the process would include having one single point of data entry in order to reduce workload. Work on making these improvements is ongoing.

6.4 It was agreed that further guidance documentation would be developed and any volunteers who would be interested in helping to take forward some of this work were invited to get in touch with the Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development.

STUDENT CASEWORK DATA
(Copies filed as UEC/260225/009 and UEC/260225/010)

8.1 The Committee received an update on the student casework data for AY 2023-2024. It was noted that, while changes have been made to the appeals process (a competency check before cases are progressed for investigation), the data reflecting this will be available next year.

8.2 A discussion took place on a review of the academic discipline procedures, to make the process more supportive and educational, rather than punitive.

STUDENT WITHDRAWALS REPORT
(Copy filed as UEC/260225/011)

9.1 Members of the UEC discussed the data presented in the Student Withdrawals Report, noting a positive trend with improvements across various schools, despite some variation. It was noted

that the data around reasons for withdrawals is limited due to its sensitive nature, but health issues appear to be a factor. While efforts are being made to provide targeted support to students during critical times to improve retention, communication and processes around withdrawals need further refinement. It was agreed that further discussions would take place with the School engagement leads.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1   Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 22 April 2025 at 1:05pm in the Committee Room 2, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2025

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
5.4	Circulate the University agreed role description for the Inclusion Coordinator.	J Bohan	Complete (see Appendix A below)

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
6.2	Reconcile inconsistencies between processes in different committees and choose one single system.	J Murray	**In progress**

Role Responsibilities- School Inclusion Coordinators

The University depends on the dedicated work of the School Inclusion Coordinators (ICs) to provide a fully inclusive teaching and learning environment for our students. ICs have expert knowledge of the School's subject area, teaching methods, assessment procedures, requirements of professional accrediting bodies, and other activities such as field trips and placements. ICs provide an invaluable contribution to supporting disabled students, students with temporary impairments, performance athletes, student parents and carers, and students experiencing personal crises such as victim/survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

ICs should make their role known to both staff and students within the School. The main responsibilities of the ICs are as follows:

a) Access the Disability Database or run a Disabled Provisions Report from the Student Record System for all courses within their School (this responsibility can be delegated to another member of staff) to identify any new or revised adjustments for students. It is recommended that this is completed on at least a weekly basis during term-time.

b) Ensure that the adjustments communicated through this process are promptly disseminated to the relevant members of staff.

c) Ensure that the individual requirements of students are met as far as is reasonable.

d) If any of the recommended adjustments pose difficulties or the ICs would like to discuss any of the adjustments, they should seek guidance from Student Advice & Support by emailing student.support@abdn.ac.uk or calling 01224 273 935.

e) Arrange for Student Support Assistants (SSAs) to be sourced, from the recruited pool and/or external partners (when required), for students who require the services of a proof-reader, note-taker, campus assistant, lab assistant etc.

f) Arrange private rooms for on campus exams/timed assessments where this is recommended for students who do not also have the adjustment of a reader and/or scribe.

g) If it is not possible to provide students with a particular reasonable adjustment when working online, such as the provision of a scribe in exams, the ICs should arrange for someone from the School to contact the student to discuss their individual support arrangements.

h) It is recommended that ICs check all courses a student is taking and where appropriate speak with other ICs to ensure a consistent approach is taken, as far as possible, taking into account the core competences being assessed on each course, when implementing students' adjustments.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

1. **COMMITTEE TITLE**
    University Education Committee (UEC)

2. **DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT**
    25 May 2021 (as Joint Committee of Court & Senate)

3. **CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA**
    Chair: Vice-Principal (Education)
    Clerk: Academic Services and Online Education (Registry)

4. **PURPOSE**
    A Strategy and Policy committee to support the University's overall educational objectives.

5. **REMIT**: *(To be reviewed annually at last meeting of committee cycle and proposed changes considered by Senate for approval)*

    To be responsible to the Senatus Academicus for the strategic oversight of:
    i.   education matters relating to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and taught elements of postgraduate research;
    ii.   the wider student experience relating to matters impacting on student success;
    iii.   the development of approaches to educational innovation

    The UEC shall:
    iv.   be responsible for the oversight, development and monitoring of the University's strategic approach to educational provision, its associated operational plan and risk register, and the alignment of these with School plans and with Aberdeen 2040 and its associated operational plans;
    v.   comment on draft education policy where input sought by the Quality Assurance Committee and drive forward its implementation working in partnership with School Education Committees;
    vi.   highlight to the Quality Assurance Committee where policy related issues are identified requiring consideration;
    vii.   be responsible for the innovation and ongoing enhancement of the quality of educational provisionand for ensuring the effective dissemination of good practice including oversight of the University's engagement with ~~the QAA Enhancement Themes~~Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP);
    viii.   Through its committees, be responsible for the development of actions at institutional level, and in Schools, based on analysis of national and internal data (e.g. National Student Survey, non-continuation, Graduate Outcomes, degree classifications and awarding gaps).
    ix.   Ensure that Education and the wider student experience is delivered inclusively.
    x.   Through the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), develop, review and promote professional staff development opportunities in regard to the delivery of education, including assessment and feedback;
    xi.   Through the Centre for Academic Development, inform the support required by Schools for the development of educational innovations.
    xii.   consider recommendations from the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) in regard to the quality of provision of careers education, employability and the co-curriculum;
    xiii.   consider recommendations from the Student Support & Experience Committee (SSEC) in regard to the quality of the delivery of effective, appropriate and consistent student support and the wider student experience;
    xiv.   be responsible for the oversight of teaching-related credit-bearing activity related to student mobility;
    xv.   engage in horizon scanning to anticipate and prepare for new opportunities and likely future developments in education and the wider student experience;

    Members' Responsibilities:
    Each member of the committee will contribute to discussions and feedback on these to their respectiveareas for comment and further input. School leads ensure that they use their School Education Committees and other School forums to inform feedback into UEC and to raise matters relevant to UEC or for referral onto QAC as

appropriate.

6. **COMPOSITION AND QUORUM**:

Chair: Vice-Principal (Education)

Membership: Student President of the Students' Association (or nominee)
Vice-President for Education of the Students' Association
School Directors of Education
Dean for Student Support and Experience
Dean for Educational Innovation
Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship
Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement ~~QAA Enhancement Theme Lead~~
Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development
Dean for Postgraduate Research School
Director of Studies (Qatar)
Dean for International Student Pathways
~~Dean for Widening Access, Articulation and Outreach~~
~~Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion~~
Two representatives nominated by Senate (2 year terms)
~~QAA Enhancement Theme Lead~~
Academic Representative of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee

In attendance: Director of Academic Services and Online Education
~~Head of Quality~~
~~Academic~~Assistant Registrar
Head of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD)
Head of Online Education
Head of the Careers and Employability Service
Head of Student Support
Head of the Language Centre
Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee)
University Librarian
School Administration Manager
Students' Association Staff Member

Quorum: 50%

ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP

7. **MEMBERSHIP**

Vice-Principal (Education)/Chair	~~Ruth Taylor~~Jo-Anne Murray
Student President of the Students' Association (or nominee)	~~Sai Shradda S Viswanathan~~Karim Hurtig
Vice-President for Education of the Students' Association	~~Rhiannon Ledwell~~Miles Rothoerl
School Directors of Education:	
Biological Sciences	Michelle Pinard
Business	David McCausland
Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	Ken Jeffrey
Education	Leigh Bjorkvoll
Engineering	Euan Bain
Geosciences	Joshua Wright
Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture	Shona Potts
Law	~~Susan Stokeld~~Anne-Michelle Slater
Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition	~~Rona Patey~~Colin Lumsden
Natural and Computing Science	~~Bill Harrison~~Nigel Beacham
Psychology	Helen Knight
Social Science	Stuart Durkin
Dean for Student Support and Experience	Jason Bohan
Dean for Educational Innovation	~~Kirsty Kiezebrink~~ tbc

Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship	John Barrow
Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement	Steve Tucker
Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development	John Mynott
Dean for Postgraduate Research School	~~Graeme Nixon~~Stuart Piertney
Director of Studies (Qatar)	Lyn Batchelor
Dean for International Student Pathways	Harminder Battu
~~Dean for Widening Access, Articulation and Outreach~~	~~Alison Jenkinson~~
~~Dean for Portfolio Development and Programme Promotion~~	~~Anne-Michelle Slater~~
Two representatives nominated by Senate (2 year terms)	Amudha Poobalan
	Afzal Waheed
~~QAA Enhancement Theme Lead~~	~~Steve Tucker~~
Academic Representative of the EDI Committee	~~tbc~~Asha Venkatesh

In attendance

Director of Academic Services and Online Education / People~~	~~Gillian Mackintosh~~Debbie Dyker
~~Head of Quality~~	~~tbc~~
~~Academic Registrar~~Assistant Registrar	~~tbc~~Emma Tough
Head of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD)	Patricia Spence
Head of Online Education	Rob Cummins
Head of the Careers and Employability Service	Tracey Innes
Head of Student Support	Nick Edwards
Head of the Language Centre	tbc~~Julie Bray~~
Director of Digital and Information Services (or nominee)	~~Susan Halfpenny~~ Ian Robotham
University Librarian	Simon Bains
School Administration Manager	Rhona Moore
Students' Association Staff Member	Graeme Kirkpatrick / Scott Carle
Clerk	Isabella Fausti

8. REPORTING LINE/PARENT COMMITTEE AND INTERFACE WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Formal reporting line: Senate which then provides assurance to Court

Sub-committees: Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)
Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC)

Steering Groups and Task and Finish Groups: VLE Steering Group, Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group, Aberdeen 2040 Delivery of Education TFG, Graduate Attributes and Skills TFG, Online Education Forum

Interface with other committees: Quality Assurance Committee,
School Education Committees,
Postgraduate Research Committee,
Student Recruitment Committee,
Student Support & Experience Committee,
Online Education Development Committee,
Digital Strategy Committee,
Qatar Partnership Management Group,
SCNU Joint Institute Academic Committee.

9. FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

A *minimum* of five meetings per session, *normally* preceding meetings of the Senate.
Meetings between 10am – 4pm in accordance with University Policy.

10. PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The agenda and meeting papers will be made available on web pages/StaffNet at least one week prior to meetings of the UEC. Where these papers are draft, this will be clearly identified.

11. DATE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVED/RECORDED:

Proposed as Senate Committee – September 2022

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY RISK REGISTER – EDUCATION RISKS

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This Paper provides UEC with an opportunity to consider the University Risk Register, and specifically the risks impacting Education and our Students. This item is for **discussion**.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SSEC	March 2025

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> UEC is invited to discuss the risks relating to education and students to support ongoing updates to the risk register. It is proposed that UEC will receive the register as an item for information at every meeting going forward.

4.   BACKGROUND TO THE RISK REGISTERS

4.1   The University has a Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and a University Risk Register (URR). The SRR contains 8, high level, institutional risks which are regularly reviewed by members of the Senior Management Team. The URR is a larger document, outlining the key institutional risks on a range of topics, each having an SMT owner and additional risk manager.

4.2   A workshop was held with risk owners/managers on 5th March to consider the current status of these two registers, and to outline a new quicker process for maintaining the URR across the University. As part of an initial range of updates to the URR, SSEC received the student support and experience risks at their last meeting and will continue to review these twice a year.

4.3   It is important that UEC has ongoing oversight of the key risks that interplay with Education and students and can feed into updates to the planned actions to mitigate these risks on a continual basis.

4.4   It is proposed that UEC will receive the up-to-date URR as an item for information at each meeting, with updates being made to scoring, mitigations and controls following any specific discussion, in coordination with the owner and manager of the risks.

4.5   The URR template has just been updated, and initial updates have been made to the Education and Student based risks. New elements of the process include separation of the controls (measures which are ongoing and part of our business as usual processes to mitigate) and measures (time limited actions which are planned to further mitigate the risk) used to manage each risk.

4.6   UEC is invited to review and consider potential new controls and measures for all the risks to feed into discussions with risk owners on updates in the coming weeks. Missing, out of date and no longer required risks should also be highlighted.

4.7   The URR contains a range of tabs of risks across a number of subject areas. We welcome feedback on any risks, but UEC will have specific responsibility for reviewing the **Education (UG and PGT)** tab and student related risks on the **People** tab. Many of these are owned by the Vice Principal Education/Director of People and span across all elements of the education portfolio including quality, experience and compliance.

4.8   Feedback from discussions will be considered with appropriate risk owners/managers and updates made on a rolling basis to the new, centralised, URR.

5.   FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1   Further information is available from Nick Edwards, Deputy Director of People (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk).

07 April 2025, version 1, Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SCOTTISH TERTIARY EDUCATION STATEMENT ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND USE OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The rapid advances in the development and adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools presents both significant opportunities and complex challenges for Tertiary Education. There is a need for the university to adopt a strategic, evidence-based approach aligned with educational values. This paper details three actions related to this:

(i)   Endorsing the University of Aberdeen as a signatory to the Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on the use of GenAI

(ii)   Establishing an Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies such as GenAI, reporting to UEC and liaising with the University's AI@ABDN Working Group

(iii) Submitting a proposal to secure approval and funding from the Digital Strategy Committee for piloting applications that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows

As a first step, this paper introduces the Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), which outlines nine core principles for guiding institutional discussions on GenAI, and invites the University Education Committee to endorse the University of Aberdeen as a signatory to the statement. This would signal the university's commitment to shared values and responsible innovation.

To ensure a strategic approach to emerging technologies such as GenAI, this paper recommends the establishment of an Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies to monitor, advise and provide strategic direction in relation to emerging technologies that could impact or enhance learning, teaching and assessment at the University. This Advisory Group would report to UEC and liaise with the AI@ABDN Working Group.

Building on these foundations, it is further proposed that UEC supports the submission of a proposal to secure approval and funding from the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) for piloting applications that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows. This pilot would be overseen by the Advisory Group described above.

This paper is for discussion and approval.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

The committee is invited to approve the following three recommendations:

- Endorsing the University of Aberdeen as a signatory to the Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on the use of GenAI
- Establishment of an Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies to monitor, advise and provide strategic direction in relation to emerging technologies that could impact or enhance learning, teaching and assessment

> - Submission of a proposal to secure approval and funding from the Digital Strategy Committee for piloting applications that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows

4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

4.1 The speed at which emerging technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools have become ubiquitous has prompted universities to reflect on their educational impact, the need to respond with agility and to do so in a principled and strategic manner, balancing educational innovation in these spaces with academic integrity and responsible adoption.

4.2 Several universities and higher education institutions have begun to articulate guiding principles for the use of GenAI in learning, teaching, assessment and research. Examples include:

- [The Russell Group's Principles on the Use of Generative AI](#)
- [Trinity College Dublin's Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI in Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Research](#)

These principles aim to ensure that the adoption and integration of GenAI tools in Education align with educational values such as academic integrity, equity, critical thinking and responsible innovation.

4.3 The Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education Network (ScAITEN) is a Scotland-wide group for those leading on the use of artificial intelligence in learning and teaching in their institutions. The group was established by Heriot-Watt University. The network has representation from all Higher Education (HE) institutions in Scotland and is working to include Colleges. The group coordinates activities and shares practices around artificial intelligence (AI) in learning and teaching. It also undertakes collaborative research and the organisation of events. The network's current objective is to position Scottish Tertiary Education as open, ethical and innovative in the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in learning and teaching.

4.4 Recognising the benefit of having a common set of principles across Scottish institutions, ScAITEN drafted a statement outlining 9 core principles for guiding institutional discussions and work on GenAI. The statement is complementary to and informed by other sector-wide guidance. It is intended that these principles would provide a foundation for informing institutional policy, guidance and actions for work in this area. As a signatory of the statement the University would signal its commitment to shared values and responsible innovation. Further detail is provided in section 5 and the Appendix.

4.5 In order to support and oversee work across education, research and professional services, in relation to artificial intelligence (AI), the University has established the AI@ABDN Working Group, a cross-functional working group. Details of this group have previously been shared with UEC on the 13 May 2024 (UEC/130524/008). However, there is a need to ensure a coordinated approach to emerging technologies such as GenAI that impact learning, teaching and assessment, with clear governance structures.

4.6 Establishing an Advisory Group on emerging technologies and their integration and use in applications supporting learning, teaching and assessment would enable a strategic and agile response to the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies, including GenAI. The Advisory Group would report to UEC and liaise closely with the AI@ABDN Group. Further detail is provided in section 6.

4.7 As part of a strategic focus on ways of working, the University has identified that Artificial Intelligence and Automation technologies may support the significant reduction of workload pressures faced by staff across the institution. One area, which has significant workload pressure for academic staff, relates to assessment and feedback. Feedback on assessment is key to student learning and success. However, providing timely, detailed and personalised feedback is challenging to achieve at scale and this is reflected in our national student survey (NSS) results.

4.8 Building on the first two recommendations, it is recommended that UEC supports the submission of a proposal to secure approval and funding from the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) for piloting KEATH.ai and Graide, applications that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows. This pilot would be overseen by the Advisory Group described above, and would enable the University to explore these technologies in a responsible manner. Further detail is provided in section 7.

5. SCOTTISH TERTIARY EDUCATION STATEMENT ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

5.1 The statement is a consultation draft which is being considered in Scottish HEIs and discussed at Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee. **The appendix with the cover paper and statement is, currently, not for further publication or dissemination beyond UEC**.

5.2 The statement outlines an ethical, enhancement-led and responsible approach to GenAI for the Scottish sector. It serves as a foundation for informing institutional policy, guidance and actions for work in this area. Licensed under Creative Commons, the statement can be adapted and repurposed by institutions within and beyond Scotland. It consists of nine core principles and is complementary to and informed by other sector-wide guidance. These nine principles are:
- Human-centred
- Agency
- Trust
- Ethical
- Equitable
- Environmentally responsible
- Collaboration
- Openness
- Transparency

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY GROUP ON EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

6.1 The purpose of establishing an Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies is to monitor, advise and provide strategic direction in relation to emerging technologies that could impact or enhance learning, teaching and assessment at the University. It would include representatives from Schools, Professional Services and students, and would liaise closely with the AI@ABDN Group which oversees AI initiatives and related policies. The Advisory Group would report to UEC and meet at least three times per year.

6.2 The remit of the group would encompass the following (final remit to be agreed at the first meeting):
- Horizon scanning to identify emerging trends, opportunities and challenges, providing guidance on implications for educational practice.
- Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of pilots and projects involving technologies supporting learning, teaching and assessment, with a view to informing evidence-based decision-making on future adoption and scaling
- Monitoring existing technologies supporting learning, teaching and assessment, with a view to advising on the appropriateness of activating or deactivating specific features in light of pedagogical, ethical and regulatory considerations
- Advocating for and assisting in the creation of professional development opportunities and guidance for academic and support staff to enhance their teaching practice and skills in relation to emerging technologies such as GenAI
- Contributing to the development and refinement of policies related to learning, teaching and assessment that are affected by emerging technologies, making recommendations to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and UEC, as appropriate.
- Engaging and consulting widely with internal and external stakeholders and groups

7. PILOTING APPLICATIONS USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK WORKFLOWS

7.1 The adoption of emerging technologies in learning, teaching and assessment workflows needs to be supported by robust evidence and critical evaluation.

7.2 Piloting applications that use artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows enables the University to assess both the benefits and the limitations of these tools in practice, ensuring wider implementation is pedagogically sound and strategically justified. This ensures responsible and effective innovation in this area.

7.3 There are new and emerging companies, some formed as University spin-outs, which provide technological solutions for enhancing assessment and grading workflows solutions. These include KEATH.ai and Graide, both of which have been piloted and/or adopted at a number of UK Higher Education institutions.

7.4 For KEATH.ai, a paid trial is available at £300/month and would not feature the full integration with the Virtual Learning Environment or other University Systems. For six months it would cost £2160 (including VAT). For Graide, a paid trial is normally undertaken over three months but could be extended to six. This would include integration to the Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard Learn. This would cost £12,000 (including VAT).

7.5 The proposal to the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) is for establishing a project to pilot both KEATH.ai and Graide. The pilot would involve using historical assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools, understand the practicalities and implications of adoption and prepare a recommendation on next steps. The aim is for the project to run from May to December 2025. The project would be overseen by the new Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies and would report to QAC, UEC and DSC.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 UEC is invited to approve the following three recommendations:

- Endorsing the University of Aberdeen as a signatory to the Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on the use of GenAI
- Establishment of an Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies to monitor, advise and provide strategic direction in relation to emerging technologies that could impact or enhance learning, teaching and assessment
- Submission of a proposal to secure approval and funding from the Digital Strategy Committee for piloting applications that use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to support assessment and feedback workflows

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk) Centre for Academic Development and Professor Jo-Anne Murray, VP Education (jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk).

18 April 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Part closed [Confidential Statement and Commercial Figures]

Cover paper: Scottish Tertiary Education statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)

Context

The Scottish Tertiary Education statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) was developed by the Scottish AI in Tertiary Education network. The Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education (TE) Network (ScAITEN) is a Scotland-wide group for those leading on artificial intelligence in learning and teaching in their institutions.

Network members recognised the need for a common set of principles on GenAI in tertiary education that were specific to the enhancement-led Scottish education context and which could be used in colleges and universities across Scotland to provide a consistent approach for students and staff. This consistent approach ensures that students and staff understand the use of GenAI regardless of which institution they are in, whether they move or collaborate between them.

The statement outlines nine core principles which will guide institutional discussions and work on GenAI. The principles are: human-centred, agency, trust, ethical, equitable, environmentally responsible, collaboration, openness and transparency.

The statement is complementary to and informed by other sector-wide guidance such as the [Russell Group Principles on the use of Generative AI tools in education](#), the [Scottish Open Education Declaration](#) and aligns with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [ALT Framework for Ethical Learning Technology](#).

It is intended that these principles would inform institutional policy, guidance and actions by providing a baseline for work in this area. They do not preclude institutions developing their policies or practices further.

Given the pace of development and impact of artificial intelligence in learning, teaching and assessment, the statement will be reviewed annually by the Scottish AI in Tertiary Education network to ensure that it remains current and relevant. Where sector developments impact the statement it will be reviewed more frequently.

We are seeking to gain institutional support for the statement in time to be able to launch it in Summer 2025, prior to the start of academic year 2025-26.

Scottish Tertiary Education statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)

Preamble

While the impact of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) on education transcends borders and national contexts, the Scottish tertiary education sector is uniquely positioned to act collaboratively and with agility on establishing and implementing principles which align with long-standing values of education for all, the shared common good and social justice.

Taking an enhancement-led approach to exploring the implications of GenAI on learning, teaching, assessment and research will enable us to address the potential impact on the learner journey, from start to finish, and our responsibilities to wider society.

We, the undersigned institutions, organisations and individuals who work and study in the Scottish tertiary education sector, recognising the opportunities and challenges that developments in GenAI present, agree that our position in relation to the use of generative AI will be guided by the following principles.

- Human-centred
- Agency
- Trust
- Ethical
- Equitable
- Environmentally responsible
- Collaboration
- Openness
- Transparency

These principles build on the Russell Group Principles on the use of Generative AI tools in education, the Scottish Open Education Declaration and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and the ALT Framework for Ethical Learning Technology.

Furthermore, we invite individuals and organisations, such as student representative bodies, funding councils, agencies, GenAI developers and companies, and governments, within and outwith Scotland to adopt these principles and collaborate with us.

Principles

Human-centred

- We value the individual and collective humanity of those who develop, use and are impacted by GenAI.
- We will ensure that our actions and decisions are evidence-based, and informed by compassion, equity, ethical and environmental responsibilities, and a commitment to the common good.
- We acknowledge that GenAI can provide efficiencies in work and study. Where appropriate we will support staff and students to utilise these to achieve fulfilment in their work and studies.
- We will introduce any changes at a scale and pace which limits the impact on wellbeing and with appropriate support and planning for longevity.

Agency

- We advocate that everyone who works and studies in the Scottish tertiary education sector develops their understanding of GenAI as it relates to their context.
- We emphasise the importance of engaging with GenAI critically, approaching it with questions rather than assumptions.
- We encourage everyone to make informed decisions about whether or not to use GenAI, when it may be appropriate to do so, and to continue to reflect on these decisions and the impact of them.

Trust

- We recognise the importance of trust between peers, colleagues, students and staff, and within and between institutions. We commit to founding our actions relating to generative AI in this shared trust.
- We encourage authentic practice and the importance of acknowledging generative AI outputs and modifications.

Ethical

- We commit to use GenAI with integrity and for the public good in keeping with the shared values of the Scottish tertiary education sector.
- We will educate and mitigate against any ethical issues created by the training and development of GenAI, particularly in terms of equity, copyright, intellectual property, privacy and data protection/governance; and will advocate for ethical future developments.
- We will ensure that any engagement with or use of GenAI complies with our legal responsibilities.

Equitable

- We recognise that we operate in a globally connected world with a diverse population.

- We will ensure that any decision about development or use of GenAI appropriately identifies any potential impact on equity and will act to address this.
- We will seek to ensure equity of opportunity, access, use and impact of GenAI.
- We acknowledge the inherent issues with bias in some models of GenAI, and the harms caused by reproducing such bias, and will seek to challenge this.

Environmentally responsible

- We recognise the environmental impact of the development and use of GenAI.
- We will make decisions informed by our environmental responsibilities and the importance of sustainability.

Collaboration

- We value learning with and from each other, and how this can enhance and support our individual and collective development.
- We commit to working together on GenAI (where relevant) and sharing our practices.

Openness

- We recognise the value of openness in education and society.
- We will uphold the values of open practices in any development and use of GenAI.
- Where appropriate, we will share our knowledge and publications openly across the tertiary education sector and wider society.

Transparency

- We commit to transparent institutional and personal decision-making.
- We will seek transparency from developers, platforms and companies in our selection and procurement of GenAI.
- We will be transparent in whether and how GenAI may be used in learning and teaching by students and staff.

References

ALT Framework for Ethical Learning Technology

Russell Group Principles on the use of Generative AI tools in education

Scottish Open Education Declaration

UN Sustainable Development Goals

Confidential draft for institutional consultation only, April 2024.
Not for publication.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

BLACKBOARD TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (NOW CALLED COURSE CATALOG)

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper seeks approval from the University Education Committee to progress the business case to the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) requesting approval and funding to continue licencing Blackboard's Training and Development Manager (now called Course Catalog) based on the outcomes from the pilot phase.
>
> Training and Development Manager (TDM) is an extension to MyAberdeen (Blackboard Learn) which enables **external learners** (unregistered students) to create an account and enrol in courses in MyAberdeen offered to them through TDM, thereby enabling the University to extend its course offerings beyond registered students.
>
> This paper outlines the background to the TDM pilot that has been taking place during AY 2024-25, the outcomes from the evaluation to date and costs for continuing to licence TDM in line with our main Blackboard Learn (MyAberdeen) contract.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by		
Further consideration/ approval required by	DSC	2 June 2025

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The committee is invited to approve the following recommendation:
>
> Progress the business case to the Digital Strategy Committee requesting approval and funding for continuing to licence Blackboard's Training and Development Manager beyond the pilot phase and in line with our main Blackboard Learn contract

4.   BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

4.1   The University has been exploring strategies to increase revenue by increasing student numbers. Below are potential areas where we could increase revenue:

- Providing offer holders with access to the same platform through which we deliver most of our teaching ie MyAberdeen, therefore maximising conversion opportunities
- Offering prospective students the ability to "preview courses" to support the upselling to courses and programmes offered by the University
- Supporting widening access and articulation initiatives
- Developing and delivering a suite of non-credit bearing courses to industry

4.2   A barrier to pursuing these use cases is that external learners (including prospective students) need to have an IT account and be registered before they can engage with us through MyAberdeen. Blackboard have a product, Training & Development Manager (now called Course Catalog), which would address these use cases without impacting on the licensing or standard account creation processes for MyAberdeen.

4.3 In May 2024 DSC approved a paper to release funding and establish a Project Board in support of a pilot during AY 2024-25 of Blackboard's Training and Development Manager (TDM), an extension to MyAberdeen that enables external learners (unregistered students) to create an account and enrol in courses in MyAberdeen offered to them through TDM.

4.4 Courses offered through TDM can be courses that require payment or free courses. In the case of courses requiring payment, the pilot investigated how this could be managed using approval workflows and codes as we already have a payment process setup for courses managed by the University's Continuous Professional Development (CPD) & Event Services Team. For both types of courses, the pilot investigated the ease with which external learners and potential students could create accounts and enrol in specific courses. The pilot also explored, to a limited extent, the ability of TDM to provide participants with personalised certificates upon successful completion of activities.

5. EVALUATION OF THE PILOT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER DURING AY 2024-25

5.1 A summary of course offerings provided through TDM to date, and those that are in the pipeline, is shown below:
- 9 course offerings
- 254 enrolments
- 8 course offerings in the pipeline

5.2 The pilot has been operational since November 2024 and to date has been used to support the following use cases:
- Courses that are 'paid for' and managed by the CPD & Event Services team
- Courses designed to support students in China transitioning to university programmes, managed by the Language Centre
- A course providing a preview of learning online, managed by the Online Education team

5.3 The following courses are planned for delivery through TDM before the end of July 2025:
- Further 'paid for' courses managed by the CPD & Event Services team
- Courses introducing programmes in Education, managed by the School of Education
- A course piloting and showcasing the 'Making it Work UK programme', a funded project to deliver a self-management programme that was originally developed in Canada, and which aims to support people with musculoskeletal conditions to manage specific challenges at work
- Additional courses are being set up for international project work, to facilitate sharing of resources and best practice
- Onboarding courses to help students transitioning to university, such as the one being developed by Biological Sciences and one for parents, such as the one being developed by Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition.

5.4 The CPD & Event Services team fed back that it was much easier and less time-consuming for them to manage the process for accessing 'paid for' courses on MyAberdeen through TDM. The approval processes and use of codes for managing access also worked as intended, ensuring only those external learners that paid for the course could access the course. The feedback gathered from the CPD & Event Services team and the Language Centre indicated that external learners had no problems with creating their accounts and enrolling in courses in MyAberdeen using the TDM functionality. However, a few learners needed further assistance in China, possibly due to language differences. Personalised certificates upon successful completion of activities are offered on the course providing a preview of learning online but as this course was recently launched, we don't yet have any data on this aspect.

5.5 The limited timeframe associated with the pilot meant that it was not feasible to develop as many of the courses for increasing engagement with offer holders and prospective students as intended. This was due to workload pressures on staff outside of the project team. Neither was it feasible to develop courses to support widening access initiatives. However, the pilot has proven to be extremely useful and

invaluable in providing the administrative experience and foundations for supporting and further promoting such activities and initiatives in the future.

5.6 In addition to the use cases identified at the start of the pilot, the ability to deliver training and educational courses developed as part of funded projects and initiatives was another use case that arose during the pilot phase which demonstrated the benefit of having TDM to support it.

6. FINANCES AND PROCUREMENT

6.1 The annual licensing costs for Training and Documentation Manager, up to 2,000 active users, are detailed in Table 1, below:

Table 1. Annual licensing costs for TDM (up to 2000 active users).

TDM Licensing Period	Net Amount (ex VAT)	Gross Amount (inc VAT)
26/07/2025 - 31/07/2026	£10,247.00	£12,296.40
01/08/2026 - 31/07/2027	£10,554.00	£12,664.80
01/08/2027 - 31/07/2028	£10,871.00	£13,045.20
01/08/2028 - 31/07/2029	£11,197.00	£13,436.40
Totals	**£42,869.00**	**£51,442.80**

6.2 The University's current contract with Anthology, for Blackboard Learn and Ally, includes optional costs for Blackboard's TDM, for up to 2000 active users, in year 2 (AY 2025-26) through to year 5 (AY 2028-29). This enables the University to move forward with procuring TDM in a cost-efficient manner. It should be noted that active users on TDM represent the average monthly number of active users on courses, not the total number of user accounts created through TDM.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 The project board overseeing the TDM pilot recommend moving from pilot phase into full business implementation, by taking the option built into the University's current contract with Anthology as highlighted above. Moving into full business implementation enables us to realise the full benefits identified in the pilot and leverage the substantial work that has taken place to have TDM live, and enable those using it to provide course offerings to continue to grow their use of it.

7.2 The University Education Committee is invited to review the outcomes from the Training and Documentation Manager pilot to date and to approve progressing the business case to DSC requesting approval and funding to continue licencing Blackboard's Training and Development Manager in line with our current Blackboard Learn (MyAberdeen) contract.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk), Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk), Academic Sponsor of Training and Development Manager Pilot, and Professor Jo-Anne Murray, VP Education (jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk).

17 April 2025

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

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE NON-CONTINUATION INTERNAL DATA

1.   **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

The purpose of the paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the 2023/24 full-time undergraduate non-continuation data as produced internally by the University.

This differs from the HESA non-continuation performance indicator, which is restricted to first year undergraduate entrants only, and is used as a metric in the Guardian University Guide and the Complete University Guide. The HESA non-continuation performance indicator is under review as part of a wider review of HESA performance indicators and has not been produced for 2025 as a result.

2.   **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	SSEC UEC	tbc tbc

3.   **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

This paper is for information, discussion, and appropriate action planning at the relevant University committees.

4.   **DISCUSSION**

This paper details and analyses the internal data for non-continuation throughout the full-time undergraduate student population at the University. The data is considered at University level and at School level for 2023/24 with reference to historical data where appropriate.

In addition to the overall position at University and School level, the non-continuation rate is considered for the following categories:

- by year of programme
- by domicile
- by gender
- by ethnicity
- by disability status

5.   **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- Further information is available from Jo-Anne Murray (Vice-Principal Education), jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk, Chris Souter (Head of Data & Business Intelligence), chris.souter@abdn.ac.uk and Lisa Gove (Planning Analyst), lisa.gove@abdn.ac.uk.

XX January 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation (internal data) 2025 Report
Analysis by the Directorate of Planning

6th February 2025

Background & Summary Methodology

Non-continuation is a retention measure used in higher education to monitor whether or not an undergraduate student qualifies or remains active in HE in the following academic year.

The data in this report is internal data that covers the full-time undergraduate population across all years of programmes and includes students from all domiciles – but excludes offshore provision and non-graduating / access pathways. A low non-continuation rate is the overall aim for the University.

Specifically, "non-continuation" in this report refers to the actual percentage of undergraduate students registered in any academic year not:

1) successfully completing their studies; or
2) transferring to another institution; or
3) registering in the next academic year.

The approach in this report differs from the non-continuation ("T3") measure as utilised by HESA as a performance indicator, which only considers UK-domiciled first-degree entrants. A further difference from HESA-generated data is that HESA data has the capability to include all students who have enrolled at another UK HE institution in the following year whereas internal data on non-continuation is restricted to those who have formally transferred and notified the University. HESA data is used as the basis (in aggregated form) for the Continuation metrics in the Guardian University Guide and the Complete University Guide, which is also used for the School data files.

Please note that the academic year refers to the earlier academic year of comparison (e.g. 2023/24 data measures the proportion of 2023/24 undergraduates who are flagged as non-continuing for 2023/24).

University of Aberdeen: Headline Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation

Undergraduate Non-Continuation 2023/24
4.0% ▼ (down 1.0pp)

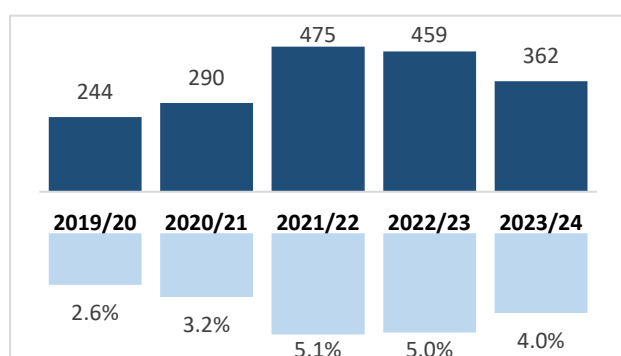| 2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
244	290	475	459	362
2.6%	3.2%	5.1%	5.0%	4.0%

Chart 1: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24

Chart 1 shows the University of Aberdeen's non-continuation rate for 2023/24 is 4.0% (362 students), which represents a decrease of one percentage point from 2022/23's position of 5.0%.

University of Aberdeen overall performance by School

Chart 2: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2023/24 by School
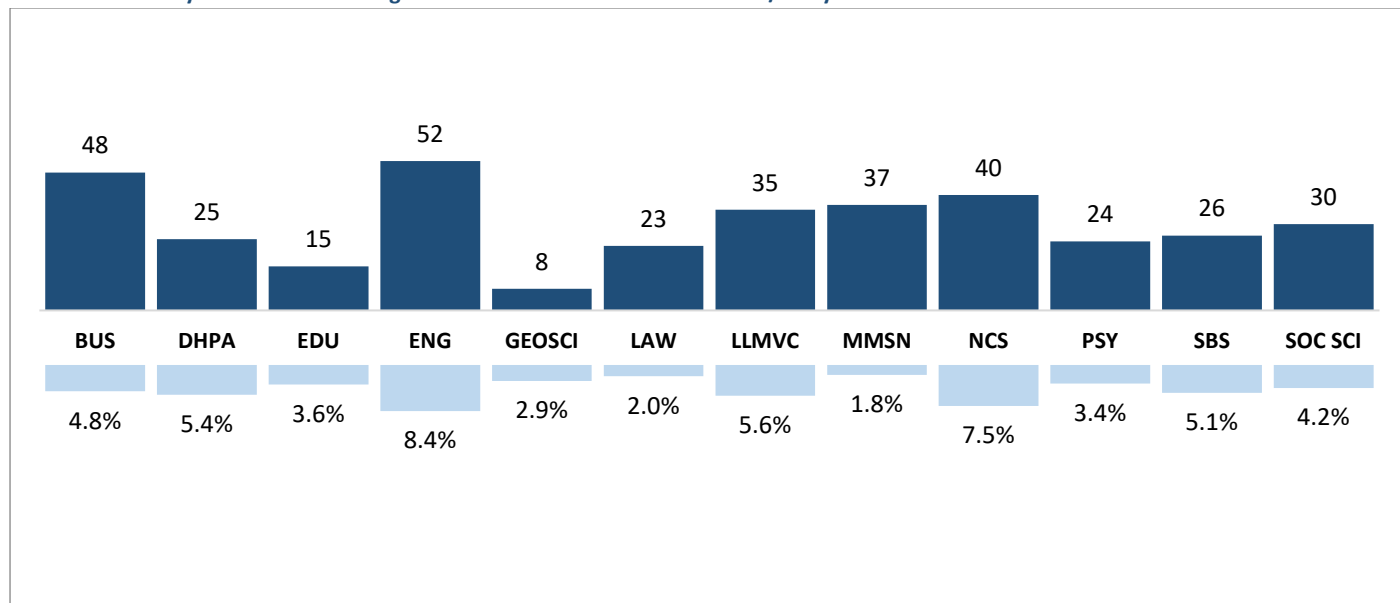

Chart 2 shows at a School level the highest undergraduate non-continuation rate for 2023/24 is observed to be in Engineering at 8.4% (52 students), followed by NCS at 7.5% (40 students). MMSN (1.8%) and Law (2.0%) have the lowest non-continuation rates for 2023/24.

When considering patterns across the previous four-year period as per Chart 3 below we can observe that the lowest non-continuation rates are to be found in MMSN, followed by Law.

Chart 3: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by School
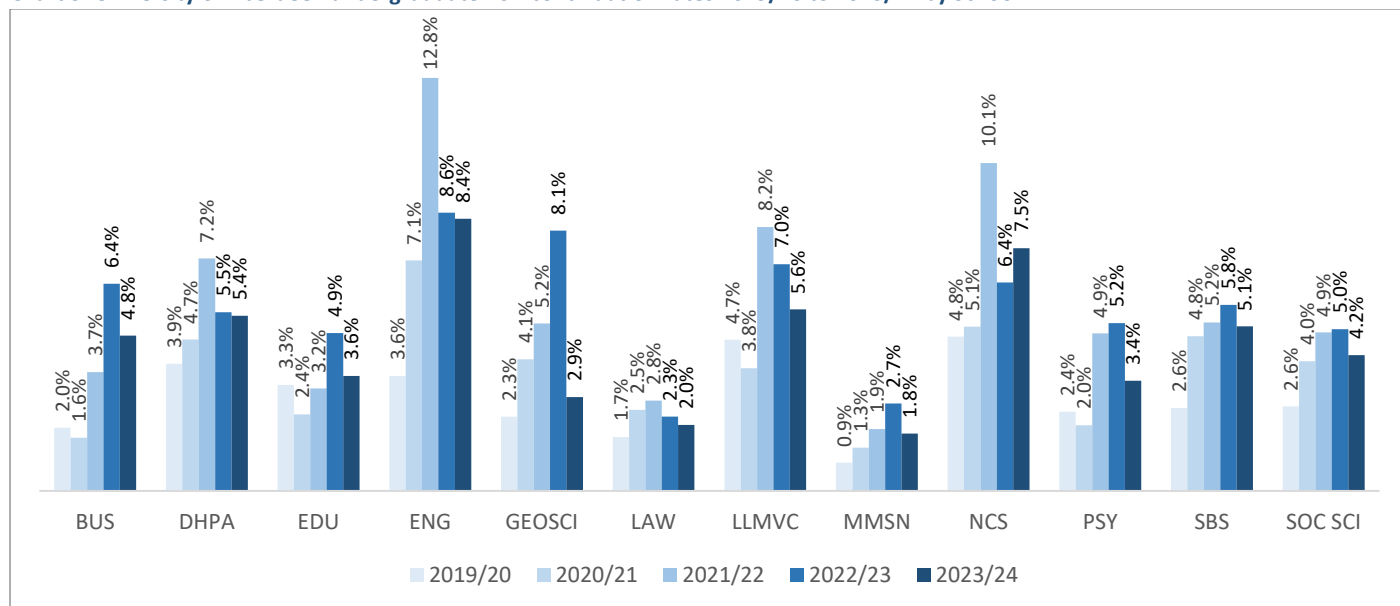
We can additionally observe that Geosciences rate of 8.1% from the previous year is juxtaposed against what had previously been a much lower non-continuation rate. This has returned to a non-continuation rate of 2.9% in 2023/24. The School of NCS was the only School to have risen in non-continuation rates from the previous year with an increase of 1.1 percentage points.

University of Aberdeen: by year of undergraduate study

Chart 4: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by year of undergraduate study #1
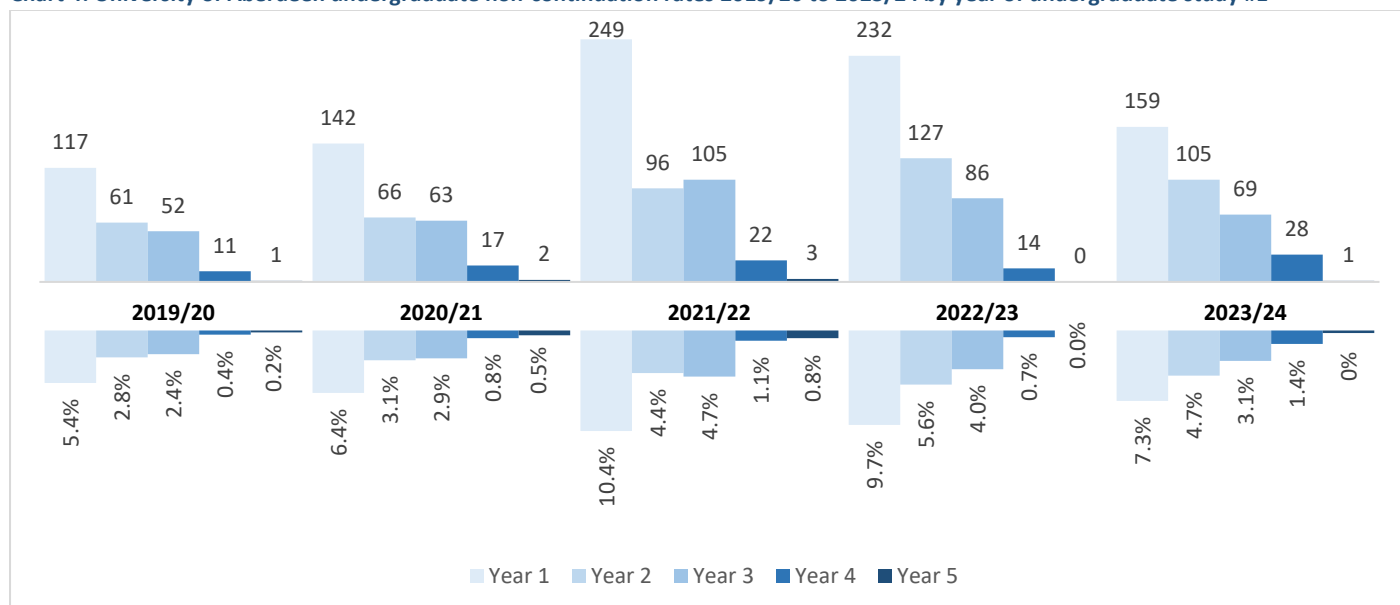

Chart 4 demonstrates the difference in non-continuation rates by year of programme for undergraduate study, with demonstrating that non-continuation rates generally improve with each subsequent programme year. For 2023/24 the undergraduate non-continuation rate for Year 1 was 7.3% for the institution and that contrasts sharply with a non-continuation rate of less than 0.1% for Year 5.

Chart 5: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by year of undergraduate study by School
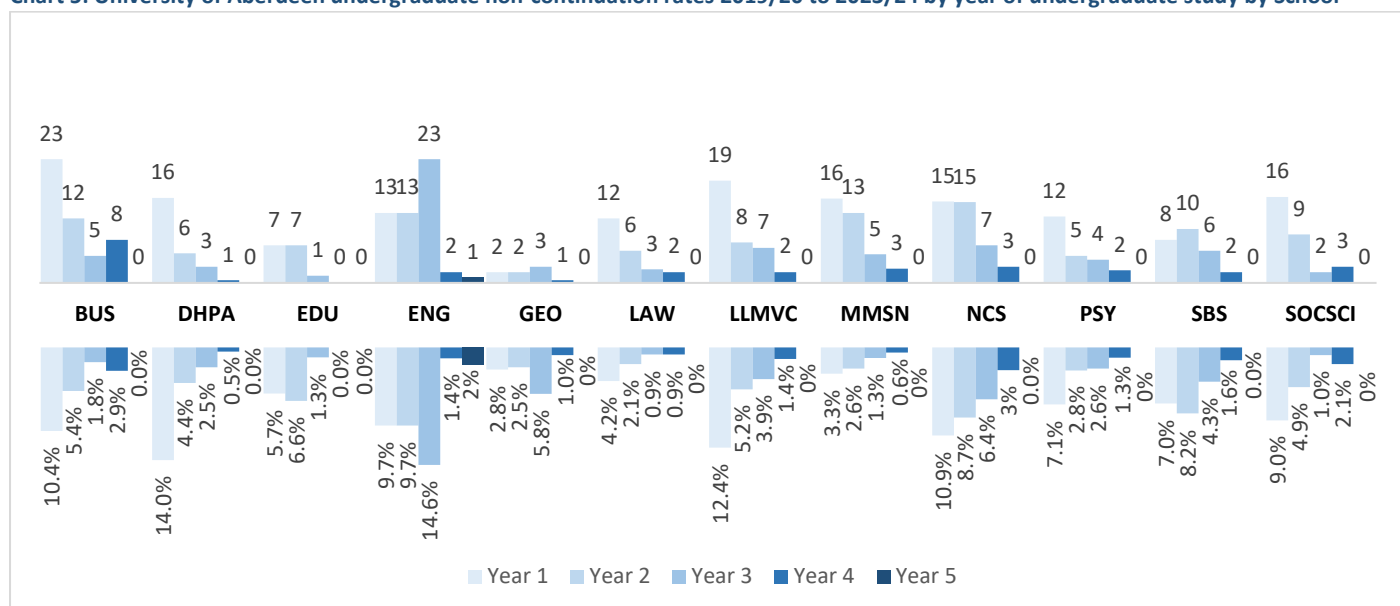

Chart 5 breaks down the 2022/23 non-continuation rates for year of undergraduate programme by School. The highest non-continuation rates for Year 1 students are found in Business, DHPA, LLMVC and NCS – where the non-continuation rates exceed 10%. The highest non-continuation rate for Year 1 is in DHPA at 14%.

In contrast, the lowest Year 1 non-continuation rates can be found in Geosciences at 2.8%, followed by MMSN at 3.3%.

University of Aberdeen: by domicile

Chart 6: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by student domicile
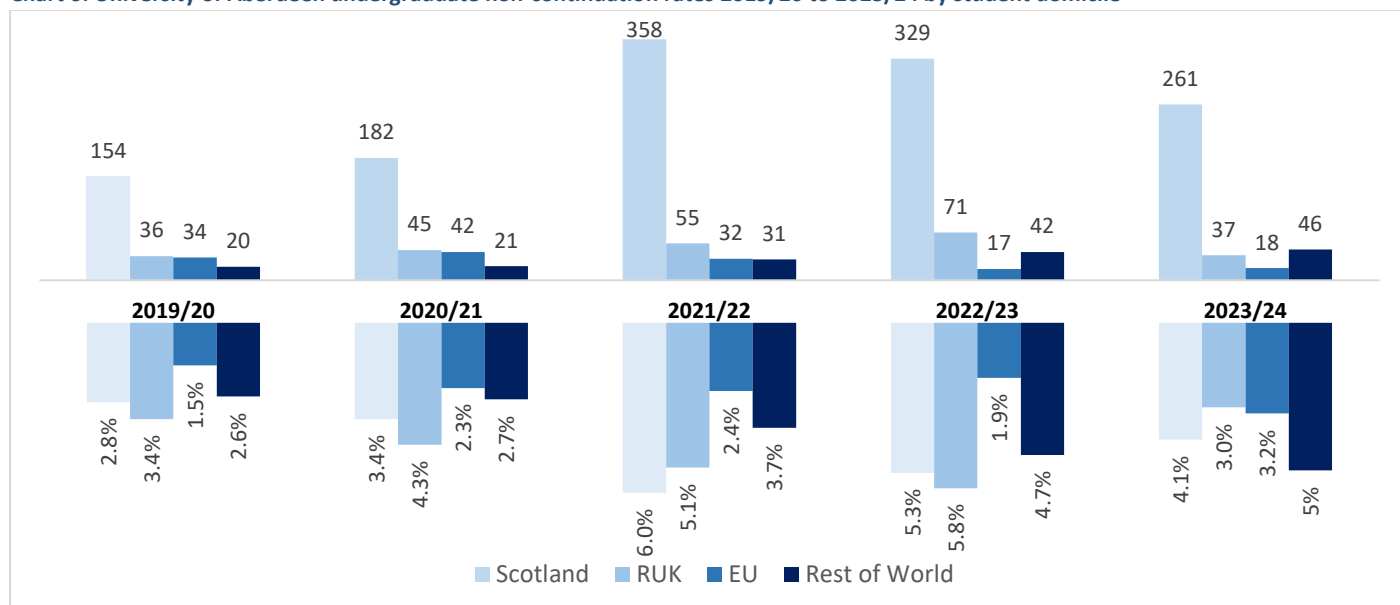
As can be seen in Chart 6, the non-continuation rates by domicile present a mixed picture, although for more recent years the non-continuation rate for students outwith the UK have generally lower non-continuation rates than their UK counterparts. However, students from the Rest of the World have had the highest non-continuation rates in 2023/24.

For 2023/24, the rest of the UK (RUK) students has a lower non-continuation rate among the four categories of students. RUK domiciled students had a non-continuation rate of 3%, followed by EU domiciled students with a non-continuation rate of 3.2%.

Chart 7: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2023/24 by student domicile by School
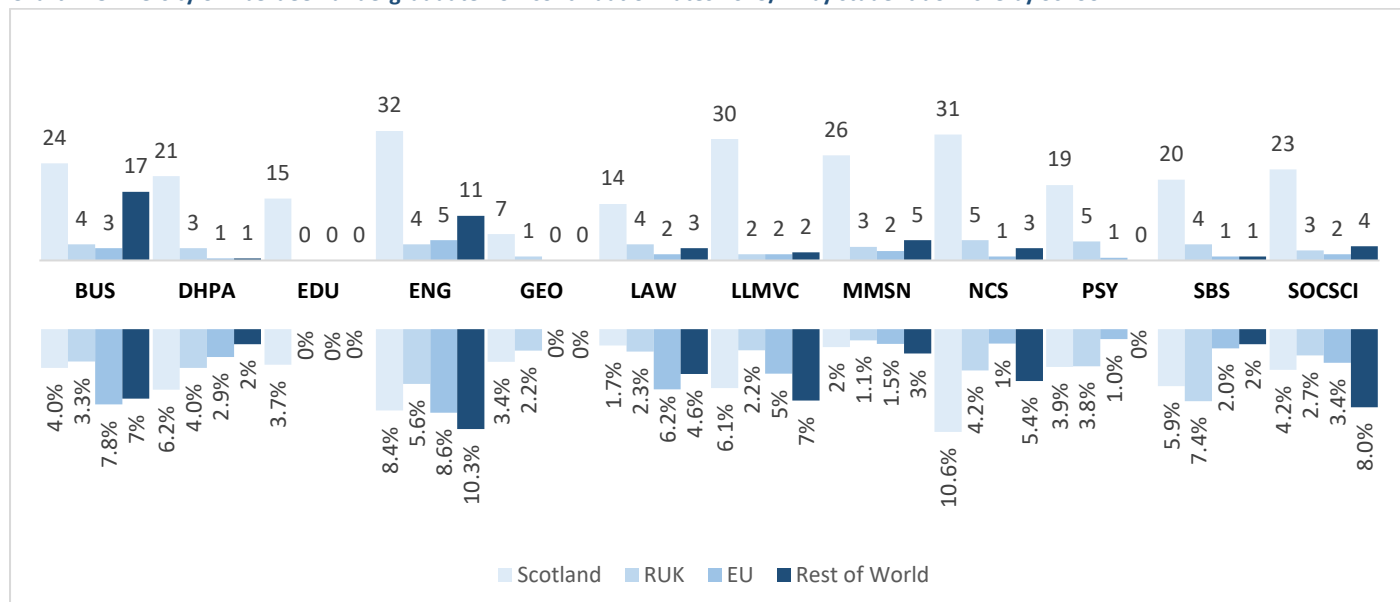

Chart 7 shows the variation between non-continuation rates with the highest non-continuation rates for Scottish-domiciled students in NCS (10.6%) and Engineering (8.4%). The highest non-continuation rates for RUK students are in SBS at 7.4%, followed by Engineering at 5.6%. The highest non-continuation rates for rest of the world students are in Engineering at 10.3%, followed by Social Science at 8%.

University of Aberdeen: by gender

Chart 8: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by student gender
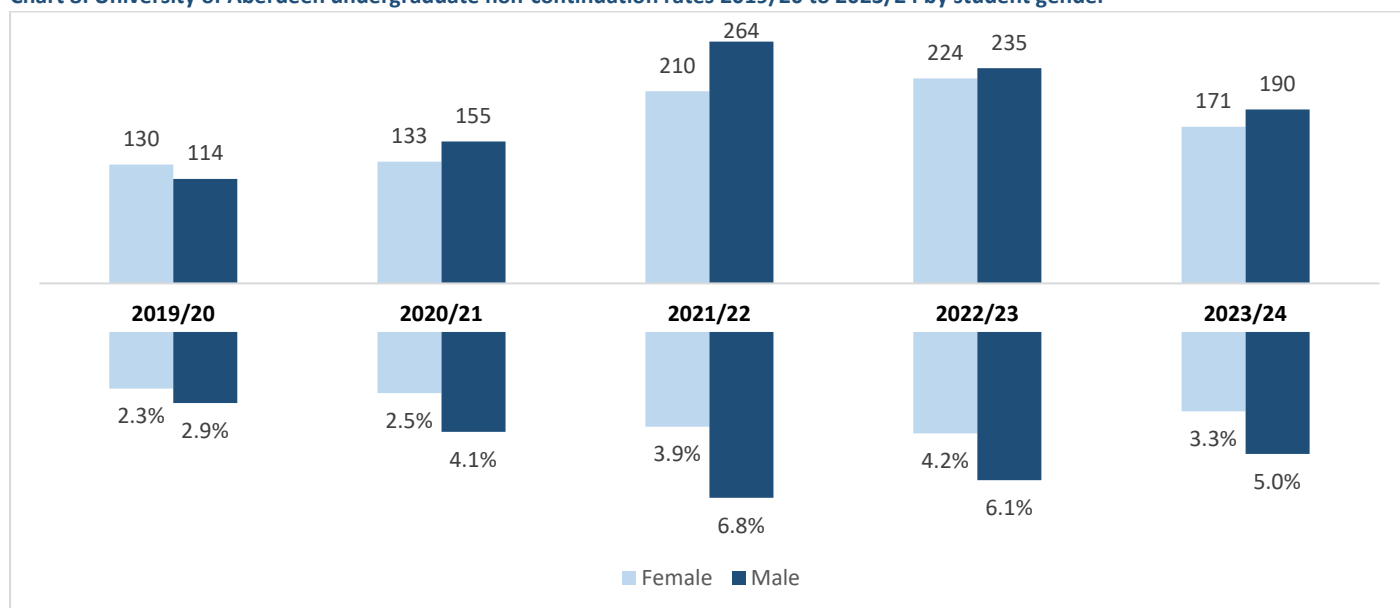

Chart 8 shows that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among male undergraduates than their female counterparts, with the 2023/24 gap of 1.7 percentage points being the third largest gap observed over the five years considered.

Chart 9: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2023/24 by student gender by School
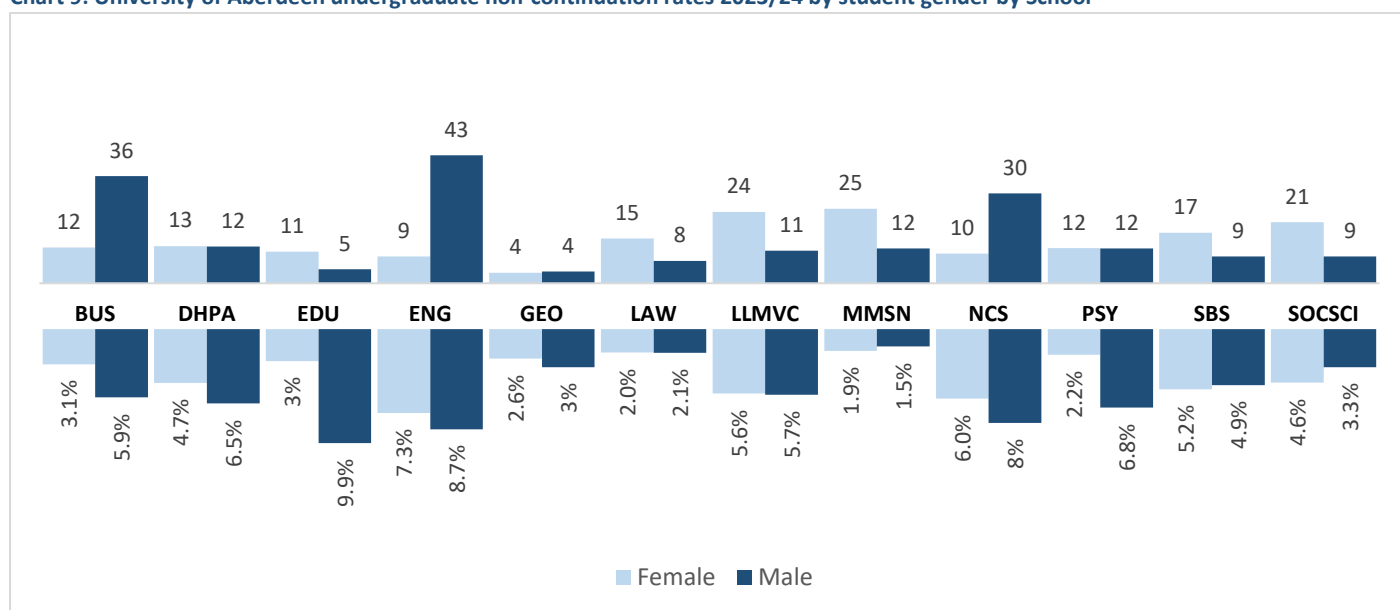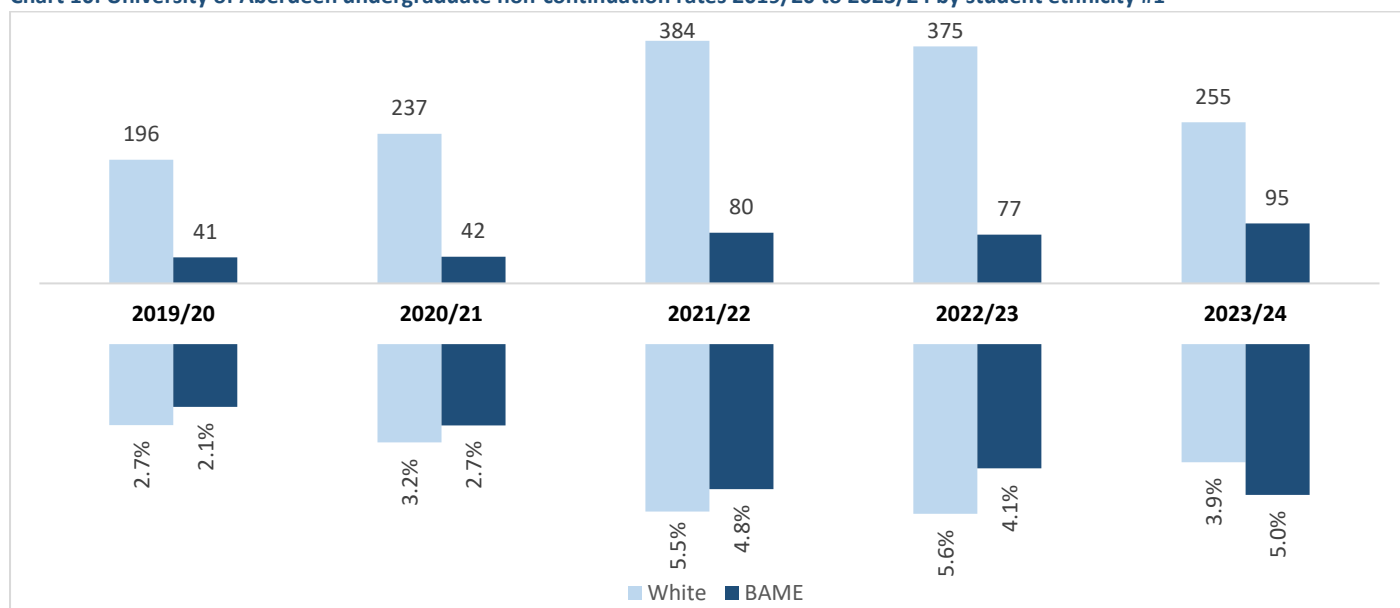

Chart 9 shows that the institutional pattern of female undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than male students is repeated across nine of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in Education where female undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 3% compared with a non-continuation rate of 9.9% for males – although it should be noted that the population of male undergraduates is lower than female undergraduates in Education.

Three Schools reverse the institutional picture with a higher non-continuation rate for female students – MMSN, SBS and Social Science.

Historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.

University of Aberdeen: by ethnicity

Chart 10: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by student ethnicity #1

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
White	196	237	384	375	255
BAME	41	42	80	77	95
White %	2.7%	3.2%	5.5%	5.6%	3.9%
BAME %	2.1%	2.7%	4.8%	4.1%	5.0%

■ White ■ BAME

Charts 10 (above) and 11 (below) show that there had been a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among White undergraduates than their Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) counterparts. However, in 2023/24 BAME undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 5% compared to White undergraduates at a rate of 3.9%.

Chart 11: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2023/24 by student ethnicity

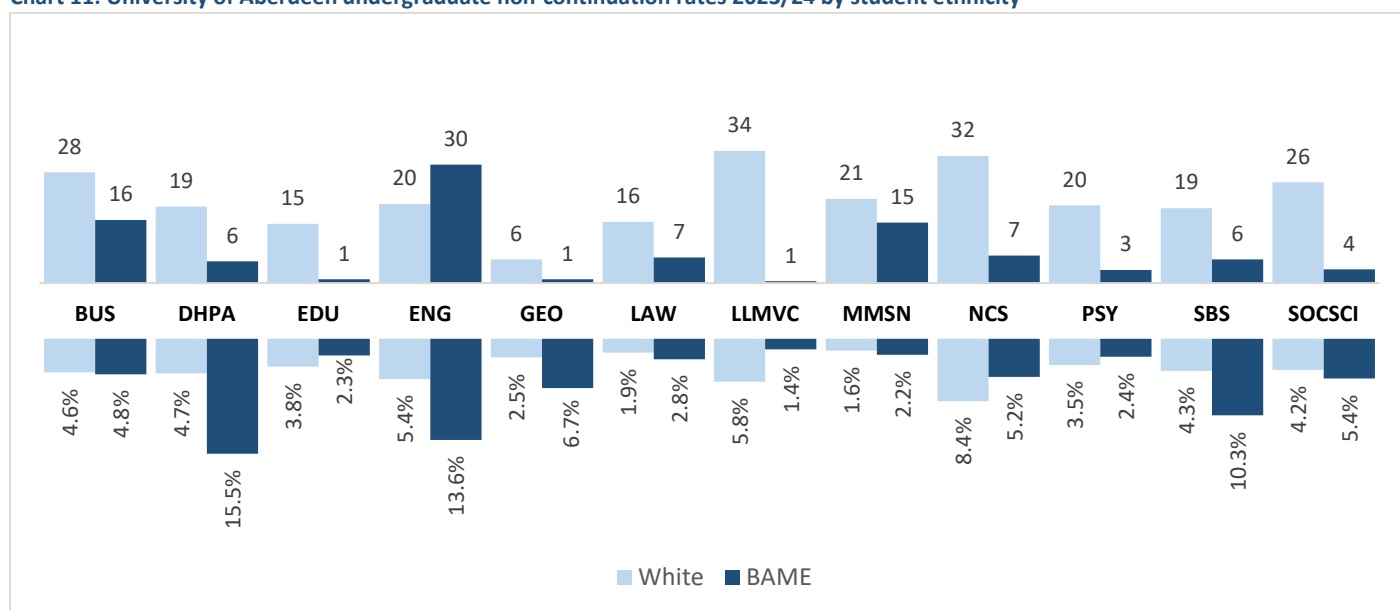|	BUS	DHPA	EDU	ENG	GEO	LAW	LLMVC	MMSN	NCS	PSY	SBS	SOCSCI
White	28	19	15	20	6	16	34	21	32	20	19	26
BAME	16	6	1	30	1	7	1	15	7	3	6	4
White %	4.6%	4.7%	3.8%	5.4%	2.5%	1.9%	5.8%	1.6%	8.4%	3.5%	4.3%	4.2%
BAME %	4.8%	15.5%	2.3%	13.6%	6.7%	2.8%	1.4%	2.2%	5.2%	2.4%	10.3%	5.4%

■ White ■ BAME

Chart 11 shows BAME undergraduates having higher non-continuation rates than White students is repeated across eight of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in DHPA where BAME undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 15.5% compared with a non-continuation rate of 4.7% for White undergraduates. It should be noted that the population of BAME undergraduates is much lower than White undergraduates in DHPA.

Three Schools reverse the institutional picture in 2023/34 with a higher non-continuation rate for White students – EDU, LLMVC, NCS and Psychology.

However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.

Chart 12: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2019/20 to 2023/24 by student disability status #1
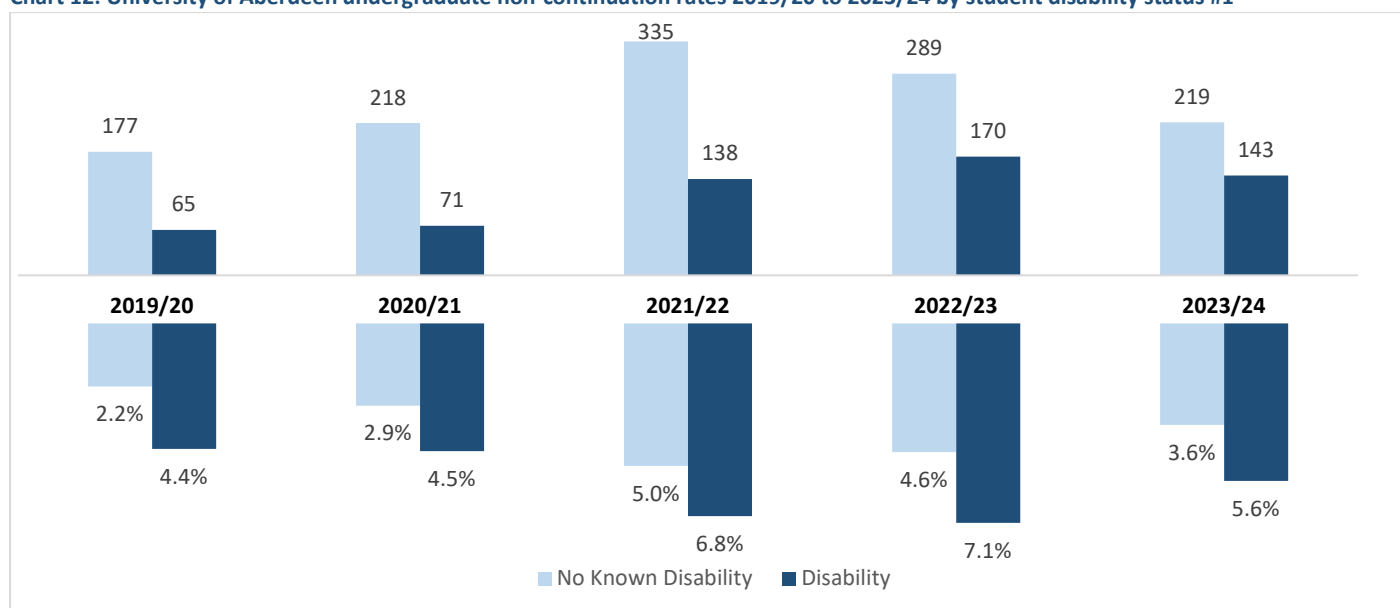

Chart 12 shows that there is a consistently higher rate of non-continuation among undergraduates who indicate that they have a disability than their counterparts who do not declare any known disability, with a gap of two percentage points in 2023/24.

Chart 13: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates 2023/24 by student disability status
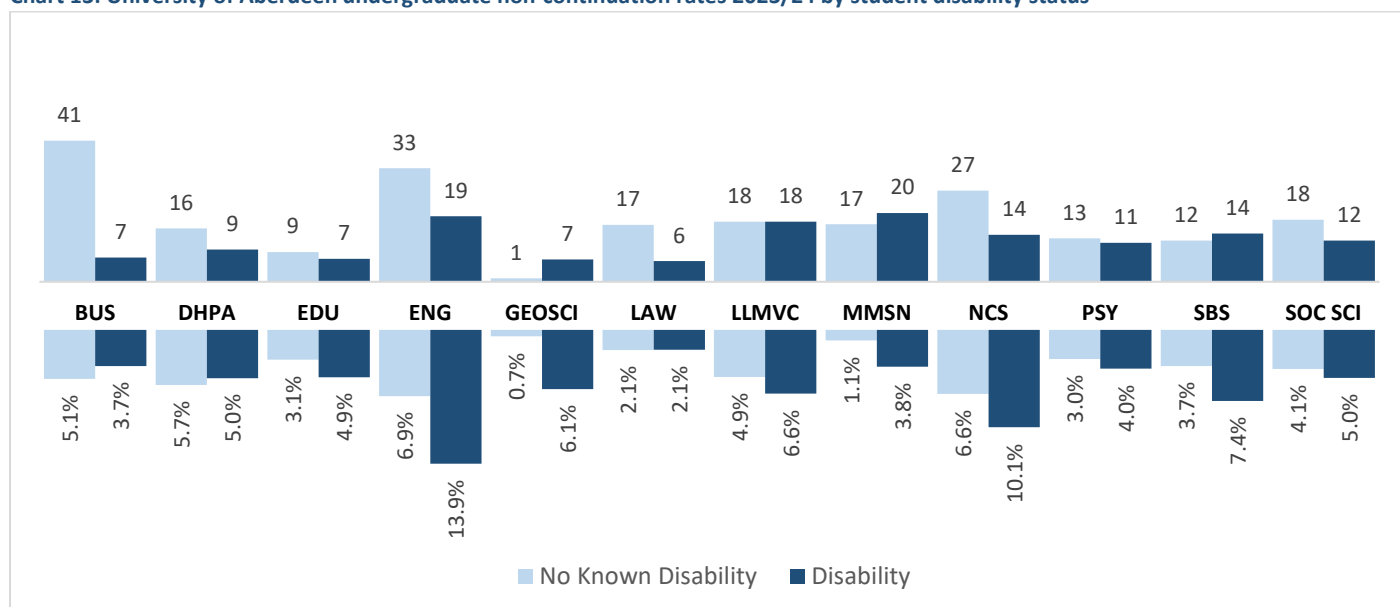

Chart 13 shows undergraduates who have no known disability having lower non-continuation rates than students with disability is repeated across nine of the twelve Schools at the University, with the largest gap evident in Engineering where non-disabled undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 6.9% compared with a non-continuation rate of 13.9% for disabled undergraduates. This is followed by the School of Geosciences where non-disabled undergraduates had a non-continuation rate of 0.7% compared with a non-continuation rate of 6.1% for disabled undergraduates.

Two Schools (Business and DHPA) show disabled undergraduates having lower non-continuation rates than non-disabled students. The School of Law had an equal non-continuation rate. However, historical checking of this data suggests that this relative performance in individual Schools can be mixed over several years and not indicative of any defined pattern where a School shows the same pattern year on year.
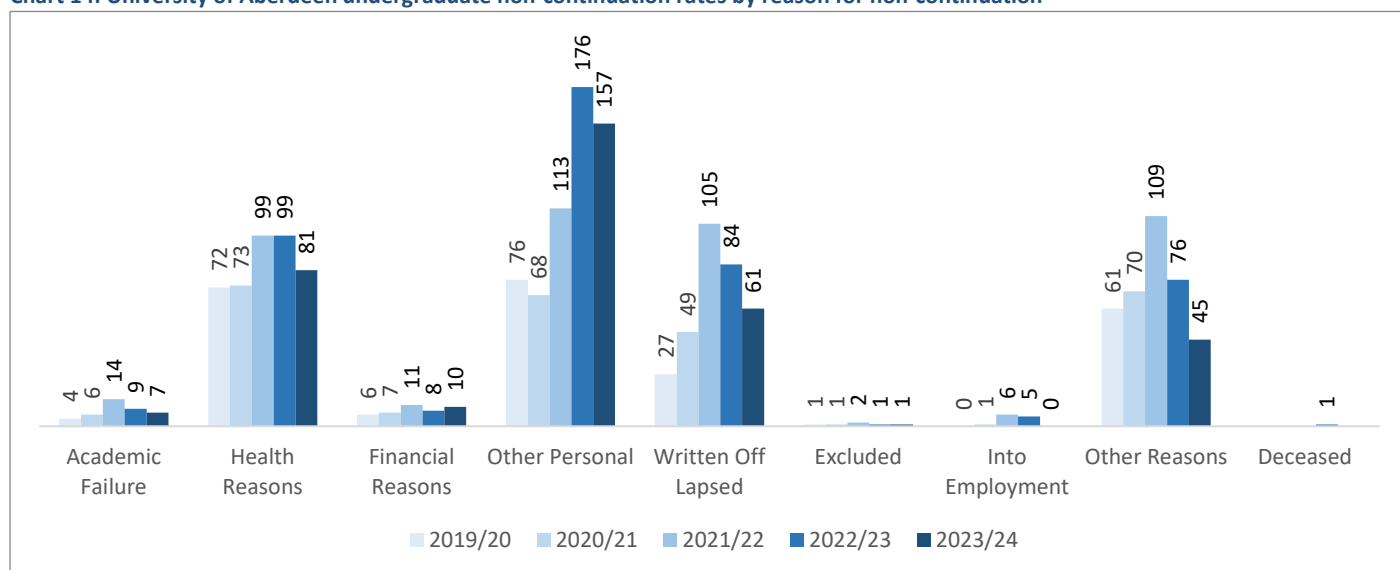
Chart 14: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates by reason for non-continuation

Legend: 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24

Chart 14 shows that generally, the most common reason for non-continuation is, in terms of magnitude, 'Other Personal', 'Other Reasons', 'Health Reasons' and 'Written Off Lapsed'.

It is noted that numbers may not be identical as reported at the time due to changes against the individual student records in respect of the reason provided for non-continuation, although the number of changes will be small and make no material difference to any patterns.
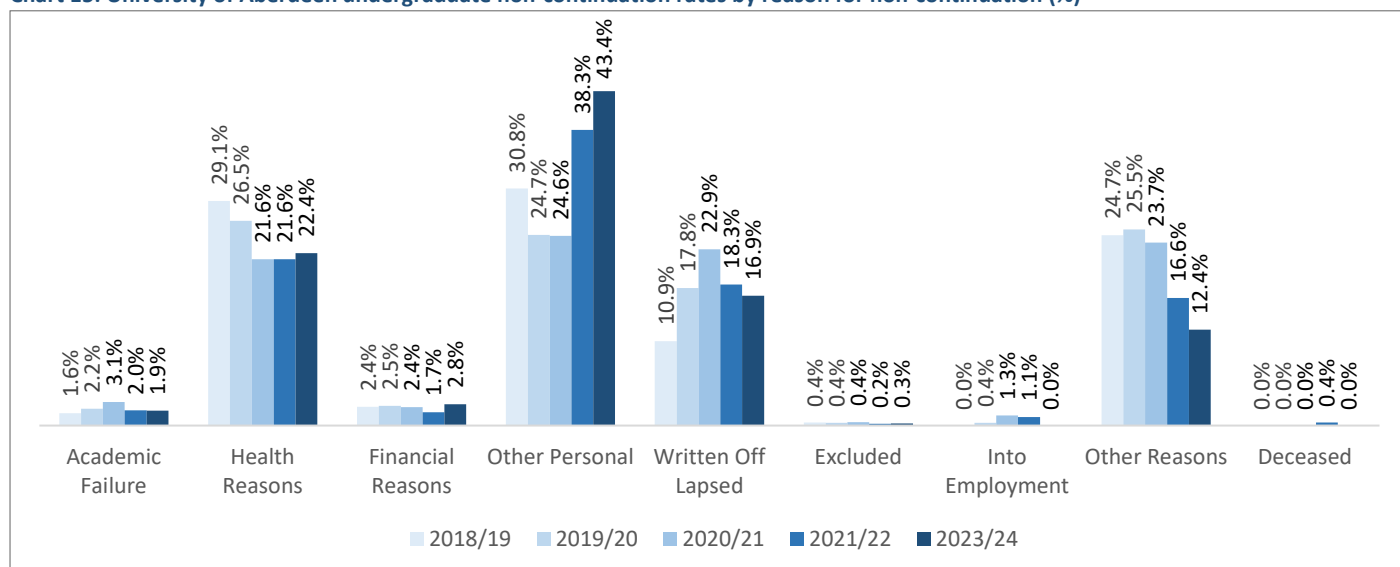
Chart 15: University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates by reason for non-continuation (%)

Legend: 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2023/24

Chart 15 shows that 2023/24 had lower non-continuation rates than the previous year for five out of nine reasons for non-continuing students.

It is noted 'Health Reasons', 'Other Reasons', and 'Other Personal' could potentially cover numerous individual circumstances, and from this data it isn't possible to identify systematic reasons for non-continuation across the institution. Further insight may, however, be possible with more detailed qualitative analysis of individual cases.

Lisa Gove, Planning Analyst
Directorate of Planning & Governance

Full-time Undergraduate Retention 2023/24
data supplied by Student Records

			Year of Programme						Domicile				Gender			Ethnicity			Disability Status	
		TOTAL	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Scotland	RUK	EU	Rest of World	Female	Male	Other	White	BAME	Unknown	Disability	No Known Disability
UoA	Continuing or Qualifying	8656	2030	2146	2126	1996	358	6070	1203	546	837	5060	3583	13	6544	1910	202	2566	6090
	Non-continuing	362	159	105	69	28	1	261	37	18	46	171	190	1	255	95	12	143	219
	% NC	4.0%	7.3%	4.7%	3.1%	1.4%	0.3%	4.1%	3.0%	3.2%	5.2%	3.3%	5.0%	7.1%	3.9%	5.0%	5.9%	5.6%	3.6%
BUS	Continuing or Qualifying	950	199	210	271	268	2	578	117	36	221	381	569	0	586	318	47	181	770
	Non-continuing	48	23	12	5	8	0	24	4	3	17	12	36	-	28	16	4	7	41
	% NC	4.8%	10.4%	5.4%	1.8%	2.9%	0.0%	4.0%	3.3%	7.8%	7.2%	3.1%	5.9%	-	4.6%	4.8%	7.9%	3.7%	5.1%
DHP	Continuing or Qualifying	434	97	119	118	97	2	313	72	17	32	255	179	1	394	30	10	177	257
	Non-continuing	25	16	6	3	1	0	21	3	1	1	13	12	0	19	6	0	9	16
	% NC	5.4%	14.0%	4.4%	2.5%	0.5%	0.0%	6.2%	4.0%	2.9%	1.5%	4.7%	6.5%	0.0%	4.7%	15.5%	0.0%	5.0%	5.7%
EDU	Continuing or Qualifying	416	115	99	105	97	0	404	7	2	3	374	42	0	400	15	1	136	280
	Non-continuing	15	7	7	1	0	-	15	0	0	0	11	5	-	15	0	0	7	9
	% NC	3.6%	5.7%	6.6%	1.3%	0.0%	-	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	9.9%	-	3.8%	2.3%	0.0%	4.9%	3.1%
ENG	Continuing or Qualifying	566	121	121	135	145	44	350	67	53	96	114	450	2	348	190	28	118	448
	Non-continuing	52	13	13	23	2	1	32	4	5	11	9	43	0	20	30	2	19	33
	% NC	8.4%	9.7%	9.7%	14.6%	1.4%	2.2%	8.4%	5.6%	8.6%	10.3%	7.3%	8.7%	0.0%	5.4%	13.6%	6.7%	13.9%	6.9%
GEOSCI	Continuing or Qualifying	251	71	79	49	52	0	188	44	9	10	134	117	0	233	14	4	100	151
	Non-continuing	8	2	2	3	1	-	7	1	0	0	4	4	-	6	1	1	7	1
	% NC	2.9%	2.8%	2.5%	5.8%	1.0%	-	3.4%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%	3.3%	-	2.5%	6.7%	12.5%	6.1%	0.7%
LAW	Continuing or Qualifying	1080	276	282	285	225	13	824	171	23	62	724	354	1	833	235	13	291	789
	Non-continuing	23	12	6	3	2	0	14	4	2	3	15	8	0	16	7	1	6	17
	% NC	2.0%	4.2%	2.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	1.7%	2.3%	6.2%	4.6%	2.0%	2.1%	0.0%	1.9%	2.8%	4.0%	2.1%	2.1%
LLMVC	Continuing or Qualifying	589	134	137	159	137	23	465	68	31	25	405	182	2	545	34	10	248	341
	Non-continuing	35	19	8	7	2	0	30	2	2	2	24	11	0	34	1	1	18	18
	% NC	5.6%	12.4%	5.2%	3.9%	1.4%	0.0%	6.1%	2.2%	4.6%	7.4%	5.6%	5.7%	0.0%	5.8%	1.4%	9.5%	6.6%	4.9%
MMSN	Continuing or Qualifying	2025	464	486	399	426	251	1390	288	153	195	1269	754	2	1295	695	34	504	1520
	Non-continuing	37	16	13	5	3	0	26	3	2	5	25	12	0	21	15	0	20	17
	% NC	1.8%	3.3%	2.6%	1.3%	0.6%	0.0%	1.8%	1.1%	1.5%	2.5%	1.9%	1.5%	0.0%	1.6%	2.2%	0.0%	3.8%	1.1%
NCS	Continuing or Qualifying	495	124	158	102	104	8	263	113	66	53	156	339	1	350	129	17	122	374
	Non-continuing	40	15	15	7	3	0	31	5	1	3	10	30	0	32	7	1	14	27
	% NC	7.5%	10.9%	8.7%	6.4%	2.8%	0.0%	10.6%	4.2%	1.5%	5.4%	6.0%	8.2%	0.0%	8.4%	5.2%	5.5%	10.1%	6.6%
PSY	Continuing or Qualifying	681	162	171	162	180	7	463	118	65	36	520	159	2	535	134	13	273	409
	Non-continuing	24	12	5	4	2	0	19	5	1	0	12	12	1	20	3	1	11	13
	% NC	3.4%	7.1%	2.8%	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	3.9%	3.8%	1.0%	0.0%	2.2%	6.8%	17.6%	3.5%	2.4%	7.2%	4.0%	3.0%
SBS	Continuing or Qualifying	485	107	112	135	124	7	321	50	50	64	308	176	1	419	52	14	176	309
	Non-continuing	26	8	10	6	2	0	20	4	1	1	17	9	0	19	6	1	14	12
	% NC	5.1%	7.0%	8.2%	4.3%	1.6%	0.0%	5.9%	7.4%	2.0%	1.5%	5.2%	4.9%	0.0%	4.3%	10.3%	6.7%	7.4%	3.7%
SOC SCI	Continuing or Qualifying	685	161	174	207	142	3	513	90	42	40	421	263	2	608	65	12	242	444
	Non-continuing	30	16	9	2	3	0	23	3	2	4	21	9	1	26	4	1	12	18
	% NC	4.2%	9.0%	4.9%	1.0%	2.1%	0.0%	4.2%	2.7%	3.4%	8.0%	4.6%	3.3%	25.0%	4.2%	5.4%	8.3%	5.0%	4.1%

NOTE: Student data is rounded to whole numbers for clarity of display, although percentages are calculated using the underlying full value.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPSCALING WORK BASED LEARNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK STREAM

REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(Sub-Group of the University Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC))

1   **GROUP TITLE**

Upscaling Work Based Learning Policy Development Work Stream

2   **DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT**

March 2025

3   **CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA**

Co-Chairs: Head of Careers and Employability | Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship
Administrative Support Area: Careers and Employability Service

4   **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

4.1   Our Aberdeen 2040 strategy commits to providing more work-based learning (WBL), through placements and volunteering.

4.2   A task and finish group in January 2022 conducted an initial scoping exercise followed by an institutional placement and WBL review report produced by external consultants Gradconsult. The report provided a set of recommendations, using an evidence-base of relevant research and sector knowledge and experience, to achieve upscaling of WBL. A vision for upscaling WBL, and short-, medium- and long-term proposals to implement recommendations to achieve our ambition to upscale WBL were approved by Senior Management Team in March 2023. The recommendations included the following infrastructure and resource requirements to upscale provision of WBL:

4.2.1   Establish infrastructure, systems, and processes to deliver WBL at scale.
4.2.2   Create a clear, concise, robust institutional placement policy.

4.3   A digital project board is currently established to develop a system to enable us to provide students with WBL opportunities at scale (recommendation 4.2.1).

4.4   A draft institutional policy was developed by external consultants Gradconsult (recommendation 4.2.2), however further work is needed to refine and complete the policy documentation, ensuring it aligns with institution structures and procedures. This work was paused due to lack of resource, an impact of the recruitment freeze in November 2023.

4.5   Further delaying development of a robust institutional placement policy presents risks to the Institution as we seek to scale WBL. This work stream is being established to develop a suitable policy which meets the needs of the Institution. This work stream will need to carefully consider an achievable timescale, maximising progress, using available resource.

5   **REMIT**

The workstream will complete the following work:

5.1   Review draft institutional policy which has already been developed by external consultants Gradconsult.
5.2   Identify and implement any required changes to draft policy to ensure fit with institution context.
5.3   Establish any connections between the draft placement policy and other institution policies, procedures and guidance notes to ensure all are fully connected.
5.4   Establish need for, route and timescales for any academic views and approvals required.
5.5   Table draft policy with EEC, UEC and other relevant committees for comment and feedback.

5.6   Submit paperwork for policy approval at required committees.

Members' Responsibilities:

Each member of the workstream will actively contribute to discussions and proactively feedback on discussions to and from their respective areas.

6   **COMPOSITION**:

Co-Chairs: Head of Careers and Employability Service | Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship

Membership: Selection of School representatives (comprising those currently involved/interested in delivery of WBL)
Careers and Employability Representative
Academic Services Representative
Work-based Coordinator
Go Abroad Representative
Student Support / Disability Representative
International Compliance Representative
Qatar campus representative
Deans with relevant areas of responsibility
Students' Association Representative

ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP

7   **MEMBERSHIP**

Representative Area	Memberships
Co-Chair	**Tracey Innes – Head of Careers and Employability** **John Barrow – Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship**
Clerk	**Ellen Minshull**
Deans with relevant areas of responsibility	**Steve Tucker** **John Mynott** **Heather May Morgan**
Work-based Learning Representative	**Peter Cross**
School Admin Manager Representative	**Rhona Moore**
Health and Safety Representative	**Emily Blake / Mike Houston**
Academic Services Representative	**Morag MacRae**
Go Abroad Manager	**Louisa Stratton**
Postgraduate Research College Representative	**Masha Shaw**
Student Support / Disability Representative	**Jemma Murdoch / Lesley Muirhead**
International Advice and Compliance	**Briony Livingston** (Sharon Cassidy as back up)

Qatar Campus Representative	**Lyn Batchelor** and TBC
Student Representation	VP Education (TBC)
School Representatives:	1. **Alan Macpherson (LLMVC)** 2. **Desidre Coopasamy (Business School)** 3. **Helen Pierce (DHPA)** 4. **Ian Fleming (MMSN)** 5. **Stuart Durkin (School of Social Sciences)** 6. **Nejc Sedlar (School of Psychology)**

8   REPORTING LINE/PARENT COMMITTEE AND INTERFACE WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Formal reporting line: University Education Committee (UEC) **and**
                                    Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC)

Interface with other committees: Quality Assurance Committee (QAC),
                                    Student Support Committee (SSC),
                                    School Education Committees,

9   FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

Meetings to be at least every 6 weeks for the duration of the workstream.

10   PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The agenda and meeting papers will be made available at least one week prior to meetings of the workstream. Where these papers are draft, this will be clearly identified

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EMPLOYABILITY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE (EEC)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday the 18ᵗʰ of March at 11:05.

Present: John Barrow, Tracey Innes, Danielle Grieve, Alisdair McKibben, Alan McCue, Desidre Coopasamy, Ijeoma, Jenna Stuart, Kirsty Wilson, Lenka Mbadugha, Helen Pierce

Apologies: Stuart Durkin, Christina Schmid, Margaret Jackson, Monika Gostic, Alan MacPherson, Alyson Young.

Ellen Minshull | Careers and Employability Service

ellen.minshull@abdn.ac.uk

MINUTES

1. **Approval of the Previous Minutes**   **(EEC.180325.001)**
   Minutes approved.

2. **Entrepreneurship Education update**
   Heather May Morgan and John Barrow
   An overview of the recent Entrepreneurial Education Review was given. The recommendations (Annex 1) were highlighted and shared via the group findings report.
   Members were encouraged to consider how the proposed 15-credit courses might work and any associated challenges. A drop-in consultation session has been scheduled for the 31ˢᵗ of March for those interested.

   Opportunities for collaboration were identified:
   * regarding the future curriculum review project with considerations made for other institutional projects e.g. sustainability, WBL etc.
   * with Online Education (and FutureLearn) regarding the development of short courses.
   * with the Careers and Employability Service generally but also including the development of an entrepreneurial mentoring programme, noting the current Career Mentoring Programme.

3. **'Use it or lose it' campaign in the Law School**
   Kirsty Wilson
   Issues with low engagement in employability related events has been identified via the Law School mini EEC despite student enthusiasm for such events. The Law School are considering a marketing campaign to increase participation.
   A discussion about engagement across this institution ensued. It became evident that low engagement is not specific to the Law School and can be put down to a range of factors.

   Methods for increasing engagement were shared. Including:
   * Timetabling events.
   * Sending personalised reminders 1 week and 2 days prior to events, including reminding students to add the event to their calendar.
   * Monetary incentives.
   * Highlighting 'why' students should attend.
   * Publicising events via lecture shout outs.

It was suggested that an institutional campaign on professional development in collaboration with Student Experience could be beneficial in the next academic year.

4. **Graduate Outcomes Data Dashboard –**
   The newly updated Graduate Outcomes data dashboard was presented. EEC members automatically have access to the dashboard but other staff must request access and will be granted access following completion of the mandatory staff data protection training.

5. *Internal UoA Internship Proposals –*
   Recently, staff were invited to submit proposals for summer internships within their departments. Unfortunately, there was low engagement amongst schools. A related discussion ensued, and feedback concluded that the tight timelines made it challenging to plan and therefore submit on time. In addition, it was noted that not all members received communications about the opportunity from their directors.

6. **Work Based Learning Policy Working Group Update**
   Work on the institutional Work-Based Learning Policy is due to restart on the 19th of March. Routine updates on the group's progress will be shared at EEC and other University Committees.

7. **Exploring capabilities of the course-booking system to record users' skills development.**
   Masha Shaw
   Opportunities to add MySkills skills development information to courses on the Course Booking Site have been explored. There is potential to integrate this with the Anthology Milestones project.

   A light overview of the Anthology Milestones project was given. The Students' Union noted an interest in this project.

8. **PwC Employability Audit Update**
   The institutional Employability Audit has been completed. PwC's report has given the University 'low risk' status overall. However, some medium risks were identified in individual areas. There are some inconsistencies in messaging that require clarification. Following this clarification, the report will be reissued and circulated to EEC members. The university will be required to create a follow up action report by May.

9. **Any Other Business**

- **ABDN Internships** – Applications close on Monday the 24th of March. Members were encouraged to share the materials via their networks

- **AI Careers Research Survey** – The Careers and Employability Service are currently conducting a research project on the use of AI in career learning and job preparation and applications. Surveys for students, and for employers are currently open. Members were encouraged to share the survey with students.

- **MySkills Audit Data –** School engagement data in the MySkills Audit has now been collected and can be shared with members. To request access, please contact John Barrow.

   Date of Next Meeting
   Tuesday 10th of September at **11:05**. **Location:** QA-AUSA Union Building Rm 101 | Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)

Minutes of the meeting held on 17/03/2025

Present: Nick Edwards, Jason Bohan, Sara Misuri, Lesley Muirhead, Despoina Kaloriti, Erin Ferguson, Miles Rothoerl, Karim Hurtig, Tõnis Tilk, Susan Halfpenny, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Megan McFarlane (in lieu of Sally Middleton), Liam Dyker (guest speaker)

Online: Karen Forrest and Zeshu Shao (in lieu of Madge Jackson), Natalie Kinchin-Williams, Lyn Batchelor, Wendy Lowe, Heidi Mehrkens, Jenna Stuart, Rhiannon Thompson, Mary Pryor, Tim Baker, Jemma Murdoch, Duncan Stuart

Apologies: John Cavanagh, Melanie Viney, Fiona Stoddard, Madge Jackson, Steve Tucker, Bekah Walker, Martin Barker, Ingrid Stanyer, John Cavanagh, Charlotta Hillerdal, Peter Henderson, Martin Mills, Melanie Viney, Kirstin Annand, Iain Grant

1. Welcome and Chairs' Update

Jason Bohan (JB) welcomes the committee and advises that the agenda points will be discussed in a different order, due to unforeseen circumstances.

2. Approval of Minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 06/02/2025
   SSEC-17032025-002 (link)

- Despoina Kaloriti (DK) to share some comments about the previous minutes with Sara Misuri (SM). SM to update the minutes accordingly. DK shares that the Registry currently does use some email/letter templates with withdrawing students to outline the process surrounding withdrawals and associated support.
- Minutes are approved.

3. Actions from the previous meeting
   SSEC-17032025-003 (link)

- JB has been discussing the possibility of reintroducing engagement roles within Schools with the.School.Engagement.Leads group. The Schools have agreed to review the role and streamline the process for monitoring engagement and risk-assess.
- Following the Withdrawal Report, many commented on the student withdrawal process and reported that it may need adjusting and clarifications. The process also does not seem to capture all the preferred data. Nick Edwards (NE) and JB met with the Academic Services team and Emma Tough. It has been reported that the University is already looking to review the Re-Admission Policy. Language around 'withdrawal' and 're-admission' will be reviewed to include renewed terminology. While the process will not change particularly, there will be more clarity surrounding concepts such as breaks from studies. The process for requesting to withdraw will move to be fully digital (online form), thus substituting the more outdated process of using a Word document. The University hopes to implement the changes by AY 2025-26, and will seek collaboration

with Alison Roberts, Registry Team, and other relevant teams. The Re-Admission Policy will also be reviewed, and any changes will be implemented accordingly.

- The introduction of the Report & Request Tool highlighted that there may be some confusion around escalating student reports to other teams. The School.Engagement. Leads group and Student Support have been collaborating on creating a solution. The teams agreed to create a Student.in.Distress.guide over the summer – which will include a section focused on how/when to escalate cases to Student Support. Jemma Murdoch and Anna Goldhawk will lead on the guide.
- Duncan Stuart (DS) to review the Induction Process and the accessibility of the digital items. DS and his team have already passed some of their work to the School Admin Managers (SAMS).
- Stats around the Feedback of Safety on Campus suggest that PGT/PGR students mostly feel safe on campus (around 90% feel either very safe or safe; and they feel enough support from the University. No live data is currently available for UG students; but the PG data can be shared with SSEC in due time.

4. (7) Student Discipline Paper
   SSEC-17032025-007 (link)

Liam Dyker (LD) presenting: The paper presented relates to Academic Discipline Update (to note, Non-Academic Discipline falls under the remit of Student Support). The data is presented as the annual review of the AY 2023-24.

The overall report highlights that the total number of academic misconduct cases has decreased in AY 2023/24 from those received in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
The percentage of the student population with academic misconduct cases is low (0.73%), and the majority relate to plagiarism.
For the first time, the University started to include cases related to the use of Artificial Intelligence. Plagiarism (AI) represents the second highest type of Academic misconduct cases.
Across all the Academic misconduct cases, only one resulted in expulsion – which is a significant decrease from previous years.
The number of cases for international students has fallen drastically, though it remains the cohort with the highest proportion of cases.
The data can be sorted by School and is available on the spreadsheet.
The decreasing amount of Academic Misconduct cases is likely related to the work carried out by Schools and CAD to promote Academic Integrity.

Karim Hurtig (KH) highlights that the report differentiates between UK, EU, and INT students. Currently, EU students are treated as International Students; so KH wonders if the International Students may be classified in different regions. Most of the plagiarism cases are seemingly happening with students from the Global South. LD agrees that the team may consider looking into updating future reports to better reflect the student population (QAC to bring forward).

Tim Baker (TB) wonders if the reduction in data may be related to the fact that Schools have stopped progressing cases as frequently as in the past – and that they will often try to resolve them on a school level in the first instance. LD can look at how data is recorded in their team to assess the information and understand the amount/types of cases that are progressed to a hearing (QAC to bring forward).

According to some students' accounts shared with TB; the waiting time for an academic hearing has significantly increased in the past years. LD agrees that, due to a variety of factors, it sometimes may take an extended amount of time to organise a hearing. As the Code of Practice on Student Discipline will soon be reviewed; LD agrees that he can report the problem related to waiting times (QAC to bring forward).

Jemma Murdoch (JM) reports that Schools highlighted a drop in academic misconduct, but that this can be linked to the increase in adjustments during in-class assessments. As a result of more class tests, plagiarism has decreased; however, this resulted in increased challenges related to in-person tests (such as operational considerations – booking rooms, having invigilators, etc.).

Lyn Batchelor (LB) reports that there has been a drop in Academic Misconduct cases at the Qatar campus – primarily within the Business School. This also coincides with the increase of in-class tests. The Computing Programs in Qatar and NCSU had high plagiarism cases in 22/23, but these dropped to zero in 24/25. LB notes that the decrease in number is likely related to the work done by Staff members and their ability to educate on plagiarism, referencing, and academic integrity.

Graeme Kirkpatrick (GK) highlights that it would be helpful to have data around percentages and headcounts sorted by Schools. GK highlights that the Student Union has noticed that different Schools seem to approach plagiarism and collusion differently, and identifying trends and tendencies would be helpful.

5. (8) Appeals and Complaints Paper
   SSEC-17032025-008 (link)

Liam Dyker (LD) presenting: The Report contains detailed data on appeal and complaint submissions received prior to and during the 2023/24 academic year, in addition to an analysis of emerging trends. Caution should be urged in interpreting the data because, from 2024/25, a new policy has been introduced – thus decreasing the number of cases brought up to Schools.

Appeals: The number of appeals has fallen, and the total percentage of the student population remains low and consistent with previous reports. As previously, the MMSN and Business School continue to have the largest number of cases. There have been some improvements in some Schools, but there are varied reasons why an academic appeal may be submitted.
The number of cases related to the removal of a class certificate (C7) has remained in line with previous years in 2023/24, though the number of cases remains high in proportion to other cases received, comprising 47.7% of all cases received. About 70% of cases related to C7s have been partially or fully upheld. This data may change in 24/25, with the renewed Monitoring and Engagement process. Informally, a difference and decrease have already been noticed, including by the School.Engagement.Leads group. Resolving engagement concerns informally at a School level would be especially beneficial for both staff and students alike.
Timescales have been improving and are predicted to continue improving.
The workload for Schools has decreased but has not been removed completely. Time is still focused on the competency-panel stage and on reviewing cases.

Complaints: A smaller number of complaint cases are still recorded – some of these at the frontline. Training is rolled out to Schools and Directorates to ensure that complaints are addressed the correct way. Given the wide range of potential complaints, it is more difficult to collect relevant data regarding clear trends.

LB notes that Appeals & Complaints of students in the program in Qatar are dealt with by the School; but frontline investigations are carried out by the Qatar Staff. To ensure that future reports are more accurate and reflective of the work done in the Qatar campus, LB wonders if frontline training can also be delivered to the Qatar campus. LD agrees to review the process (QAC to take forward).

GK wonders if it would be possible to analyse data by student provenance/global region. Similarly to what was reported in the School Discipline Paper, the Student Union has noticed that most Appeals & Complaints are concerning students from the Global South; therefore designated data would be especially useful.

6. (11) University Risk Register
   SSEC-17032025-011 (link)
   SSEC-17032024-011a (spreadsheet) (link)

Nick Edwards (NE) presenting: this is the start of a team review by SSEC on the Education and Student Experience Risks that are contained within the University's Risk Register (primarily managed by Debbie Dyker and Jo-Anne Murray). NE collated the risks and determined the impact they may have on Student Experience. SSEC will look at reviewing and discussing the annexe and information every six months (additionally, further quarterly updates will follow with the Planning team/Debbie Dyker). The committee will discuss how to control, update and action such risks. NE has already agreed to update the current annexe to remove risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

LB highlights that the non-Aberdeen campuses appreciate how a point has been included to reflect on the Quality Assurance Report and determine the importance of pursing quality across the various committees. NE highlights that there used to be a dedicated tab for International Partnerships, but TNE operations should be more embedded within the main Risk Assessment. References to other campuses will begin to be more integrated with the overall risk assessment topics; rather than separated.

GK wonders if the Wider Student Experience also considers the current financial situation of the University. GK reports that the recent VS/ER scheme has had a negative impact on the student experience; for example with the repeated closure of Libraries across the year due to reduced staffing. Given the current financial situation of the University, GK is concerned about potential future trends which may continue to impact staffing and, consequently, student experience. NE explains that this issue is explored by the HR Risk Assessment; however, NE will look at the possibility of exploring more in detail the role that reduced staffing has had/will have on the general student experience.

Megan McFarlane (MF) refers to the point on non-continuation students from a student recruitment prospective. MF and the Recruitment Team have been working on lowering tariffs to enhance student recruitment – and have been engaging on ongoing discussions with Planning. UG entry requirements have been explored, and PG entry requirements will be explored in the upcoming month.

Feedback and thinking points are encouraged and should be shared with NE by the end of 21.03.2025 (Teams post reminder).

7. (4) Sport & Active Health (Draft) Strategy 2025-30
   SSEC-17032025-004 (link)

Duncan Stuart (DS) presenting: the document is the result of collaborative work with the Students Union, ASV, the Scottish Students Sport, and the University. The document is being shared with SSEC to gather feedback before sharing it with SMT. Ideally, this would result in the creation of a working group focused on how to deliver the objectives outlined in the strategy.

Feedback is welcome and can be shared directly with DS.

Tõnis Tilk (TT) agrees that the document will have a positive impact in ensuring that Sport is valued at the University. TT believes that the document would benefit from a closer link to the 2040 strategy and a more linked-up strategy with the wider University. TT would like to see more direct mentions of the work done by the Student Union and ASV, perhaps including the review of Sports under ASV. Finally, TT trusts that there would be scope for including a focus on the impact Estates may have on the Sport strategy. Overall, the strategy is acknowledged as positive.

MM highlights that they have been reviewing the RUK Scholarship Provision for 2026 for UG and would like to remind SSEC that some sports scholarships are available. MM and DS to discuss potential marketing strategies surrounding Sports scholarships.

KH highlights that the University is great at promoting ASV to prospective students, but more attention should be focused on ensuring that the facilities are effectively accessible to enrolled students.

Susan Halfpenny (SH) wonders if the strategy should have a specific focus on International Students. Similarly, LB wonders if TNE should also be considered separately. DS explains that the strategy's overarching goal is to promote activity across all campuses – but it may be more difficult to develop specific strategies for the TNE campuses. DS explains that EEW Team will soon welcome a new intern. Their role will be to focus on the International Student Experience and understand where further support may be necessary. The new intern will be able to investigate the query surrounding International Students and Sports.

8. (5) AUSA Standing Point/Update

Miles Rothoerl (MR) presenting: The Student Union will provide a general update for this meeting.

- Annual General Meeting: Ran every 1.5 years. Met quorum with 350 students. The AGM was rather successful.
- Class Rep Conference: around 80 Class Reps from across various Schools attended. Training, funded by the Development Trust, was provided. The event was positive in terms of networking and engagement.
- AUSA Student Officers Elections: Over 2000 students voted, with about 12.2% turnout. The percentage of voter is especially strong for the SU, especially compared to previous years – and in line with the general national trend.
  The new officers are as follows: Student President - Christina Schmid (re-elected); Vice President for Activities - Hannah Cowie; Vice President for Communities - Jonathan

Dorrat; Vice President for Education - Samuel Seymour; Vice President for Welfare - Karim Hurtig (re-elected)

MR shares that the Student Union has been receiving feedback regarding the release of Graduation Ceremony dates. International Students would especially appreciate it if information/dates could be released earlier, to allow for travel arrangements (for instance, with visiting families). Further, some students have complained about the tickets being released in May – which may impact attendance and travel arrangements.

DS confirms that their team is looking at reviewing the process for releasing graduation dates. The process is a bit convoluted, but there can be scope for bringing this forward. The ticket sale process is more complicated, as it currently occurs once the applications to graduate are closed, as to ensure equal access to the tickets. DS and AUSA to speak about possible alternative solutions (for example, allowing students to purchase their two guaranteed tickets ahead of the general ticket sale).

Zeshu Shao recounts that many International PG students (Jan starts) have also complained about the Graduation scheduling – especially those who are impacted by their VISA (and whose graduation ceremonies are often scheduled past the VISA expiration date). DS explains that this challenge is a bit more difficult to address, as the graduation cycle is set various years ahead; but DS can report the feedback. Further challenges to the set cycle of graduations are also in relation to RGU's graduation dates and the risk of overlaps.

9. (6) Full-Time Undergraduate Non-Continuation Internal Data
   SSEC-17032025-006 (link)
   Reviewed version SSEC-17032025-006 (link)

Jason Bohan (JB) presenting: The purpose of the paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the 2023/24 full-time undergraduate non-continuation data as produced internally by the University. This differs from the HESA non-continuation performance indicator, which is restricted to first year undergraduate entrants only. The internal non-continuation data focuses on various non-continuation students, including those who are not registered for the following academic year, not completing their studies, and who are seemingly not continuing their studies in other institutions.

The results are overall positive, the non-continuation rate for 2023/24 is 4.0%, which represents a decrease of one percentage point from 2022/23's position of 5.0%. However, for the first time, data highlights that International Students are more likely to not continue than their UK counterpart. Further, the data considers the following categories and non-continuation trends: Male > Female Students; BAME > White Students; Students with declared disability > non-disabled students. It is noted that 'Health Reasons', 'Other Reasons', and 'Other Personal' covers numerous individual circumstances for non-continuation, and it isn't possible to identify systematic reasons for non-continuation across the institution.

Despoina Kaloriti observes how various students seem to be under the non-continuation data due to their non-attendance; however, the report does not explain the reason why some students may have chosen to stop attending classes.

JB highlights that, while the data has improved, some issues are unchanged – for example, the high levels of non-continuing students in Y1, or of disabled students. The University has been looking at strategies to counteract this, for example by organising BeWell week (to foster a

positive environment), reviewing the monitoring processes, etc. Further work can be developed and strategies reconsidered.

MR highlights that it would be helpful again to categorise data by regions (International, European, etc.). MR also highlights that Chart 15 'University of Aberdeen undergraduate non-continuation rates by reason for non-continuation (%)' demonstrates a spike in students reporting feeling 'Excluded'. JB to review the data on Chart 15 for accuracy, with particular focus on the 'Excluded' data.

10. (9) Digital Exams Guidance Paper
    SSEC-17032025-009 ([link](#))

Jason Bohan (JB) presenting: The purpose of this paper is to develop clear School guidance on the delivery of digital-based assessments. Schools regularly employ a range of digital assessments both in person and remotely. The use of these types of assessments has grown substantially post-COVID however, we have also witnessed inconsistency in practice, which calls for greater school guidance, and support/advice for students on a range of issues. Students have experienced difficulties in understanding the difference between assessment types (for example, invigilated exams vs. class tests), and the expected regulations.

A working group was formed out of the Exams Planning Group, and a survey was delivered it Schools to identify where additional support may be needed. Schools highlighted that they require additional support, but they also shared concerns about the possibility of new types of assessment being delivered with a return to fully on-campus teaching.

The work by the group also resulted in the review of the disability guidance, the development of an assessment taxonomy, and overall guidance for Schools surrounding procedures and digital assessments. A summary of the main addition to the guidance can be found on section 5 of the paper. Overall, the new guidance will look to clarify practice surrounding facilities and equipment, extra time in assessments, use of browsers, Schools and Students' expectations, etc. The Committee has been invited to share feedback during the meeting, or with JB by 20/03 – as per the Teams [post](#).

SSEC approves the guidance, so this will move to QAC to be integrated into the AQH.

Jenna Stuart reports that there has been a trend whereby fully online students have been sometimes requested to attend in-person assessments. JB will consider whether guidance surrounding this issue should be included in this Guidance Paper, or if should be considered elsewhere.

MK agrees that the guidance is a positive addition to the institution, and helps in providing clarity and structure for both Schools and Students.

Heidi Mehrkens wonders if it would be possible to provide practical advice regarding how to implement the recommended changes – for example how to implement additional 'upload' time' across various types of assessments. JB to look at the possibility of implementing changes to the guidance to account for more practical guidance.

In reference to point 3.9, Lesley Muirhead (LM) highlights some key changes to the language. LM to share comments and feedback with JB.

JB and Mary Pryor have been working on guidance for schools to Inclusive Assessments. That guidance may be further integrated to the Digital Assessment Guidance.

11. (10) Update on Inclusion Adjustments

Lesley Muirhead (LM) presenting: the proposal to review Study Adjustments was first presented to SSEC last year, and the work is about to be finalised with an update to the Student Record System.

Since discussing this with SSEC, LM reports that the University has positively committed to update their language and move from using the terminology 'provision' to instead speak of 'adjustments'. However, some of the online systems (like SRS, Student Hub) still use the older language. JB and LM have already requested an update to these sites.

The proposal to update Inclusion Adjustments focused largely on reviewing and expanding upon the types of codes used on SRS. Currently, SRS speaks of 'disability provision codes' and lists a limited amount of pre-written codes. The adjustments have thus been relying largely on the use of a 'free text' option to accommodate for non-coded adjustments. To promote inclusion and consistency across the Institution, a new collection of codes has been developed and was previously circulated with SSEC for review. The new database has been shared with IT and the update to SRS should be progresses. There will be some testing after the new system of codes is implemented, to ensure that the information is accessible and transferable across Student Support and Schools.

The goal is to have the change finalised and implemented on SRS by Sept 2025.

AOBC

- Susan Halfpenny (SH) highlights that reduced staffing and limited resources have affected the Library Services, especially in their opening times – with Medical and Taylor Library closing on various occasions. In terms of Student Experience, this challenge has especially affected the delivery of the service during Evening & Weekends. The Library team is prioritising the opening of facilities around assessment times. The 24-hour access to SDRL will not be affected this semester, as it will be open as usual with the support of the Security Team.
  MR highlights that, while 24-hour access has been confirmed for the current AY, there hasn't been confirmation that budgeting will be made available in the upcoming years. MR reflects that it may be necessary to reconsider 24-hour accessible spaces in the future – as the MacRobert Building does not provide facilities on par with SDRL.
  JM reminds the committee that if any student reports issues in their ability to access technology (laptop, Wi-Fi), or if they speak of Digital Inclusion, Disability, and Equipment; they can be signposted to Student Advice & Support (as funds and loans may be available).
- In line with the University Guidance, SSEC will move to the DecisionTime platform (about the platform) in 2025/26. SSEC members who are not on the platform will be

invited to join it over the break. The Teams site will remain active and documents and papers will be available.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON THE MYABERDEEN ROLLOVER PROCESS FOR AY 2025-26 AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

1.   **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

> This paper outlines provides an update on the MyAberdeen Rollover Process for AY 2025-26, the support available to staff, including training sessions, resources, one to one advice sessions, as well as an overview of timescales and communications plan.
>
> This paper is for information only.

2.   **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

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

3.   **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

> This paper is for information only.

4.   **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

4.1   Following the successful pilot of an institutional course template for the creation of course areas in MyAberdeen during AY 2024-25, and the benefits of such an approach for enhancing the student learning experience, the University Education Committee approved the following recommendations on the 26 February 2025:

- For AY 2025-26 and subsequent academic years, the creation of all MyAberdeen courses areas for that academic year will use an institutional template, which will be reviewed and updated in consultation with the School Directors of Education and the Education Deans prior to the start of each academic year
- Course materials and assessments from last year's course areas in MyAberdeen will **not** be copied across during the rollover process
- Course areas in MyAberdeen should be made available to students a week before the start of teaching so that students can access the course guide and reading lists

4.2   This change in the MyAberdeen rollover process saves staff time by providing a pre-built structure for presenting standard information that should be available in all course areas in MyAberdeen whilst ensuring staff still have freedom in how they design their learning materials, activities and assessments.

4.3   This paper provides an update on the work that the eLearning team are and will be doing in order to support staff with this change, an overview of timescales and the communications plan.

5.   SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND STAFF TO ENSURE THEIR COURSES ARE READY FOR AY 2025-26

5.1   Colleagues from the eLearning Team in the Centre for Academic Development will be meeting with individual School Directors of Education and School Admin Managers and/or Lead School Admin for Learning and Teaching, to gather feedback on the proposed institutional course template for AY 2025-26, outline the support available and agree a plan for communicating the change in the MyAberdeen rollover process and support available to their staff.

5.2   The support available to Schools includes the following:
- Information sessions for staff about the changes to the rollover process for AY 2025-26, with an opportunity to ask questions.
- Training sessions tailored at School-level or Programme/Course Team-level, to ensure staff are confident with how to create and edit Ultra documents (web pages) and how to copy selected content from previous year's courses
- Support for copying standard information, such as course learning outcomes, into the relevant section of the institutional course template for review by staff, if requested.
- Detailed course readiness reports leading up to and during the start of a Term, to help Schools target support and communications to their staff
- Drop-in sessions and key contacts in the eLearning team, who can work with School champions
- Customisable communications about the MyAberdeen rollover changes, timescales and support available
- Access to a range of guides, videos and exemplars to enable staff to engage through different modalities
- Access to one-to-one advice sessions

5.3   The eLearning team have updated their web pages on the course rollover process that include links to a range of guides, videos as well as a set of institutional course template FAQs.

6.   OVERVIEW OF TIMESCALES AND THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

6.1   Concurrently with meetings at School-level, the order of which is being prioritised based on School requests and whether Schools were involved in the pilot during AY 2024-25, the eLearning team will be liaising with Schools in relation to arranging information and training sessions and providing customisable communications about the changes, timescales and support available, which Schools will be able to action prior to meeting with eLearning.

6.2   Table 1, shown on the following page, provides an overview of timescales associated with the MyAberdeen rollover process for AY 2025-26, including key communication events. General communications about the rollover process will be distributed via CAD communications to Schools, posts in the staff ezine and in various communities of practice (CoP) in relation to learning and teaching.

Table 1. Indicative Couse Rollover and Communication Timeline (April to September 2025)

Month in 2025	Course Rollover Activities	Communication Events
April	- School-level meetings and feedback on the template - Technical preparations for the rollover commence	- School-level communications about the rollover process - FAQs, resources and key dates shared - Awareness raising during the Academic Development Symposium
May	- School-level meetings and feedback on the template - Technical preparations for the rollover	- School-level communications about the rollover process - FAQs, resources and key dates shared - School-level information sessions
June	- Feedback on the template from Education Deans (early June) - Institutional course template finalised (early June) - Rollover commences	- Communications about the rollover process, posts to staff ezine and CoP - School-level information sessions - Training sessions
July	- Support for copying standard information - Rollover completed	- School-level information sessions - Training sessions - MyAberdeen updates in orientation courses for students
August	- Support for copying standard information - Mop up rollovers that were not included in the main rollover	- Communications about the rollover process, posts to staff ezine and CoP - Training sessions - Drop-in/one-to-one advice sessions
September	- Course readiness reports for Schools - Teaching commences (22 Sep)	- Training sessions - Drop-in/one-to-one advice sessions

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk) Centre for Academic Development and Professor Jo-Anne Murray, VP Education (jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk).

15 April 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ASSESSMENT TAXONOMY

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper proposes a new approach to defining assessment types to improve clarity for both staff and students. The current list does not include agreed definitions, leading to confusion—especially when discussing assessments across disciplines.
>
> The University Education Committee is asked to **note** the creation of a standardised taxonomy with clear definitions for each assessment type.
>
> If approved, the taxonomy will be integrated into university systems so that course catalogues and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) display assessment information consistently. To keep the taxonomy relevant, definitions will be reviewed and updated annually if needed.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	Quality Assurance Committee (for **discussion**)	19 February 2025
	University Education Committee (for **discussion**)	26 February 2025
	Academic Policy and Regulations Group (for **approval**)	20 March 2025
	Quality Assurance Committee (for **approval**)	16 April 2025
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Education Committee (for **information**)	22 April 2025

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The **University Education Committee** is invited to **note** this paper.

4.   DISCUSSION

4.1   In higher education, traditional distinctions between "exams" and "coursework" have typically hinged on the timing of the assessment — exams occurring at the end of a course and coursework being distributed throughout the term. However, this model has become increasingly outdated. Many courses now implement substantial assessments at term's end that do not follow the format of conventional exams. Additionally, many courses include assessments with all the features of exams delivered during the term, often called "class tests." This shift has created ambiguity around what defines an "exam" versus "coursework" and whether these categories remain useful in capturing the purpose and structure of modern assessments.

4.2 This paper proposes a new taxonomy (Appendix A) of assessments grounded not in the outdated exam-coursework binary but rather in the distinct features and purposes of the assessments themselves. This taxonomy organises assessments based on key characteristics, format, structure, and intended skill outcomes. Such an approach will allow for a clearer, more consistent framework for program reviews, course design, and accreditation.

4.3 The current table of assessment types reflects a variety of formats tailored to specific learning outcomes and school requirements, leading to an extensive list of assessment types with no clear definitions (see appendix B). This variety, while responsive to pedagogical needs, has also created challenges for students and staff alike. Students may struggle to understand what each assessment entails, and staff may find it difficult to clearly communicate expectations.

4.4 Unclear assessment descriptions make it difficult for those responsible for maintaining assessment standards to ensure alignment with university policies. This affects the work of the Quality Assurance Committee, Internal Teaching Review, and the TESTA Programme for Assessment Enhancement. Additionally, inconsistent use of terms such as "exam" and "test" across schools or disciplines creates confusion, making it harder for students to make informed decisions about their degree pathways.

4.5 The proposed taxonomy would also improve the university's ability to tailor support for students who require adjustments. Clear assessment definitions would allow adjustments to be better aligned with the specific requirements of each assessment type, rather than relying on more generic applications.

5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5.1 Integrate the new taxonomy across university systems (including the course catalogue, and any other space where student view their assessment descriptions).
   ▪ This will be incorporated into the same project planned for the Graduate Outcomes update, ensuring efficient use of resources.

5.2 Update course change and new course proposal forms.

5.3 Support implementation across all schools and disciplines.

5.4 Collaborate with Student Support Services to embed the taxonomy into reasonable adjustment processes to improve accessibility.

5.5 Collaborate with Timetabling team to support the integration with "exam" scheduling

5.6 Collaborate with Students' Union (AUSA, Aberdeen University Students' Association) to develop clear communication and training to help students understand the changes in assessment descriptions.

5.7 As part of the routine QAC approvals process, the types of assessments being considered and their alignment with the taxonomy will be monitored. This will help identify whether any amendments are needed to the taxonomy to reflect assessment design practices across the university.

Where amendments are required, these will be returned to the Academic Policy and Regulations Group and the Quality Assurance Committee for consideration before the adaption of the taxonomy

5.8 Evaluate sector-wide acceptance assessing the feasibility of broader adoption across the university sector.

6. UPDATES

6.1 Updated version of the taxonomy which included some additional examples, along with a clearer heading that the list is not meant to be exhaustive. The purpose of the taxonomy is to provide broad categories summarising that capture the main characteristics of the assessment but not a detailed descriptor of every type of assessment.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experiences (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk), or Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink, School of Medicine Medical Sciences and Nutrition (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk).

2 April 2025
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Appendix A: Assessment taxonomy

<u>Part A – Structure</u>

• **Formative:** Assessment provides feedback and information primarily for the benefit of students in gauging their knowledge and ability at the time of the assessment they may include an indicative grade, they do not contribute towards the final mark for a course or degree classification. • **Summative:** Assessment provides feedback and information after the learning process and will include a grade; these grades contribute to the award of credit and where relevant may be included in the calculation of the degree classification

• **Invigilated:** Assessments carried out with monitoring ensure adherence to regulations
   ◦ **Closed:** Assessments without access to any additional materials.
      ▪ **Lockdown:** Digital assessment where specialist software to prevent students from accessing unauthorised resources during the assessment.
   ◦ **Open**: Assessments that allow the use of textbooks, notes or digital resources.
• **Non-invigilated:** Assessments that are taken without supervision, allowing students to complete them independently, often in a setting of their choice, and typically without real-time monitoring for academic integrity.

• **Timed**: These assessments must be completed within a specified time limit, which could be a single set time (e.g., a two-hour assessment scheduled at 10 a.m.) or a flexible window (e.g., a two-hour assessment available to start anytime within a 24-hour period). Where an assessment is to be completed within a specified time window this would ordinarily be no more than a 72 hour window. Timed assessments emphasise time management and a student's ability to perform under pressure, often reflecting real-world scenarios where responses need to be both accurate and time efficient. • **Non-Timed:** Assessment that provides students the flexibility to complete activities without a fixed time constraint still includes a clear submission deadline. This approach allows students to work at their own pace within the allocated timeframe, emphasising the quality and depth of their responses over the speed of completion while ensuring timely submission
• **Pre-released:** Assessments where students receive the questions or topics in advance, allowing them to prepare responses using their study materials ahead of the assessment submission. This description specifically refers to situations where students are given the actual questions they are required to address in the assessment. • **Unseen:** Assessments where students are presented with questions they have not encountered ahead of the assessment, requiring them to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills without prior preparation
• **Handwritten**: Assessment format in which students respond to questions using written answers, typically involving the use of pen or pencil • **Digital**: Assessments administered on electronic devices, where students' complete questions using software applications (not scanning of paper based) may also be conducted via the internet, where students' complete questions and submit their responses using electronic devices • **Oral:** Assessment where students are required to verbally respond to questions posed by an examiner or a panel. • **Practical:** Assessment where student are observed conducting specific task, may also include elements of oral aassessment within the practical
• **Group:** Any assessment which involves students collaborating in teams to complete (can be pairs or larger groups) • **Individual:** Any assessment which where each student is responsible for completing a task or project independently

Part B –

Assessment Descriptor	Some Example approaches (not exhaustive)
Extended Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring in-depth written responses (minimum 1000 words).	• Essays: Analytical or argumentative pieces on a specific topic. • Reflective writing: exploring and analysing personal experiences, thoughts, or learning to gain deeper understanding and insights. • Creative writing: crafting original narratives, poems, or other literary works that emphasise imagination, expression, and storytelling rather than purely factual or technical content • Research Papers: In-depth studies on a topic, often requiring literature reviews and original research. • Reports: Structured report format, often simulating the expectations and standards of professional practice in their field (i.e. Grant applications, technical reports). • Lab book/research journal: Detailed record of practical work, including experiments, procedures, observations, results, and analyses • Dissertations/Theses: Comprehensive, original research projects that contribute new knowledge to a field.
Brief Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring brief written responses (less than 1000 words).	• Short Answer Questions: Students respond to questions with concise answers, typically a few sentences or brief paragraph long. • Discussion Board Posts: Online platforms where students write brief responses or contributions to discussion prompts, engaging with their peers. • Response Papers**:** Brief written responses to prompts or questions about a specific reading or topic, focusing on key ideas
Objective Assessments: Assessment where the questions or tasks have predetermined correct answers they usually test specific knowledge or skills rather than subjective analysis or extended explanations.	• Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) • Single-Best-Answer (SBA) • True/False • Fill-in-the-Blanks • Matching Exercises • Very Short Answer (Maximum 20 Words)
Performance-Based / Practical Assessments: Evaluations that measure students' ability to apply skills often reflecting real-world scenarios.	• Professional Practice Assessments: Evaluations in fields like healthcare or education, assessing practical skills and decision-making in professional settings, or role play within these types of settings. • Practical Assessments: Evaluations based on the application of skills or knowledge, often in a laboratory, field setting, placements or performance space

	• Musical Performance**:** Evaluating students' proficiency in playing an instrument or singing, focusing on technical skill, interpretation, and expression. • Computer Programming Exercise: Evaluating student coding skills by writing, testing, or debugging software to complete specific tasks or solve problems.
Presentations: Assessments that require students to prepare and deliver an oral and /or visual presentation on a specific topic.	• Oral: Delivered synchronously in person or via video or pre-recorded, these presentations assess students' verbal communication skills, confidence, and ability to effectively convey information. May or may not also be accompanied by visual element i.e. PowerPoint slides, artefact diplays. • Poster presentations: Students create visual posters that concisely summarise research, findings, or ideas, may or may not also be accompanied by a brief synchronous or pre-recorded oral explanation • Musical or Artistic performance: Involve a live performance (in person or recorded) where they showcase technical or interpretive skills, such as playing an instrument, acting, or dance, assessed on aspects like skill, expression, and creativity.
Portfolios / Cumulative Assessments: Portfolios may include a range of materials that collectively illustrate the student's progression within a subject area, portfolios often involve progression marking.	• Materials could include written assignments, projects, creative works, reflections, and feedback
Peer Assessment: Evaluation of a student's work by fellow students, providing feedback and grading. Can also assessment of student ability to provide peer assessment	• Discussion Forums or Blogs – Peers provide feedback on each other's discussion contributions or reflective blog post • Group Projects with Peer Evaluation – Students assess each other's contributions to a group project. • Presentations with Peer Feedback – Peers evaluate and provide constructive comments on oral or poster presentations.
Self-Assessment: Students evaluate their own work and learning processes. Can also assess of student ability to self-assess	• Self-Graded Quizzes – Students complete a quiz and then review their answers against a provided answer key. • Personal Learning Goals – Students set learning objectives at the start of a course and evaluate their progress at the end. • Rubric-Based Self-Assessment – Students use a grading rubric to assess their own work before submission. • Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis – Students analyze their skills and areas for improvement in a specific subject or task.

	• Portfolio Review – Students compile and assess their own work over time to track development.

Where an assessment consists of more than one type, such as a test with both multiple-choice elements and short-answer questions, it should be categorised based on the predominant type. The predominant type is determined as the question format that contributes the greatest proportion of marks. At the discretion of the course coordinator, exceptions may be made if a different categorisation is deemed more appropriate based on the nature of the assessment. Additional descriptions of the question types must be clearly communicated to students alongside the standard description

Course catalogue details will display the following set of questions

1. **Is the Assessment Formative?**

   - Yes (Formative)

   - No (Summative)

2. **Is the Assessment Invigilated?**

   - Yes (Invigilated)

     is the assessment Open

     Is the assessment conducted under Lockdown browser

   - No (Non-Invigilated)

3. **Is the Assessment Timed?**

   - Yes (Timed)

     o Conducted at a fixed time

     o To be completed within a fixed time window

   - No (Untimed)

4. **Is the Assessment Seen?**

   - Yes (Pre-released)

   - No (Unseen)

5. **What is the Format of the Assessment?**

   - Handwritten

   - Digital

   - Oral

   - Practical

6. **Is the Assessment Individual?**

   - Yes (Individual)

   - No (group based)

     o self-selected groups

     o assigned groups

7. **What is the format of the assessment?**

Where an assessment consists of more than one type, such as a test with both multiple-choice elements and short-answer questions, it should be categorised based on the predominant type. The predominant type is determined as the question format that contributes the greatest

proportion of marks. Additional descriptions of the question types must be clearly communicated to students alongside the standard description.

- Extended Writing Task

- Brief Writing Task

- Objective assessment

- Performance-Based / Practical Assessment

- Presentation

- Portfolios / Cumulative Assessment

- Peer Assessment

- Self-Assessment

Appendix B: Current List of Assessment Types

Assessment Type	Assessment
Coursework	Class Test
Coursework	Class Test - Multiple Choice Questions
Coursework	Design Project: Group
Coursework	Design Project: Individual
Coursework	Essay
Coursework	Field Trip Log
Coursework	Lab Book
Coursework	Lab Report: Group
Coursework	Lab Report: Individual
Coursework	Language Exercise
Coursework	Mapping Exercise
Coursework	Other
Coursework	Report: Group
Coursework	Report: Individual
Coursework	Portfolio
Coursework	Project Plan, Summary or Abstract
Coursework	Project Report/Dissertation
Coursework	Reflective Report
Coursework	Take Home Exam
Coursework	Tutorial/Seminar Participation

Practical Exam	Computer Programming Exercise
Practical Exam	Design Project: Group
Practical Exam	Design Project: Individual
Practical Exam	Oral Exam
Practical Exam	Oral Presentation: Group
Practical Exam	Oral Presentation: Individual
Practical Exam	Other
Practical Exam	Poster Presentation
Written Exam	Class Test
Written Exam	Exam
Written Exam	Exam - Multiple Choice Questions
Written Exam	Other

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUDCATION COMMITTEE

DIGITAL ASSESSMENT SCHOOL GUIDANCE

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> The purpose of this paper is to develop clear School guidance on the delivery of digital based assessments. Whilst the use of both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments is commonly employed during term-time and exam weeks, there is no clear guidance on the procedures Schools should follow in delivering these assessments.
>
> Further the paper has reviewed and updated the invigilator guidance for computer-based exams as well as the Guidance for Exam Arrangements for Students with Disabilities.
>
> The University Education Committee (UEC) is asked to **note** the paper.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	Quality Assurance Committee (for **discussion**)	19 February 2025
	University Education Committee (for **discussion**)	26 February 2025
	Student Support and Experience Committee (for **discussion**)	17 March 2025
Further consideration/ approval required by	Quality Assurance Committee (for **approval**)	16 April 2025
	University Education Committee (for **information**)	22 April 2025

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The **University Education Committee (UEC)** is invited to **note** this paper and associated appendices.

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   Schools regularly employ a range of digital assessments such as invigilated computer-based class tests / exams or non-invigilated open-book online tests. The use of these types of assessments have grown substantially post-covid when teaching and assessment pivoted to online delivery. However, whilst the expansion of assessment types has been welcomed by students and staff, we have also witnessed inconsistency in practice, call for greater school guidance, and support/advice for students on a range of issues.

4.2 Member of the University Exam Planning Group reported a number of concerns around the running of computer-based invigilated assessments, including that the exam guidance wasn't applicable to computer-based exams (e.g. the additional time needed to physically get students in the room and logged-on to computer versus a traditional paper and pen exam format). Furthermore, students and schools reported increasing numbers of timetabling clashes between invigilated and non-invigilated assessments during exam weeks as well as inconsistent practices in the delivery of non-invigilated assessments and application of provisions for these assessments.

4.3 In response to this the Dean for Student Support and Experience established a short-lived digital assessment working group to investigate the range of issues surrounding digital-based assessments comprised of School leads, CAD, Student Support, DDIS, Students Union, QAC representatives (see Appendix D for full list of membership).

4.4 This group oversaw a survey of Schools conducted by Sara Preston to better understand current School digital assessment practices and identify specific issues that Schools are facing and where they require additional support. The survey results are summarised in Appendix C, however Schools reported that they wanted additional Guidance / Policy on the provision of digital assessments to address issues around timetabling, academic integrity, inclusivity. Furthermore, the survey results suggest that Schools increasingly wish to be able to deliver invigilated computer-based assessments with large L1/2 cohorts but are concerned about the lack of suitable spaces to efficiently deliver these forms of assessments.

4.5 The group reviewed current University policies contained within the Academic Quality Handbook in relation to the setting and arranging assessments including exams and identified that current policies relate to written invigilated exams but not invigilated computer-based exams or non-invigilated exams. An informal sector-review by this group further identified that such guidance is common in other universities.

4.6 The group identified a number of actions that would support university guidance and procedures for digital assessments:
4.6.1 Develop institutional guidance to support the delivery of digital assessments.
4.6.2 Develop a more detailed assessment taxonomy to summarise the range of assessments to capture the range of assessments currently employed across the institution.
4.6.3 Develop invigilator guidance for computer-based assessments.
4.6.4 Review the guidance for exam arrangements for students with disability provision

4.7 Institutional guidance for the delivery of digital assessments was written by the working group and summarised in the next section (see Appendix A).

4.8 The assessment taxonomy was developed by Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink and is appended to the Digital Assessment Procedures document.

4.9 Invigilator guidance for digital assessments was developed by Dr Mary Pryor (CAD) and published on the university assessment webpages (see Appendix E).

4.10 Guidance for exam arrangements for students with disability provision was reviewed by Lesley Muirhead (Student Advice and Support) and Steven Sangster (Assistive Technology Adviser) and is attached in Appendix B with track changes.

5. GUIDANCE FOR THE DELIVERY OF DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.1 The full guidance document can be found in Appendix A. The document provides clear guidance on the delivery of both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments to

ensure a more consistent institutional approach as well as to rectify some of the issues identified by students and schools.

5.2 The guidance is separated into sections relating to invigilated and non-invigilated assessments. For ease the main elements where there could be changes to current School procedures are summarised below:

- This guidance is applicable to all students studying on any undergraduate and postgraduate taught course regardless of mode of study or delivery and should be read in conjunction with the University's Codes of Practice on Assessment (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught). Further information on Assessment at the University is available in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH).

- In the provision of extra time for students with disability provision the guidance states that Students with the inclusion adjustment, 'extra time' must have this adjustment applied to both invigilated and non-invigilated timed assessments but are not subject to un-timed assessments which may be submitted during a longer time window (e.g. 48, 72 hours etc) where the assessment has been designed to be inclusive (Section 3.8 for invigilated assessments and Section 5.14 for non-invigilated assessments).

- In relation to timetabling, Section 4.1.2 requires Schools to inform Central Timetabling of all computer-based assessment requirements as part of the annual timetabling process to ensure room availability and coordination with other services (e.g. digital). In non-invigilated assessments during exam weeks, Section 5.1.2 states that timed assessments or those that have to be completed within a 24 hour time window must be timetabled alongside invigilated exams to avoid clashes.

- Section 4.1.5 The guidance requires schools utilise lockdown browsers for invigilated digital assessments which would reduce workload for colleagues in DDIS manually installing exam software on to individual machines.

- Section 4.2.5 states that students should enter the exam hall 20 minutes prior to the start to allow sufficient login time and testing of computing equipment.

- Section 4.2.10 (invigilated) and Section 5.4.4 (non-invigilated) requires that there is an upload time of 30 minutes added to the exam time if required (e.g. if the exam is 2 hours in length then an additional 30 minutes to permit upload of documents).

- Section 4.4.2(invigilated) and Section 5.3.3 (non-invigilated) stipulates that students are not permitted to share exam content with other students, for example sharing screenshots of questions, to address concerns integrity concerns raised by staff and students.

- In non-invigilated assessments Schools must ensure that there is appropriate level of support available to candidates. Guidance should clearly indicate who to contact if student's have questions/difficulties and what they should do if they have difficulties out with working hours (e.g. if an assessment is scheduled over 24, 48 + hours) and when they will receive a response. (Section 5.22)

6. REVISIONS

6.1 Feedback on the guidance and taxonomy have been gathered from SSEC, UEC, and the Exam Planning Group, which has led to a number of revisions. Attached is a clean copy of the Guidance and Taxonomy, as well as a copy with track changes.
The main revisions include:

- Provision of more detail on the use of lockdown browsers and link to Toolkit resources including staff and student guides, including the requirement that Schools must ensure that students receive mock tests using lockdown browsers to ensure they work on their own device (see 4.1.5, 4.2.2, 4.2.4)

- Strengthening the point that students are responsible for downloading and testing use of lockdown browsers if using their own device and cannot form the basis for Good Cause applications (see 4.2.4).
- 5.2.8 additional advice on the use of lockdown browsers for non-invigilated assessments which may be useful for preventing students from copying/pasting answers from notes/browser or the use of GenAI tools to generate answers to questions. This may be useful especially for timed assessments where there is insufficient time to use a second device but cannot entirely prevent this from happening.
- Provision of more detail on implementation of Upload times (reference to upload times deleted in 4.2.10 because not relevant to invigilated exams, and further detail in 5.4.4).
- Review of upload times allowed from 30 mins to 15 mins.
- 5.2.2 additional detail regarding School requirements to ensure key contact for non-invigilated assessments and who to contact out with normal working hours and that Schools should ensure appropriate mitigation is provided.
- Deletion of 3.9 regarding small exam rooms because this is not current practice and not practical to implement.
- In 4.1.3 clarifying that Schools are responsible for dealing with student assessment clashes.
- Use of computers in exams – clarifying that computers in VLEs are permissible (see 4.3.4)
- Deletion of 4.5.3 referring to the need to notify IT Service Desk in the event of technical difficulties in an invigilated exam – any such problems would be reported by the invigilator.
- Further detail in 5.6.3 of when students should notify IT Service Desk in the event of a technical difficulty when completing an online assessment.
- Updated version of the taxonomy which included some additional examples, along with a clearer heading that the list is not meant to be exhaustive. The purpose of the taxonomy is to provide broad categories summarising that capture the main characteristics of the assessment but not a detailed descriptor of every type of assessment.

6.2 Further revisions as requested by APRG prior to discussion at QAC:
- Remove any reference to '[Digital Assessment] Procedures' and replace with '[Digital Assessment] Guidance' DONE
- Remove any reference to approval by Senate. DONE
- Amend guidance to include the statement "not ordinarily longer than 72 hours" in respect of flexible windows. DONE, SEE SECTION 3.8
- Delete repetition of first bullet point in section 4.2.8 (ii) candidates must note the following, "candidates will not be admitted to an examination hall after the assessment has been in progress for thirty minutes." DONE
- Specify CAD as a contact for the design and development of online examinations only. DONE, SEE 4.1.5
- Consider removing or combining (iv) of section 4.3.4 into (i) as programmable calculators may be required for certain examinations (e.g. Engineering). TEXT HAS BEEN EDITED.
- Consider making it explicit in the guidance that permission to leave temporarily includes being allowed to leave temporarily within the final 30 minutes of the exam. DONE SEE 4.4.2 (ii).
- In terms of section 5.4.4, it was noted that the upload window has been reduced from 30 minutes to 15 minutes following feedback from Schools. It was suggested that the approach to marking submissions received outside the 15-minute window could be further clarified via the inclusion of a statement such as

"ordinarily penalties will be applied to late submissions (coursework vs exam)…" ADDITIONAL TEXT ADDED, SEE 5.4.4

- It was noted that "take-home examinations" are neither timed nor invigilated so could arguably be considered coursework and therefore contributing to misunderstandings. Consider replacing "take-home assessments" with "untimed non-invigilated unseen assessments". DONE SEE 5.1.4

7.   NEXT STEPS

7.1   The APRG has approved the guidance subject to the changes detailed in section 6. The QAC are invited to **approve** the Digital Assessment Guidance and Taxonomy.

8.   FURTHER INFORMATION

8.1   Further information is available from Professor Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support and Experiences (jason.bohan@abdn.ac.uk).

8 April 2025
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

GUIDANCE FOR THE DELIVERY OF DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

1. PROCEDURES

1.1 The Guidance for the Delivery of Digital Assessments apply to all students studying on any undergraduate and postgraduate taught course regardless of mode of study or delivery.[1]

1.2 The guidance sets out the University's requirements and procedures for digital assessments. It is an expectation of all Schools that the requirements detailed within this guidance are adhered to, and appropriate records maintained. The guidance forms part of the processes used to ensure integrity of the assessment process.

1.3 The guidance are designed to be read in conjunction with the University's Codes of Practice on Assessment (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught). Further information on Assessment at the University is available in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH).

1.4 The guidance applys to invigilated assessments during term time (e.g. class tests) and exam diet, as well as non-invigilated assessments scheduled during exam diet. This does not apply to non-invigilated assessments scheduled out with the exam diet.

2. TYPES OF DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

2.1 The University encourages a mixed method of assessment, as appropriate to the nature of individual courses. The use of different forms of assessment has been encouraged, as outlined in the Assessment Taxonomy (*Appendix A*).

2.2 Digital assessments relevant to this guidance include:

(i) Invigilated or non-invigilated assessments requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

(ii) Timed or non-timed assessments requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

(iii) Open or closed-book assessments requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

3. INCLUSION ADJUSTMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

3.1 This section is in accordance with the guidance outlined in the University's Guidance for Those with Responsibility for Making Examination Arrangements for Disabled Candidates.

3.2 Additional support measures, such as any assistive technology, also apply to both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments.

3.3 Candidates are responsible for ensuring that any inclusion adjustment requirements are appropriately flagged to Student Advice & Support.

3.4 Candidates with disabilities must ensure that appropriate assessments and/or medical certificates to support the need for any inclusion adjustments are obtained and that these

---

[1] This Policy does not apply to postgraduate research students (they should consult the PGR Handbook for this information).

are received by Student Support Services at the earliest opportunity. Late submission of these may result in lesser arrangements being made.

3.5   It is the responsibility of the Student Advice and Support Office to ensure that details of the academic provisions and/or examination arrangements required by the student are recorded on the Student Record System.

3.6   It is the responsibility of the School Inclusion Coordinator and the Registry Timetabling team to ensure that assessment arrangements, as specified in the Student Record System, are implemented.

3.7   It is the responsibility of the School Inclusion Coordinator to inform candidates about how inclusion adjustments will be organised and what is required of them. This should be done with at least one week's notice, if possible.

3.8   Students with the inclusion adjustment, 'extra time' must have this adjustment applied to both invigilated and non-invigilated timed assessments but are not subject to un-timed assessments which may be submitted during a longer time window (e.g. normally no longer than 72 hours) where the assessment has been designed to be inclusive.

3.9   .

4.   INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1   SCHEDULING OF INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1.1   All scheduling of prescribed assessments must follow the procedures described in the University's Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas.

4.1.2   Invigilated assessments to be scheduled outside of the main exam diet which require the use of computer classrooms (e.g. class tests) are to be highlighted to the Central Timetable team during the annual timetable setting to ensure that appropriate teams are aware of the additional requirements and colleagues in Digital & Information Services, including the Assistive Technology Team, are notified of the requirements.

4.1.3   Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there are no Central Timetable clashes with iInvigilated assessments, candidates must make their School aware of any such clashes within one week of the Exam Timetable being published. Schools are responsible for advising the student on alternative arrangements.

4.1.4   Candidates are responsible for checking their assessment schedule prior to the assessment to ensure that no location changes have been made. Candidates are required to attend in-person invigilated digital assessments. Failure to attend an assessment may prevent progression/graduation. If a student is unable to attend an assessment, they should refer to the University's Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

4.1.5   Invigilated digital assessments must utilise a suitable lockdown browser (e.g. Respondus, see the Staff Guide for using Respondus) unless the assessment is open book by design, requires access to other applications (e.g. to perform data manipulations or statistical analyses) or the ability to upload files (e.g. hand written equations). Students must be

provided with an opportunity to practice a digital assessment that utilises a lockdown browser, whether this is on a University computer or their own personal computer, on which the lockdown browser has been pre-installed. Assessments that do not use a lockdown browser and are not open book may require additional digital support. CAD may contacted for guidance on the design and development of online assessments.

4.2 DELIVERY OF INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.2.1 The University is responsible for ensuring that all computing equipment is fully operational prior to an assessment diet. The Central Timetabling team will ensure that assessments taken in computer rooms are at no more than 90% capacity to ensure that additional computers are available in the eventuality of an individual computer suddenly not working.

4.2.2 In situations where it is appropriate for a student to use their own personal computer, the student is responsible for ensuring that their personal computer is fully operational and configured to the required conditions of the individual assessment. This includes preinstalling a lockdown browser, if this is being used,

4.2.3 Invigilators appointed for digital assessments must familiarise themselves with the current guidance for invigilators, which can be found here: Digital-Exams-Guidance-for-Invigilators.docx.

4.2.4 Schools are responsible for ensuring that each candidate has access to a suitable computer for all computer-based assessments. If a digital assessment allows use of a candidate's personal computer, Schools must also ensure that the system requirements for the assessment are published in advance of the examination and if a lockdown browser is being used, they should provide students with guidance on installing the lockdown browser on their personal computers (see Student Guide on Lockdown Broswer). Students are responsible for ensuring that the lockdown browser is downloaded to their device and tested before the assessment is attempted. Failure to do so, and any subsequent problems associated with using the lockdown browser, cannot be the basis for Good Cause applications. Schools must ensure that students have an opportunity to do a mock digital assessment with the same setup as the digital assessment.

4.2.5 Students attending an invigilated digital exam are required to enter the exam hall 20 mins prior to the start of the assessments (please see Digital Exam Guidance) to log on and ensure that all equipment is working correctly.

4.2.6 Students sitting an invigilated digital exam who arrive late or have not logged on/ensured that equipment is working correctly prior to the start of the exam will NOT be provided with additional time at the end of the assessment.

4.2.7 Schools should ensure that digital assessments permit candidates to submit their answers online via the VLE (or alternative assessment platform if being used) wherever possible rather than saving to portable devices, e.g. USBs. This also applies to candidates with adjustments for the permitted use of a computer during written exams.

4.2.8 As outlined in the Rules of Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations For Degrees or Diplomas, when sitting invigilated digital assessments:

(i)   candidates are responsible for the following:

- Candidates attending an invigilated digital exam are required to enter the exam hall 20 minutes prior to the start of assessments (please see Digital Exam Guidance) to log on and ensure that all equipment is working correctly.
- Displaying their student identity card on the corner of the examination desk.
- Reading and adhering to the instructions on the front sheet of the examination answer book (whether in paper or digital form).
- Ensuring that only permitted materials are on their persons at their examination desk and for the entire duration of the examination.

(ii)   candidates must note the following:

- Candidates will not be admitted to an examination hall after the assessment has been in progress for thirty minutes.
- Candidates sitting an invigilated digital exam and attend late or have not logged on/ensured that equipment is working correctly prior to the start of the exam will NOT be provided with additional time at the end of the assessment.
- Candidates will not be permitted to leave during the first thirty minutes and the last thirty minutes of any examination.
- Candidates may be permitted to leave an examination hall temporarily with the consent of the Invigilator,
- Candidates must not leave the examination hall until either they are directed to do so by an Invigilator, or their work has been submitted through the necessary VLE and shown as such to an Invigilator. At the end of an examination, the Invigilators will either request all candidates then present to remain in their places until all work has been submitted or direct candidates to leave quietly.

4.2.9 If a student sits an exam, or submits an assignment, it will be assumed that the student is fit to sit and there are no extenuating/mitigating circumstances (defined as exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems, both medical and not). If a student believes that they are not fit to sit an exam or to submit an assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, or subsequently realises that they were not fit to do so, they should advise the School by completing the absence form on the Student Hub at the first possible opportunity, in line with Section 2.1 of Policy and Procedures on Student Absence, and in any case **before** any results are published. Failure to follow this may undermine any future appeal.

4.3   PERMITTED MATERIALS DURING INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.3.1 In relation to permitted materials, invigilated digital assessments follow the guidelines set out in the University's Rules of Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations For Degrees or Diplomas.

4.3.2 Candidates may only take printed or other written materials to the examination desk when it has previously been advertised by the School and when it is stated in the rubric to the question paper that such material may be used.

4.3.3 All bags and other objects must be deposited where the Invigilators direct.

4.3.4 Examination papers shall either prohibit calculators or allow those only as specified under:

(i)   Calculators must not normally be graphical, programmable, able store text or formulas and cannot be able to communicate with other devices unless authorised by the School. When there is any restriction on the type and use of calculators permitted this will be clearly stated on the examination papers (e.g. have enabled a digital calculator with the VLE for student use).

(ii)   No calculator instruction manuals will be allowed in examination rooms under any circumstances.

(iii)   Candidates are responsible for the performance of their own calculators.

(iv)   It is not permitted to use a mobile telephone as a calculator.

4.3.5   No candidate may consume any food or drink (except bottled water) in the assessment hall/room or room other than what may be medically required/prescribed, e.g. cough lozenges, etc. or for adjustments.

4.3.6   Any electronic or smart device, including those that can send and/or receive information or store data are not permitted during an assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, mobile phones, smart watches, e-readers, wearable technology items, fitness trackers and smart glasses. Such devices should be turned off completely and placed in a jacket or bag and left in the area designated by the Invigilators or placed under the examination desk, turned completely off. Invigilators may ask to see such devices and examine them at any point in the assessment room.

4.3.7   Students are permitted to have an analogue or simple digital watch with them during the assessment for the purposes of timekeeping. Watches must be taken off and placed on the examination desk for the duration of the assessment. Such watches must not have any smart capabilities (regardless of them being turned on) such as messaging, internet access, data storage, calculator or other connectivity abilities. Invigilators may ask to see watches and examine them at any point in the assessment room.

4.3.8   Candidates may refer to English/native tongue (excluding electronic) dictionaries when permitted by their Schools to do so. Such dictionaries must, if so requested, be presented to an Invigilator for inspection prior to examination.

4.4   CONDUCT DURING AN INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

4.4.1   All candidates undertaking an assessment are expected to comply with the rules and regulations set out by the Universities' Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic). Any candidate found in breach of the Code of Practice will be reported to the Head of the relevant School in the first instance.

4.4.2   For all individual invigilated digital assessments, candidates must comply with the following regulations:

(i)   There must be no communication, either spoken or written, between candidates during the period of examination.

(ii) In the case of invigilated computer-based assessments, candidates are not allowed to leave the hall during the first 30 minutes and the last 30 minutes of an invigilated computer-based assessment unless for a toilet break.

(iii) Candidates must not share information about the contents of the assessment with other students or third parties.

(iv) Candidates must not save, replay, post or take screenshots of assessments or suggest answers in any capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, the sharing of assessment content on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, etc.

(v) Any assessment must be completed by the candidate personally and any work submitted must be the candidate's own work.

4.5 TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES DURING AN INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

4.5.1 The University reserve the right to cancel any digital assessment due to technical difficulties. Assessments cancelled in this regard will be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools are responsible for ensuring that candidates are informed in good time regarding the new date for their assessment.

4.5.2 In instances where a candidate experiences technical difficulties during an invigilated assessment, they must raise their concerns with an invigilator in the first instance, who will then advise on the next course of action.

4.5.3

5. NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.1 SCHEDULING OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.1.1 All scheduling of prescribed assessments must follow the procedures described in the University's Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas.

5.1.2 Non-Invigilated Assessments that are timed and/or to be completed within a 24-hour window and to be scheduled during the main exam diets are to be sent to the Central Timetable team to avoid conflicts with other invigilated/non-invigilated assessments.

5.1.3 Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there are no Central Timetable clashes with invigilated assessments, candidates must make their School aware of any such clashes within one week of the Exam Timetable being published. Schools are responsible for advising the student on alternative arrangements.

5.1.4 Non-invigilated assessments that are not timed and/or may be completed over a longer time window than 24 hours (e.g. 48 or72 hours) may run alongside other assessments and will not be considered as clashing. No additional time will be permitted in these situations. Therefore, a non-invigilated and an invigilated assessment may be scheduled on the same day without further adjustments to the schedule or additional time provided.

5.2 DELIVERY OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.2.1 The School must provide candidates with clear instructions on how to access, complete and submit digital non-invigilated assessments. Instructions should be published on relevant course pages of the VLE.

5.2.2 Schools must ensure that there is appropriate level of support available to candidates. Assessment information should clearly identify a key contact if students have questions/difficulties. For assessment that are both timed and run during working hours and those run over a longer period (e.g. assessments scheduled over 24, 48 + hours) Schools must provide clear information on who students should contact if there is an issue / problem with the assessment out with normal working hours and indicate when they will receive a response. Students should not be disadvantaged by any delay in responding and the School is responsible for enacting appropriate mitigation measures.

5.2.3 The student is responsible for ensuring that their personal computing equipment that they are using for digital assessments are fully operational and configured to the required conditions of the individual assessment.

5.2.4 Candidates must ensure that they access their online assessment at the appropriate Scheduled time.

5.2.5 Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they have an appropriate internet connection for successfully completing the assessment. If candidates do not have a suitable internet connection, they should refer to the School Guidance.

5.2.6 Candidates should ensure that they have read all assessment information on the course page prior to the assessment prior to the due date to ensure that they are familiar with the assessment's requirements and timing.

5.2.7 If a student sits an exam, or submits an assignment, it will be assumed that the student is fit to sit and there are no extenuating/mitigating circumstances (defined as exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems, both medical and not). If a student believes that they are not fit to sit an exam/test or to submit an assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, or subsequently realises that they were not fit to do so, they should advise the School by completing the absence form on the Student Hub at the first possible opportunity, in line with Section 2.1 of Policy and Procedures on Student Absence, and in any case **before** any results are published. Failure to follow this may undermine any future appeal.

5.2.8 Whilst use of lockdown browsers are not normally recommended for non-invigilated assessments, they may be useful for some timed assessments to prevent the use of the copy and paste function , although it will not prevent the use of a second device to look up answers.

5.3   CONDUCT DURING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.3.1 Online assessments which do not require a candidate to be on campus for their duration should still be conducted under conditions as if they were being sat on campus.

5.3.2 All candidates undertaking an assessment are expected to comply with the rules and regulations set out by the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).

Any candidate found in breach of the Code of Practice will be reported to the Head of the relevant School in the first instance.

5.3.3 For all individual invigilated computer-based assessments, candidates must comply with the following regulations:

(i) There must be no communication, either spoken or written, between candidates during the period of examination.

(ii) Candidates must not share information about the contents of the assessment with other students or third parties.

(iii) Candidates must not save, replay, post or take screenshots of assessments or suggest answers in any capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, the sharing of assessment content on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, etc.

(iv) Any assessment must be completed by the candidate personally and any work submitted must be the candidate's own work

5.4 CONCLUDING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.4.1 Candidates are responsible for following all school guidance and ensuring that their assessment submission is the correct version. All submissions will be marked according to the Universities' marking and moderation procedures.

5.4.2 Candidates are required to ensure that they write their answers in English, unless a foreign language has been approved for use within the assessment due to either the assessment's nature or special arrangements.

5.4.3 Candidates are required to upload their assessment by the due date and time. Failure to do so, and blank or unreadable submissions, will be treated as a non-submission, and marked as such. If a candidate fails to submit an assessment, they should contact the School as soon as possible and complete an Absence Report as outlined in the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

5.4.4 At the end of the assessment duration, an additional time allocation must be provided to allow for the upload of the assessment submission, if appropriate for the assessment (e.g. time needed to upload a written document when there may be system issues with a large volume of submissions occurring at the same time). Upload times should be at least 15 minutes and will be clearly indicated to the candidate on the assessment instruction page (for example, if the assessment is due to be submitted at 1pm the assessment link remains open to 1.15pm and no penalties applied during this additional time).Assessments uploaded beyond this window will normally be treated as a non-submission or penalties applied as appropriate.

5.5 LATE SUBMISSIONS OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.5.1 Schools will be responsible for ensuring that information regarding submissions windows, and upload times, are effectively communicated to candidates and that the appropriate settings are applied within the VLE.

5.5.2 Submissions received after the end of a scheduled assessment will be regarded as a late submission and penalties applied as outlined in the [Policy and Procedures on Extensions and Penalties for Unauthorised Late Submissions of Coursework](#) or non-submission as appropriate.

5.5.3 Where a candidate uploads their submission after the end of the specified upload time, they must provide further information to the School contact as identified in the Assessment information for the reason for their late submission and complete an Absence Report as outlined in the [Policy and Procedures on Student Absence](#).

5.6   TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES DURING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.6.1 The University reserve the right to cancel any digital assessment due to technical difficulties. Assessments cancelled in this regard will be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools are responsible for ensuring that candidates are informed in good time regarding the new date for their assessment.

5.6.2 A candidate who experiences technical difficulties with accessing, checking, submitting or completing an online assessment should immediately contact the School contact as identified in the Assessment information. Schools should ensure that this information is made available to candidates via the front page of their assessment.

5.6.3 In the event of submitting a claim for late or non-submission due to technical issues, students should support their claim by providing additional evidence, such as a Service Desk ticket number if they have logged the issue via [MyIT](#) or a screenshot illustrating the problem.

Appendix A: Assessment taxonomy

Part A – Structure

• **Formative:** Assessment provides feedback and information primarily for the benefit of students in gauging their knowledge and ability at the time of the assessment they may include an indicative grade, they do not contribute towards the final mark for a course or degree classification. • **Summative:** Assessment provides feedback and information after the learning process and will include a grade; these grades contribute to the award of credit and where relevant may be included in the calculation of the degree classification

• **Invigilated:** Assessments carried out with monitoring ensure adherence to regulations
    ○ **Closed:** Assessments without access to any additional materials.
        ▪ **Lockdown:** Digital assessment where specialist software to prevent students from accessing unauthorised resources during the assessment.
    ○ **Open**: Assessments that allow the use of textbooks, notes or digital resources.
• **Non-invigilated:** Assessments that are taken without supervision, allowing students to complete them independently, often in a setting of their choice, and typically without real-time monitoring for academic integrity.

• **Timed**: These assessments must be completed within a specified time limit, which could be a single set time (e.g., a two-hour assessment scheduled at 10 a.m.) or a flexible window (e.g., a two-hour assessment available to start anytime within a 24-hour period). Where an assessment is to be completed within a specified time window this would ordinarily be no more than a 72 hour window. Timed assessments emphasise time management and a student's ability to perform under pressure, often reflecting real-world scenarios where responses need to be both accurate and time efficient. • **Non-Timed:** Assessment that provides students the flexibility to complete activities without a fixed time constraint still includes a clear submission deadline. This approach allows students to work at their own pace within the allocated timeframe, emphasising the quality and depth of their responses over the speed of completion while ensuring timely submission
• **Pre-released:** Assessments where students receive the questions or topics in advance, allowing them to prepare responses using their study materials ahead of the assessment submission. This description specifically refers to situations where students are given the actual questions they are required to address in the assessment. • **Unseen:** Assessments where students are presented with questions they have not encountered ahead of the assessment, requiring them to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills without prior preparation
• **Handwritten**: Assessment format in which students respond to questions using written answers, typically involving the use of pen or pencil • **Digital**: Assessments administered on electronic devices, where students' complete questions using software applications (not scanning of paper based) may also be conducted via the internet, where students' complete questions and submit their responses using electronic devices • **Oral:** Assessment where students are required to verbally respond to questions posed by an examiner or a panel. • **Practical:** Assessment where student are observed conducting specific task, may also include elements of oral aassessment within the practical • **Group:** Any assessment which involves students collaborating in teams to complete (can be pairs or larger groups)

• **Individual:** Any assessment which where each student is responsible for completing a task or project independently	

Part B –

Assessment Descriptor	Some Example approaches (not exhaustive)
Extended Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring in-depth written responses (minimum 1000 words).	• Essays: Analytical or argumentative pieces on a specific topic. • Reflective writing: exploring and analysing personal experiences, thoughts, or learning to gain deeper understanding and insights. • Creative writing: crafting original narratives, poems, or other literary works that emphasise imagination, expression, and storytelling rather than purely factual or technical content • Research Papers: In-depth studies on a topic, often requiring literature reviews and original research. • Reports: Structured report format, often simulating the expectations and standards of professional practice in their field (i.e. Grant applications, technical reports). • Lab book/research journal: Detailed record of practical work, including experiments, procedures, observations, results, and analyses • Dissertations/Theses: Comprehensive, original research projects that contribute new knowledge to a field.
Brief Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring brief written responses (less than 1000 words).	• Short Answer Questions: Students respond to questions with concise answers, typically a few sentences or brief paragraph long. • Discussion Board Posts: Online platforms where students write brief responses or contributions to discussion prompts, engaging with their peers. • Response Papers**:** Brief written responses to prompts or questions about a specific reading or topic, focusing on key ideas
Objective Assessments: Assessment where the questions or tasks have predetermined correct answers they usually test specific knowledge or skills rather than subjective analysis or extended explanations.	• Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) • Single-Best-Answer (SBA) • True/False • Fill-in-the-Blanks • Matching Exercises • Very Short Answer (Maximum 20 Words)
Performance-Based / Practical Assessments: Evaluations that measure students' ability to apply skills often reflecting real-world scenarios.	• Professional Practice Assessments: Evaluations in fields like healthcare or education, assessing practical skills and decision-making in professional settings, or role play within these types of settings.

	• Practical Assessments: Evaluations based on the application of skills or knowledge, often in a laboratory, field setting, placements or performance space • Musical Performance**:** Evaluating students' proficiency in playing an instrument or singing, focusing on technical skill, interpretation, and expression. • Computer Programming Exercise: Evaluating student coding skills by writing, testing, or debugging software to complete specific tasks or solve problems.
Presentations: Assessments that require students to prepare and deliver an oral and /or visual presentation on a specific topic.	• Oral: Delivered synchronously in person or via video or pre-recorded, these presentations assess students' verbal communication skills, confidence, and ability to effectively convey information. May or may not also be accompanied by visual element i.e. PowerPoint slides, artefact diplays. • Poster presentations: Students create visual posters that concisely summarise research, findings, or ideas, may or may not also be accompanied by a brief synchronous or pre-recorded oral explanation • Musical or Artistic performance: Involve a live performance (in person or recorded) where they showcase technical or interpretive skills, such as playing an instrument, acting, or dance, assessed on aspects like skill, expression, and creativity.
Portfolios / Cumulative Assessments: Portfolios may include a range of materials that collectively illustrate the student's progression within a subject area, portfolios often involve progression marking.	• Materials could include written assignments, projects, creative works, reflections, and feedback
Peer Assessment: Evaluation of a student's work by fellow students, providing feedback and grading. Can also assessment of student ability to provide peer assessment	• Discussion Forums or Blogs – Peers provide feedback on each other's discussion contributions or reflective blog post • Group Projects with Peer Evaluation – Students assess each other's contributions to a group project. • Presentations with Peer Feedback – Peers evaluate and provide constructive comments on oral or poster presentations.
Self-Assessment: Students evaluate their own work and learning processes. Can also assess of student ability to self-assess	• Self-Graded Quizzes – Students complete a quiz and then review their answers against a provided answer key. • Personal Learning Goals – Students set learning objectives at the start of a course and evaluate their progress at the end.

	- Rubric-Based Self-Assessment – Students use a grading rubric to assess their own work before submission. - Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis – Students analyze their skills and areas for improvement in a specific subject or task. - Portfolio Review – Students compile and assess their own work over time to track development.

Where an assessment consists of more than one type, such as a test with both multiple-choice elements and short-answer questions, it should be categorised based on the predominant type. The predominant type is determined as the question format that contributes the greatest proportion of marks. At the discretion of the course coordinator, exceptions may be made if a different categorisation is deemed more appropriate based on the nature of the assessment. Additional descriptions of the question types must be clearly communicated to students alongside the standard description

GUIDANCE FOR THE DELIVERY OF DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

1. PROCEDURES

1.1 The ~~Digital Assessment Procedures were originally approved by Senate on xxx. These procedures~~ Guidance for the Delivery of Digital Assessments apply to all students studying on any undergraduate and postgraduate taught course regardless of mode of study or delivery.[1]

1.2 The~~se procedures~~ guidance set~~s~~ out the University's requirements and procedures for digital assessments. It is an expectation of all Schools that the requirements detailed within ~~these procedures~~this guidance are adhered to, and appropriate records maintained. The~~se procedures~~ guidance ~~are~~ forms~~only~~ part of the processes used to ensure integrity of the assessment process.

1.3 The~~se procedures~~ guidance are designed to be read in conjunction with the University's Codes of Practice on Assessment (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught). Further information on Assessment at the University is available in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH).

1.4 The~~se procedures~~ guidance apply~~s~~ to invigilated assessments during term time (e.g. class tests) and exam diet, as well as non-invigilated assessments scheduled during exam diet. This does not apply to ~~general coursework~~non-invigilated assessments scheduled ~~outwith~~out with the exam diet.

2. TYPES OF DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

2.1 The University encourages a mixed method of assessment, as appropriate to the nature of individual courses. The use of different forms of assessment has been encouraged, as outlined in the Assessment Taxonomy (*Appendix A ~~refers~~*).

2.2 Digital assessments relevant to this guidance include:

(i) Invigilated or non-invigilated assessments requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

(ii) Timed or non-timed assessments requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

(iii) Open or closed-book assessment~~s~~ requiring the use of a computer to complete or submit answers

3. INCLUSION ADJUSTMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

3.1 This section is in accordance with the guidance outlined in the University's Guidance for Those with Responsibility for Making Examination Arrangements for Disabled Candidates LINK TO BE ADDED.

3.2 Additional support measures, such as any assistive technology, also apply to both invigilated and non-invigilated digital assessments.

---

[1] This Policy does not apply to postgraduate research students (they should consult the PGR Handbook for this information).

3.3   Candidates are responsible for ensuring that any inclusion adjustment requirements are appropriately flagged to Student Advice & Support.

3.4   Candidates with disabilities must ensure that appropriate assessments and/or medical certificates to support the need for any inclusion adjustments are obtained and that these are received by Student Support Services at the earliest opportunity. Late submission of these may result in lesser arrangements being made.

3.5   It is the responsibility of the Student Advice and Support Office to ensure that details of the academic provisions and/or examination arrangements required by the student are recorded on the Student Record System.

3.6   It is the responsibility of the School Inclusion Coordinator and the Registry Timetabling team to ensure that assessment arrangements, as specified in the Student Record System, are implemented.

3.7   It is the responsibility of the School Inclusion Coordinator to inform candidates about how inclusion adjustments will be organised and what is required of them. This should be done with at least one week's notice, if possible.

3.8   Students with the inclusion adjustment, 'extra time' must have this adjustment applied to both invigilated and non-invigilated timed assessments but are not subject to un-timed assessments which may be submitted during a longer time window (e.g. ~~24, 48,~~normally no longer than 72 hours ~~etc~~) where the assessment has been designed to be inclusive.

3.9   ~~Students with inclusion adjustments in place must not sit any invigilated assessment within the same hall/room as those who do not have special adjustments. Students with additional time for assessments may only sit an assessment in the same hall/room as those who have the same assessment duration~~.

4.   INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1   SCHEDULING OF INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.1.1   All scheduling of prescribed assessments must follow the procedures described in the University's Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas.

4.1.2   Invigilated ~~Assessments~~ assessments to be scheduled outside of the main ~~assessment~~ exam diet which require the use of computer classrooms (e.g. class tests) are to be highlighted to the Central Timetable team during the annual timetable setting to ensure that appropriate teams are aware of the additional requirements and colleagues in Digital & Information Services, including~~,~~ the Assistive Technology Team, are notified of the requirements.

4.1.3   Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there are no Central Timetable clashes with ~~i~~Invigilated assessments, candidates must make their School aware of any such clashes within one week of the Exam Timetable being published. Schools are responsible ~~so that Registry can make~~ for advising the student on alternative arrangements.

4.1.4 Candidates are responsible for checking their assessment schedule prior to the assessment to ensure that no location changes have been made. Candidates are required to attend in-person invigilated digital assessments. Failure to attend an assessment may prevent progression/graduation. If a student is unable to attend an assessment, they should refer to the University's Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

4.1.5 Invigilated digital assessments must utilise a suitable lockdown browser (e.g. Respondus, see the Staff Guide for using Respondus) unless the assessment is open book by design, requires access to other applications (e.g. to perform data manipulations or statistical analyses) or the ability to upload files (e.g. hand written equations). Students must be provided with an opportunity to practice a digital assessment that utilises a lockdown browser, whether this is on a University computer or their own personal computer, on which the lockdown browser has been pre-installed. Assessments that do not use a lockdown browser and are not open book may require additional digital support. In these situations, Schools must notify Registry when scheduling the assessment diet.CAD may contacted for guidance on the design and development of online assessments.

4.2 DELIVERY OF INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.2.1 The University is responsible for ensuring that all computing equipment is fully operational prior to an assessment diet. The Central Timetabling team will ensure that assessments taken in computer clusters rooms are at no more than 90% capacity to ensure that additional machines computers are available in the eventuality of an individual machines computer suddenly not working.

4.2.2 In situations where it is appropriate for a student to use their own personal computer, tThe student is responsible for ensuring that their personal computing equipmentcomputer that they are using for digital assessments areis fully operational and configured to the required conditions of the individual assessment. This includes preinstalling a lockdown browser, if this is being used,

4.2.3 Invigilators appointed for digital assessments must familiarise themselves with the current guidance for invigilators, which can be found here: Digital-Exams-Guidance-for-Invigilators.docx.

4.2.4 Schools are responsible for ensuring that each candidate has access to a suitable computer for all computer-based assessments. If a digital assessment allows use of a candidate's personal computer, Schools must also ensure that the system requirements for the assessment are published in advance of the examination and if a lockdown browser is being used, they should provide students with guidance on installing the lockdown browser on their personal computers (see Student Guide on Lockdown Broswer). Students are responsible for ensuring that the lockdown browser is downloaded to their device and tested before the assessment is attempted. Failure to do so, and any subsequent problems associated with using the lockdown browser, cannot be the basis for Good Cause applications. Schools must ensure that students have an opportunity to do a mock digital assessment with the same setup as the digital assessment.

4.2.5 Students attending an invigilated digital exam are required to enter the exam hall 20 mins prior to the start of the assessments (please see Digital Exam Guidance) to log on and ensure that all equipment is working correctly.

4.2.6 Students sitting an invigilated digital exam who arrive late or have not logged on/ensured that equipment is working correctly prior to the start of the exam will NOT be provided with additional time at the end of the assessment.

4.2.7 Schools should ensure that digital assessments permit candidates to submit their answers online via the VLE (or alternative assessment platform if being used) wherever possible rather than saving to portable devices, e.g. USBs. This ~~would~~ also ~~apply~~ applies to candidates with adjustments for the permitted use of a computer during written exams.

4.2.8 As outlined in the Rules of Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations For Degrees or Diplomas, when sitting invigilated digital assessments:

(i) candidates are responsible for the following:

- Candidates attending an invigilated digital exam are required to enter the exam hall 20 minutes prior to the start of assessments (please see Digital Exam Guidance) to log on and ensure that all equipment is working correctly.
- Displaying their student identity card on the corner of the examination desk.
- Reading and adhering to the instructions on the front sheet of the examination answer book (whether in paper or digital form).
- Ensuring that only permitted materials are on their persons at their examination desk and for the entire duration of the examination.

(ii) candidates must note the following:

- Candidates will not be admitted to an examination hall after the assessment has been in progress for thirty minutes.
- Candidates sitting an invigilated digital exam and attend late or have not logged on/ensured that equipment is working correctly prior to the start of the exam will NOT be provided with additional time at the end of the assessment.
- Candidates will not be permitted to leave during the first thirty minutes and the last thirty minutes of any examination.
- Candidates may be permitted to leave an examination hall temporarily with the consent of the Invigilator,
- Candidates must not leave the examination hall until either they are directed to do so by an Invigilator, or their work has been submitted through the necessary VLE and shown as such to an Invigilator. At the end of an examination, the Invigilators will either request all candidates then present to remain in their places until all work has been submitted or direct candidates to leave quietly.
- ~~Candidates will not be admitted to an examination hall after the examination has been in progress for thirty minutes.~~

4.2.9 If a student sits an exam, or submits an assignment, it will be assumed that the student is fit to sit and there are no extenuating/mitigating circumstances (defined as exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems, both medical and not). If a student believes that they are not fit to sit an exam or to submit an assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, or subsequently realises that they were not fit to do so, they should advise the School by completing the absence form on the Student Hub at the first possible opportunity, in line with Section 2.1 of Policy and Procedures on Student Absence, and in any case **before** any results are published. Failure to follow this may undermine any future appeal.

4.2.10 ~~At the end of the assessment duration, a time allocation must be provided to allow for the upload of the assessment submission, if required. Upload times will be clearly indicated to the candidate on the assessment instruction page.~~

4.3   PERMITTED MATERIALS DURING INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

4.3.1   In relation to permitted materials, invigilated digital assessments follow the guidelines set out in the University's Rules of Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations For Degrees or Diplomas.

4.3.2   Candidates may only take printed or other written materials to the examination desk when it has previously been advertised by the School and when it is stated in the rubric to the question paper that such material may be used.

4.3.3   All bags and other objects must be deposited where the Invigilators direct.

4.3.4   Examination papers shall either prohibit calculators or allow those only as specified under:

   (i)   Calculators must not normally be graphical, programmable, able store text or formulas and cannot be able to communicate with other devices unless authorised by the School. When there is any restriction on the type and use of calculators permitted~~,~~ this will be clearly stated on the examination papers ~~will state this~~(e.g. have enabled a digital calculator with the VLE for student use).

   (ii)   No calculator instruction manuals will be allowed in examination rooms under any circumstances.

   (iii)   Candidates are responsible for the performance of their own calculators.

   (iv)   ~~Calculators must not be graphical, programmable, able store text or formulas and cannot be able to communicate with other devices.~~ It is not permitted to use a mobile telephone as a calculator.

4.3.5   No candidate may consume any food or drink (except bottled water) in the assessment hall/room or room other than what may be medically required/prescribed, e.g. cough lozenges, etc. or for adjustments.

4.3.6   Any electronic or smart device, including those that can send and/or receive information or store data are not permitted during an assessment. This includes, but is not limited to, mobile phones, smart watches, e-readers, wearable technology items, fitness trackers and smart glasses. Such devices should be turned off completely and placed in a jacket or bag and left in the area designated by the Invigilators or placed under the examination desk, turned completely off. Invigilators may ask to see such devices and examine them at any point in the assessment room.

4.3.7   Students are permitted to have an analogue or simple digital watch with them during the assessment for the purposes of timekeeping. Watches must be taken off and placed on the examination desk for the duration of the assessment. Such watches must not have any smart capabilities (regardless of them being turned on) such as messaging, internet

access, data storage, calculator or other connectivity abilities. Invigilators may ask to see watches and examine them at any point in the assessment room.

4.3.8 Candidates may refer to English/native tongue (excluding electronic) dictionaries when permitted by their Schools to do so. Such dictionaries must, if so requested, be presented to an Invigilator for inspection prior to examination.

4.4   CONDUCT DURING AN INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

4.4.1 All candidates undertaking an assessment are expected to comply with the rules and regulations set out by the Universities' Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic). Any candidate found in breach of the Code of Practice will be reported to the Head of the relevant School in the first instance.

4.4.2 For all individual invigilated digital assessments, candidates must comply with the following regulations:

(i)   There must be no communication, either spoken or written, between candidates during the period of examination.

(ii)   In the case of invigilated computer-based assessments, candidates are not allowed to leave the hall during the first 30 minutes and the last 30 minutes of an invigilated computer-based assessment unless for a toilet break.

(iii)   Candidates must not share information about the contents of the assessment with other students or third parties.

(iv)   Candidates must not save, replay, post or take screenshots of assessments or suggest answers in any capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, the sharing of assessment content on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, etc.

(v)   Any assessment must be completed by the candidate personally and any work submitted must be the candidate's own work.

4.5   TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES DURING AN INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

4.5.1 The University reserve the right to cancel any digital assessment due to technical difficulties. Assessments cancelled in this regard will be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools are responsible for ensuring that candidates are informed in good time regarding the new date for their assessment.

4.5.2 In instances where a candidate experiences technical difficulties during an invigilated assessment, they must raise their concerns with an invigilator in the first instance, who will then advise on the next course of action.

4.5.3 In the event of submitting a claim for late or non-submission due to technical issues, students must support their claim with their Service Desk ticket number if they have logged the issue via MyIT.

5.   NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.1   SCHEDULING OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.1.1   All scheduling of prescribed assessments must follow the procedures described in the University's Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas.

5.1.2   Non-Invigilated Assessments that are timed and/or to be completed within a 24-hour window and to be scheduled during the main exam diets are to be sent to the Central Timetable team to avoid conflicts with other invigilated/non-invigilated assessments.

5.1.3   Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that there are no Central Timetable clashes with i~~t~~nvigilated assessments, candidates must make their School aware of any such clashes within one week of the Exam Timetable being published. Schools are responsible for advising the student on alternative arrangements. ~~so that Registry can make alternative arrangements.~~

5.1.4   Non-invigilated assessments that are not timed and/or may be completed over a longer time window than 24 hours (e.g. ~~take-home exams, online tests available for~~ 48 or~~,~~ 72 ~~+~~ hours) may run alongside other assessments and will not be considered as clashing. No additional time will be permitted in these situations. Therefore, a non-invigilated and an invigilated assessment may be scheduled on the same day without further adjustments to the schedule or additional time provided.

5.2   DELIVERY OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.2.1   The School must provide candidates with clear instructions on how to access, complete and submit digital non-invigilated assessments. Instructions should be published on relevant course pages of the VLE.

5.2.2   Schools must ensure that there is appropriate level of support available to candidates. ~~Guidance~~ Assessment information should clearly ~~indicate~~ identify a key ~~who to~~ contact if student~~'~~s have questions/difficulties. For assessment that are both timed and run during working hours and those run over a longer period ~~and what they should do if they have difficulties out with working hours~~ (e.g. ~~if an~~ assessment~~s is~~ scheduled over 24, 48 + hours) Schools must provide clear information on who students should contact if there is an issue / problem with the assessment out with normal working hours and indicate ~~and~~ when they will receive a response. Students should not be disadvantaged ~~:~~ by any delay in responding and the School is responsible for enacting appropriate mitigation measures.

5.2.3   The student is responsible for ensuring that their personal computing equipment that they are using for digital assessments are fully operational and configured to the required conditions of the individual assessment.

5.2.4   Candidates must ensure that they access their online assessment at the appropriate Scheduled time.

5.2.5   Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they have an appropriate internet connection for successfully completing the assessment. If candidates do not have a suitable internet connection, they should refer to the School Guidance.

5.2.6 Candidates should ensure that they have read all assessment information on the course page prior to the assessment prior to the due date to ensure that they are familiar with the assessment's requirements and timing.

5.2.7 If a student sits an exam, or submits an assignment, it will be assumed that the student is fit to sit and there are no extenuating/mitigating circumstances (defined as exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems, both medical and not). If a student believes that they are not fit to sit an exam/test or to submit an assignment due to an extenuating circumstance, or subsequently realises that they were not fit to do so, they should advise the School by completing the absence form on the Student Hub at the first possible opportunity, in line with Section 2.1 of Policy and Procedures on Student Absence, and in any case **before** any results are published. Failure to follow this may undermine any future appeal.

5.2.7 5.2.8 Whilst use of lockdown browsers are not normally recommended for non-invigilated assessments, they may be useful for some timed assessments to prevent the use of the copy and paste function or the use of GenAI tools, although it will not prevent the use of a second device to look up answers.

5.3 CONDUCT DURING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.3.1 Online assessments which do not require a candidate to be on campus for their duration should still be conducted under conditions as if they were being sat on campus.

5.3.2 All candidates undertaking an assessment are expected to comply with the rules and regulations set out by the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic). Any candidate found in breach of the Code of Practice will be reported to the Head of the relevant School in the first instance.

5.3.3 For all individual invigilated computer-based assessments, candidates must comply with the following regulations:

   (i) There must be no communication, either spoken or written, between candidates during the period of examination.

   (ii) Candidates must not share information about the contents of the assessment with other students or third parties.

   (iii) Candidates must not save, replay, post or take screenshots of assessments or suggest answers in any capacity. This includes, but is not limited to, the sharing of assessment content on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, etc.

   (iv) Any assessment must be completed by the candidate personally and any work submitted must be the candidate's own work

5.4 CONCLUDING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.4.1 Candidates are responsible for following all school guidance and ensuring that their assessment submission is the correct version. All submissions will be marked according to the Universities' marking and moderation procedures.

5.4.2 Candidates are required to ensure that they write their answers in English, unless a foreign language has been approved for use within the assessment due to either the assessment's nature or special arrangements.

5.4.3 Candidates are required to upload their assessment by the due date and time. Failure to do so, and blank or unreadable submissions, will be treated as a non-submission, and marked as such. If a candidate fails to submit an assessment, they should contact the School as soon as possible and complete an Absence Report as outlined in the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

5.4.4 At the end of the assessment duration, an additional time allocation must be provided to allow for the upload of the assessment submission, if ~~required~~ appropriate for the assessment (e.g. time needed to upload a written document when there may be system issues with a large volume of submissions occurring at the same time). Upload times should be at least 15~~30~~ minutes and will be clearly indicated to the candidate on the assessment instruction page (for example, if the assessment is due to be submitted at 1pm the assessment link remains open to 1.15pm and no penalties applied during this additional time).~~.~~Assessments uploaded beyond this window will normally be treated as a non-submission or penalties applied as appropriate.

5.5 LATE SUBMISSIONS OF NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

5.5.1 Schools will be responsible for ensuring that information regarding submissions windows, and upload times, are effectively communicated to candidates and that the appropriate settings are applied within the VLE.

5.5.2 Submissions received after the end of a scheduled assessment will be regarded as a late submission and penalties applied as outlined in the Policy and Procedures on Extensions and Penalties for Unauthorised Late Submissions of Coursework or non-submission as appropriate.

5.5.3 Where a candidate uploads their submission after the end of the specified upload time, they must provide further information to the School contact as identified in the Assessment information for the reason for their late submission and complete an Absence Report as outlined in the Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

5.6 TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES DURING A NON-INVIGILATED DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

5.6.1 The University reserve the right to cancel any digital assessment due to technical difficulties. Assessments cancelled in this regard will be rescheduled at the earliest possible opportunity. Schools are responsible for ensuring that candidates are informed in good time regarding the new date for their assessment.

5.6.2 A candidate who experiences technical difficulties with accessing, checking, submitting or completing an online assessment should immediately contact the School contact as identified in the Assessment information. Schools should ensure that this information is made available to candidates via the front page of their assessment.

5.6.3 In the event of submitting a claim for late or non-submission due to technical issues, students ~~must~~ should support their claim ~~with~~ by providing additional evidence, such as

atheir Service Desk ticket number if they have logged the issue via MyIT or a screenshot illustrating the problem.

Appendix A: Assessment taxonomy

Part A – Structure

- **Formative:** Assessment provides feedback and information primarily for the benefit of students in gauging their knowledge and ability at the time of the assessment they may include an indicative grade, they do not contribute towards the final mark for a course or degree classification.
- **Summative:** Assessment provides feedback and information after the learning process and will include a grade; these grades contribute to the award of credit and where relevant may be included in the calculation of the degree classification

- **Invigilated:** Assessments carried out with monitoring ensure adherence to regulations
  - o **Closed:** Assessments without access to any additional materials.
    - ▪ **Lockdown:** Digital assessment where specialist software to prevent students from accessing unauthorised resources during the assessment.
  - o **Open:** Assessments that allow the use of textbooks, notes or digital resources.
- **Non-invigilated:** Assessments that are taken without supervision, allowing students to complete them independently, often in a setting of their choice, and typically without real-time monitoring for academic integrity.

- **Timed:** These assessments must be completed within a specified time limit, which could be a single set time (e.g., a two-hour assessment scheduled at 10 a.m.) or a flexible window (e.g., a two-hour assessment available to start anytime within a 24-hour period). Where an assessment is to be completed within a specified time window this would ordinarily be no more than a 72 hour window. Timed assessments emphasise time management and a student's ability to perform under pressure, often reflecting real-world scenarios where responses need to be both accurate and time efficient.
- **Non-Timed:** Assessment that provides students the flexibility to complete activities without a fixed time constraint still includes a clear submission deadline. This approach allows students to work at their own pace within the allocated timeframe, emphasising the quality and depth of their responses over the speed of completion while ensuring timely submission

- **Pre-released:** Assessments where students receive the questions or topics in advance, allowing them to prepare responses using their study materials ahead of the assessment submission. This description specifically refers to situations where students are given the actual questions they are required to address in the assessment.
- **Unseen:** Assessments where students are presented with questions they have not encountered ahead of the assessment, requiring them to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills without prior preparation

- **Handwritten:** Assessment format in which students respond to questions using written answers, typically involving the use of pen or pencil
- **Digital:** Assessments administered on electronic devices, where students' complete questions using software applications (not scanning of paper based) may also be conducted via the internet, where students' complete questions and submit their responses using electronic devices
- **Oral:** Assessment where students are required to verbally respond to questions posed by an examiner or a panel.
- **Practical:** Assessment where student are observed conducting specific task, may also include elements of oral aassessment within the practical

- **Group:** Any assessment which involves students collaborating in teams to complete (can be pairs or larger groups)
- **Individual:** Any assessment which where each student is responsible for completing a task or project independently

Part B –

Assessment Descriptor	Some Example approaches (not exhaustive)
Extended Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring in-depth written responses (minimum 1000 words).	• Essays: Analytical or argumentative pieces on a specific topic. • Reflective writing: exploring and analysing personal experiences, thoughts, or learning to gain deeper understanding and insights. • Creative writing: crafting original narratives, poems, or other literary works that emphasise imagination, expression, and storytelling rather than purely factual or technical content • Research Papers: In-depth studies on a topic, often requiring literature reviews and original research. • Reports: Structured report format, often simulating the expectations and standards of professional practice in their field (i.e. Grant applications, technical reports). • Lab book/research journal: Detailed record of practical work, including experiments, procedures, observations, results, and analyses • Dissertations/Theses: Comprehensive, original research projects that contribute new knowledge to a field.
Brief Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring brief written responses (less than 1000 words).	• Short Answer Questions: Students respond to questions with concise answers, typically a few sentences or brief paragraph long. • Discussion Board Posts: Online platforms where students write brief responses or contributions to discussion prompts, engaging with their peers. • Response Papers: Brief written responses to prompts or questions about a specific reading or topic, focusing on key ideas
Objective Assessments: Assessment where the questions or tasks have predetermined correct answers they usually test specific knowledge or skills rather than subjective analysis or extended explanations.	• Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ) • Single-Best-Answer (SBA) • True/False • Fill-in-the-Blanks • Matching Exercises • Very Short Answer (Maximum 20 Words)
Performance-Based / Practical Assessments: Evaluations that measure students' ability to apply skills often reflecting real-world scenarios.	• Professional Practice Assessments: Evaluations in fields like healthcare or education, assessing practical skills and decision-making in professional settings, or role play within these types of settings. • Practical Assessments: Evaluations based on the application of skills or knowledge,

	often in a laboratory, field setting, placements or performance space • Musical Performance: Evaluating students' proficiency in playing an instrument or singing, focusing on technical skill, interpretation, and expression. • Computer Programming Exercise: Evaluating student coding skills by writing, testing, or debugging software to complete specific tasks or solve problems.
Presentations: Assessments that require students to prepare and deliver an oral and /or visual presentation on a specific topic.	• Oral: Delivered synchronously in person or via video or pre-recorded, these presentations assess students' verbal communication skills, confidence, and ability to effectively convey information. May or may not also be accompanied by visual element i.e. PowerPoint slides, artefact diplays. • Poster presentations: Students create visual posters that concisely summarise research, findings, or ideas, may or may not also be accompanied by a brief synchronous or pre-recorded oral explanation • Musical or Artistic performance: Involve a live performance (in person or recorded) where they showcase technical or interpretive skills, such as playing an instrument, acting, or dance, assessed on aspects like skill, expression, and creativity.
Portfolios / Cumulative Assessments: Portfolios may include a range of materials that collectively illustrate the student's progression within a subject area, portfolios often involve progression marking.	• Materials could include written assignments, projects, creative works, reflections, and feedback
Peer Assessment: Evaluation of a student's work by fellow students, providing feedback and grading. Can also assessment of student ability to provide peer assessment	• Discussion Forums or Blogs – Peers provide feedback on each other's discussion contributions or reflective blog post • Group Projects with Peer Evaluation – Students assess each other's contributions to a group project. • Presentations with Peer Feedback – Peers evaluate and provide constructive comments on oral or poster presentations.
Self-Assessment: Students evaluate their own work and learning processes. Can also assess of student ability to self-assess	• Self-Graded Quizzes – Students complete a quiz and then review their answers against a provided answer key. • Personal Learning Goals – Students set learning objectives at the start of a course and evaluate their progress at the end.

	• Rubric-Based Self-Assessment – Students use a grading rubric to assess their own work before submission. • Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis – Students analyze their skills and areas for improvement in a specific subject or task. • Portfolio Review – Students compile and assess their own work over time to track development.

Where an assessment consists of more than one type, such as a test with both multiple-choice elements and short-answer questions, it should be categorised based on the predominant type. The predominant type is determined as the question format that contributes the greatest proportion of marks. At the discretion of the course coordinator, exceptions may be made if a different categorisation is deemed more appropriate based on the nature of the assessment. Additional descriptions of the question types must be clearly communicated to students alongside the standard description

Appendix A: Assessment taxonomy

Part A – Structure

- **Invigilated:** Assessments carried out with monitoring ensure adherence to regulations
  - **Closed :** Assessments without access to any additional materials.
  - **Open**: Assessments that allow the use of textbooks, notes or digital resources.
  - **Lockdown:** Digital assessment where specialist software to prevent students from accessing unauthorised resources during the assessment.
- **Non invigilated:** Assessments that are taken without supervision, allowing students to complete them independently, often in a setting of their choice, and typically without real-time monitoring for academic integrity.
- **Timed**: These assessments must be completed within a specified time limit, which could be a single set time (e.g., a two-hour exam scheduled at 10 a.m.) or a flexible window (e.g., a two-hour exam available to start anytime within a 24-hour period). Timed assessments emphasise time management and a student's ability to perform under pressure, often reflecting real-world scenarios where responses need to be both accurate and time-efficient.
- **Non-Timed:** Assessment that provides students the flexibility to complete activities without a fixed time constraint still includes a clear submission deadline. This approach allows students to work at their own pace within the allocated timeframe, emphasizing the quality and depth of their responses over the speed of completion while ensuring timely submission
- **Pre-released:** Assessments where students receive the questions or topics in advance, allowing them to prepare responses using their study materials ahead of the assessment submission. This description specifically refers to situations where

students are given the actual questions they are required to address in the assessment.
- **Unseen:** Assessments where students are presented with questions they have not encountered ahead of the assessment, requiring them to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills without prior preparation
- **Hand written**: Assessment format in which students respond to questions using written answers, typically involving the use of pen or pencil
- **Digital**: Assessments administered on electronic devices, where students complete questions using software applications(not scanning of paper based) may also be conducted via the internet, where students complete questions and submit their responses using electronic devices
- **Oral:** Assessment where students are required to verbally respond to questions posed by an examiner or a panel.
- **Group** – any assessment which involves students collaborating in teams to complete (can be pairs or larger groups)
- **Individual** - any assessment which where each student is responsible for completing a task or project independently

Part B – Descriptor

Extended Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring in-depth written responses (minimum 1000 words) example include:
- Essays: Analytical or argumentative pieces on a specific topic.
- Research Papers: In-depth studies on a topic, often requiring literature reviews and original research.
- Reports: Structured report format, often simulating the expectations and standards of professional practice in their field.
- Lab book/research journal: Detailed record of practical work, including experiments, procedures, observations, results, and analyses
- Dissertations/Theses: Comprehensive, original research projects that contribute new knowledge to a field.

Brief Writing Tasks: Assessments requiring brief written responses (less than 1000 words), examples include:
- Short Answer Questions: Students respond to questions with concise answers, typically a few sentences or brief paragraph long.
- Discussion Board Posts: Online platforms where students write brief responses or contributions to discussion prompts, engaging with their peers.
- Response Papers: Brief written responses to prompts or questions about a specific reading or topic, focusing on key ideas

Objective Assessments: Assessment where the questions or tasks have predetermined correct answers they usually test specific knowledge or skills rather than subjective analysis or extended explanations Examples include:
- multiple-choice questions (MCQ)
- single-best answer (SBA)
- true/false
- fill-in-the-blanks
- matching exercises
- very short answer (maximum 10 words)

Performance Based / Practical Assessments: Evaluations that measure students' ability to apply skills often reflecting real-world scenarios example could include
- Professional Practice Assessments: Evaluations in fields like healthcare or education, assessing practical skills and decision-making in professional settings, or role play within these types of settings.

- Practical Assessments: Evaluations based on the application of skills or knowledge, often in a laboratory, field setting, placements or performance space
- Musical Performance: Evaluating students' proficiency in playing an instrument or singing, focusing on technical skill, interpretation, and expression.
- Computer Programming Exercise: Evaluating student coding skills by writing, testing, or debugging software to complete specific tasks or solve problems.

Presentations: Assessments that require students to prepare and deliver an oral or visual presentation on a specific topic. Examples include
- Oral: Delivered in person or via video, these presentations assess students' verbal communication skills, confidence, and ability to effectively convey information.
- Poster presentations: Students create visual posters that concisely summarise research, findings, or ideas, may or may not also be accompanied by a brief oral explanation
- Musical or Artistic performance: Involve a live performance (in person or recorded) where they showcase technical or interpretive skills, such as playing an instrument, acting, or dance, assessed on aspects like skill, expression, and creativity.

Portfolios / Cumulative Assessments: Portfolios may include a range of materials—such as written assignments, projects, creative works, reflections, and feedback—that collectively illustrate the student's progression within a subject area, portfolios often involve progression marking.

Peer Assessment: Evaluation of a student's work by fellow students, providing feedback and grading. Can also assessment of student ability to provide peer assessment

Self-Assessment: Students evaluate their own work and learning processes. Can also assessment of student ability to self-assess

Where an assessment consists of more than one type, such as a test with both multiple-choice elements and short-answer questions, it should be categorised based on the predominant type. The predominant type is determined as the question format that contributes the greatest proportion of marks. Additional descriptions of the question types must be clearly communicated to students alongside the standard description.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EXAMINERS' MEETINGS PROCEDURES

1.   PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> This paper provides an overview of the proposed amendments to the Examiners' Meetings procedures.

2.   PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Academic Policy and Regulations Group (For **approval**)	20 March 2025
Further consideration/ approval required by	Quality Assurance Committee (For **approval**)	16 April 2025
	Senate (For **information**)	7 May 2025

3.   RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The **University Education Committee (UEC)** are invited to **note** the amendments to the Examiners' Meetings Procedures, as detailed in **Annex A**.

4.   BACKGROUND

4.1   The Examiners' Meetings procedures were last reviewed in 2017/18 and approved by the University Committee of Teaching and Learning (UCTL as was, now the University Education Committee (UEC)) in September 2017. The Examiners' Meetings procedures were originally published in three distinct documents: the job description for Examinations Officers, guidance on the Number, Composition and Purpose of Examiners' Meetings, and guidance on the Conduct of Examiners' Meetings. These documents were intended to provide assistance for Schools and/or Disciplines in terms of what was required (as a minimum) to be detailed in an Examiners' Meeting, and to assure that assessment criteria had been applied consistently. The documents gave guidance to ensure that terms used within them were transparent, and that Examiners' Meetings were conducted in a largely standardised manner across the University

4.2   Further to the Education Policy and Regulations Update that the Education Committees received by circulation, a review of the Examiners' Meetings procedures has been undertaken to combine the three existing documents into one comprehensive document. Aspects of the existing procedures have been clarified (as summarised in Section 5), and extensive layout amendments have occurred to bring these procedures in line with other existing University documents.

4.3   In taking this forward, the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement in conjunction with the Academic Services team developed a proposal document to be presented for consultation to maintain the rigour of quality assurance practices. This draft was presented to the Directors of Education and Examinations Officer(s) for each School,

and a number of comments were received. These have been noted, and the procedural document has been amended as a result.

4.4   In considering the review of the Examiners' Meetings procedures, sectoral research was carried out with a number of UK Universities, including other Ancient Scottish Universities. The sectoral research is appended as **Annex B**. The sectoral analysis highlights that the University's current Examiners' Meetings procedures appear to be in line with those of other Higher Education Institutions.

5.   SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

5.1   The following summary details the key amendments and clarifications which are proposed to the procedures. The majority of the amendments were minor, and it should be noted that the content of the three documents remain largely preserved in the new single document. The full revised Examiners' Meetings procedures are provided in **Annex A**.

- The three documents that previously existed (as described in 4.1) have been combined into one document entitled *Examiners' Meetings Procedures*.

- A glossary has been added in Section 2 to clarify what is meant by the various terms referred to throughout the document. Additionally, in response to feedback, a sentence was added to highlight that membership and attendance at all Examiners' Meetings would be at the discretion of the Convenor of the Meeting.

- Distinction was made between undergraduate and postgraduate taught Examiners' Meetings, in terms of the times of year that they take place.

- Wording was changed in terms of "half-session" to "term", and "extenuating circumstances" to "mitigating circumstances".

- An optional template for the compilation of the minute for all Examiners' Meetings is included as Appendix A to the Annex.

6.   ACTION REQUIRED

6.1   The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is invited to **discuss and approve** the combined document at the meeting on 16 April 2025.

7.   NEXT STEPS

7.1   The procedures will be noted at the University Education Committee (UEC) for information.

8.   FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Steve Tucker (s.j.tucker@abdn.ac.uk), Liam Dyker (liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk) or Morag MacRae (morag.macrae@abdn.ac.uk).

26 March 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Annex A: Examiners' Meetings Procedures (revised)

ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
EXAMINERS' MEETINGS PROCEDURES

1.   PROCEDURES

1.1   These procedures set out the number, composition, conduct and responsibilities relating to Examiners' Meetings, and were approved by the Quality Assurance Committee on <mark>XXX</mark>.

1.2   These procedures are designed to be read in conjunction with the University's Codes of Practice on Assessment (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught) and External Examining documentation. Further information on Assessment at the University is available in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH).

1.3   The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) can be consulted (via Academic Services) should a School wish to discuss matters relating to Examiners' Meetings in more detail.

2.   GLOSSARY OF TERMS

2.1   A glossary of terms is provided as follows:
- **Internal Examiners' Meeting:** A meeting of internal academic staff (the Professors, Readers, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and Teaching Fellows within a specific programme or discipline) normally held following the end of an assessment diet.
- **Examiners' Meeting:** A meeting of internal and external examiners normally held following the end of an assessment diet.
- **Final Examiners' Meeting:** A meeting of internal and external examiners normally held following the end of an assessment diet to determine classifications and consider borderline cases. This is normally held at the end of the Term 2 assessment period for undergraduate programmes, and end of the Term 3 assessment period for postgraduate taught programmes.
- **Examinations Officer:** The individual member(s) of academic staff within a school with   oversight of the assessment procedures as detailed in section 6.

3.   NUMBER, COMPOSITION AND PURPOSE OF MEETINGS

3.1   The outcomes of assessments are approved by Examiners' Meetings. It is the responsibility of Heads of School to decide how many Examiners' Meetings they need to convene each year and to ensure that External Examiners are informed of the dates well in advance. It is at the discretion of the respective Schools to determine whether the meetings will take place in person on campus, online, or in a hybrid manner.

3.2   Normally, Final Examiners' Meetings are held at the end of the Term 2 assessment diet for undergraduate programmes and at the end of the Term 3 assessment diet for postgraduate taught programmes. At least one External Examiner is required to attend these meetings. In addition, Schools should normally hold a meeting of internal examiners after the Term 2 or 3 assessment diet and immediately before a Final Examiners' Meeting, primarily to identify any potential borderline candidates. This would allow a candidate's scripts and in-course assignments to be collated and made available to the Final Examiners' Meeting, in order to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to candidates for whom the assessment outcome may be unclear.

3.3   In cases where a final Examiners' Meeting would be considering a very small number of candidates, it is acceptable for an External Examiner to request that they should be excused from attending the University provided they have been sent the following:

- advice regarding any mitigating circumstances that a student has submitted regarding their performance so that these can be taken into account by the External Examiner in approving overall course grades and programme awards;
- summative assessments for each individual candidate which have not been previously seen by the External Examiner.

The External Examiner must also agree to raise any issues with the Head of School by telephone or e-mail prior to confirming the marks and awards and in sufficient time for the School to meet the Senate-approved deadlines for the submission of results to the Student Records team, and to provide feedback to the Head of School in regard to the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, and the appropriateness of the curricula.

3.4 Schools may also elect to hold an internal Examiners' Meeting at the end of Term 1 or resit summer assessment diets, to agree the marks, scripts and other information to be made available to the External Examiners. There is no requirement for External Examiners to attend these meetings. Where an Examiners' Meeting is not held at the end of Term 1 or the resit diet, it shall be for the Head of School and Course Coordinator to approve the marks for an individual course, which should be submitted to the External Examiner for award of the final overall mark.

3.5 The primary purposes of Final Examiners' Meetings are: -
- to make recommendations in regard to programme awards (including decisions made regarding borderline candidates);
- to finalise the Term 1 grades for courses for Honours and postgraduate taught candidates;
- to finalise the grades to be awarded for all Term 2 courses and those Term 1 courses that are assessed at the end of Term 2 for Honours;
- to finalise the grades to be awarded for all Term 2 or 3 courses and those Term 1 courses that are assessed at the end of Term 2 or 3 for postgraduate taught;
- for borderline candidates only, to take into consideration any medical or other mitigating circumstances that had been submitted to the School within the required time limits (this is normally done via a separate School Mitigating Circumstances Committee);
- to assist Heads of School in identifying candidates for the award of any prizes that are the responsibility of a School;
- to receive oral comments from the External Examiner(s) in regard to (a) the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, (b) the appropriateness of the curricula, particularly in regard to any external reference points such as the national subject benchmark statement, where relevant, and (c) the structure and content of existing programmes of study, as part of a systematic reflection on the provision and appropriateness of these programmes.

4. COMPOSITION OF EXAMINERS' MEETINGS

4.1 For programmes delivered by one School, the Head of a School (or their nominated Deputy) should normally serve as Convenor of all Examiners' Meetings for that School. In addition, all Course Coordinators would be expected to attend where the results for their courses were being considered and/or where the results for their courses would contribute to a candidate's overall programme result. All other examiners are also eligible to attend internal Examiners' Meetings. Other markers may be permitted to be in attendance, but without power to vote. The membership of each Examiners' Meeting will be at the discretion of the Convenor. The quorum for a Final Examiners' Meeting

would be the Convenor, at least one External Examiner, and normally at least three other internal examiners.

4.2 For programmes delivered by more than one School, the final decision on the award should be taken by an Examiners' Meeting consisting of up to three examiners from each of the participating Schools, plus appropriate External Examiners where available. Where an External Examiner is not available, decisions will be subject to subsequent ratification by the relevant External Examiner(s). For multi-disciplinary programmes with a designated Honours Coordinator and separately identified External Examiners, the Examiners' Meeting must comprise at least the Honours Coordinator, the External Examiner(s), and at least one representative from each School which has contributed courses.

4.3 For joint and major/minor Honours degrees in which a candidate has studied two subjects, in practice one School will hold its Final Examiners' Meeting and decide candidates' marks to be awarded for the assessments for which it is responsible before the equivalent meeting for the second subject. Examiners representing the first School/subject will then take joint candidates' marks to the Final Examiners' Meeting for the second subject. The examiners for the two subjects will then jointly determine the overall programme award. This must be agreed in advance between the Examiners.

5. CONDUCT OF EXAMINERS' MEETINGS

5.1 Examiners' Meetings shall be convened by the Head of the relevant School (or their nominated deputy) or Honours Coordinator where appropriate. The meetings should be scheduled to ensure that the School can submit results, approved by the External Examiner, by the Senate-approved deadlines.

5.2 Those attending Examiners' Meetings are obliged to declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with a student being assessed, as defined in the Personal Relationships Policy.

5.3 Only data, and any personal information, required for Examiners to reach an appropriate outcome should be shared for the meeting. Schools should determine an appropriate mechanism (e.g. a dedicated Teams site) for the distribution and management of this information. Examiners should be provided with instructions around restrictions on sharing and handling data, and instructions for deleting information following the conclusion of the meeting. Data should only be kept for the minimum period necessary to complete the task. Multiple copies of information must not be kept.

5.4 All summative assessments should be available for Examiners' Meetings, if requested, in regard to any student for whom an assessment outcome is being considered.

5.5 Where the Examiners have evidence (e.g. a candidate's past performance) to believe that a candidate's performance has been impaired for a prolonged period of time (e.g. long-term illness of a parent), the Examiners may take account of this in reviewing borderline cases to determine final degree classification or postgraduate taught award. Should mitigating circumstances already have been applied at course level, they should not be also applied at programme level. See also the relevant Code of Practice on Assessment.

5.6 The Code of Practice on Assessment indicates that, in regard to degree classification, where the Examiners use their discretion to depart from the class indicated by the Grade Point Average, such discretion can only be used in an **upward** direction. In all circumstances where discretion is applied, clear reasons must be identified for doing so and a record kept in the minutes of the Examiners' Meeting. It is the responsibility of the

Convenor to ensure that an appropriate record is kept of the procedures and decisions of each Examiners' Meeting. An optional template for School use for the minute of all internal and Final Examiners' Meetings is provided in Appendix A.

5.7 External Examiners, as full members of the relevant Examiners' Meeting, must normally be invited to attend all Examiners' Meetings at which significant decisions are to be taken in regard to the specialisms with which they have been concerned (including those for which they have approved question papers). At least one External Examiner must be present at all Final Examiners' Meetings.

5.8 In addition to noting the comments from External Examiners, minutes of Examiners' Meetings should include the following set of information as a minimum:
- Full title of Examiners' Meeting
- Date and location of meeting
- Those present followed by those who have submitted apologies
- List of programmes and/or courses being examined
- Explanation of calculations to be used in determining grades, including instances in which the Degree Classification Tool in the Students' Record System has not been used
- Criteria used in consideration of borderline candidates
- Candidates with special circumstances possibly affecting their performance
- List of results, including details of any borderline decisions made and the rationale for them

5.9 Additionally, the following points should be taken into consideration when compiling minutes:
- The use of personal information should be avoided as much as possible
- Students should be referred to by ID numbers
- All decisions should be attributed to all Examiners

6. THE ROLE OF AN EXAMS OFFICER

6.1 Each School must appoint an Examinations Officer, hereafter referred to as an Exams Officer, who will have oversight of the examinations process in that School. Schools can appoint an Exams Officer for undergraduate programmes and one for postgraduate taught programmes, if they wish, or a single Exams Officer can oversee both levels. If they wish, multi-discipline Schools can appoint an Exams Officer for each Discipline but in that case, it is expected that they would meet routinely throughout the year to agree on School policies and the timings and delegation of duties. In such instances, Schools should appoint a Senior Exams Officer to ensure consistency and compliance across the School and to provide a single point of contact for the School. The Exams Officer(s) must be an experienced academic member of staff who has an in-depth knowledge of the University's policies on Feedback and Assessment and the dates by which actions need to have been taken.

6.2 All Exams Officers are required to attend an annual training session prior to the final Examiners' Meetings of the academic year to apprise themselves of any changes to University policy. Support for Exams Officers is available throughout the year and in particular at the time of Examiners' Meetings from members of the Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Services staff.

6.3 The responsibilities of an Exams Officer are as follows:
a) Being fully cognisant of, and keeping up to date with, all institutional policy and regulations in regard to assessment;
b) Attending annual Exams Officer training;

c) Ensuring School/Discipline knowledge of, and compliance with, the University's current assessment policies and regulations, including internal moderation;

d) Coordinating the preparation of examination papers for all courses assessed by written papers, including checking for accuracy and, where appropriate, ensuring they are in the requested format for special needs students;

e) Ensuring that the School's External Examiner(s) are fully inducted (see External Examining for further detail) and have been familiarised with the University's policies and practices; ensuring that the External Examiner(s) have received accurate and timely information and documentation relating to the course/programme being examined; liaising with External Examiner(s) to obtain feedback on draft exam papers, and supplying them with course grade lists and samples of student coursework and exam scripts; providing additional information requested by the External Examiners, regarding assessments, programmes and courses, during their visit;

f) Liaising with the University's Central Timetabling Team, Academic Services and the Quality Assurance Committee, as required, on academic matters relating to assessment;

g) Ensuring staff are aware of, and comply with, all deadlines for the setting of assessments and the return of marks;

h) Liaising with and supporting the work of non-academic staff concerning the School's assessment processes;

i) Establishing and chairing a School/Discipline Mitigating Circumstances Committee, to ensure a consistent approach to, and consideration of, all students in the School/Discipline;

j) Attending the School's/Discipline's Examiners' Meetings (potentially chairing such meetings if requested by the Head of School), ensuring they are held in accordance with University policy; arranging for the provision of materials for Examiners' Meetings within the School/Discipline, including any second marking/moderation issues and mitigating circumstances of particular students (anonymised); reviewing final degree examination results and, when necessary, bringing to the attention of External Examiners and Examiners' Meetings any borderline cases or others which require consideration; where appropriate, making statistical analysis of course grades available to internal and External Examiners;

k) Ensuring production of records of the discussions and actions taken at Examiners' Meetings, including formal minutes in line with Academic Quality Handbook guidance; ensuring that such records are retained in an appropriate format in accordance with the University's retention policy;

l) Agreeing an approach to and liaising with other Schools/Disciplines regarding results and decisions for students on joint degree programmes (NB: this should be agreed prior to the Examiners' Meeting);

m) Supporting Administrative Staff to carry out a final check of course grades for accuracy prior to the School Office entering them into Student Records, and a further check after entering has been completed but before 'committing';

n) Reporting and investigating, as appropriate, any instances of academic misconduct during examinations in accordance with the University's normal procedures.

All queries should be addressed to academicservices@abdn.ac.uk

**Template for optional use by Schools to produce the
Minute of all Examiners' Meetings
(both Internal and Final)**
<FULL TITLE OF EXAMINERS' MEETING>

Date and location of meeting
(*NB A note should be made as to whether the Examiners' Meeting was conducted remotely or in person, or in a hybrid manner*)

List of those present identifying the Convenor, the Internal Examiners, the Exams Officer(s), the External Examiner(s) and the meeting clerk. Where an examiner is not present at the meeting, the minute should acknowledge receipt of any written comments.

1. List of programmes and/or courses being examined
2. Explanation of calculations to be used in determining grades, including instances in which the Degree Classification Tool in the Students' Record System has not been used
3. Criteria used in consideration of borderline candidates
4. Candidates with special circumstances possibly affecting their performance (if appropriate)
5. List of results, including details of any borderline decisions made and the rationale for them
6. For any meeting which has an External Examiner in attendance, comments from External Examiners on the following:
   - the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates
   - the appropriateness of the curricula, particularly in regard to any external reference points such as the national subject benchmark statement, where relevant
   - the structure and content of existing programmes of study,
   Remember:
   - The use of personal information should be avoided as much as possible
   - Students should be referred to by ID numbers
   - All decisions should be attributed to **all** Examiners

Institution	Key notes of practice	Link
University of Edinburgh	- Has a handbook for the Board of Examiners - Also a Regulations Expert for each board (or a number of Boards) – akin to our Exams Officers, or AST/Dean for QA - Gives a template for minutes of the BoE, and an annual calendar of timelines and processes associated with the BoE - Informal discussions take place before the BoE, as compared to internal examiners' meetings	Uni of Edinburgh Board of Examiners Handbook
University of Glasgow	- Does not seem to have one specific policy for standard Examiners' Meetings. Has template of minutes, exam board guidance for joint degrees - Has a YouTube video about taking exams at the UofG	Template for Exam Board minutes Joint Degree Exam Boards
University of Dundee	- Have pre-meetings instead of internal (vs external) meetings. Otherwise very similar to our processes	Board of Examiners Conduct
University of Strathclyde	- No clear guidance on examiners' meetings conduct, frequency etc. - There is a "Procedure for returning marks and disseminating results" but it is relatively short and mostly concerns the release of marks to students on the UoS student portal - In the Assessment and Feedback Policy, it has a section on Programme Exam Boards which are responsible for: "making sure assessments across a programme are marked fairly; ensuring university and faculty regulations are adhered to; and responding to points made by External Examiners."	Procedure for returning marks and disseminating results
University of St Andrews	- They have a password protected document on "Assessment, marking and module boards" and one on	Assessment policies and procedures

	"Assessments, policies and procedures: Guidance for staff" which is also password protected - They have Module Boards which are carried out at course level, and Degree Classification Boards which are only for graduating students. Uncertain what, if anything, comes between a Module Board and a Degree Classification Board. Seems burdensome for staff (academic and PS) to need to carry out boards for each individual course - The "Assessment policies and procedures" has one section devoted to Module Boards.	
University College London	- **Board of Examiners (**annual meeting of the Board of Examiners with all members in attendance (subject to quoracy provisions), including the External Examiner(s))**; Preparatory Boards** (Preparatory Meetings will usually have a limited membership, and care must be taken to maintain candidate anonymity wherever possible); **Sub-Boards** (The Full Board may delegate authority to a smaller Sub Board of itself to make decisions on its behalf for out-of-cycle matters such as Late Summer Assessments. They may meet virtually, by correspondence or in person provided that all members of the Sub-Board (including the External Examiner(s), are copied in to the papers or discussion); and **Interim Boards** (Some Programmes hold 'Interim Boards' to discuss results received so far, often at the end of the taught modules on a Masters programme)	[Boards of Examiners](#)

	- Full Boards are also attended by a representative of the Faculty Board of Examiners to ensure all standard are adhered to - Conducted online unless there is an academic requirement for meeting face-to-face - Each Faculty will have its own BoE which must meet at least once a year, and reports to the UCL Quality and Standards Committee of Education Committee (akin to QAC). Seems an overly bureaucratic process as the FBoE just ratifies the decisions of the BoEs	
University of Durham	- Can only locate the Theological Education Institution (TEI) policy, as compared to the institutional one. - From what is available, their processes are broadly similar to our own	[Exam Boards and External Examiners - Durham University](#) [Responsibilities of Durham (Overarching) Board of Examiners - Durham University](#)

Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Employability

University of Aberdeen

Final
March 2025

pwc

Contents

Distribution list

For action:
Debbie Dyker - Director of People
Tracey Innes - Assistant Director and Head of Careers

For information:
Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and COO
Samantha Waters, Interim University Secretary
Liz Rattray, Interim Chief Operating Officer
Audit and Risk Committee

1. Executive summary

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">**Report classification**

●

Low risk</td><td></td><td>**Critical**</td><td>**High**</td><td>**Medium**</td><td>**Low**</td><td>**Advisory**</td></tr>
<tr><td>Control design</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td>Operating effectiveness</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>1</td></tr>
</table>

Background

Graduate outcomes are key to universities because they serve as a measure of the institution's success in preparing students for the workforce by enhancing their employability. Employability for a university is the process of equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to be successful in their future. Positive graduate outcomes, such as high employment rates and successful career trajectories, enhance the reputation of the university, attract prospective students, and contribute to the overall value and impact of the institution.

According to the Complete University Guide's 2025 University League Tables, the University of Aberdeen is ranked 45th in the UK out of 130 universities for graduate prospects, with an overall score of 80%. The University also ranks at 32nd out of 122 universities within the Guardian University Guide 2025 rankings, under the 'Career after 15 months' category.

Aberdeen 2040 provides a focus on Education in the context of preparing "graduates to thrive in the diverse workplaces of the future" with commitments that need to be embedded in the experience of all students. The University recognises the need to further develop and mature how employability is approached and embedded. Two years ago an external consultant was engaged to help the University develop their vision and strategic approach to upscaling work-based learning. Recommendations included development of policy, systems and investment in staff resource. Work has also focused on reviewing and developing a graduate attributes framework, enabling students to meaningfully recognise and reflect on their skills development. This involved working with external partners and alumni. The resulting 'MySkills' framework is now being embedded across the Institution.

Overall Conclusions

We assessed the design and operating effectiveness of key controls associated with employability across the University. Specifically, we:

- Examined the relevant committees in place, reviewing a sample of terms of references for these alongside the most recent meeting minutes to assess how employability is discussed across the University.

- Reviewed the University's Strategy and supporting documents for the three employability commitments and understood their implementation.

- Selected a sample of four schools and held discussions with each to understand employability mechanisms in place. We also considered student voice, employer links and how employability is built into programmes across the sampled schools.

- Through discussions, we understood what initiatives were in place for students to gain relevant work experience, through placement, volunteering or shadowing opportunities.

We identified four low risk findings relating to inconsistent Academic Framework for Employability, action plans for employability commitments, KPI and Data Insights and Employability activity planning and tracking We also identified an advisory finding regarding the need for consistent advisory boards across the university. While initial conversations with management suggest that this may not be a current priority, we have included it for consideration based on comparisons with other institutions we have reviewed.

Overall, there are a number of mechanisms in place for enhancing and embedding employability, but their effectiveness depends on consistent application. By addressing these findings, the university can enhance students' employability.

1. Executive summary

Good Practice

We noted areas of good practice, including:

- The university is introducing the identification of soft skills associated with each module offered, helping students understand which skills they are developing. This initiative will be supported by end-of-module surveys that allow students to reflect on the soft skills they have gained throughout the course. This reflection will enable a comparison between the initial objectives of the module and the actual skills acquired.

- The University has implemented the use of an in-house 'MySkills' tool, serving to assist students in mapping their career readiness. This tool enables students to reflect on their existing skills and identify those they wish to develop, while also aligning their goals with the university's established attributes.

- An Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee has been established, comprising members from each School and the Careers team, to address employability issues. Our review highlighted that relevant employability topics were discussed in the three sample meetings we examined, clearly outlining how these align with the university's strategic objectives.

- All students participate in a career readiness survey as they commence their next year of studies, with the results displayed in a dashboard for staff members to review. This information is invaluable for tracking progress throughout undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

- Across the sampled schools, we see that alumni are actively engaged to host talks and panels for students, sharing their experiences since graduating and discussing various employability topics.

Summary of key findings

We identified four low and one advisory finding as part of our review:

- **Inconsistent Academic Framework for Employability (Low) -** The review of employability activities across four sampled schools within the university identified inconsistencies in feedback mechanisms and the implementation of employability modules. While some schools integrate these modules into specific courses and academic years, others lack similar opportunities. Furthermore, insufficient communication and sharing of best practices among schools hinder the consistent application and enhancement of employability initiatives across the university.

- **Enhancing Action Plan for Employability Commitments (Low) -** The university's strategy aims to fulfill key commitments by 2040, emphasising employability through interdisciplinary courses, global employment preparation, and international experiences for students. However, these commitments currently lack clear action owners and timescales for the current action plan in place and are not regular agenda items in the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee meetings, which hinders accountability and progress.

- **KPI and Data Insights (Low) -** The university currently relies on a single key performance indicator (KPI) to monitor graduate outcomes, concentrating on the overall number of graduates in highly skilled employment. While various metrics are identified and shared annually for informational purposes, there is a lack of concerted effort to leverage this data in developing a data-driven approach to employability activities, in contrast to good practices seen at other universities.

- **Employability Activity - Planning and Tracking (Low) -** Conversations with four sampled schools revealed the absence of a maintained timeline or log for planning student employability activities throughout the year, leading to the ad-hoc organisation of events such as career fairs. Establishing a forward-looking timeline at the beginning of the academic year, perhaps led by Employment Engagement Managers, could effectively map activities across schools, identify gaps, and ensure comprehensive coverage for all student groups.

- **Inconsistent Approach to Formalising Industry Relationships (Advisory) -** The university promotes student employability through a combination of institution-wide and school-specific activities; however, a review of four schools highlighted inconsistencies in the application and effectiveness of Industry Advisory Boards (IABs)/employer links. Some schools have established formal IABs that facilitate structured industry feedback, while others depend on informal staff relationships, resulting in a lack of consistent industry insights and collaboration across the university.

1. Executive summary

HE Insights

Graduate employability has had an increased focus across the higher education sector in recent years, with Universities shifting focus away from sole attention on graduate outcomes data, to consideration of how the University can help to shape individuals who are career-ready. From our work at a number of other higher education insitutitions, we consider the University to have good operational-level mechanisms in place to support student employability, in line with the sector, however the University of Aberdeen is on a journey in the development of its strategic approach.

We have observed a range of initiatives to enhance and embed employability which are varied across our client portfolio. Some institutions have made use of innovative technologies and adopted the enhancement of digital tools and artificial intelligence. For example providing a digital skills accelerator programme for students, allowing students to develop highly sought after skills which employers are increasingly interested in.

Other institutions are making use of timetabled reading weeks to showcase professional development, for example allowing students to select a one-day course relating to key employability topics and transferable skills such as: business writing, communication, public speaking, assertiveness and Microsoft Excel and IT skills development. Similarly, others have introduced a programme of digital badges or 'skills passports' which enable students to obtain recognition for the development of key transferable skills throughout their study, which can be drawn upon in job applications or interviews.

We have also observed utilisation of industry links through Industrial Advisory Boards, whereby such links are utilised for both employability initiatives and feedback on new programme development, alongside dedicated career development resource operating in a hub and spoke model between central careers service and Schools.

2. Current year findings

<div style="color:white;background:#c8102e;padding:1em;">

1

Inconsistent Academic Framework for Employability

Operating Effectiveness

</div>

Finding rating

Rating	Low

Finding and root cause

To evaluate the consistency of employability activities across the University, we reviewed a sample of four schools. Our findings indicate feedback mechanisms at the university level, including evaluations from careers fairs and end-of-module surveys for both students and employers. However, at the school level, we observed significant variation in approaches to gathering student feedback. For instance, while the Natural Sciences school utilises student representatives, the Law school involves students in advisory boards, and the Languages, Literature, Music, and Visual Culture school lacks these connections altogether. We recommend establishing consistent channels for student voice across the university.

Additionally, we found inconsistencies in the implementation of employability modules tailored to specific courses, which vary not only across schools but also among different courses within the same school. For example, within the School of Natural Sciences, the Chemistry programme includes a mandatory employability skills module focused on CV writing and soft skills, while Physics offers it as an optional module with lower attendance rates. In contrast, other subjects in the same school, such as Mathematics and Computer Science, do not have access to such a module. Though it is important to note that central provision of employability support is available, but employability provisions are not embedded consistently across the curriculum.

Moreover, the timing of employability-focused modules varies significantly; while some schools implement these in the third year, others target first-year students, fourth-year students, or postgraduates. Good practices observed at other universities involve consistently integrated, mandatory employability modules across all courses and stages, covering essential topics like interview skills and CV writing.

Lastly, although there are some good practices in place, such as the introduction of employability-focused modules, there is currently no mechanism for sharing these successful strategies across schools. Discussions among sampled schools revealed a lack of dialogue regarding the exchange of best practices within the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC).

Potential implications

Without a structured and consistent approach to employability, students may miss out on key employability events, workshops, and career development opportunities, ultimately reducing their preparedness for the job market.

Further, without consistency individual schools may work in isolation, resulting in duplicated efforts, missed opportunities for joint initiatives, and inefficient use of resources that could otherwise enhance employability support.

Employers looking to collaborate with the university may struggle to navigate fragmented or inconsistent engagement efforts, potentially leading to missed partnerships and fewer opportunities for students to connect with industry professionals.

2. Current year findings

1 Inconsistent Academic Framework for Employability

Operating Effectiveness

Finding rating

Rating	Low

Recommendations

- The university should establish a consistent approach to engaging students by incorporating mechanisms such as advisory boards and student representatives across all schools. This will help ensure a unified student voice in decision-making processes.
- The university should consider developing a flexible framework for employability modules, allowing schools to adapt core elements such as interview preparedness, CV writing, and personal branding to fit their specific needs and existing structures. This approach should be considered during the upcoming full curriculum review to ensure that all students gain essential employability skills while respecting the diversity of academic programs and disciplines.
- The university should promote the exchange of best practices among schools within the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) to foster continuous improvement in employability initiatives.

Management action plan

We will review the findings of this report through the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee and engage with schools to discuss and agree the most appropriate way to address the findings and recommendation raised in this report.

Responsible person/title:
Tracey Innes - Assistant Director and Head of Careers

Target date: 30 April 2025

2. Current year findings

2 Enhancing Action Plan for Employability Commitments
Control Design

Finding rating

Rating	Low

Finding and root cause

The University has a strategy in place identifying key commitments they will focus on to achieve their wider ambitions by 2040. Within the commitments outlined there are three with a direct focus on employability activities. The relevant commitments are outlined within the remit of the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) that meets on a monthly basis;

- Design new courses and programmes which encourage interdisciplinary learning, and ensure that all our students can experience innovative, challenge-led education involving external stakeholders.
- We will equip our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods.
- Ensure all our students can have an international experience, by studying abroad or working collaboratively with international partners.

Whilst we understand these commitments are outlined within the remit of the EEC, these are not standing agenda items within the meetings. Further, through review of the People Directorate Plan we can see that whilst an action plan has been developed and is reported on annually to SMT, the actions outlined do not have specific timeframes for completion or allocated action owners. Typically, where each of the commitments has been broken down into actions we would expect documented action owners and timescales, with regular reporting periods identified within the EEC to allow clear ownership and accountability.

By clearly identifying ownership and timescales to actions it allows the committee responsible to have clear governance and identify where further work may be required to meet the Universities ambitions.

Potential Implications

Without assigned action owners and timescales, different schools and departments may struggle to understand their role in delivering employability commitments, leading to fragmented efforts, confusion, and a lack of accountability for key initiatives.

Without specific timescales for actions, the university may find it challenging to track whether employability initiatives are meeting their intended goals within set milestone periods, making it difficult to adjust strategies and improve outcomes based on measurable impact.

Recommendations

We recommend that where the university has establishing action plans for each of its three strategic employability commitments to further enhance this by specifying action owners and timelines for implementation. Additionally, we suggest developing clear reporting mechanisms as standing agenda items within the EEC to enhance ownership and accountability for progress.

Management action plan

We will review the findings of this report through the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee and engage with schools to discuss and agree the most appropriate way to address the findings and recommendation raised in this report.

Responsible person/title:
Tracey Innes - Assistant Director and Head of Careers

Target date: 30 April 2025

2. Current year findings

3   KPI & Data Insights
Operating Effectiveness

Finding rating

Rating	Low

Finding and root cause

The university has a key performance indicator (KPI) to monitor graduate outcomes, focusing on the number of graduates in skilled employment as reported in the Graduate Outcome Survey data.

Additionally, annual metrics are identified through the 'School and Discipline Provision Planning Data Pack', including graduate outcomes by school, destination insights for undergraduates, and the number of career appointments hosted by each school, along with appointment outcomes. While these metrics are shared among schools, there is currently no emphasis on using this data to cultivate a data-driven approach to employability activities.

Discussions with sampled schools revealed a lack of consideration for these metrics in the development of employability initiatives throughout the year. Although schools are aware of the available data, they are not leveraging it to inform their broader activities and currently there is no central drive to emphasise this approach. Best practices in the sector show that universities effectively utilise data insights to identify areas for improvement, thereby driving targeted employability initiatives.

One effective example of a data-driven approach observed at other universities involves analysing career service and event engagement rates to determine the most effective services for various student demographics. By leveraging this data, universities can offer more targeted career support to groups that may be less likely to engage with available resources, ultimately enhancing overall student outcomes and ensuring equitable access to career services.

Additionally, some institutions utilise predictive analytics to assess a student's likelihood of securing employment after graduation by examining factors such as engagement, attendance, academic performance, and extracurricular activities. This information is then used to identify students at risk of lower employability outcomes, allowing for targeted interventions and enhanced support through career service signposting and relevant events.

Potential Implications

Without analysing existing data, the University may struggle to identify which student groups need further employability support, potentially leading to a single approach that fails to address specific needs.

A lack of data-driven decision-making could result in resources being allocated to initiatives that have little impact, while areas of genuine student need remain underfunded or overlooked.

Recommendations

- Where data insights are shared across the University, ensure emphasis from the central team is placed on the importance of embedding these into employability activities held throughout the year. The schools should consider how this data can inform future activity.
- Once these metrics are utilised, efficacy can be monitored to identify areas of low engagement or theme analysis by course/school.

2. Current year findings

<table>
<tr><td>

3 **KPI & Data Insights**

Operating Effectiveness

</td><td>

Management action plan

We will review the findings of this report through the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee and engage with schools to discuss and agree the most appropriate way to address the findings and recommendation raised in this report.

Responsible person/title:
Tracey Innes - Assistant Director and Head of Careers

Target date: 30 April 2025

</td></tr>
</table>

Finding rating

Rating	Low

2. Current year findings

4 Employability Activity - Planning and Tracking
Control Design

Finding rating

Rating	Low

Finding and root cause

Discussions with the four sampled schools revealed a lack of a formal log or timeline for tracking and planning student activities throughout the year. While events such as career fairs and specific activities are organised, there is no forward-looking timeline in place to outline these plans in advance.

We have observed some other universities create an initial timeline at the beginning of the academic year, detailing a provisional plan for employability activities and communication. Given the university's structure, which includes courses spanning multiple schools, coordinating this may pose challenges. However, Employment Engagement Managers could collaborate to develop such documents, ensuring that all relevant activities are mapped across the necessary timelines.

Establishing a comprehensive process to track and share offering would enable schools to identify gaps in events. For instance, if the School of Natural Sciences lists its career fairs and guest speakers, a tracker might reveal that there are no events specifically targeting mathematics students. This insight could help drive more inclusive and targeted employability initiatives across the university.

Potential Implications

The absence of a formal tracking system may lead to certain schools or courses receiving more employability support than others, creating disparities in the availability of career-related activities across disciplines.
A lack of structured planning means that there is no clear way to assess whether all student groups are being adequately supported. This could result in some cohorts being overlooked in employability initiatives.

Recommendations

We would recommend for Schools to consider opportunities to share information and improve the communications between schools to identify any potential gaps in services offered.

Management action plan

We will review the findings of this report through the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee and engage with schools to discuss and agree the most appropriate way to address the findings and recommendation raised in this report.

Responsible person/title:
Tracey Innes - Assistant Director and Head of Careers

Target date: 30 April 2025

2. Current year findings

<table>
<tr><td>

5

</td><td>

Inconsistent Approach to Formalising Industry Relationships

Operating Effectiveness

</td></tr>
</table>

Finding rating

Rating	Advisory

Finding and root cause

The University engages in employability activities throughout the year to support students, with both university-wide activities such as career fairs, as well as school specific activities. As part of this review we selected a sample of four schools and understood what employability activities looked like at a school level. We understand that currently there is inconsistency in the application of Industry Advisory Boards (IABs) and employer links between Schools in the ownership, management, and operational effectiveness of these boards across the Schools. In some areas, industry links are dependent on informal / personal relationships with University Staff, meaning the relationship could easily break down if the staff member leaves.

We spoke to Employability leads in four schools and observed the following:

- **School of Law:** The School of Law operates a committee involving staff within the school alongside student representatives from Law based committees as well as employers. This committee discusses employability opportunities and takes feedback from students within these meetings.

- **Business School:** The Business School utilises an advisory board consisting of external members. Feedback from this board is incorporated into the school's programs, and placement or work opportunities are advertised through this network.

- **School of Natural Sciences:** Although this school previously maintained an advisory board, it has not been active since the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, it relies on individual staff members and their personal industry connections.

- **School of Languages, Literature, Music and Visual Culture:** There are no formal links between this school and employers through an advisory board. The school depends on smaller initiatives, grants, and personal relationships to foster industry connections.

The lack of centralised oversight and standardisation in the establishment and management of IABs / employer links across the university has led to inconsistencies. As a result, some schools may miss out on industry insights that inform curriculum development and the cultivation of essential soft skills. Across the sector we are seeing a trend toward strengthening IABs, which has benefited other universities by enhancing their ability to align academic programmes with industry needs, thereby improving student employability and ensuring that curricula remain relevant and responsive to the evolving job market.

Recommendations

- In the long term, the University should evaluate their appetite for formalising industry relationships through Advisory boards or otherwise. This should be implemented as a standardised framework across the University with clear guidelines for the membership and responsibilities for the group. This should be in place for all schools to develop structured formalised relationships between Schools and industry partners.
- In the interim, the University should undertake an exercise to identify all current industry relationships across the University. This will identify Schools and Faculties where these are highly dependent on personal relationships with University staff, which should be used to inform targeted approaches to formalise these industry relationships where possible.

Appendices

Appendix A: Basis of our classifications

Individual finding ratings

Critical

> A finding that could have a:
>
> - **Critical** impact on operational performance; or
> - **Critical** monetary or financial statement impact; or
> - **Critical** breach in laws and regulations that could result in material fines or consequences; or
> - **Critical** impact on the reputation or brand of the organisation which could threaten its future viability.

High

> A finding that could have a:
>
> - **Significant** impact on operational performance; or
> - **Significant** monetary or financial statement impact; or
> - **Significant** breach in laws and regulations resulting in significant fines and consequences; or
> - **Significant** impact on the reputation or brand of the organisation.

Medium

> A finding that could have a:
>
> - **Moderate** impact on operational performance; or
> - **Moderate** monetary or financial statement impact**;** or
> - **Moderate** breach in laws and regulations resulting in fines and consequences; or
> - **Moderate** impact on the reputation or brand of the organisation.

Appendix A: Basis of our classifications

Individual finding ratings
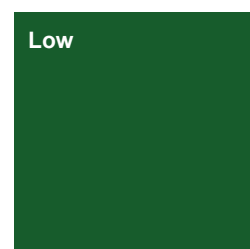
Low > A finding that could have a:

- **Minor** impact on the organisation's annual performance; or
- **Minor** monetary or financial statement impact; or
- **Minor** breach in laws and regulations with limited consequences; or
- **Minor** impact on the reputation of the organisation.
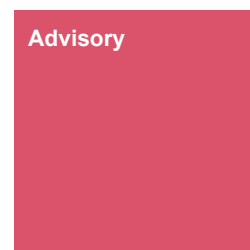
Advisory > A finding that does not have a risk impact but has been raised to highlight areas of inefficiencies or good practice.

Report classifications

The report classification is determined by allocating points to each of the findings included in the report.

Findings rating	Points		Report classification		Points
Critical	40 points per finding		●	Low risk	6 points or less
High	10 points per finding		●	Medium risk	7 – 15 points
Medium	3 points per finding		●	High risk	16 – 39 points
Low	1 point per finding		●	Critical risk	40 points and over

Appendix B: Terms of reference

We will review the design effectiveness and operating effectiveness of processes and controls in place. The sub-processes, risks and related control objectives included in this review are:

Sub-process	Objectives	Risks
Strategy and Governance	- The University has a clear vision and strategy for student and graduate employability. - Governance arrangements are in place at a strategic and operational level to ensure that an appropriate level of focus is placed on improving employability and graduate outcomes and oversight of activities conducted across the University. - The governance arrangements in place enable a cohesive and coordinated approach to employability across schools. - Key performance metrics have been established for schools in relation to employability and there is central oversight of these metrics. - Schools utilise data insights around graduate outcomes and employability to enhance and embed employability into their curricula.	- A lack of flexibility can mean the University's vision and strategy may not accurately align with industry demands, emerging trends, and changing needs in the workplace, leading to a mismatch between the skills and knowledge acquired by graduates and the requirements of employers. - Failure to establish governance arrangements may result in inadequate focus on enhancing employability and graduate outcomes. Governance arrangements may not effectively prioritise and allocate resources towards improving graduate employability, resulting in limited progress and impact in this area. - Without key performance metrics and central oversight, schools may lack accountability and consistency in improving graduate outcomes. - Schools may not effectively utilise graduate outcomes data and insights, resulting in limited integration of employability into their curricula and potentially hindering the desired outcomes.

Appendix B: Terms of reference

We will review the design effectiveness and operating effectiveness of processes and controls in place. The sub-processes, risks and related control objectives included in this review are:

Sub-process	Objectives	Risks
Employability and Careers Support	• The MySkills framework equips students with a broad and diverse set of skills and attributes aligned with the needs of the workforce. • Initiatives are in place to engage with alumni for careers advice and mentoring activities. • Extra-curricular delivery of careers, employability interventions and events such as careers fairs, talks and workshops held by local employers, are established to enhance student careers advice and employability. • Robust mechanisms are in place which facilitate collaboration across Academic Schools via the Employability and Skills Champions and the central Careers Service to ensure students receive comprehensive career guidance tailored to their specific fields, enhancing employability and facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce. • The student voice is captured through student feedback channels to enable the university to gain valuable insights and perspectives directly from the students who are experiencing the curriculum and preparing for the job market. This means the university can make informed decisions and improvements to better align with student needs and enhance employability outcomes.	• If the MySkills framework does not effectively equip students with a broad and diverse set of skills and attributes, there is a risk that graduates may not meet workforce needs, potentially impacting their employability and the university's reputation. • Without a clear programme of support activities / interventions accessible to all students, students may not develop necessary core skills for aiding their step into graduate employment. • If robust mechanisms for collaboration are not effectively implemented, there is a risk that students may receive inadequate career guidance, potentially hindering their employability and transition into the workforce. • Student voice and feedback may not be effectively captured, analysed, and acted upon, leading to missed opportunities for improvement and potential dissatisfaction among students.

Appendix C: Limitations and responsibilities

Limitations inherent to the internal auditor's work

We have undertaken this review subject to the limitations outlined below:

Internal control

Internal control systems, no matter how well designed and operated, are affected by inherent limitations. These include the possibility of poor judgment in decision-making, human error, control processes being deliberately circumvented by employees and others, management overriding controls and the occurrence of unforeseeable circumstances.

Future periods

Our assessment of controls is for the period specified only. Historic evaluation of effectiveness is not relevant to future periods due to the risk that:

- The design of controls may become inadequate because of changes in operating environment, law, regulation or other changes; or

- The degree of compliance with policies and procedures may deteriorate.

Responsibilities of management and internal auditors

It is management's responsibility to develop and maintain sound systems of risk management, internal control and governance and for the prevention and detection of irregularities and fraud. Internal audit work should not be seen as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the design and operation of these systems.

We endeavour to plan our work so that we have a reasonable expectation of detecting significant control weaknesses and, if detected, we carry out additional work directed towards identification of consequent fraud or other irregularities. However, internal audit procedures alone, even when carried out with due professional care, do not guarantee that fraud will be detected.

Accordingly, our examinations as internal auditors should not be relied upon solely to disclose fraud, defalcations or other irregularities which may exist.

Thank you

pwc.co.uk

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE]

TEN YEARS OF OPERATING A PROFESSIONALLY ACCREDITED CPD FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING & TEACHING: UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

> *It is now the end of the tenth academic year since the University's first overarching, externally accredited continuous professional development (CPD) Framework for Learning & Teaching received its first applications for internal review.*
>
> *This paper provides an update to UEC on the development and progress of the Framework along with numbers of staff that have been awarded professional recognition through the Framework.*
>
> *This paper is for INFORMATION ONLY*

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	None	
Further consideration/ approval required by	None	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

> The University Education Committee is invited to note the outcome of the operation of the CPD Framework for Learning & Teaching over the last ten years.

4. DISCUSSION

Advance HE is a sector-led organisation that exists to improve higher education and provide professional recognition for staff (academic and non-academic) using a globally recognised Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning (PSF 2023). Staff undertaking the recognition process are required to demonstrate a systematic, evidence-based approach to their teaching and support of learners. This is all to the benefit of our students, helping to provide an excellent educational experience and "…*to ensure that our curriculum and our student experience are among the very best in the world*." (Aberdeen 2040: Education & Research).

The University of Aberdeen has a long association with Advance HE and its predecessor, the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Accredited provision with these organisations for staff has been offered by the University's Centre for Academic Development (CAD) (and its own predecessors) since 2003.

In August 2014 the University, in line with sector trends, brought all of its accredited provision under a single Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Learning & Teaching and achieved accreditation by the HEA. This Framework encompassed all previously HEA-accredited provision provided by the University, including the long-running PG Certificate in H.E. Learning & Teaching and the Principles of Learning & Teaching in H.E. programmes.

The Framework has been reaccredited successfully twice since inception, most recently in April 2024 under the new title of "ABDN:PRS" (Professional Recognition Scheme). Over the same

period the HEA has merged with two other organisations to become known now as Advance HE, accompanied by an update to the PSF in 2023.

Throughout this period CAD has both operated the Scheme and helped and supported staff, both academic and across the various professional services, to gain professional recognition with Advance HE through the ABDN:PRS Scheme via a combination of:

a/ taught provision, including;

    i.   PG Certificate in H.E. Learning & Teaching (delivered in partnership with the School of Education)
    ii.   Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (currently delivered as a zero credit-rated course in partnership with the School of Education)
    iii.   Delivering and Teaching Online Courses (DTOC) short, online course

b/ individual applications (assessed by University staff trained in-house by and including CAD).

The ABDN:PRS Scheme is, in turn, supported currently by 50 CAD-trained volunteer mentors, themselves Fellows or Senior Fellows, who are involved in supporting new applicants, reading draft materials and maintaining regular contact with applicants.

What have we achieved?

Over the period September 2014 – March 2025, a total of 600 Advance HE recognitions have been awarded to staff from across the University against three categories of Advance HE recognition, as follows:

Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1) all awards:	323
Fellowship (Descriptor 2) all awards:	221
Senior Fellowship (Descriptor 3) all awards:	56

Breaking these data down further, the number of successful recognitions awarded through the individual application route demonstrates the popularity of this approach. The individual application route requires applicants to reflect and evaluate critically their own practice in teaching and / or supporting learning against the PSF 2023. The success of this approach at the Fellowship category is notable (note; there is no taught route to achieve Senior Fellowship):

Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1) awards:	51
Fellowship (Descriptor 2) awards:	187
Senior Fellowship (Descriptor 3) awards:	56

The outstanding success of the taught 'Principles of Learning & Teaching in H.E.' course in providing a valued route to Associate Fellowship for less experienced staff, postgraduate demonstrators / tutors and many professional services staff is clear from the number of successful awards made, with 262 (from a total of 323 from all routes, or 81%) of all D1 awards being generated though this provision. With a consistent intake to the course of *c*.50 over two iterations per year, demand remains high, with an ongoing throughput of participants at this category reflecting their more transitory nature, especially PGRs who are more likely to leave the University once their studies are complete. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this group is using Associate Fellowship proactively if applying for posts with a teaching component in other higher education institutions. This, in turn, generates positive impressions externally of the support provided to them whilst at Aberdeen as they developed their teaching and learning support duties.

These data also highlight that the majority of Fellowship applications are gained via the individual application route rather than via the taught PG Certificate option. As the PG Cert requires formal study to gain credit as well as Fellowship, this is of benefit to those who are able to allocate time to complete this SCQF Level 11 qualification, but numbers able to do this remain low.

Fellowship: via the individual application route:	187
Fellowship: via the PG certificate in H.E. Learning & Teaching:	34

The benefits of undertaking the taught, formal PG Cert programme extend beyond achievement for the individual, but with current resource issues necessitating putting the programme on hold, it is clear from the data above that allocating resource to supporting individual applications for Fellowship gains the University more Fellows than via the resource -intensive PG certificate, by an order of magnitude.

Numbers of current, employed staff holding Advance HE recognition

The above data are concerned exclusively with the operation of our own University scheme. Most other H.E. providers in the UK, and increasingly overseas, operate their own equivalent schemes. Staff movement, both in and out of the University of Aberdeen, means that these numbers are in permanent flux. The current number (April 2025) of University of Aberdeen employees holding Advance HE recognition (awarded either from within or from elsewhere prior to joining the University of Aberdeen) is as follows:

Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1):	184
Fellowship (Descriptor 2):	252
Senior Fellowship (Descriptor 3):	51
TOTAL:	**487**

The University also has four Principal Fellows. These recognitions are awarded outwith the above ABDN:PRS Scheme and have not been counted in the above.

In conclusion, the ABDN:PRS Scheme and its predecessor CPD Framework have been, and remain, instrumental in providing opportunities for staff at the University to gain professional recognition for their teaching and learning support duties. More importantly, the benefits from undertaking this process result ultimately in a constantly improving learning experience for our students.

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Dr Darren Comber, Centre for Academic Development (d.comber@abdn.ac.uk)

Date Paper was written: 4th April 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open]