<p style="text-align:center">UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN</p>

STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)

<p style="text-align:center">Minutes of the Meeting held on 04 November 2025</p>

Present: Jason Bohan, Jemma Murdoch (**Co-Chairs**); Duncan Stuart; Sally Middleton; Lyn Batchelor; Steve Tucker; Susan Halfpenny; Martin Barker; Fiona Stoddard; Ingrid Stanyer; Josh Wright; Will Barras; Wendy Lowe; Heather Branigan; Lorna Cruickshank; Hannah Cowie; Samuel Seymour; Ken Jeffrey; Erin Ferguson; Glenda Hale; Jenna Stuart; Mary Pryor; Melanie Viney; Despoina Kaloriti; Natalie Kinchin-Williams; Petra Barber; Chris Souter; Kaye Taylor; Saiqa Andleeb; John Paul Mynott (**Guest**); Sara Misuri (**Clerk**)

Apologies: John Cavanagh; Peter Henderson; Malcolm Harvey; Rhiannon Thompson

Welcome and Chairs' Update

1.1   The Chair opened the meeting, introduced the guest and welcomed the committee. The chair explained that some items in the agenda would be presented in a different order. hey have been noted in the original order in the minutes for consistency.

Approval of Minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 11/09/2025
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-002)

2.1   The committee discussed amending a spelling mistake in the minutes. This has been actioned. The minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 11/09/2025 were approved following the change.

Actions from the previous meeting
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-003)

3.1   The committee reviewed the actions from the previous meeting, which have been actioned and completed. The relevant information was shared ahead of the meeting via the SSEC Teams channel and via email.

Curriculum Transformation / Review
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-004)

4.1   The item was presented for information and discussion. Committee members were invited to provide feedback during the committee meeting. The 'Curriculum Transformation' presentation will be made available for members to comment online (***Action – SM to share link to the online PPT with SSEC***). As the recommendations are presented and discussed across various committees and structures, the presentation will evolve to become a comprehensive paper to be shared with SSEC for information in due course.

Rationale for Curriculum Review: various rationales such as: - Economic viability of academic portfolio; - Current complexity of academic structure of courses and programmes (for example, various challenges associated with different course codes/programmes); - Limited flexibility for student choice (as economic viability takes hold, there has been a decrease in choice within structure); - Organisational Agility; - Suitability for now and future (considering staff and students alike); - Inclusion and Access for all.
The Curriculum Review aims to complete an overall review by 2033, with the initial objective work completed by 2028. In the review work, Aberdeen 2040 will also be considered.

Scope: developing across four areas: Curricula (programmes and courses aligning with current and future needs); Digital Transformation (investing in tech and digital infrastructures); Student Engagement (students perceived as partners in co-creation of the university experience – including to determine student needs across the academic week); Operational Agility (streamlining processes to improve responsiveness, consistency, and effectiveness).

Timeline: Though currently in phase one (discovery and strategy), the timeline aims to develop across five overall phases. Phase 2 focuses on Design and Development (Apr-Dec 26); Phase 3 on Initial Piloting and Capacity Building (Jan-Apr 27); Phase 4 focuses on implementation and scaling of Pilot (May 27- Dec 26); Phase 5 aims at a full implementation and continuous review (from July 28). The aims and goals may be shifted and adapted as needed.

Phase 1: Part of phase one involves the creation of a curriculum transformation governance group. The group should meet frequently and provide information to the overall University. Initially, phase 1 will focus primarily on Assessment; Teaching & Learning; Academic Structures; Learning Infrastructures. The topics will be discussed in relation to: Student/Staff Perception/Engagement; Economic Viability; Competitor Analysis; Inclusivity; Graduate Skills/Employability; Suitability for present and future; External Perspectives & Benchmarking. At the end of phase 1, the expected deliverables will be: governance structure; outcome report for the four themes to help with the implementation of phase 2; KPI.

The review process should be considered as a collaborative process across the University.

4.2   The Committee was invited to provide comments and feedback. The committee felt that the review project would benefit from input by various groups:

Estates & Facilities: for governance and in relation to the digital infrastructure/physical estate.
Online Team: representative from the team (besides School representatives who may be able to discuss their online programs) and students from online degrees.
Recruitment: to ensure that prospective students continue to be briefed correctly, and with updated information. As the recruitment team engage with prospective students up to two years in advance of their start dates, it would be especially beneficial to include them in the governance group.
GoAbroad: to facilitate the correct delivery of information to incoming and outgoing students, as well as to be able and feedback on the potential impact that the curriculum review may have on facilitating the incoming/outgoing process itself with course selections, exchanges, etc.
TNE: the committee agreed that it would be beneficial to include the Transnational Education Campuses (TNE) team.

In relation to the digital space, the committee wondered if the review would consider rethinking certain digital systems such as MyCurriculum. Updates regarding digital systems may be considered more practically at a later stage.

Regarding the curriculum review and economic viability; the committee recognised that it would be beneficial to pay active attention to changing/removing courses from the catalogue, especially in relation to the impact this may have on the international campuses. If certain degrees/course selections were to be removed from the Aberdeen campus, the group may wish to consider whether TNE should begin running independent courses.

The committee discussed the benefits and interest in offering flexibility with selecting courses. This flexibility is a current key marketing point for the University. At the end of the review process, the governance group should have come to a consensus regarding whether more flexible approaches should be encouraged.

To be inclusive, the governance group may work asynchronously, especially if including a high volume of members. The governance group is hoping to benefit from various perspectives and be as inclusive of as many voices as possible. Committee members are encouraged to share feedback and comments, especially if they are part of and/or engage with underrepresented groups.

At the end of phase one, the review aims to deliver a report and series of recommendations which will support the continuation of the project.

Evaluation of Education Strategy 2021-2025 & Education Strategy 2025-2030
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-005)

5.1   The paper was presented to the committee for discussion. The paper was created following the submission to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review. The paper aims to evaluate the education strategy that was timed for 2021-2025. Further, the paper focuses on various themes from the previous strategy and develops a new plan for 2030.

The 2021-2025 plan focused on five selected commitments from Aberdeen 2040. New areas, objectives and initiatives were identified and aligned with these previous commitments. KPIs were set out to measure performance to date. The team was able to demonstrate that the University has been progressing by looking at various KPIs, themes, and priorities.

Appendix 1 focuses on the analysis against the KPIs. Appendix 2 analyses the continuing work related to the commitments and combines some of the previous commitments. Appendix 2 also identifies three key pillars of the new Education Strategy: Collaborative Learning Culture, Innovative and Interdisciplinary, and Global Prospectives. These have been framed against two lenses: inclusion education and wellbeing, and driving continuous quality enhancement. Appendix 2 also sets baseline levels for KPIs and goals for the strategy aimed towards 2030.

 5.2   In discussion, the committee asked for information regarding the potential need for change/progress following the introduction of a new principal. The paper intends to continue developing work in alignment with the 'Adapting to Continuous Success' initiative, and has already involved Senior Management in some capacity.

5.3   The team involved in organising and informing the paper was acknowledged and thanked for their efforts. The committee did not have further questions or comments.

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) Update
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-006)

6.1   The paper was presented to the committee for discussion. Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) is an external review for further and higher education provision in colleges and universities across Scotland. The University needed to submit a strategic impact analysis to measure details of our initiatives and overarching strategies with reference to operational evidence gathered from within Schools and services. A lot of feedback was gathered from events, forums, and the community – which was appreciated as considered particularly helpful.

The strategic impact analysis reported against four TQER principles: excellence in learning, teaching and assessment; supporting student success; student partnership and engagement; enhancement and quality culture. Two further principles of the TQER are data and evidence and externality. The latter are expected to cut through the former four.

The team was also required to submit a dossier of evidence (made of over 300 files) under the name of 'advanced information' comprising case studies, data, and evidence to support the impact analysis.

The submission is waiting to be reviewed by a panel and will be discussed on 9/10 December 2025 and 02/05 February 2026. Various stakeholders and other University staff members will be invited to attend these visits. Everyone is invited and encouraged to read the TQER documents, especially in advance of the future discussions. Further pre-briefing session ahead of the panel visits will be organised and members will be invited to attend as needed.

6.2   The committee acknowledged and thanked the team involved in the work. The committee was invited to share comments/suggestions regarding the strategic plans. Feedback can be shared directly with [Steve Tucker](#).

Library Services: General Update

7.1   The item was presented for information and discussion. The Library has been able to implement various improvements to customer services. While the Library Services needed to change and reduce the opening hours for Taylor Library; they were able to improve the customer experience across various other projects. Over the last year, the Services focused on a selection of customer experience projects.

- Library website review: The project was led by Ewan Grant, and it is almost complete. It involved students, card sorting. Ultimately, the project aimed at improving and streamlining website navigation.

- Noise and behaviour project: Various reports, including from the NSS, had highlighted a need for improvements for noise and behaviour – especially in the Sir Duncan Rice Library (SDRL). A summer intern engaged with over 160 students to collect feedback aimed at improving the library and developing more inclusive practices via policy work.

- Exam Papers: An intern is due to start a project to review access to exam papers. Previously, exam papers were catalogued and made available via Primo. The current project aims at developing a more accessible system focused on students' needs.

SDRL will be opening 24/7 in the run up of and during the exam period (open at 11am on 23.11.25 until 5pm on 19.12.25).

Over the past three years, the services have focused a lot of effort on Digital & Information Skills Support. The team has been able to offer embedded and supplementary work, including embedded information literacy teaching.

New Library Guides have been developed in line with the *American* and *College & Research Libraries* 'Framework for Information Literacy'. The guides aim to improve a holistic approach to information literacy.

Various courses are taking place in the library, for example, the PGT Autumn sessions in collaboration with CAD and the Student Learning Services to cover academic skills, digital skills and information skills.

An ongoing project is looking at developing AI Learning Labs. The project is led by [Jen BirtlesKelman](#) (Digital Skills Officer) and is currently aimed at staff members. Staff are encouraged to reach out, especially if interested in leading workshops.

The team has been working across different teams to develop some high-level AI principles. Currently, the Scottish Tertiary Education AI principles were adopted for education, and a separate set of EC Principles was adopted for research. A paper regarding these principles will be shared with QAC and may be shared with SSEC for information.

The 'Inclusive Libraries, Inclusive Collections' group (chaired by Erin Matheson) has been able to develop curated reading lists for various collections, including for Black History Month, Disability History Month, and to promote other activities. To provide access to further materials, the Library Services have been collaborating with Aberdeen City Council Libraries and with volunteer students. The Library also has a small pot of money made available for specific campaigns to diversify the collection (choosing categories in collaboration with students).

The initiative for Sustainability at the University was addressed by the libraries with their agreement to the [CILIP Green Libraries Manifesto](#).

7.2   The committee acknowledged how helpful the Library services have been for supporting students with disabilities and/or individual study adjustments. The Student Union also highlighted that students have reported positive feedback since the introduction of a hot water tap on the ground floor of SDRL.

Reading List Service Report
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-008)

8.1   The paper was presented for information and discussion. Since its launch as a service in 2022, engagement with the Reading List Service (RLS) continues to grow, with a need for further funding than anticipated in 24/25. The library services are able to purchase two essential items from the reading lists; but more items can be marked as essential and will be purchased if permitted by the budget. The library services also introduced a new collection advisory group to approach budgeting more strategically and ensuring that the teaching budget remains a positive asset to students and academics. The RLS has already received about 50% of reading lists, an

increase from the previous AY. The RLS is aware that not all courses will require a reading list, and they are considering introducing a specific tag to reflect this.

The team has introduced a specific tag to flag items which would enhance the Library collections and help towards the decolonising the collections project.

The Library is going through a negotiation process with five main publishers. The negotiation will impact the materials available for reading lists and for research materials. The RLS team will be able to provide support with any area that may be impacted, especially if resources from reading lists were to be significantly reduced.

8.2   The committee wondered if it would be possible to obtain reports & specific data surrounding the number active users viewing/using reading lists.

The committee asked for further clarifications in relation to the publishing deals. In consultation with Library Representatives, the Library removed lending access to certain journals during the previous AY. The consultation was based on access to journals by cost, and the number of removed journals was small. The library was able to implement a rapid interlending (rapid ILL)– which simplified the process to access materials that are currently not available to the University of Aberdeen. Academic Staff and students have found the rapid ILL especially useful.

AUSA Standing Item

9.1   The item was presented for information and discussion. The Student Union was able to successfully lead their Union Council elections with 897 individual votes (turnout of 5.4% - an improvement compared to the previous AY, but not particularly high against the full student body). The SU is looking to implement a democracy review to improve the percentage of voting students in the future *(update as of 17/12: AUSA concluded the democracy review and are now in the process of implementing the recommendations)*. As a result of the elections, some positions remained unfilled, including the Qatar Chair and Vice-Chair & School Convenors for various Schools (Education, Geosciences, and Natural and Computing Sciences). The Students Council voted for co-options for these positions, and further planning is ongoing.

The University competed in Scotland in the Scottish Students Sport League and nationally with the British University and Colleges Sports, or BUCS Leagues. Students take part in 23 sports across 65 teams, with further students competing outside leagues and knockouts. At the time of the meeting, UoA was 72nd in the UK leaderboard, with hopes for further improvement (UoA was 39th at the end of the previous AY). At the date of the meeting, UoA competed in 174 matches with 83 wins and 17 draws. Some of the recent sports success include: two rowers attending the under-23 GB trials in Boston; two bronze medals in Taekwondo in Nottingham and four golds in Wishaw; championship status for the women's Hockey Team in the 24/25 season.

Across all activities, 6868 students have participated in 201 clubs and societies (an increase from the previous year). The top clubs are Snow (204 members), Women's Hockey (202 members), Netball (169 members). The top societies are Law (735 members), Medicine (524 members), Highland Faffers (223 members).

The SU has been offering some free sports sessions (currently, tennis and football). The free sessions have been attended by an average of 50 students per week. The number may increase in the future, with plans from the Union to introduce other sports besides football and tennis. AUSA has been ensuring to invest in this project as it aligns with the BUCS Student Survey. The survey demonstrated that students agreed that being involved in sport gave them a sense of

belonging to their institution and its community. Further, the survey also proved that students participating in sports felt supported in their mental wellbeing.

9.2   Following a question from the Committee, AUSA expressed that engagement with students from the Qatar campus has historically been difficult, with hopes to improve comms in the future. The Student Union was invited to interact with the Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing (EEW) team if support from the University may be useful in engaging with Qatar students.

The Student Union is working with the University to distribute a Coaching and Support fund. This would go towards students who are interested in learning coaching skills, and who will be able to utilise this within sport societies, communities, and to enhance their curriculum. More updates may be provided to the committee in due course.

'Wednesday Teaching Policy' Paper Proposal
(copy filed as SSEC-04112025-010)

10.1   The paper was presented for discussion. The paper provided information regarding the potential review of existing academic policies. The paper outlined two proposals: to avoid scheduling teaching on Wednesdays, or to avoid scheduling compulsory teaching on Wednesdays. If the proposed changes to the policy were to be approved, further input would be required from the Academic Services team, especially related to wording and updates to the policy's language. Typically, the University does not hold compulsory classes or official engagement-based activities on Wednesday afternoons. Whilst this adjustment is appreciated, it does not always facilitate sports activities. It may be challenging to attend most sports events held in the central belt for those who may have teaching on Wednesday mornings.

10.2   The committee reflected on how the policy may be difficult to practically support, especially in relation to students needing to undertake NHS Clinical Placements. The Student Union agreed that the policy would require further consideration.

The committee wondered whether the policy would apply to all levels of studies, or just UG courses. PGT Teaching, for example, will sometimes still offer classes on Wednesday afternoon.

The committee reflected that there may be some challenges in implementing the policy across all degrees and levels of study. The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to consider all groups of students who may experience exemptions from this policy. Where relevant, the University should provide specific instructions and set expectations for those wishing to participate in sports.

The committee agreed that it may be beneficial to include the timetabling team within the Policy discussions.

The committee commented on how it may be difficult, especially for large cohorts, to eliminate all teaching activities on the entirety of Wednesday. Practically, the second option outlined in the paper, appears more achievable.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Standing Item

11.1   The item was presented for information and discussion. The EEW Team led on various events in the recent months. Some of the events included: Late Arrivals Coffee Morning in the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy (to allow students who joined the University later than expected to feel

part of the community); a Wellbeing Symposium in the library (to discuss how wellbeing activities implemented across various teams); a PGR Wellbeing Conference in Foresterhill (to focus on the PGR communities and improve the sense of belonging to the community).

Students and Staff alike were invited to attend the Wellbeing Fair across the main Aberdeen Campus and Suttie Centre. The fair offered various activities, advice, and freebies. Overall, the fair was really successful and produced a lot of engagement.

11.2   The committee was invited to share feedback and/or comments. The committee thanked the EEW team and all the volunteers who helped deliver activities and events at the BeWell Fairs.

Student Support – General Update

12.1   The item was presented for information and discussion. Some updates regarding the Student Support services:

- Contract Tenders: The service has been through a tender process for the Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) supplier and the Educational Psychologist (EP) provider. As a result of the process, the University continues to work with Randstad as an external NMPH supplier, and NEAPS for the EP work.

- Discretionary Funds: The auditing process for discretionary funds was successful.

- Recruitment process: The service was able to successfully appoint an in-house needs assessor to deliver Needs Assessment appointments. Previously, Needs Assessment appointments were primarily outsourced to an external partner. The introduction of a new in-house worker should improve student experience and streamline processes. The role will especially support students applying for Disabled Students' Allowance.
The team also appointed a new Graduate Trainee Administrator.

- Counselling: The service has noticed an increase in requests, with the online booking system still proving to be successful. The system, amongst other things, has allowed the service to operate with no waiting lists. The counselling service remains available for students and staff alike.

- Student Helpline: There has been an increase in demand for the Student Helpline. The promotional work done by the EEW team has been especially useful in promoting both the Student Helpline service, and the staff wellbeing platforms/apps.

- Hardship Funds: Hardship applications have been sustainably busy over the year. The fund will be closing earlier than some previous AYs due to capacity with the Finance Team. Comms will be shared with students to note the closing date. Hardship funds are available to all students, including UK-based and International students.

- Student Conduct: Student Conduct has been busier than in previous years. This should not be considered as a reflection that more students are performing misconduct, but rather as a sign that more students are aware of the reporting process.

- Student Advice & Support: the service has experienced an increase of about 9% in email demands. The combination of requests and current staffing has resulted in a slight delay in actioning non-urgent queries. The student.support@abdn.ac.uk inbox has been updated to offer an automated response. The automated response offers signposting to various support

services (incl. emergency services) and sets an expectation for the response times. The quickest way to access Student Advice & Support is by attend drop-in (open during term-time, Mon to Thu, 10 to 12 – top floor of the Student Union Building).

12.2   The committee wondered if there are SAD lamps/Lightboxes available for students to hire. These can be requested for lending via the Student Union website (soon available to be requested from the [Tool Library](#)), but are also available at the Chaplaincy (Book 30-min sessions, more info [here](#)).

12.3   Student Support Services have noticed a change in support accessed by Associate Students. Students are typically given this status if they withdraw during the academic year, or if they are registered for resits. The status of associate student allows the individual to still access various resources with the university (IT Services, Library Access, Study Learning Services, Wellbeing and Support Services). Currently, there are no specific guidelines regarding what type of well-being support can be accessed by these students (except for hardship funds, which are only for registered students). In the past years, the services noticed how Associate Students (not engaging in studies) have increasingly been accessing such core services as Counselling.

12.4   The committee was invited to reflect on how their teams have been supporting registered and associate students – with particular attention to the latter. The committee was invited to consider whether support for associate students may be reviewed, and if so, in what capacity – especially in relation to accessing mental health and wellbeing support and the impact on emergency escalations.

The Registry team does not consider Associate Students as active students in various regards. When someone gains this status, the team offers clear information regarding the support that these students cannot access (such as the ability to apply for council tax exemptions). However, other support will still be accessible – typically in relation to reassessments.

The Qatar campus notes how they currently only have a total of three active Associate Students. These students are actively supported by the Qatar campus team, as their status is related to the late submission of their final dissertations.

The Committee agrees that it would be beneficial to have more specific guidelines. More consideration may be given to Pastoral Support and the expectation of the workload related to Personal Tutors.

The Committee acknowledges that, if access to certain support types were to be reduced/removed (such as Counselling), Associate Students should be provided with strong signposting information.

The Committee also acknowledges the importance of re-engagement with Associate Students to facilitate and promote return to studies.

FOR INFORMATION

AOCB

13.1   The Committee was reminded of various sources of Staff support available, especially useful around the busy times ([Employee Wellbeing](#)).

Date of Next Meeting

14.1
The third SSEC meeting will be held on Wednesday, 17th of December 2025 from 10:05 to 11:55 (University Court Room 2 or Teams Meeting).