

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 14 January 2025

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

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Lyn Batchelor, Anne-Michelle Slater, and Louisa Stratton.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2024

(copy filed as UEC/140125/001)

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first meeting of 2025 of the University Education Committee (UEC). Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 20 November 2024 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

(copies filed as UEC/140125/002 and UEC/140125/003)

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 20 November 2024 as follows:
- (i) The Chair and the Interim Director of Digital & Information Services, Ian Robotham (IR) reported that this action is in progress. The plan is for Digital Strategy Committee papers to be available on a SharePoint site after the meetings. Details of this will be shared with the wider university community at the next Digital Strategy Forum.
 - (ii) The Dean for Student Support and Experience reported that this action is in progress and that the breakdown of the data would be shared as soon as it was received by Planning. He also confirmed this would apply to data for the Qatar courses.
 - (iii) The Chair reported that this action was still in process and she would have an update in due course.
 - (iv) The Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development reported that the paper was currently with SMT and would be included at the next UEC meeting.
 - (v) The Dean for Quality Assurance and enhancement reported that discussions around the ITR structure are an ongoing process.
 - (vi) The Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability reported that a breakdown of the response rates on the Graduate Outcomes survey had been provided as requested (see UEC/140125/003) and the action was therefore completed. He noted changes in how international students are contacted, potentially impacting on the statistics for certain schools. The UK domiciled response rates show little year-on-year change, but non-UK domiciled rates for some disciplines show significant changes, which may affect overall

Graduate Outcome statistics. It was noted that a new version of this data including a headcount as well as percentages would be circulated (**Action: JBa**)

STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE

- 3.1 The Chair and IR provided an oral update to the UEC on the Student Management System. The UEC heard that the programme had received approval to proceed, with the programme board having its initial meeting to discuss composition and business case development. The first phase will concentrate on understanding the project's scope and requirements. While still in the early stage, it is anticipated that this will encompass the entire student journey, from an applicant's initial interaction with the university to graduation. The focus will be on identifying all areas of change, reviewing processes and standardising them. To ensure its success, the project will incorporate lessons learnt from other organisations that have undertaken similar initiatives. The aim is for this to be a collaborative effort, ensuring the needs of all stakeholders are addressed and the system is future proofed. Workshops and sessions will be conducted to gather detailed requirements, with an emphasis on enhancing current processes rather than merely replicating them in a new system.
- 3.2 The updated was received positively by UEC members, with a question asking further details on student representation in the project, given the impact it is likely to have both on the student experience and on the Students' Union operations. The Chair clarified that student representation would be included in workstreams, decision-making, and user testing.

CORPORATE PARENTING PLAN

(copy filed as UEC/140125/004)

- 4.1 The Deputy Director of People, Student Advice & Support, Nick Edwards (NE), started by thanking those who have worked on the corporate parenting plan, which has previously been approved by the Student Support and Experience Committee with minor adjustments. The updated plan, which is part of the corporate obligations of the university and a legislative requirement, aims to support students with care experience and will be effective from the 2024-25 academic year for three years. The goal is to simplify and make the plan more user-friendly, ensuring it is easily understood by those impacted. The action plan outlines clear, identifiable tasks for the university over the next three years. NE invited questions or queries regarding the document, the action plan, or future steps.
- 4.2 The plan was received positively by UEC members, with the following queries being addressed:
- (i) It was asked whether personal tutors would be notified if their tutees needed an additional level of support, or if students would need volunteer this information to PTs. The response indicated that it would depend on the information provided by students at the start of their journey, as not all students with care experience disclose this information initially. However, the hope is that updates made to inclusion adjustments (previously known as disability provisions), will allow for better support to be provided when needed, including for those with care experience. A named contact within student support will assist in coordinating support and work with personal tutors as needed.
 - (ii) A query was raised about incorporating a dedicated contact point for careers during study, as most students are unaware of the existing provision. Additionally, clarification was sought on the term "bespoke support". The response highlighted that the

legislation required a more formalised language, but agreed that our institution already aims to provide individualised support. It was agreed to include a dedicated careers contact point in the action plan.

- (iii) A question was raised about whether the plan will be reviewed by the EDI committee and if an equality impact assessment will be conducted. It was confirmed that the plan will go to Senate and Court, with the EDI committee involved in the process to ensure the EQHI is considered.
- (iv) A comment was made that the plan is well-constructed but primarily focused on undergraduates, raising the need for specific considerations for the PGT and PGR communities. The response invited suggestions for any additional elements relevant to postgraduates. It was noted that some of the language around admissions may not apply to them.
- (v) A point was raised about the creation of a new society for care-experienced and estranged students, noting that it should be student-led rather than coming from above. It was also mentioned that these students might prefer not to be solely identified by their care experience. The response agreed to adjust the language to reflect that the university would be actively supportive of such initiatives if students found them helpful, so that a balanced approach could be achieved.
- (vi) A suggestion was made to involve care-experienced staff in positive role modelling by sharing their educational journeys, similarly to previous initiatives around disability and neurodivergence. The response acknowledged this idea, noting plans to reach out to staff and alumni across a variety of different areas supported. The aim is to create more engaging content, such as videos, to complement the current document and ensure its impact is widely understood. This approach will be integrated into the communications plan to enhance awareness and support.
- (vii) A concern was raised about the absence of references to care and the corporate parenting plan in the personal tutoring section of the staff website. It was suggested that any changes impacting personal tutors should be carefully considered. It was agreed to take the paper to the senior Pastoral Support Group for further discussion and to consider a review of the personal tutor role.

- 4.3 The UEC approved, for its part, the Corporate Parenting Plan subject to the points addressed above.

GRADES MANAGEMENT IN MYABERDEEN

(copy filed as UEC/140125/005)

- 5.1 Following the previous consideration of an earlier version of this paper at both UEC and QAC, and the approval of the majority of the recommendations set-out within it, UEC members were asked to discuss the two outstanding recommendations. Following a discussion, the UEC agreed to approve the following recommendation: that where there is a course where all the assessments are graded in percentages or a portfolio assessment consisting of individual assessments graded in percentages, that a weighted average should be carried out to reflect an overall percentage grade, and that this is the grade which is then displayed as a grade point to students.

- 5.2 A discussion also took place around the recommendation to standardise the grading terminology, where the proposal was to update the terms “marks” and “marking” to “grades” and “grading” in our University documentation going forward, to provide more consistency in language. While it was noted that improving consistency is beneficial from a student perspective, a discussion took place on the interpretation of the meaning of the two terms and on staff time required to update the documentation and regulations.
- 5.3 Following the discussion, the UEC decided not to approve the recommendation on the standardisation of grading terminology at this time.

SECTOR UPDATE

(Oral Item)

- 6.1 The Chair noted ongoing financial pressures across UK institutions and highlighted that our university is in a stable state despite past challenges. The Chair also mentioned sector-wide efforts to review portfolios and curricula, and the need for further discussions on inclusivity and resource adjustments, confirming an alignment of our institution with common challenges faced by other institutions.

UPDATE FROM THE DEAN FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

(Oral Item)

- 7.1 The Dean for Education Innovation informed the UEC that AdvanceHE had published the report ‘*GenAI use in higher education: stakeholder perceptions and attitudes*’ and thanked all those who had been involved in producing it. It was noted that clarification from AdvanceHE would be sought in regards to the dissemination of the report to staff (**Action: SPr**). The committee heard that further funding had been awarded, which would allow the analysis to continue and for facilitated workshops to be offered to Schools.
- 7.2 UEC members heard that, as part of the updates being made to the current rollover process for courses on MyAberdeen, an institutional course template will be implemented in all courses from the next academic year, following a successful pilot in three whole Schools (Biological Sciences, Law and DHPA) and some individual courses or programmes in other Schools (Psychology, Education, and LLMVC) this academic year. A more detailed paper will be provided at the next meeting.
- 7.3 It was suggested that, if this is not already the case, the new institutional course template should be mentioned in the two-day course for new members of staff.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 1:05pm in the Committee Room 2, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.