

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)**

Minute of the Meeting held on 24 September 2025

*Present:* Jo-Anne Murray (Chair), Euan Bain, Tim Baker, Lyn Batchelor, John Barrow, Nigel Beacham, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Hannah Cowie, Helen Knight, Colin Lumsden, David McCausland, Heidi Mehrkens, John Mynott, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Samuel Seymour, Anne-Michelle Slater, Ezel Tabur, Steve Tucker, and Joshua Wright, with Scott Carle, Lorna Cruickshank, Susan Halfpenny, Tracey Innes, Jemma Murdoch, Ian Robotham, Kate Smith, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, and Isabella Fausti (Clerk) in attendance.

*Apologies:* Waheed Afzal, Harminder Battu, Nick Edwards, Jenna Stuart, Emma Tough, and Asha Venkatesh.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2025**

*(copy filed as UEC/240925/001)*

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcome the new members of the Committee.
- 1.2 Members of the Committee considered the minute of the meeting held on 22 April 2025 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

**MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS**

*(copies filed as UEC/240925/002)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee noted that an outstanding action from the meeting held on 20 November 2024 remains in progress. The Chair provided an update, informing members that a governance review was currently underway. An external agency, SUMS, has completed its assessment and submitted a set of recommendations. These have only recently been received and will initially be considered by Senior Management, and then circulated more broadly in due course.

**UNIVERSITY RISK REGISTER**

*(copy filed as UEC/240925/003)*

- 3.1 The Chair reminded Committee members that they may get in touch to record new risks or update existing entries in the University Risk Register at any time.

**ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS' WORK AFFECTED BY THEM  
UNDERTAKING PAID EMPLOYMENT**

*(copy filed as UEC/240925/004)*

- 4.1 The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) regarding students undertaking paid employment. Specifically, the proposal recommended removing the current stipulation limiting students to 15 hours of work per week, which cannot

be enforced and limits the number of good quality part-time job opportunities that can be advertised by the Careers and Employability Service. In addition, the proposal aligns the guidance provided to employers with existing regulations for international students, which permit up to 20 hours of work per week during term-time. It was noted that the proposed text had been approved by the International Advice and Compliance Team.

- 4.2 The proposal was generally welcomed by most members of the Committee, noting that the proposed changes reflect the current practice in a number of settings. For example, in the context of the Qatar campus, the structure of the working day and family life differs significantly to the UK, so most PGT students are full-time students who also work full-time.
- 4.3 A discussion followed, with a suggestion that, in some Schools, Course Coordinators or the Head of School might not be the most appropriate contacts for students seeking advice on this topic. Instead, members recommended using more generic terminology, with examples provided in brackets (e.g. Programme/Year Leads or Directors of Education).
- 4.4 The Committee discussed whether the AQH guidance should include a recommended maximum number of working hours. It was noted, however, that any such recommendation may need to vary depending on the programme of study and that it would be unhelpful to set a maximum number that was below the number of hours currently worked by a significant proportion of the student population.
- 4.5 It was agreed that the comments raised would be further considered, and a revised version of the proposal would be circulated as soon as possible for approval (**Action: TI/JBa**).

#### **UPDATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY-WIDE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ELECTIVES TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

*(copy filed as UEC/240925/005)*

- 5.1 The Committee received an update on the work of the 'University-wide entrepreneurship electives TFG', as reported to the Enterprise & Innovation Committee. The current approach includes the introduction of non-credit bearing 'Adam Smith' online courses, offered by the Business School, as well as the development of a 'with Entrepreneurship' degree pathway.
- 5.2 During the discussion, members pointed out the need for further work related to entrepreneurship within the humanities and to explore the suitability of the 'with Entrepreneurship' degree pathway to joint degrees, which are very common among humanities students. It was noted that, while many humanities students do not perceive entrepreneurship as applicable to their disciplines, these skills are increasingly important, and it was suggested that there may be an opportunity to further explore this as part of the education strand of the *Adapting for Continued Success* programme.
- 5.3 It was suggested that similar approaches could be used for entrepreneurship, sustainability, and work-based learning, and that further discussions take place to explore how these proposals might impact on or enhance Go Abroad opportunities.
- 5.4 Members discussed the potential benefits of embedding entrepreneurship within existing courses, rather than offering standalone or compulsory modules, and suggested that further work should be explored in this area.

- 5.5 It was noted that the term *entrepreneurship* may not always resonate with students, and that *enterprise* might be a more inclusive and accessible alternative.
- 5.6 Overall, the Committee expressed support for the proposed direction and endorsed the approach approved by the Enterprise & Innovation Committee.

#### **UPDATE ON THE TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (TQER)**

*(Oral Item)*

- 6.1 The Committee received an update on the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), noting that the University is one of the first institutions to undergo this process since the introduction of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). This is a significant piece of work, involving an external, peer-led, enhancement-focused review overseen by the Scottish Funding Council and supported by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
- 6.2 The submission deadline for submitting the documentation is Friday 3 October, and the work is well advanced. The submission consists of two main components:
- A **Strategic Impact Analysis** (approximately 20 pages)
  - An **Advanced Data Set**, which has required careful coordination and interpretation of the guidance.
- 6.3 Particular thanks were extended to Emma Tough for her exceptional dedication and effort in coordinating this work, especially in managing the complex data requirements and interpreting the associated guidelines. Appreciation was also expressed to those who participated in forums over the summer, which provided valuable opportunities for reflection and sharing of good practice.
- 6.4 The draft analysis is nearing completion and highlights a number of examples of good practice. The findings are broadly positive and reassuring, demonstrating that the University is delivering meaningful impact on the student experience. The Committee noted that this type of exercise is particularly valuable, as it provides an opportunity to reflect on current practices and identify areas for further improvement.
- 6.5 As the TQEF is a relatively new framework, it was noted that the process has been a learning experience for both the University and the QAA.

#### **DEGREE CLASSIFICATION REPORT 2023-24**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/007)*

- 7.1 The Committee discussed the Degree Classification Report 2023-24.
- 7.2 Members noted that comparison with Russell Group data is useful; however, it would be very beneficial to include comparative data from Scottish institutions. It was suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had an impact on the 2023–24 data for Scottish universities, particularly given that Scottish degrees are four years in duration, while institutions in the rest of the UK typically offer three-year degrees (**Action: Chair**).
- 7.3 Members emphasised the importance of programme-level data being available within the Power BI Dashboards, to enable Schools to access the specific insights they require. It was noted that, in

one instance, an external examiner had requested discipline-level data relating to awarding gaps, which was not readily accessible. Providing such data would support more informed discussions within Schools (**Action: Chair**).

## **PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/006)*

- 8.1 The Committee discussed proposals for updating programme specifications. It was noted that current specifications are not compliant with requirements for publication on the University website. The proposed updates aim to improve clarity and accessibility, while also reducing administrative workload over time. Feedback would be welcome on how joint degree components should be represented.
- 8.2 The updates were received positively, with a member noting that the specifications are easy to read and suggesting a similar approach for course specifications. It was also noted that, for certain programmes, accrediting bodies require mapping of course-level ILOs to programme-level ILOs.
- 8.3 It was noted that current students preparing to study abroad use programme prescriptions to match overseas courses with learning outcomes for courses of their home institution. It was agreed that the option of including study abroad opportunities in the programme specification would be considered, either within the *Distinctive Features* field or within a *Notes* section at the end of the document. The guidance accompanying these documents will be key.
- 8.4 It was agreed that user testing should be conducted, ideally involving students. Collaboration with the Students' Union would be sought for this. It was also suggested that the updated specifications be tested with live programmes, particularly for Schools that have modulating courses or complexities in their design (such as LLMVC and the Business School).
- 8.5 It was noted that substantial feedback has already been received from the Curriculum and Timetabling Team, which will need to be reviewed as part of this process.

## **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2025: INSTITUTIONAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

*(Copies filed as UEC/240925/008 and UEC/240925/009)*

- 9.1 The Committee received a summary of the NSS report and related action plan.
- 9.2 Members discussed the perception of timeliness in assessment feedback. It was noted that while feedback may be returned within the expected three-week timeframe, it is not always perceived as timely if the next assessment is scheduled shortly thereafter. An example was shared of another institution that consistently performs well on the NSS feedback timeliness question, despite operating a four-week turnaround policy—longer than Aberdeen's current three-week standard.
- 9.3 The Committee considered options for establishing a Steering Group to monitor NSS-related matters more regularly. Alternatively, it was suggested that NSS updates could be reported at DoEs meetings, which occur more frequently than UEC meetings. It was noted that a Graduate Outcomes Steering Group already exists, and a similar approach for NSS could be beneficial (**Action: JBo**).

- 9.4 Members highlighted the availability of resources from the Centre for Academic Development, the Careers and Employability Service, and Digital and Information Services to support Schools in improving performance on relevant NSS questions. Further discussions on how these services can best support Schools would be welcomed.
- 9.5 It was noted that courses that adopted the new MyAberdeen template last year saw increased engagement with reading lists. This correlated with improved satisfaction scores related to access to library resources, so wider adoption of the template across courses is welcomed.

#### **EXAM ROOM ARRANGEMENTS 2025-26**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/012)*

- 10.1 The Chair introduced the topic of exam room arrangements, noting the ongoing discussions around inclusive assessment, increasing the diversity of assessment types and promoting authentic assessment practices. However, concerns around GenAI have led to a trend in some areas toward a return to in-person, invigilated assessments. It was emphasised that assessment drives learning, and the principles of assessment *for* learning should remain central.
- 10.2 The Committee received an update on the current situation regarding in-person invigilated assessments. There is a growing need for inclusive adjustments, such as private rooms, which places additional pressure on staff resources. The increasing use of large-scale computer-based exams also presents logistical challenges, particularly in terms of estate capacity and availability of suitable computer rooms. It was noted that Digital and Information Services (DIS) is currently reviewing computer-based provision and the feasibility of large-scale computer classrooms.
- 10.3 Some colleagues across the University have expressed a willingness to adapt assessment types but would welcome further advice and support. It was suggested that services such as the Library and CAD could assist colleagues in exploring literature and best practices for assessments that respond to the evolving capabilities of GenAI.
- 10.4 It was noted that some of the pressure to return to in-person invigilated exams stems from requirements set by regulators and accrediting bodies (e.g. for disciplines such as healthcare or accountancy). However, members acknowledged that exams can play an important role in learning and that students can develop valuable skills through exams, such as the ability to think critically and problem-solve under pressure.
- 10.5 An issue was raised regarding the May exam diet usually clashing with the May Day Bank Holiday, reducing the number of available days and creating additional pressure on timetabling.
- 10.6 The Committee noted that staffing challenges – resulting from the recent voluntary severance scheme, recruitment freeze, and pause on promotions – will likely impact the University's ability to maintain a diverse range of assessment types.

#### **PGT POLICY REVIEW TFG REMIT AND COMPOSITION DRAFT**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/010)*

- 11.1 Members of the Committee were asked to circulate the Remit and Composition of the PGT Policy Review Task and Finish Group within their respective Schools and to identify or nominate colleagues who may be interested in being involved in this work (**Action: DoEs**).

## **LECTURE CAPTURE AND VIDEO CAPTIONS SUPPORT**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/011)*

- 12.1 The Committee held a brief discussion on lecture capture and video captioning support. Due to time constraints, it was agreed that more time for discussion would be scheduled for the next meeting.
- 12.2 A request was made to provide data on lecture capture uptake at School and/or programme level to support local monitoring and enhancement efforts (**Action: PS**).
- 12.3 It was noted that lecture capture is currently not available at the Qatar campus due to limitations in IT infrastructure, but that discussions with colleagues will continue.

## **UPDATES FROM THE EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMITTEE (EEC)**

*(Copies filed as UEC/240925/013 and UEC/240925/014)*

- 13.1 The Committee noted the minutes of the EEC meeting held on 10 September 2025.
- 13.2 The Committee approved the amendments to the EEC Remit and Composition.

## **UPDATES FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT AND EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)**

*(Copies filed as UEC/240925/015 and UEC/240925/016)*

- 14.1 The Committee noted the minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 11 September 2025.
- 14.2 The Committee approved the amendments to the EEC Remit and Composition.

## **UEC REMIT AND COMPOSITION**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/017)*

- 15.1 The Committee approved the changes to the UEC Remit and Composition, to be further approved by the Senate.

## **NOTE OF QAA INSTITUTIONAL LIAISON MEETING (ILM)**

*(Copy filed as UEC/240925/018)*

- 16.1 The Committee noted the record of the QAA Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM).

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 17.1 The Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Thursday 20 November at 1:05pm in the Committee Room 2, University Office, or by Microsoft Teams.