

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 September 2025

Present: Jason Bohan, Jemma Murdoch (**Co-Chairs**); Duncan Stuart; Sally Middleton; Lyn Batchelor; Steve Tucker; Susan Halfpenny; Martin Barker; Fiona Stoddard; Ingrid Stanyer; John Cavanagh; Josh Wright; Will Barras; Wendy Lowe; Peter Henderson; Heather Branigan; Malcolm Harvey; Lorna Cruickshank; Hannah Cowie; Samuel Seymour; Rhiannon Thompson; Despoina Kaloriti; Despoina Kaloriti; Natalie Kinchin-Williams; Petra Barber; Chris Souter; Kate Smith; Saiqa Andleeb; Sara Misuri (**Clerk**)

Apologies: Ken Jeffrey; Erin Ferguson; Glenda Hale; Jenna Stuart; Mary Pryor; Melanie Viney

Welcome and Chair's Update

- 1.1 The Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced themselves. Changes to the committee membership were acknowledged, and the new members were welcomed. All attendees (both in person and online) introduced themselves and their roles.

Approval of Remit, Composition, and Membership for 2025/26

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-002)

2.1 The Chair acknowledged how SSEC benefits from various perspectives/representations: from Academic and Professional Services to Student Representation. The main aim of the committee is to ensure and enhance the delivery of effective, appropriate and consistent student support and enhancement to the student experience across the institution.

2.2 The Committee discussed some updates to Membership and Composition to reflect changes in titles/roles/team names. These have been actioned. The Committee discussed updating 'Section 8' of the document to reflect the presence of additional groups reporting to SSEC. This has been actioned. *Remit, Composition, and Membership* were approved following the changes.

Approval of the minutes of the SSEC held on 17/03/2025

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-003)

- 3.1 The committee discussed amending a name in the minutes. This has been actioned. The minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 17/03/2025 were approved following the change.

Actions from the previous meeting

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-004)

4.1 All actions from 17/03/2025 were completed. No further comments.

Update on Accommodation Matters

5.1 The item was presented to SSEC for information. The committee was informed that there are various overlaps of responsibilities with Facilities and Residences Services (the latter including accommodation buildings that are owned/managed by the University). Some of the overlapping responsibilities include: cleaning, logistics, portering, security, incident reaction, etc.

The committee was informed that Hillhead's staff is made up of about 50 members across four teams: the site services team, the cleaning and admin team, the accommodation office, and the student resident assistance (SRA) team. The accommodation team deals with room allocations, room transfers, and oversees legal contractual agreements. The domestic team provides cleaning services, general upkeep of the communal area, and the turnover of the site from student to commercial use. The site services team undertakes duties from minor repairs and logistics, moving/replacing furniture, to providing first emergency responses (fire alarm activations, on-site emergencies, noise complaints, initial response to welfare/wellbeing concerns). The SRA team focuses on student engagement (events & activities, community building), student mediation (interpersonal concerns in flats), and student support (first response to welfare/well-being and mental health concerns). The SRA and site services teams often action wellbeing concerns together and provide immediate support. Longer-term support is implemented by the Student Advice & Support team.

The committee was advised that the current focus for the accommodation team is to foster a positive residential experience. This is acknowledged to improve student experience and set the University-owned properties as the preferred choice over PBSAs.

The committee was informed of the Hillhead infrastructure in its configuration. The site accommodates approximately 2,000 beds, primarily for undergraduate students in their first year of studies. The University also manages two smaller residential complexes for postgraduates (Elphinstone Flats, Kings Hall). Hillhead offers about 500 en-suite rooms and various cluster flats with shared facilities. Catered facilities are not as favoured as 15/20 years ago, as students seem to prefer the independence of self-catered options. The Hillhead site offers various facilities accessible to all students: shop (soon to be reopened), outdoor gym, parking, In-Post/Amazon lockers, gaming room, GP sports hall, spaces for socialisation & engagement in the central building. This year, the team has facilitated the re-opening of the computer room and a multi-use meeting space. Unfortunately, other spaces such as the food hall are yet to open.

The committee members are invited to visit the Hillhead site, if interested.

5.2 Following some questions from the committee, it was highlighted that Emergency Accommodation at Hillhead is possible, and availability is based on student occupancy. In discussion, it was highlighted that, currently, the UoA-accommodation team provides support to students in University-owned and managed accommodations. In the future, the team may expand the remit of support to include private accommodations. The committee was advised that PBSAs routinely contact the University (Student Advice & Support) when expressing welfare/wellbeing concerns for UoA students.

NSS 2025*(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-006)*

6.1 The committee was presented with some relevant results from NSS for discussion. The committee was reminded that the National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual review of students in their final year of undergraduate studies, and it's conducted across the entire HE sector to reflect students' opinions of their educational experience. The NSS results can influence government policy decisions, quality assurance regulations, and recruitment.

The committee was invited to review and reflect on various specific results:

Overall Positivity Score: The data presents a break between 2022 and 2023. This reflects a change in the survey, which moved focus from specific questions on student satisfaction to considering and averaging all scores from the survey into the 'overall positivity score'. Overall, our score remains high and reflects that we are maintaining high standards. However, we are losing ground to our competitors who are scoring higher in the overall ranks. The UoA overall ranking has moved from 10th in 2023, to 25th in 2024, and 34th in 2025.

NSS Scale Performance: NSS rates performance based on seven scales ('Teaching on my Course', 'Learning Opportunities', 'Assessments and Feedback', 'Academic Support', 'Organisation & Management', 'Learning Resources', 'Student Voice'). The UoA score has remained consistent, but the overall rank has declined across all scales. 'Assessment and Feedback' continues to be the worst scale and should be prioritised. 'Student Voice' and 'Learning Opportunities' have also slipped in rankings.

NSS Assessment & Feedback: Though improving this score has been a priority for many years, we have not seen any substantial progress yet. The survey highlights specific concerns with feedback and markings with Q10 placing UoA in the 3rd quartile, and Q12,13,14 placing UoA in the 4th quartile. Performance continues to be varied across all Schools, and focused reports have been shared with the intention of being reviewed and actioned accordingly. Some changes have been implemented on an institutional level, for example, with the introduction of an Institutional Course Template. The course template will feature clear marking criteria and a feedback calendar.

NSS Student Voice: Positivity scores have remained stable over the last two years (Q22 placed UoA in the 1st quartile; Q24,25 in the 3rd quartile). Feedback from this category has been reviewed and partially actioned (for example, with the Institutional Course Feedback), hopefully resulting in future improvements.

NSS Academic Support: Overall, Academic Support continues to perform relatively well. Overall, UoA is sitting in the 1st quartile, with Q16 in the 2nd quartile. The positive score is optimistic for the institution.

NSS Additional Questions: The survey included additional queries focused on Welfare Resources & Facilities, Student Safety, and Wellbeing & Support Services. Overall, students are satisfied with comms and signposting by the University. UoA continues to perform well with Welfare resources, though there is room for further improvement. Finally, the survey revealed that students report feeling safe on campus.

6.2 The committee discussed various points from the presentation.

Overall Positivity Score: The committee wondered if it might be beneficial to, alongside a review of the UoA practices, check what other institutions are doing to raise their overall rankings. The

committee acknowledged that it would be more beneficial to rank higher than to maintain consistent scores, especially for recruitment purposes.

The committee wondered if the University might wish to consider promoting the surveys more widely across the institution and potentially arrange 'tutorials' focused on the survey's questions and its purpose. This may result in more positive results and feedback following a more in-depth understanding of the survey.

NSS Assessment & Feedback: The committee highlighted how the 3-week feedback return time may not be the best-suited solution for shorter courses, and wondered if automated marking should be promoted where possible. The committee also acknowledged how certain courses and assessment will require a longer marking time. Overall, the committee wondered if it would be possible to consider creating more in-depth guidance around assessment design and marking by course types.

The committee advised that TNE and UoA students must receive feedback from the same course at the same time. Staff should consider that there may be different working weeks across the various campuses, and how this will reflect on marking times. As this will impact the feedback calendar, the committee believes it is important to maintain consistency across the various Schools and Campuses.

The committee was reminded that policies and code of practice are routinely reviewed upon receiving feedback from surveys. Overall, the committee agreed that the institutional course template will prove useful in setting up expectations and promoting consistency.

NSS Student Voice: The committee wondered if AUSA could provide more in-depth training to improve the Class Rep system. The committee acknowledged that Class Reps could contribute to further improving student experience and provide insightful feedback.

6.3 The committee was reminded that Schools have been asked to create an action plan based on their individual data. This will inform an Institutional strategy and result in a workshop based on advice and good practices (on 05/11/2025). Any future relevant updates will be shared with SSEC in due course.

Update on Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing

7.1 The committee was given a general update for information. The committee was informed that most of the events in September and early October will be focused on supporting new and returning students. The Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing (EEW) team has been working across the InfoHub, Science Teaching Hub, and the Student Union Building.

The committee was provided with some updates by topic:

InfoHub: the office opening times were impacted by reduced staffing, and the service opened again on w/c on 08/09/2025. The email traffic and queries continue to be very high and similar to the previous year. With the significant reduction in staffing, the response time for emails is typically up to seven working days. The team has been focused primarily on addressing emails and queries, as well as printing student IDs for the incoming new students.

Science Teaching Hub: The STH will be open from 15/09/25 to 03/10/25. Various teams will operate from this location during this period: on the ground floor will be the InfoHub, Finance, Registry, MyCurriculum, Immigration & Compliance, the Go Abroad Team, and IT. On the first floor, students will be able to collect their IDs. The Student ID process should have been simplified with the

introduction by IT of a new upload system. The Arrivals and Wellbeing Hub will also be present on the ground floor and signposting to various services and support (Student Support, GP, Dentists, other NHS-related services, etc.). Various in-person sessions, panels, presentations and talks will be held on the top floor of the STH during the first week of term.

Hillhead: various support services and meet & greets are available 11,12,13/09/2025 to welcome students and parents. Staff from Hillhead, EEW, and Student Advice & Support will be available on the site at these dates.

Local Student Event: the event was run to welcome students who may be based in/around Aberdeen but not in halls. The event was attended by about 80-90 students and was really successful.

Comms: The EEW has been drip-feeding information to students across 4-5 weeks to make sure that students are set up for the academic year ahead. The content has been scaled back compared to the previous year to promote engagement, and signposting to further content has been provided for each section.

Future plans: the EEW is working on the BeWell Week which will take place in October. The team has also started some initial work to prepare for summer graduations.

7.2 The committee was invited to share questions or comments. The committee asked to have visual examples of the Student Hub page for students, as this may help with signposting to the various resources. Some screenshots from the Staff Student Hub interface were shared in the chat and have been saved in a document on the SSEC files (*SSEC-01092025-StudentHub*). **DS to get updated screenshots from the student's profile page to share with the committee.**

Update on Student Support Services

8.1 The committee was provided with various updates for information.

Multi-Faith Chaplaincy: The team will continue to deliver the same events and activities as the previous academic years. Info on the service, pastoral support, and events & activities can be found on their [website](#).

Counselling: The service will continue to operate from their online booking system, which has proved very popular. Students and Staff can book their own appointments, and new timeslots are released every Monday. Students should be advised to check the site on Mondays around lunchtime for the week ahead. The Counselling service continues to offer appointments on a one-at-a-time basis to avoid waiting lists. The Counselling service is also working on amending self-help guides and providing workshops – more information will be available via the newsletter.

Student Helpline: The resource continues to be available for students 24/7. The Student Helpline can offer in-the-moment counselling, which is especially useful with the usual reports of low mood and anxiety typical of the start of term. The EEW team has also been able to promote the Helpline and associated app, which provides additional resources on mental health and wellbeing.

Student Advice & Support: The service will continue to work Mon-Fri, 10-4pm. The staff will be able to triage and escalate emails during these times. The drop-in service (top floor of the Student Union Building) will operate Mon-Thu, 10-12pm. The Disability team is now offering appointments which can be booked by students online and are open for up to 6 weeks in advance.

Disability & Inclusion: The work on Adjustments, initially brought to SSEC about 2 years ago and progressed via UEC and Senate, is now almost fully confirmed with updated wording across sites, and the introduction/update of new adjustment types/codes. There will be a delay in implementing all the codes to SRS, but it should ideally be finalised by the end of the Academic Year. In the meantime, adjustments which do not have an associated existing code will be updated to SRS with the 'free text' option. Further updates may be provided at the next SSEC meeting.

Student Support Training & Guidance: Staff will be presented with updated guidance about boundaries, communication, acknowledging/actioning signs of concern and distress. Recently, Student Support delivered a successful session with School Admins to determine how to communicate with support services, signpost, and how/when to escalate concerns. More work will be developed, including a 'Student in Distress' Guide. Further updates may be provided at the next SSEC meeting.

8.2 The committee was invited to share questions and feedback. The committee wonders if a distinction is made for students who express feelings of anxiety, as opposed to those who may have a medical diagnosis of anxiety. The committee was advised that adjustments are implemented for those with a clinical diagnosis, while students who are feeling anxious may be initially referred to the counselling service and/or some self-help guides. The committee also discussed how Academic Staff may wish to consider these feelings of anxiety when preparing assessments and their academic calendar. The committee also acknowledges how Staff should be empowered to feel supported if they struggle with anxiety or are impacted in their workload. SSEC may consider inviting a speaker to discuss " in a future meeting. [Dignity at Work and Study](#)' in a future meeting.

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-009)

9.1 The committee focused on discussing the 'Student Mental Health Agreement' point from the paper, which will see collaborative work done from the EEW Team and the Student Union team to enhance Curriculum, Culture, and Communication for students. A more focused discussion may be developed at future SSEC meetings by both teams.

The committee was reminded that Staff are always encouraged to read and engage with the UoA newsletters on Thursdays and standalone comms. These are helpful tools to ensure that Staff are aware of operational updates & various sources of support and services available to students and staff.

Lecture Recording and Capture Paper

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-010)

10.1 The committee was provided with an update regarding the availability and feedback of lecture capture and support available in teaching and learning for making videos more accessible. Overall, it was reported that lecture recording proved a useful tool for students with disabilities/learning differences, international students, students who work/are parents, etc.

The committee was provided with an update regarding lecture capturing. The committee was reminded that academic staff are expected to, where possible, review the automatically generated captions for their lectures (Panopto) and make any necessary updates. Where this may not be

possible, staff may request access to additional support via the dedicated funding budget. According to the current data and reports, captioning seems to have been well-received and functional.

10.2 The committee discussed the possibility of reviewing the lecture recording practice to ensure that it is being carried out (with the exceptions in mind, as outlined in the [policy](#)). The committee also discussed some of the Schools' concerns with reduced engagement due to the policy. The committee discussed the possibility of collecting data in relation to students' engagement and lecture recordings. In analysing data, the committee agrees that it would be important to assess the relation between attendance, engagement, and performance based on the outlined learning outcomes.

The committee discussed the improvement of capturing technology, but also acknowledged how different accents may impact the accuracy of the text.

Standing AUSA Point - Review of the Class Rep System

(copy filed as SSEC-11092025-011)

11.1 The committee was invited to discuss the need for a reviewed Class Rep System.

While the Student Union has been able to review and implement good training, it would be beneficial to review how the system can be implemented and adapted in each School, as there seem to be inconsistent practices and engagement levels across courses. Overall, the committee agrees that a more consistent and effective approach across the institution would be beneficial.

The Student Union asked for volunteers to engage with a short-term task & finish group to review the Class Rep System following a democratic review of the system during the previous academic year. The results/suggestions from the review group will be implemented next academic year.

11.2 Various members of the committee volunteered to participate in the task group. **Any further volunteers to contact Samuel Seymour.**

Future Agenda Items

12.1 The committee was advised that members should contact the chairs/clerk if they wish to discuss specific topics relating to their School/Department in future SSEC meetings. The chairs/clerk may be in touch directly to request oral updates/presentations that may be beneficial at future SSEC meetings.

AOCB

13.1 The committee queried whether there is any University guidance regarding student identification and full-face covering. **JM to check if the appropriate guidance is required.**

13.2 The committee was advised that, due to reduced staffing, the Library Services were required to review their opening times across the various sites. Opening times/days are available on the [website](#).

Date of next meeting

14.1 The next meeting of the Student Support & Experience Committee will take place on 04/11/2025 at 14:05. This will be in person (University Court Room) or via MS Team.