

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (SSEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 22 September 2022

Present: Abbe Brown (Chair), Nick Edwards (Chair), Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan, Helen Pierce, Grainne Ferrigan, Erin Ferguson, Russell Moffatt, John Barrow, Duncan Stuart, Lesley Muirhead, Jacqueline Tuckwell, Jemma Murdoch, Tim Baker, Heather Branigan, Wendy Lowe, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Mary Pryor, Lyn Batchelor, Rebekah Walker, Jaye Carr, Stevie Kearney (Clerk)

Apologies: Katrina Foy, Alison Jenkinson, Steve Tucker, Martin Barker, John Cavanagh, Charlotta Hillerdal, Julie Timms, Martin Mills, Akua Serwaa Agyeman, Lucy Leiper, Carolyn Porter, Melanie Viney, Iain Grant

Welcome and Chairs' Update

- 1.1 Introduction and welcome from Nick Edwards (NE) and Abbe Brown (AB).
AB highlighted the excellent work done by all those involved in welcoming students back for the start of term. Work is ongoing with a policy on student carers and that is tied in with a discussion about wider provisions policy as well, with Jemma Murdoch (JM) taking a lead. Also, work with the Arriving and Thriving report will be considered by EDIC in November then further comment and challenge is welcome.

Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 23 August 2022

(copy filed as SSEC/220922/002)

- 2.1 No comments or amendments were received from members of the Committee. The minutes of the SSEC meeting held on 23 August 2022 were approved.

Updated SSEC remit and composition

(copy filed as SSC/220922/003)

- 3.1 NE highlighted that the name of the Committee has been expanded to the "Student Support & Experience Committee" due to slight changes in remit. NE noted the amendments in the updated remit and composition. No comments or questions were received from members of the Committee.

NE advised that if there are any comments from the members, these can be provided to NE, AB or Stevie Kearney (SK) following the meeting and can be collated before being considered by UEC.

Action: SSEC members to provide comments to NE, AB or SK

Code of Practice on Student Discipline – TFG Update

(copy filed as SSC/220922/004)

- 4.1 NE advised that the paper provided is the final version. The cover paper summarises the changes. The code of practice is a comprehensive rewrite of the 2012 documents. There has been a significant amount of work to update the wording and clarity, and to ensure that it is accessible for students. However, it needs to be formal in tone. Supporting documents will be created for students, on a range of topics, which will be more appropriate to that target audience, plus guidance for staff. The aim is that students will not need to read the formal document as the guides will explain the code adequately. The documents will be shared with SSEC once ready.

A number of members of the Committee submitted comments in advance which have been factored into the code.

Mary Pryor (MP) noted that it would be helpful to create a student friendly pamphlet, similar to the one available on academic integrity.

NE: noted that a student should never need to read the formal document as the supporting guides will cover everything. There will be a focus on good conduct as well, to make the emphasis more positive in outlook.

AB agreed that is a good idea to complement the plans for other available guidance such as the academic integrity material, which is great.

NE advised that the document will now go to UEC and then Senate, with the hope that there will not be any substantive changes. The TFG will then do a final scrutiny, and the document will then come back to SSEC with the more user-friendly companion documents. NE noted his thanks to all who have contributed to the process.

Action: NE to correct a spelling error in the document and progress the documents via UEC and Senate

Progression, Attainment, and Employability Action Plan: Priority groups and wider student population

(copy filed as SSC/220922/005)

- 5.1 AB introduced the paper which builds on the papers submitted to this group previously, looking at degree classification, student continuation and withdrawal. Much of the work took place in June and July with a Continuation Group. The plans then went to UEC and became aligned with some discussions at senate. As a result, John Barrow (JB) and AB were asked to draw together all the work which has taken place on continuation, degree classification, graduate employability and outcomes. This had a focus on particular groups of concern, such as widening access students, mature students and BAME students. Three sets of priorities were suggested for the three areas: attainment, employability, and continuation. These were areas of focus but were not exclusive. SMT were very positive about the paper. There is now a new set of continuation data, which shows two additional issues. One was in relation to an increased number of PGT students discontinuing studies, especially from Bangladesh. Another was an increase in white undergraduate students discontinuing their studies, which is an area of concern. Also, when this committee looked at the data, we felt there was a need to focus on some other groups, particularly disabled students. The aim of this paper is to bring all those

strands together in one place, set out some suggested priorities and work out what we do now. Point 5.1 in the paper sets out some detail on that area, providing a framework for this committee and reporting up to UEC and looks at what can be done, with school-based action plans, but also to continue sharing of practice across schools. We'll try not to replicate other meetings, but to draw together other communities of practice. All thoughts on ongoing activity and areas of priority are most welcome.

JB added that the employability sections highlight the data we have. "Graduate Outcomes" is a survey graduated students receive 15 months after they graduate and attempts to give a more longitudinal analysis of where they are at in their career at that point in time. We perform currently not as we might like to. We also have data on various characteristics that we have not previously analysed which will be shared with schools to allow a deeper dive to support students.

AB noted that the employability side will be discussed at the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee. If there are no objections, AB will go ahead and update template documents as a base, set up the community of practice meeting and add an agenda item for the December SSEC meeting to take things forward.

Graeme Kirkpatrick (GK) advised that AUSA would very much like to be involved. He added that this is great work being undertaken, but it is very concerning that if you are from one of the groups mentioned that you would be less likely to get a good degree.

AB agreed that AUSA will be involved.

Action: AB to set up community of practice meeting and update template documents
SK to add follow up as agenda item for December SSEC meeting

Graduate Attributes and Skills

(copy filed as SSC/220922/006)

- 6.1 JB introduced the paper on Graduate Attributes and Skills. He explained that this is an update and a request for feedback. The paper Summarises work originally from two working groups. One was linked to Graduate Attributes and Skills and the other was looking at the Enhanced Transcript, which students get at graduation and included co-curricular activities which are recognised by the institution. There was a review of the enhanced transcript alongside graduate attributes and skills, which were introduced over ten years ago. This considers whether it could be more embedded in our practice and going forwards, these two pieces of work will be looked at under the Employment and Entrepreneurship Committee. We will now call this 'skills development' as people are not clear on what graduate attributes are. Students will be able to work through a process as they progress with their studies, for UG, PGT and PGR. It will encompass all students across all campuses so will effectively be a blank canvas which students will work through. This will be aligned to the Aberdeen 2040 strategic plan, but we can also link into other frameworks, plus staff and students will feed into the process. The other side of this is how students evidence their activities as we look at the enhanced transcript, so we're hoping to create a system which allows students to capture all their activity as they do it, so it will be in digital format in real time. Rather than being something students get at graduation, they will be able to use it at any time, to apply for part-time work or internships, for example. This will potentially capture skills from courses, so those not able to undertake a large number of extra-curricular activities can still use the system, capture skills and articulate them to employers. We know employers aren't too fussed about a bit long list

of skills but care much more about how these skills are articulated, which is an area many students struggle with. Personal tutors could then engage more with students to identify skills gaps and have a sort of annual review process. The work is in the very early stages, so these are just initial ideas. But the hope is to create the scaffolding framework to allow students to populate their activities. We will be reaching out to those in the group to take this forward.

NE noted that this will help empower and develop students, which is something which has been discussed with JM and Lesley Muirhead (LM) already in their roles in student support.

GK expressed that this is a fantastic piece of work and although there are lots of challenges, it looks like these are being taken into consideration. One thing which stood out was that those who do not have time to undertake many activities outside of their studies can still participate, as the current enhanced transcript often exacerbates the social divide, as students could be parents, carers and have multiple part time jobs, so it looks like these factors have been taken into account, which is great.

JB highlighted that we need the expertise and to get as many voices as possible. JB will reach out to people in SSEC and is happy to come back and update the Committee. The paper will go to the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee, UEC and to Senate a few times before approval at Senate, hopefully for the next academic year. If there are any touch points with student support, JB advised to get in touch, as nothing is set in stone at this point.

NE noted that the SSEC is happy to have John back and look at opportunities for deep dives into particular areas.

MP added that she is very happy to remain involved in this work.

NSS Action Plans

(copy filed as SSC/220922/007)

- 7.1 NE introduced this item and advised that the aim is to collate some free comments feedback from the NSS and discuss themes common to us all and to have examples of best practice discussed at the SSEC meeting in December.

AB noted two main threads; last time we discussed the institutional priorities. We agreed work would continue in some areas like learning community. For the academic side, the focus would be assessment and feedback. Great strides have been made in the last year, but we can always improve. We also have school action plans, which have been uploaded to the Teams site, when provided. We are still waiting on some schools to submit their plans, but members of the Committee should feel free to view other schools' plans for best practice. In November AB will attend a meeting between Ruth Taylor and the school Directors of Education to have a similar discussion about how schools are going to share practice around all areas of the NSS results, and then in December's SSEC we will have a more formal NSS slot. AB requested that members of the SSEC from academic schools, should invite anyone to the next meeting who they feel would be keen to participate in the NSS discussions and SK can please ensure those invites go out in good time. Also, AB noted that as we plan to use the NSS work as a template for other areas discussed earlier, any comments from members of the Committee were very welcome.

Action: SK to add NSS best practice to agenda for December SSEC

SK to put out reminder to see if any additional invites are required for December meeting

AOCB

8.1 No items of AOCB were raised by members of the Committee

Reflection on this meetings' discussion regarding equality, diversity, inclusion, health, safety and wellbeing.

9.1 Wendy Lowe noted that when working with a disabled student who has the provision of quality assured captions for pre-recorded materials, it is becoming increasingly difficult to accommodate this provision. WL added that we are trying to be inclusive but are the processes in place to support this.

NE advised that the Student Advice & Support Team are happy to speak offline and look at getting a chat set up with the relevant teams.

AB noted that for pre-recorded materials, funds have been allocated to each school to arrange quality assured captions when this is required for disability or other reasons, such as subject specific content.

Tim Baker (TB) added that he relates to WL's point, and this is something discussed in a variety of schools

LM noted that WL and she are in touch already, processes are in place; the e-learning team can help with the provision of quality assured captions for pre-recorded lectures, while for live lectures the Disability Team need to be involved. She advised that colleagues reach out if they require further information.

AB added that, hopefully someone within the schools knows the procedure as there are funds in place to support this work.

LM provided a link to the process: [Accessibility of Video \(blackboardcdn.com\)](https://blackboardcdn.com) The support with captioning section explains what to do if you're working with a disabled student who requires the provision of quality assured captions.

Action: *NE to reach out to WL for further discussion offline*

Reflection on Aberdeen 2040 Updates on Operational Plan

10.1 No comments were received from members of the Committee.

Reflection on SSEC Task and Finish Groups

(Copy filed as SSEC/220922/011)

11.1 AB advised that the papers provided on the TFGs were provided for information. These are the papers which went to senate for consideration on 21 September 2022. There was a high level of support for the pastoral review case and the support for PGT, but also real concern

for the workload implications of that. The takeaway is for the TFG to look at how we provide that support in a manageable way. On the monitoring absence and engagement paper, the feedback received was very positive in relation to short- and medium-term activity and there was plenty of support for the name change.

Inclusion FAQs and Guidelines for Supporting Disabled Postgraduate Researchers

(Copy filed as SSEC/220922/012)

- 12.1 NE explained that the document provided was an updated version of Inclusion FAQs, and Guidelines for supporting disabled postgraduate researchers.

LM added that the information is due to be added to the website once some final updates have been completed. The PGR guidance will go to PGR committee, Lucy Leiper (LL) is taking it there.

AB noted that the FAQs are on the website now. AB advised that a large amount of great work has been undertaken behind the scenes involving many colleagues to produce these documents.

NE added that members of the Committee should let LM know of any comments.

Action: LM to update and circulate paper and add to website

Date of Next Meeting

- 13.1 The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Monday 05 December 2022, at 10:30am, in person and via by Microsoft Teams (hybrid meeting). Venue University Office Court Room.

NE added that this will be AB's last meeting in her role as Dean.