Subject: Accreditation Panel Outcome and Feedback

Dear Professor Murray,

Thank you very much to the team at the University of Aberdeen for submitting provision for accreditation. The documentation was considered by the Advance HE Accreditation Panel held on 15 February 2024. The Panel considered the following lines of provision:

- **ABDN: Professional Recognition Scheme for Advance HE Fellowship (Descriptors 1-3)**
- **Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching & Learning (Descriptor 2)**
- **Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (Descriptor 1)**

I am pleased to inform you that the Panel has agreed that this provision can be accredited subject to just four conditions. These conditions have been captured in the attached action plan.

The date by which we would like to receive the University’s response to the conditions set by the Panel is **Tuesday 09 April 2024**. In addressing the conditions, we ask the team to signpost to the action taken within the final column of the action plan and to submit revised participant guidance (with revisions highlighted) and/or a new narrative explanation as appropriate (please do not return to the submission templates).

Please send the revised documentation to our accreditation team at accreditation@advance-he.ac.uk.

**Accreditation Panel Commendations**

The Accreditation Panel identified many areas of good practice in relation to your accreditation submission and wishes to commend the University of Aberdeen on the following aspects:

- The Professional Values of the Professional Standards Framework 2023 (PSF) are at the heart of the ‘Aberdeen 2040’ strategy, which articulates the University’s strategic themes around inclusion, collaboration and sustainability (p7).
- The University is forming significant collaborations with international partners which should enrich learning and teaching practice through cultural exchange, extended networks and mutual learning.
• Staff at the new Qatar campus are able to engage in the range of professional development opportunities on offer, including access to fellowship via appropriate routes through the accredited provision. Access to the development on offer is enabled by online delivery, with appropriate scheduling in place to ensure staff based outside the UK can fully engage.

• The University of Aberdeen’s Five Principles for the Delivery of Education closely align with the PSF 2023 Dimensions. The Principal’s Teaching Excellence Awards raise the profile of learning and teaching and reward excellent practitioners. A new Senior and Principal Fellows’ Network will promote cross-institutional collaborations and learning and teaching initiatives. Staff have opportunity to collaborate and share best practice in teaching, learning, and assessment via monthly Learning & Teaching Network events and monthly Pedagogical Inquiry Network (PIN) events.

• A recent review of the scholarship and professional practice promotions track has enabled a more transparent use of fellowship as an esteem indicator in an application for promotion.

• The institution-wide adoption of Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology, supported by the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), provides teaching teams with holistic data to evaluate the student experience across an entire degree programme. This fosters critically evaluative, reflective and evidence-informed approaches to learning and teaching.

• The changes introduced for this new accreditation cycle have been carefully considered and create a greater clarity for participants, mentors and reviewers. The ABDN: Professional Recognition Scheme for Advance HE Fellowship mirrors the Advance HE direct application format and utilises Advance HE guidance. The Postgraduate Certificate programme has a stronger practice-based focus and requires participants to have two years’ experience to enrol.

• Guidance documents for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching and Learning programme explain the PSF 2023 well. Assessment tasks across the programme are well designed to generate evidence to meet Descriptor 2; in particular, the Panel considers the poster assessment to be an innovative design for PSF V5 ‘collaborate with others to enhance practice’.

• A distinct handbook for Staff Contributors to the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching and Learning programme (Appendix E2.5) provides clear and useful guidance which will support mentors, guest lecturers and observers to understand the PSF 2023 and the nature of their role and responsibilities within the programme.

If you or your colleagues would like to discuss the outcome of the Accreditation Panel further, please do get in touch and I will be happy to explain the panel conditions set and information requested. We look forward to receiving the revised information requested by Tuesday 09 April 2024 and send our congratulations to you and your colleagues on this highly positive outcome for the University of Aberdeen.

Yours sincerely

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## Accreditation Action Plan: University of Aberdeen

### Conditions set by Accreditation Panel

In addressing the conditions outlined below, please submit revised participant guidance (with revisions highlighted) and/or a narrative explanation as advised in the supporting explanation. Please provide clear signposting to the action taken in the last column below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Action Set</th>
<th>Supporting Explanation</th>
<th>Cross reference to response by institution</th>
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| 1  | ABDN: Professional Recognition Scheme for Advance HE Fellowship (D1-3)   | Enhance /provide participant guidance related to aspects of the design of the provision, support in place and assessment process | The Panel asks for guidance to be enhanced/provided as follows:  
1. Currently the Application Forms (Appendix E1.4) include links to the full Advance HE applicant packs rather than direct links to the Advance HE Associate Fellow, Fellow and Senior Fellow Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions documents themselves. The Panel asks that these links are updated to avoid confusion, as the Advance HE applicant packs also include guidance for direct applicants (including fees, application processes etc.) and templates, etc. that would need to be adapted for PRS participants.  
2. Explain how participants initially determine which category of fellowship to apply for and how those applying for Associate Fellowship are supported to decide which two Areas of Activity to choose to evidence.  
3. Provide the guidance participants receive that supports them to understand how they should construct their application to appropriately evidence the relevant Descriptor.  
4. Provide the participant guidance that explains the assessment process, possible outcomes, timeline and resubmission process (including the support in place for resubmissions).  
5. Provide the guidance participants receive about the support provided by mentors and how mentors are allocated. |                                                                                                                                         |
<p>| 2  | ABDN: Professional Recognition Scheme for Advance HE Fellowship (D1-3)   | Enhance mentor guidance to include examples of appropriate D1-3 practice | Enhance the guidance in the ABDN PRS Mentor Handbook (Appendix E1.1) to include information about the types of practice appropriate to each PSF 2023 Descriptor in order to ensure that mentors and are clear about evidence requirements for each category to enable them to appropriately advise mentees. This might be achieved, for example, through adding some explanation about the importance of, and direct links to, the Advance HE Guide to the PSF 2023 Dimensions documents (as above in Condition 1.1). |                                                                                                                                         |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ABDN: Professional Recognition Scheme for Advance HE Fellowship (D1-3)</th>
<th>Address two points related to the fellowship judgement process</th>
<th>Please address the following two points:</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1. Page 7 of the ABN PRS Reviewer Handbook (Appendix E1.2) states that “The Lead Reviewer is responsible for collating the feedback both they and Reviewer 2 have independently produced and writing the final feedback for the original submission and the resubmission if necessary.” However, the Panel is unclear about how the feedback should be presented, as the review pro formas do not appear to be designed for this purpose and there is no explanation provided. Please enhance the guidance to clarify the format to be used and how this will be issued, along with (if applicable) the feedback templates to be used.</td>
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<td>2. Enhance the Terms of Reference for the ABDN Ratification Board (Appendix E1.3) to include how this Board operates in practice to carry out its defined purpose “To oversee and ensure fair and transparent governance and decision-making in the processes associated with the award of Advance HE Fellowship at Associate Fellow, Fellow, and Senior Fellow”; please add information to clarify the responsibilities and operation of this Board. If the Board could potentially overturn a fellowship judgement, please include information about the basis for this.</td>
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|   | Principles of Learning & Teaching in Higher Education – Descriptor 1 | Ensure that PSF 2023 is accurately referenced | 1. The Panel understands that any two Areas of Activity selected from A1, A2, A3 and A4 to suit the participants’ context are the focus of assessment on this programme and the reason why A5 is excluded from the programme assessment. They also note that the Professional Standards Framework (PSF 2023) Descriptor 1 criteria have been altered in the PLTHE Handbook (Appendix E3.1, p.5) and in the PLTHE Course Guide (Appendix E3.2, pp.5, 19, 23, 24, 27 and 28). To ensure that the PSF 2023 is accurately referenced and represented, the Panel asks that only the wording of Descriptor 1 as set out in the PSF 2023 on page 7 is used, and instead a contextual sentence about A5 and the PLTHE is added at the relevant points. Please revise E3.1 and E 3.2 accordingly. |
| | | | 2. In the PLTHE Course Guide (Appendix E3.2), text around Slide 5 on page 25 states “reflect on how you have engaged with and are showing your commitment to the Professional Values (V1 and V3) in your approaches to teaching and/or supporting student learning”. The Panel considers that the wording highlighted in italics reflects UKPSF 2011. A change introduced in PSF 2023 is to ask for evidence of active ‘use’ of Professional Values and the Panel asks for the text to be updated. |
### Recommendations made by Accreditation Panel

The Accreditation Panel also made five recommendations that the team may wish to consider. No further information is required by the Panel.

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<th>Provision</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<td><strong>A</strong> Institution</td>
<td>Given the new international collaborations, growing use of fellowship and the link to the scholarship and professional practice promotions track, the Panel recommends that the University considers whether it might be useful to broaden the remit and membership of the Advance HE Professional Recognition Review Board, perhaps to include a senior leader of learning and teaching (e.g. PVC), representation from the new Qatar campus and HR representation, for example.</td>
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<td><strong>B</strong> ABDN: PRS (D3)</td>
<td>The Panel notes mention in the narrative that the focus for the next accreditation cycle in increasing the overall number of Senior Fellows across the University. However, from the forecast numbers, the narrative provided and recent Senior Fellow success rates it was not quite clear how the increase in Senior Fellowship numbers will be achieved and recommends that progress towards this aim is monitored.</td>
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<td><strong>C</strong> PGCHETL (D2)</td>
<td>One member of the PGCHETL does not currently hold a category of fellowship. The Panel notes that this team member is not involved in assessment (an accreditation policy requirement) but given the responsibility this member of staff has in supporting participants to engage with the PSF 2023 and fellowship during the programme, they recommend that support is put into place for this individual to achieve an appropriate category of fellowship.</td>
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<td><strong>D</strong> PGCHETL (D2)</td>
<td>Appendix E2.5 - PGCert Guide for Staff Contributors mentions that “mentors do not feature as a mandatory aspect of the PGCert” and the Panel recommends that the team monitors the participant experience to ensure that there is no disadvantage to those participants without mentors.</td>
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<td><strong>E</strong> PLTHE (D1)</td>
<td>The Panel considers that guidance in the PLTHE Course Guide (Appendix E3.2) around summative assessments 1 and 2 (rubrics, questions and explanatory text) would benefit from additional emphasis being placed on practice needing to be demonstrated as effective and inclusive.</td>
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### Accreditation - Terms and Conditions

Please note that once awarded, accredited provision must operate as explicitly accredited. Accreditation does not cover provision that is developed for commercial sale. Please refer to the full terms and conditions set out in Appendix 1 of the Advance HE Accreditation Policy 2023 for further information. Institutions who wish to request any changes to accredited provision should discuss plans with Advance HE and seek approval of any changes through the major and minor change process (Section 8 of policy).