

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT SUPPORT &
EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

Minute of the meeting held on 19 May 2022

Present: Abbe Brown (Chair), Nick Edwards (Chair), Lyn Batchelor, Tim Baker, Martin Barker, Heather Branigan, Jaye Carr, Ivana Drdakova, Grainne Ferrigan, Bryony Garford, Alison Jenkinson, Stevie Kearney, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Ondrej Kucerak, Wendy Lowe, Jemma Murdoch, Carolyn Porter, Mary Pryor, Emma Richards, Megan Smith, Duncan Stuart, Jacqui Tuckwell, Melanie Viney, Zeray Yihdego, Bekah Walker and Lesley Muirhead (Clerk), with Janine Chalmers, Ceit Mackintosh and Sally Middleton.

Apologies: John Cavanagh, Oghenamega Erivona, Katrina Foy, Iain Grant, Charlotta Hillerdal, Lucy Leiper, Heidi Mehrkens, Martin Mills, Russell Moffatt, Fiona Ritchie, Julie Timms, Steve Tucker.

Welcome and Chairs' Update

- 1.1 Nick Edwards (NE) opened the meeting and welcomed members to the seventh meeting of the Student Support Committee (SSC).
- 1.2 AB noted that a meeting took place earlier in the day looking at reviewing the Carers policy. The current Student Carers policy was scheduled for review in 2018 but this has been delayed. The review will incorporate a policy for staff carers.
- 1.3 AB advised that in collaboration with John Barrow an action plan is being developed in relation to widening access, race, and mature students around progression, attainment, and outcomes. This ties in with work that AB is undertaking with Alison Jenkinson (AJ) and Sally Middleton (SM) on the Widening Access Vision.
- 1.4 AB and NE noted that this is the last meeting of the SSC at which the current AUSA sabbatical vice-presidents will attend; AB and NE thanked Ondrej Kucerak (OK) and Ivana Drdakova (ID) on behalf of the Committee for their work and contributions. We look forward to working with the new sabbatical vice-presidents.
- 1.5 NE highlighted additional posts within Student Support which will be advertised soon. This will include two new Graduate Trainee roles. More information will be provided on the revised structure of the Student Support team in advance of the new academic year and details will be provided as to how staff can sign post students to access support from the team. These new roles will provide welcome additional resource to the team.

Approval of the Minute of the SSC held on 21 March 2022*(copy filed as SSC/190522/002)*

- 2.1 Members of the Committee approved the Minute of the meeting of the SSC held on 21 March 2022.

Approval of the Minute of the SSC held on 07 April 2022*(copy filed as SSC/190522/003)*

- 3.1 Members of the Committee approved the Minute of the extraordinary meeting of the SSC held on 07 Apr 2022.

Neurodiversity Policy*(copy filed as SSC/190522/004)*

- 4.1 Janine Chalmers (JC) provided members of the Committee with an overview of the policy which has been developed to raise awareness of neurodiversity and the experience of staff and students who are neurodiverse. It offers support to staff working with staff and students who are neurodiverse. The policy will be implemented through an awareness raising campaign, including social media campaigns, and training (online and in-person). The policy will also be promoted on neurodiversity awareness days. The policy has been through a number of groups, including the Staff Disability Network and the Disabled Students' Forum to ensure that we take into consideration the lived experience view as much as possible. JC welcomed comments from members of the Committee and noted that the policy will be discussed at the PARC meeting the following week.
- 4.2 NE advised that comments were received from Lucy Leiper (LL) in advance of the meeting in relation to the policy. NE will share these comments with JC and Ceit Mackintosh (CM). LL has suggested some amendments to the language used in the policy to provide clarity for PGR students around how they can access support.
- 4.3 NE shared personal experience of neurodiversity and highlighted the hope that the policy encourages members of our community to be open about their neurodiversity and ensures that staff and students are aware that the University not only supports neurodiverse members of our community, but there is acknowledgment of the benefits that neurodiversity can bring to our community.
- 4.4 Tim Baker (TB) noted that he thinks the policy is great and endorses it. He asked about what happens when a student needs further support than is recorded on their provisions, such as the student requiring more time for assessments than the time stipulated on their provisions. TB asked what can be done when staff to do not implement provisions consistently.
- 4.5 NE acknowledged TB's points and agreed that we are aware that provisions are not always consistently applied. NE hopes that the communication which will be

provided when the policy is passed at PARC, will ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities and what is required.

- 4.6 AB advised that we are aware of situations where provisions are not implemented sufficiently as staff want to know more about the student's diagnosis, rather than their provisions. Acknowledgement and respect to the process of assessing students' disability-related study needs via the appropriate channels within the University is required. Consideration also needs to be given to inclusion and anticipating the needs of all our students in our practice. The policy will provide extra power to highlight what should be happening in terms of practice.
- 4.7 NE added that clarity will be provided when promoting the policy that the disability specialists within the Student Support team are professional experts in assessing the study-related needs of disabled students in collaboration with colleagues in the sector such as Educational Psychologists and academic colleagues, where required. Work will be undertaken to promote the specialisms within Student Support so that everyone is clear on this.
- 4.8 AB recommended that in point 10.1 of the policy reference is made to exams, but consideration should be provided to changing this to assessment.
- 4.9 AB highlighted recent discussions about the requirement for policy and whether individual policies should be developed around specific student/staff groups or whether it is better to have one more inclusive policy. AB noted that long term individual policies may not be required but at present, the policies being developed are valuable and welcome.
- 4.10 Zeray Yihdego (ZY) welcomed the policy and noted that the tone of the policy is appreciated. ZY suggested a review of the use of the word disability as this is not perceived as a positive term. ZY agreed that the next step will be to plan for the operation of the policy to create an inclusive environment.
- 4.11 NE highlighted that there have been interesting discussions around the use of the term disability and that we will be looking at this in terms of how we engage with students. NE noted that a number of neurodiverse people will identify as disabled and will find the term empowering. The University has a role in removing the stigma around the term disability. Legislation is restrictive in the use of terminology, and we need to get to the point of balance where everyone who wants/needs to access support feels comfortable doing so whether they consider themselves to be disabled or not. NE hopes that in time, we will further enhance the work to try to remove the stigma around the term disability as an individual is not disabled, it is society that has disabled them through some means.
- 4.12 LM will provide comments to JC and CM on the policy in terms of suggestions for amendments to the wording and updates to the statistics included. LM highlighted in the meeting that more students than originally noted in the policy, have been referred to the Educational Psychologist for a specific learning differences (SpLD),

Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and/or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) assessment in academic year 2021/22; as of 11th May 2022, 298 students have been referred and more students will be booked to see the Educational Psychologist prior to the end of the academic year.

- 4.13 JC agreed with NE's points in relation to the use of the term disability. During the development of the policy, input from a range of people has been sought and some people very clearly identify as disabled and want to be identified in this way and other people feel strongly that they are neurodiverse and not disabled. JC noted that we need to ensure the message made to staff and students is that whether you consider yourself to be disabled or not, support is available to you.
- 4.14 NE agreed and noted that we want to celebrate the diversity in our community and support is available to allow everyone to thrive.
- 4.15 Mary Pryor (MP) noted that the Student Learning Service (in CAD) has expertise in working with neuro-diverse students on academic skills.
- 4.16 TB noted that this is the most positive discussion of neurodiversity that he has heard at the University, and it is really appreciated.

***Actions: NE to provide LL's feedback to JC and CM
LM to provide feedback to JC and CM***

Reflections on Widening Access Internal Audit report

- 5.1 AJ introduced the internal audit report which was recently conducted by an external organisation. There were five findings which were classed as low risk. A number of areas of good practice were highlighted. AJ summarised the key findings and those that are relevant to the SSC.
- 5.2 In addition to the audit being undertaken, a review of widening access processes is being undertaken. Approval was recently granted for a widening access positioning paper reviewing the metrics that we have been using to look at widening access, with a view to broaden SIMD20 being a key metric, to using free school meals, which is much more applicable and appropriate for our local, regional challenges. We are in the early stages of developing our widening access strategy which is recognised in the audit report.
- 5.3 The key message in the first finding is that we are being asked to put a timeline to developing our strategy, which is being called "our vision", which sits under the Aberdeen 2040 strategy and is clearly interlinked with the strategy. It is hoped that a draft of the strategy will be produced over the next month. This will be circulated for feedback and comment. The governance of where the strategy will go is being considered and the SSC will receive updates on this work as it develops. It will also be

provided to the Access and Articulation Committee and the Student Recruitment Committee. AJ, SM and AB are all identified as acting on the strategy development.

- 5.4 The second low risk finding is in relation to linking in with our outcome agreement information. AB is not noted as acting on this point. Consideration is being given to the impact and evaluation of our activities. We are viewing this as the stage after the strategy development, focussing on action and implementation, and will link this in with the outcome agreement requirements.
- 5.5 The third finding is around data; there are significant data challenges around widening access data which impacts not just on the number of students coming in, but also on data such as retention and degree outcomes etc. There are areas flagged for various parts of the University to try to enhance our effective data collection.
- 5.6 The fourth finding is around updating the website and some paperwork; these actions have been completed.
- 5.7 The fifth finding is the most relevant to SSC; the actions sit with the VP for Education and the Director of Academic Services and Online Education and focuses on early withdrawals. The audit criteria covers widening access recruitment and the first few weeks of retention or non-continuation of students who enter the University. There are some actions in relation to this which have been started and are part of the ongoing discussion about data collection and analysis of the data around non-continuation. The hope is to expand the information to have more detail on widening access students and their progress.
- 5.8 There was a SFC publication released yesterday on national widening access data and this information will be circulated to committees in due course. The key headline to flag to SSC, is that the University of Aberdeen is second in Scotland for the retention of SIMD20 students from year 1 to year 2 and we are third for overall retention. The data is therefore looking very strong; this matches our own data and shows that we are performing very well nationally in our ability to retain students, and particularly to retain SIMD20 widening access students, which is a key metric used by the Scottish Government.
- 5.9 NE commented that it is great to see a report which highlights low risk findings and actions required.
- 5.10 AB noted that the SSC received recognition in the report for valuable discussion and challenge of the work around non-continuation and withdrawals.
- 5.11 ZY asked if the agenda of the review incorporates consideration to the accommodation of refugees and migrants as students within the University. AJ noted that refugee status and asylum seekers are considered under the contextualised admissions process. One of the challenges is that the University has targets for widening access in terms of SIMD20, care experienced entrants and articulation from college. The University takes our responsibility to be open to all very seriously and

we are including all the contextualised admissions criteria in our work but when it comes to the institution and how we are monitored externally, it is a much narrower criteria as detailed in the information identified as targets.

- 5.12 SM added that the outcome agreement was narrowed over the last 2 years to ensure that Universities could meet these and that the reporting of progress could be completed effectively due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The criteria were wider previously.

Code of Practice on Student Discipline

(copy filed as SSC/190522/005)

- 6.1 NE introduced the paper which provides an update on the work of the Code of Practice on Student Discipline TFG. The paper outlines the main comments received on the first draft which was shared in the March meeting of the SSC. NE provided comments in response to points raised in the SSC meeting, in the SSC MS Teams site.
- 6.2 One small amendment which will be made to the draft, is clarity on the link between the University's halls of residence and the accommodation contracts, and some of things that may be regarded as misconduct under the terms of our accommodation contract, for example, setting off a fire alarm in the halls of residence. Clarity will be provided to reflect that we may be able to deal with some situations without going through the formal conduct process. NE has been discussing this with Jacqui Tuckwell and her team and the information in the paper will be amended to reflect this.
- 6.3 The next steps for the work of the TFG will be to share the updated draft with members of the Senior Management Team, external members will be consulted, and the information will be shared with colleagues in Student Services including the Student Support Leads group at other institutions to allow for benchmarking. The code will then progress through the governance structure at the next available opportunity, and it will hopefully be considered for formal approval at Court shortly in the new academic year. NE asked Committee members for their input.
- 6.4 AB noted that in the Code there is helpful detail on who can be involved at the disciplinary level but there does not seem to be information about who can undertake the role of Case Manager and Investigator. NE highlighted that the appendix provides information about the level of staff who can undertake the role of an Investigator; the idea being that it is based on staff grade and the severity of the offence, but it could be any staff member both within the School environment and Professional Services. The key thing that will be offered going forward is training to those who are involved. These training opportunities may be advertised. The Case Manager role will be covered initially by the Directorate of People and will be an administrative role.

- 6.5 ZY asked if there was a clear policy around how we manage the long-term implications of the decisions made under the code, such as do we consider this when providing references for students? NE will reflect on this and will consider whether information around this specific situation can be included. This would be a complicated situation if the student was undergoing investigation and a reference request was received, prior to a formal outcome being reached. In most cases we would not reference a situation handled under the Code unless the student had been expelled from the University.
- 6.6 AJ noted that shadowing cases can be a useful approach to support training and NE noted that the support provided to the Investigating Officer team will be different to the way it is currently offered, to ensure that we achieve consistency in relation to decisions made. Similarly, those who are involved in a panel will be provided with the opportunity to observe a panel before they are present on a panel. The training and support for individuals involved in the process is being considered.
- 6.7 NE advised that members of the Committee were welcome to email him after the meeting with any further comments or questions.

Action: Members of the Committee to provide comments to NE

Degree Classifications report

(copy filed as SSC/190522/006)

- 7.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the Degree Classifications report. AB advised that the report has been considered at UEC, SMT and Senate. It sets out which students at UG level have achieved a good honours degree. It also sets out awarding gaps with considering protected characteristics such as race, gender, age, and disability; with a particular focus on the difference in degree classifications between white and BAME students, female and male students, UK and international students, mature and non-mature students, and disabled and non-disabled students. This ties into the work that AB and John Barrow are leading on in relation to an action plan for widening access; this will be defined widely and will consider race and mature students. The report will be kept under regular review. The data will be shared with Schools through the UEC. Further analysis will be carried out and there will be ongoing annual results. SSC will have a key role in the progression of this work. AB asked for members to reflect on this information and to provide comment.
- 7.2 NE asked for ideas from members of the Committee on what more the University can be doing in relation to this area. Members were asked to provide comment over the summer.
- 7.3 TB asked about the School breakdowns and whether the information is fully disaggregated and available. AB advised that the information has recently been published. AB advised that much of the information will be available in Power BI but

not all staff members have access to this. AB noted that she is confident that the information will be shared appropriately.

- 7.4 NE highlighted that the University has a significant amount of data available, which is not hidden, but it can be challenging to communicate the information effectively. NE noted that if staff feel it would be helpful to have data broken down at a local level, this can be highlighted to the SSC and can then be raised with the planning team. NE noted that it may already exist at a local level in Power BI.
- 7.5 AB suggested that a light summer work group could be convened to explore this area further.

Action: Members of the Committee to provide comments to NE/AB/Clerk

Non-continuation report

(copy filed as SSC/190522/007)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the non-continuation report. The predecessors of this report were the papers referred to in the widening access audit. The SSC has been lauded for our consideration of the papers. The SSC is asked to consider the report and discuss how to progress this work. This will be considered at UEC.
- 8.2 SSC will take responsibility to develop an overall action plan for the next academic year, identifying issues arising, current practice, additional actions, responsible persons, timelines, and measures for impact. A significant amount of informal work has already been undertaken in this area. There is a readmissions group, which is working informally and collaboratively to look at how we effectively support students who are withdrawing from their studies and how we can support them to return. There is potentially a gap in the decision-making process around how we permit students to return and the formal support available. This ultimately stretches into everything that we do to enable students to feel comfortable, to belong at the University, and to effectively engage with their studies. There is wider work noted in the audit paper in relation to the possibility of a cross University focus on the student journey, the particular vulnerabilities, the support offered, and the support that we may wish to enhance. More information will be provided to SSC as this progresses.
- 8.3 Of particular importance and priority for SSC is to consider specific groups of students, building on the widening access work that AB and John Barrow are leading, focussing on mature, race and widening access students. We should consider why students in these groups choose not to continue, why they are not achieving as well as they might, and if there are particular references to certain Schools with higher and lower non-continuation. SSC should consider what action should be taken in this area. AB noted that a working group should be established to focus on this area, to progress this vital work. AB asked members of the Committee for their thoughts and comments.

- 8.4 NE suggested that as a first step an oral update is provided to UEC in relation to the proposed subgroup and if the Committee agrees, SSC can undertake an in-depth review of this area. NE welcomes the way that the information is presented graphically; this helps to provide context. NE asked whether comparator data across the sector is available. There was discussion that this is potentially commercially sensitive and therefore it is not widely shared. AJ advised SFC published a report yesterday looking at retention rates across the country which was focussed on SIMD 20. The SFC publishes the institutional overall retention rates but only for Scottish students, however this may provide a comparator.
- 8.5 AB commented data is recorded for certain purposes by the University, such as for HESA and SFC, but we are also trying to record other forms data. A report from SSC may lead to the capturing of other forms of valuable data to evidence our recommendations.

Actions: Chairs to set up a working group to consider this area in more detail, including common themes and trends and where this interacts with different processes and policies. A report will then be provided to UEC at the start of the next Committee cycle in September.

An update will be provided to UEC on this discussion at the next meeting by AB and NE.

Committee members to contact AB/NE/LM to express an interest in participating in the working group.

Class Representative Review

(copy filed as SSC/190522/008)

- 9.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from OK on the Class Representative review. OK provided a phase one update to the SSC in a previous meeting. Following this discussion, a number of outstanding topics, recommendations and questions were highlighted. The review group have explored these areas with student and staff focus groups. Areas explored were around recruitment, role and purpose, communication, training, and development.
- 9.2 The review group has been speaking to students about their experiences of being a class representatives and how the system works overall. The feedback received highlighted issues with clarity of the role across the institution, whether the representatives are per course or per year; this has implications for the timing of elections and selection. This has also led to challenges around representatives having time to effectively gather feedback and carry out their duties. Difficulties were also highlighted in relation to accessing training and the level of usefulness of the training; recommendations have been made in relation to improving this. Students also mentioned that contacting their own classmates can be a barrier to obtaining effective feedback; this has been raised with staff and students to explore solutions.

- 9.3 The diversity of programmes and how these are delivered has posed challenges. The review group are still looking to provide recommendations on the system as a whole and they hope in many instances to only have one recommendation per area, but the group have recognised that there will likely be instances where they will be required to make two different recommendations and ask Schools to choose the recommendation which would work most effectively for their context. The hope is for Schools to achieve some consistency across the UG and PG programmes.
- 9.4 The aim is to implement changes in time for the new academic year; due to the current timeframes, it is not possible for one-to-one conversations to take place with all the Schools to explore what would work best for them and therefore it is likely that the review and the recommendations will be finalised in the first half session of the new academic year. The outcomes will therefore be implemented in the following academic year (2023/24). It is hoped this will provide Schools with ample time to prepare for the recommended changes. The next step is for AB and OK (or OK's successor) to speak with the Schools, to map out what would work in each Schools' context.
- 9.5 AB noted a point raised at the Global Accessibility Day in relation to class representatives highlighting accessibility and inclusion needs to the Course Coordinators; perhaps this area could be enhanced in the training offered to representatives. OK is developing a workshop for the Enhancement Theme conference focussing on issues of equity, which may progress this area.
- 9.6 No comments were received from members of the Committee.

NSS Response Rates

(copy filed as SSC/190522/009)

- 10.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB on the NSS Response Rates. AB noted that the paper provided was strictly confidential. The paper sets out where we are so far in relation to the NSS survey which has recently been completed. This is of key importance for the University and provides feedback from final year students. The University is keen to ensure that as many students as possible participate in the survey. The Student Experience Team and other colleagues have undertaken a great deal of work to encourage students to complete the survey. The final institutional response rate was 67.8% which is 3.25% higher than the previous years' response rate, which is positive.
- 10.2 Plans for encouraging participation in next years' NSS will be underway soon. This will be discussed at the NSS Steering Group and will be discussed at the SSC.
- 10.3 An important point to note is that the results of the survey will be published on 6th July 2022. Committee meetings for the NSS have been set for July to disseminate results and to start to consider responses in the short and longer term.

- 10.4 OK suggested that for the courses which have less than 15 students, whether it would be possible for them to be joined up with another course in the School, with similar numbers. With small numbers, the response rate needs to be very high (90-100%) for the feedback to be reported. These targets are unrealistic and will lead to valuable data being lost. AB advised that she would follow up on this with relevant colleagues.
- 10.5 Martin Barker (MB) noted that smaller numbers of students are not necessarily less representative. In any case, individual voices can give use useful insights.
- 10.6 AB advised that substantive work would take place over the summer reflecting on the results and how we respond to these. This will be considered at the SSC meeting scheduled for the start of the new academic year.

Actions: AB to follow up point 10.4 with relevant colleagues

School and Directorate ASES and NSS Actions

- 11.1 Prior to the meeting, members of the Committee were asked to provide reflections or key learnings from their School/Directorates from either surveys and to share any examples of good practice in the actions undertaken in response to the survey feedback, with the Committee.
- 11.2 DS highlighted the importance of this reflection to ensure that the survey is achieving what we require it to. The actions are communicated via the University website, which is essential; this is the point of undertaking the survey.
- 11.3 AB noted that there is a template which is being used by some Schools to respond to feedback received in the NSS which may be employed further in the new academic year for the ASES and NSS actions.
- 11.4 AB highlighted that in ASES there had been University wide feedback about the role of Personal Tutors and students being unclear about this. Through orientation, support for PTs and enhanced resources, the University has worked to ensure that everyone knows about the role of PTs. This has also informed the wider, pastoral review which is being undertaken. This is an ongoing journey. The feedback from the survey has provided a valuable prompt to address this issue.
- 11.5 Jemma Murdoch (JM) highlighted that there is work to be done in relation to Student Support regarding the questions asked in the surveys. One piece of feedback received was around appointment wait times which the team has reflected on; much of this will have been affected by resource issues and new resource has been approved for the Student Advice & Support Team; new Advisers have recently been employed, which will reduce waiting times for appointments. The team have also enhanced their duty advice service and cross training has taken so that all team members across the different specialisms within the team, can answer urgent questions from students so that they do not need to wait for an answer from a

specialist adviser in an appointment, thus reducing the waiting time for the query to be answered. Feedback was also received around the hardship application process and the team are in the process of developing an online application which will make the process much quicker and more straightforward for students and staff. The online application will also be more accessible. JM added that when reading through the survey comments, it is clear that students are not always sure of the services offered by Student Support and therefore it has been identified that work is required around clarity of what the team does, including online biographies for team members. A journey map is being considered to detail what students can expect when accessing support from the team. It seems that many students do not understand what happens when accessing support and who information is shared with. Clarity around the specialist services provided will be helpful.

- 11.6 ZY noted that the approval of appointing more colleagues as part of the Student Support team is extremely promising. He understands the pressure the team are under to deal with all cases.
- 11.7 Bryony Garford (BG) noted that she strongly agrees with the provision of more clarity for what to expect from Student Support. She is aware of many students who have not wanted to access support from various people because they do not know what they will do.
- 11.8 Lyn Batchelor (LB) thanked Student Support for the extraordinary things that have been done for and on behalf of students and staff. There have been some incidents which could not have been predicted on campus in Qatar and Student Support have moved quickly to support the students, even though they are in a different time zone and in a different legal jurisdiction. The students and their parents have been really impressed at the support provided, which has been invaluable. Although the community may not know what Student Support does, the team go out of their way to do what is needed. LB advised that she is delighted with the support offered by the team. Emma Richards (ER), Melanie Viney (MV) and ZY noted their agreement to LB's comments.
- 11.9 NE advised that he is keen to ensure that members of the Student Support team can visit the Qatar campus to meet with staff, so that they are able to manage situations locally in a more confident way. More clarity will be provided on the breadth of professional services available.
- 11.10 BG noted that she feels as though Student Support is the team who students seek support from as a last resort. She highlighted that it would be good to promote the pro-active support available to students throughout their studies. For many students BG has spoken with, the service feels like a lifeline rather than a service available to everyone. NE thanked BG for this feedback and noted that much like the term disability and some people identifying with this and some people not, some people identify student support as being available to assist in an emergency and not for more pro-active support. Now that the Team has additional resource, the hope is

that they can focus on providing more pro-active support that will prevent some of the emergency situations arising.

- 11.11 NE added that this discussion has been helpful, and we may revisit discussing feedback and actions at future SSC meetings. Members of the Committee are welcome to bring points forward to the Chairs and Clerk.

Application made for University of Aberdeen to become a University of Sanctuary
(copy filed as SSC/190522/010)

- 12.1 Members of the Committee were provided with information from AB in relation to the application made for the University to become a University of Sanctuary. The application has been submitted, which reflects a significant amount of work, and we are now awaiting feedback on the application. There is a central University of Sanctuary group who will consider the application. They have acknowledged receipt of the application. Once feedback has been provided, the group will visit the University to determine whether the work we are currently undertaking ensures that we are supporting individuals seeking sanctuary for whatever reason. This will require us to demonstrate that we have the needs of these individuals embedded in our work, including in our admissions, funding, and scholarships processes, and that we have a learning culture. The work that we do in relation to peer support and the approaches we take in teaching, such as the aim to decolonise the curriculum, have been noted in our application. The current offering of support in relation to the war in Ukraine and Afghanistan have been detailed in the application.
- 12.2 AB asked for questions or comments from members of the Committee. She noted that if anyone would like to become involved there are projects being undertaken to support people affected by war on a more social basis in the forthcoming weeks. The group are looking to set up a student-led STAR award. They have been in touch with all the Schools and are looking to meet with Directorates. If anyone would like to know more about the work being undertaken, please contact AB.
- 12.3 ZY noted that he thinks this is a great initiative from the University and he agrees that this is not merely about scholarships but that this should be one of the key areas for consideration. Many Universities in England and Scotland are offering fully funded scholarships to UG, PGT and PGR students. It would be good to ensure that this is strengthened at the University of Aberdeen.
- 12.4 ZY asked if the Admissions team at central and School levels, are aware of the work being undertaken as they are at the frontline making admissions decisions and receiving enquiries about the support available. ZY is aware of some situations in which he is not sure that the relevant colleagues were aware of the work. Awareness of this is of key importance.
- 12.5 AB confirmed that scholarships are available. Fine tuning is taking place on the information which will be added to the University website in relation to this. Two scholarships per year across the University at UG or PG will be available, which will

include a full fee waiver and funds for maintenance, but this needs to be considered in terms of benefits available to students and the impact a scholarship award may have on these payments. Consideration is also being given to other forms of funding available such as the University's discretionary fund. Accommodation for students and their family members may also be provided.

- 12.6 AB advised that the work was started by the UG Admissions Team working with the Development Trust who have funds available to support initiatives. International Admissions colleagues are now involved in the work being undertaken as individuals may still be out with the UK. Centrally at the Admissions level there is a significant awareness and a tremendous amount of expertise. One of the reasons the group are speaking with Schools is to raise awareness as queries can be received by anyone; it is therefore essential that all staff aware of the work being undertaken in this area and what is available. AB thanked ZY for his input.

AOCB

- 13.1 No items were raised by Members of the Committee.

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

- 14.1 NE thanked and agreed with TB for his comments received earlier in the meeting in relation to the positive discussion around neurodiversity. No other comments were received from SSC members.

Reflection on Aberdeen 2040 Updates on Operational Plan

- 15.1 NE noted that much of the work highlighted in the meeting today is factored into the discussion of the meetings with UEC which focus on Aberdeen 2040.

Reflection on SSC Task and Finish Groups

- 16.1 AB advised that the work of the Monitoring and Pastoral Review TFGs is ongoing, and the groups will meet again in the coming days with a view to provide information to Senate at the start of the new academic year, and then coming back for a more formal journey through the Committees. Anything that arises will be shared on the SSC MS Team.

Date of Next Meeting

- 17.1 The date of the next meeting of the Committee is Thursday 22nd September 2022 at 10am via MS Teams.