

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
POLICY UPDATE AND REVIEW 2022/23 – 2024/25

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to provide the University Education Committee (UEC) with an update on a plan for policy update and, where appropriate, review in academic years 2022/23 - 2024/25.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	-	-
Further consideration/ approval required by	Student Support Committee (SSC) Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee (EEC) Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	5 December 2022 6 December 2022 14 December 2022

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Members of the UEC are asked to **discuss** the approach being taken to policy update and review in academic years 2022/23 - 2024/25.

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Following previous updates to the University Education Committee (UEC) in regard to policy review, the purpose of this paper is to provide the UEC with an update on (i) progress in regard to work undertaken to date and (ii) with a plan for policy update and, where appropriate, review, in academic years 2022/23 - 2024/25.

4.2 WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

- 4.2.1 Work undertaken to date in regard to policy update and review has primarily reflected the University's response to the impact of Covid-19 and the required review of education policies in the context of (i) blended learning and (ii) a reversion to primarily on-campus teaching. Work undertaken, however, has also reflected responses to feedback from Schools, changes in regulatory guidance and work undertaken by Task and Finish Groups (TFGs). A series of education policies have been reviewed since last reporting, as summarised in *table 1* below:

TABLE 1 POLICY UPDATES TO DATE

Policy Area	Summary of Work
Monitoring & Review (Annual Review)	A paper, providing recommendations on Annual Course and Programme Review (AC/PR) processes was approved by the then University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) (and passed to the Senate for information) in August 2020. This paper included a series of recommendations to improve and streamline ACR and APR processes in 2020/21 and beyond. Following approval:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpages/documents were amended to reflect the agreed ACR and APR processes for 2020/21 and beyond; • Webpages/document were checked for accuracy (i.e., references to 'SCEF' replaced with 'Course Evaluation Form') • Any remaining references to 'in-class' etc. were replaced. <p>In December 2020, it was agreed that ACR/APR forms should be further revised, to include a question on Blended Learning, with the intention of understanding how courses and/or programmes were delivered and to ensure the context of course and programme evaluation was clear.</p>
Monitoring & Review (Periodic Review)	<p>A paper, providing an update on Internal Teaching Review (ITR) and seeking the approval of changes to ITR policy and procedure documents was considered and approved by the University Education Committee in August 2021. The changes proposed reflected a blended approach to ITR and reflected feedback from Schools, student and panelists following ITRs held during the impact of Covid-19 and a required online only approach to review.</p> <p>In August 2022, members of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and UEC approved further changes to ITR policy and procedure, amended to reflect a return to on-campus ITRs, where possible, from the commencement of the 2022/23 academic year.</p>
Assessment & Feedback	<p>A paper, providing an update on the position with regard Assessment and Feedback and requesting approval for revised Codes of Practice on Assessment was approved by the UEC in August 2021. This paper, and the work carried out following its approval, sought to clarify the position with regard each UG and PGT student cohort with regard degree outcome/classification, in light of the (phased) removal of the Grade Spectrum and policies associated with the initial impact of Covid-19.</p>
External Examining	<p>A holistic review of external examining administrative processes was concluded in January 2022. The review focused on the appropriateness of the External Examiner administrative processes throughout the University and made recommendations as to how these processes might be streamlined. Following the review, processes across University departments and resources for External Examiners have been significantly improved.</p>
Appeals and Complaints	<p>Following publication of a revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), the CHP was revised in April 2021.</p>
Student Discipline (Academic)	<p>A short paper, seeking minor typographical changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline and to confirm that Plagiarism in 'open-book' assessments can be heard by Schools was approved by the Senate on 25 August 2020. Further to this, in April 2022, further changes to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) and the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Plagiarism against Graduates of the University were approved. The changes made included the inclusion of specific reference to contract cheating.</p>

Fitness to Practise	In May 2022, changes to the Policy on Fitness to Practise and associated guidance notes, applicable to students' undertaking qualifications within the School of Education, were approved. Specifically, the addition of Counselling and Psychotherapy as disciplines in which students registered for a specified award are subject to 'Fitness to Practise' was approved.
Student Absence	An updated Student Absence policy (reversing the short-term actions approved during the initial impact of Covid-19) was considered and approved by the UEC in August 2021.

4.3 POLICY UPDATE GOING FORWARD (ACADEMIC YEARS 2022/23 – 2024/25)

4.3.1 Work remains ongoing to ensure the update and, where appropriate, review of education policies, as laid out in the [Academic Quality Handbook \(AQH\)](#), ensuring each is continually kept up to date (e.g., reflects current University structures) and remains fit for purpose. Led by the Academic Services team (from an administrative perspective), the Education Portfolio Deans, and other teams as appropriate, this work, which is substantive in nature, will continue to take place during academic years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 and include:

- (i) Reviewing each policy (and associated guidance/webpages) to ensure each remains up to date in terms of University structures and terminology/language use etc.;
- (ii) reviewing each policy to ensure each remains fit for purpose and in line with published guidance, sector standards and requirements, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education;
- (iii) considering the content and layout of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) (in which the majority of these policies are listed).
- (iv) undertaking work and utilising tools such as the University Toolkit to ensure the presentation and publicisation of University policy is appropriate to all stakeholders (i.e., staff, students and/or members of the public);
- (v) following the conclusion of initial review work (expected to conclude by the end of the 2024/25 AY) ensuring a timetable is in place for policy review going forward (i.e., review each policy every 2-years);
- (vi) the creation of a standard template for education policies and/or procedures;
- (vii) the publication of clear and transparent instructions on instigating changes to published policy and the required approval process for policies and/or procedures, depending on their nature.

4.3.2 To ensure this ongoing and in-depth consideration of policies and/or procedures, a timetable, to which the Academic Services team will work, has been developed and can be summarised for the forthcoming academic years in tables 2, 3 and 4 respectively below. Members of the Committee will note work ongoing for the immediate consideration of the University's Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals and Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), External Examining and Student Monitoring and Absence. This work is expected to conclude in 2023, with updates following to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) or UEC, in advance of progression to the Senate, as appropriate.

TABLE 2: ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23:

Category	Brief Summary
Student Discipline (Non-Academic)	A holistic review of <i>Student Discipline (Non-Academic)</i> policy and procedures, including the refinement of materials to improve readability and accessibility has been underway, led by a Task and Finish Group (TFG). The TFG has now concluded its work, and a report and associated revised Code of Practice on Student Discipline (non-academic) included on the agenda of the UEC on 10 October 2022 for approval and, if

	appropriate, for referral to the Senate for further approval.
Appeals and Complaints	The review of policies and administrative processes in regard to <i>Appeals and Complaints</i> is currently underway. This work is intended to review existing processes and procedures in light of School and student feedback. Work in this regard is expected to conclude (and to report to the QAC and/or UEC) <i>in January 2023</i> .
External Examining	Following a review of administrative processes in respect of External Examining, a TFG, led by a member of the QAC has been established to review the <i>academic elements</i> of External Examining policy and procedures. This work is underway and expected to report to the QAC and/or UEC in January or March 2023. The QAC and the UEC will be kept updated in this regard.
Student Monitoring	A holistic review of Student Monitoring and Student Absence processes has been underway, as part of work being led by the <i>Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG</i> . Work continues in this vein, particularly in regard to the development of IT solutions to support the vision of the TFG and future changes to student monitoring and engagement processes. In the meantime, however, work is in train to update web resources and student and staff communication in relation to Monitoring, Absence and Engagement to ensure that this operates effectively and supportively for staff and students. This includes the update of the Absence Policy and Monitoring guidance, to make clear approaches which should be taken to frontline appeals and the flexibility which is available in exercising discretion if a student has now reengaged with their studies/appears in a position to wish to do so. This work is underway, and a further update is expected to follow to Committee in January 2023.
Student Absence	
General	Work to review each policy contained within the AQH (and associated guidance/webpages) to ensure each is up to date in terms of University structures and terminology/language use etc. is underway. This work will ultimately include the re-development of the AQH and its presentation to all stakeholders. This work is not insurmountable in nature and will continue across academic years, with updates following to the QAC and/or UEC as appropriate.

TABLE 3: ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24:

Category	Brief Summary
General (all policy materials)	Ongoing work to review each policy contained within the AQH (and associated guidance/webpages) to ensure each is up to date in terms of University structures and terminology/language use etc. is underway. This work will ultimately include the re-development of the AQH and its presentation to all stakeholders. This work is not insurmountable in nature and will continue across academic years, will

	updates following to the University Committee structure as appropriate.
Assessment and Feedback	<p>A review of existing Assessment and Feedback policy and procedures to be undertaken, including the refinement of materials (such as the Codes of Practice on Assessment) to improve readability and accessibility. While many Assessment and Feedback policies and procedures (e.g., GPA procedures) have recently been reviewed, this work will include the identification of policy areas which require update. This may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for conduct of Examiners' meetings; • Feedback on Assessment; • Extensions.

TABLE 4: ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25:

Category	Brief Summary
General (all policy materials)	Ongoing work to review each policy contained within the AQH (and associated guidance/webpages) to ensure each is up to date in terms of University structures and terminology/language use etc. is underway. This work will ultimately include the re-development of the AQH and its presentation to all stakeholders. This work is not insurmountable in nature and will continue across academic years, will updates following to the QAC and/or UEC as appropriate.
Assessment and Feedback	In recognition of the volume of work which comprises a review of policy and procedures in regard to Assessment and Feedback, this may extend into 2024/25.
Student Discipline	A review of <i>Student Discipline (Academic)</i> policy and procedures, including the refinement of materials to improve readability and accessibility.
Fitness to Practise	A review of <i>Student Discipline (Academic)</i> policy and procedures, including the refinement of materials to improve readability and accessibility.
Learning and Teaching (Student Focused): Student Progress (UG, PGT and PGR)	Future review of policies and processes in regard to <i>Student Progress</i> .

- 4.4 Members of the QAC and/or UEC will be updated and engaged, as appropriate, on progress with the policy update and review project and any required revisions to the timetable. Members of the Committee will appreciate that work in regard to policy can be driven by external factors (e.g., required responses to regulatory guidance) and therefore, while it is hoped that review can take place in a timely manner, changes may be required to ensure the review or development of other policies as required of the University.
- 4.5 Finally, members of the UEC will be aware that the timetable above does is not exhaustive in listing every education policy or policy area. While work to update each section of, and each policy contained within, the AQH, in the context of University structures and terminology/language use etc. will be undertaken, in-depth reviews of policy have been identified for high-priority areas only. Following the conclusion of the 2024/25 academic year a review of this work will be undertaken, with close adherence to those policies which have not been further considered and the appropriateness of scheduling their imminent review.

4.6 Members of the Committee are invited to **discuss** and **comment** on the update provided.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) (r.taylor@abdn.ac.uk), or Emma Tough, Assistant Registrar (e.tough@abdn.ac.uk).

3 October 2022

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open