

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**REPORT FROM THE STUDENT SUPPORT & EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
22ND SEPTEMBER 2022**

- 1. Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 23 August 2022**
 - 1.1:** Minutes approved
 - 1.2:** No outstanding actions

- 2. Updated SSEC remit and composition**

2.1: Nick Edwards (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. **[Note: the remit reflects changes from Senate and some other points which are marked differently in the draft.]** No comments or questions were received from members of the Committee.

- 3. Code of Practice on Student Discipline – TFG Update**

3.1: 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 and also 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 documents will be shared with SSEC once ready.

3.2: 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.

- 4. Progression, Attainment, and Employability Action Plan: Priority groups and wider student population**

4.1: Abbe Brown (AB) introduced the paper and Appendix which builds on the papers submitted to this group previously, looking at degree classification, student continuation and withdrawal and explores data. 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 is set out in the Appendix This had a focus on particular groups of concern, such as widening access students, mature students and BAME students.

4.2: The paper, drawing on the Appendix, has three sets of priorities were suggested for the three student groups: degree classification, employability, and continuation. These groups 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 is an Annex to the paper, 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, the paper notes that when this committee had previously looked at continuation data in June and July, we felt there was a need to focus on some other groups, particularly disabled students.

4.3: The aim of this paper is to bring all those strands together in one place. It sets out some suggested institutional priorities, sitting alongside the ongoing detailed work which is set out in the Appendix. It is also suggested that each school will produce an action plan, based on the templates used for the NSS action plans, exploring steps at School level to address degree classification and continuation and this will be discussed at the December meeting of the committee. There will also be a regular Community of Practice which draws together several existing groups (Retention Taskforce/Resilience Learning Communities, Readmission Support Group, Continuation Group) to share and enhance practice in a supportive and efficient manner. The employability side will be discussed at the Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee. The committee supported this.

5. Graduate Attributes and Skills

5.1: John Barrow (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.

5.2: There was a review of the enhanced transcript alongside graduate attributes and skills, and this considers whether it could be more embedded in our practice. Going forwards, these two pieces of work will be looked at under the Employment and Entrepreneurship Committee. This will now be called 'skills development' as often 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.

5.3: JB said the other side of this is how students evidence their activities as we look at the enhanced transcript. It is hoped to create a system which allows students to capture all their activity as they do it, meaning 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. JB added the work is in its very early stages and will involve a lot of stakeholder opinions going forward.

6. NSS Action Plans

6.1: AB advised that NSS Action Plans will be a bigger agenda item at the December SSEC meeting. For now, School Action Plans responding to NSS 2022 which have been shared are now on a channel on the Committee Teams site so all members can have access and share best practice.

6.2: At institutional level, AB noted work would continue in areas like the learning community, however the focus on the side would be assessment and feedback, led by Kirsty Kiezebrink Dean for Educational Innovation

6.3: Invites are to be extended to other School colleagues who wish to join the discussion on NSS Action Plans at the December SSEC meeting.

7. Reflection on SSEC Task and Finish Groups

7.1: 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 and there was support for PGT, but also concern for the workload implications. The TFG will look at how support can be provided in a manageable way with current resources. On the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement paper, the feedback received was very positive in relation to short- and medium-term activity and there was support for the name change. For the longer term, the availability of resource was raised again. This will be considered further.

8. Inclusion FAQs and Guidelines for Supporting Disabled Postgraduate Researchers

8.1: NE explained that the document provided was an updated version of Inclusion FAQs, and there are new Guidelines for supporting disabled postgraduate researchers.

8.2: Lesley Muirhead 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 is taking it there.

9. Action required

10. Further information

10.1: Further information may be obtained from Abbe Brown, Co-Chair, (abbe.brown@abdn.ac.uk), Nick Edwards, Co-Chair, (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk) or Stevie Kearney, Clerk, (steven.kearney@abdn.ac.uk).