1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to provide the University Education Committee (UEC) with an update on international student exchange and other international mobility-related activities for January 2022.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board/Committee</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously considered / approved by</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further consideration / approval required by</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Members of the UEC are asked to note the paper and provide feedback, where relevant.

4. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY – DEFINITIONS

4.1 As background, definitions of the different terminology used throughout the paper can be found in appendix 1.

5. INBOUND STUDENT MOBILITY – SECOND HALF SESSION 2021/22

5.1 The pandemic has had a significant impact on the number of students willing to undertake cross-border travel. While inbound mobility from outside of Europe was severely hampered by travel restrictions in 2020/21, we have seen sufficient easing in 2021/22 for offer numbers to return broadly to pre-pandemic levels for the second half-session. While we have yet to see the full impact of the new Omicron variant, we are anticipating that the conversion rate from offer to enrolment is closer to the average 95%, which was the expected conversion rate prior to the pandemic (it was 90% in September 2021 and 69% in January 2021).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Half-Session Offers by mobility programme</th>
<th>2019/20*</th>
<th>2020/21*</th>
<th>2021/22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erasmus/Swiss Exchange</td>
<td>61 (60)</td>
<td>84 (60)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Exchange</td>
<td>70 (66)</td>
<td>31 (8)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>39 (38)</td>
<td>28 (18)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>170 (164)</td>
<td>143 (86)</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Actual enrolments shown in brackets

5.2 Changes to immigration requirements for EU students, introduced in January 2021, have not had a significant impact on second half-session numbers. This is likely because single semester students can enter the UK as a visitor, unlike full-year students who now must pay for a student visa (plus NHS surcharge) at a cost of approx. £1,000. For now, these costs can be offset with Erasmus funding, but from 2023/24 inbound students will no longer have wholesale access to Erasmus funding for the UK. A drop in full-year student numbers could have two possible knock-on effects: an overall reduction in places for outbound students if certain partnerships are scaled back or no longer viable, given that our exchange arrangements are reciprocal and there is a
need to maintain a balance between incoming and outgoing student mobility; an increase in first half-session demand, which is already heavily skewed due to European term dates, i.e. our second half-session dates overlap with first semester assessment periods in many European countries, ruling out inbound mobility for many during this period. This latter outcome will also mean high demand for accommodation in first half-session and under-capacity in second half-session.

5.3 Applications for inbound first half-session are normally received between March and July, ahead of study in the September. A further update can be provided to the committee after that point.

6. **OUTBOUND STUDENT MOBILITY FOR 2022/23**

6.1 For 2022/23, we will have two funding streams open to outbound students. We have around £650K of remaining Erasmus funding to cover eligible European mobility until May 2023 and we plan to apply for Turing funding for 2022/23 when funding applications open, following our successful initial application in 2021/22. Erasmus funding can only be used where there is an existing bilateral agreement between University of Aberdeen and an institution in an Erasmus Programme country (essentially EU/EEA plus North Macedonia and Turkey). Turing funding can be used globally and therefore is a useful source of funding for International Exchange students for 2022/23 while we run both programmes concurrently. When we lose access to Erasmus funding from May 2023, Turing funding will be of greater importance going forward, as we look utilise Turing funding for European as well as non-European mobility. It is not yet clear whether we will be allocated sufficient Turing funding to meet this demand, and therefore decisions may have to be made as to which student groups are prioritised for access to funding. It is important to note that, unlike Erasmus, Turing funding only supports outbound mobility.

6.2 Access to funding is a key driver of demand, though we foresee this being dampened for 2022/23 by the ongoing impacts of the pandemic around travel restrictions and overall uncertainty.

6.3 The Go Abroad Fair, which takes place annually in November, is a key event to promote outbound mobility and the opportunities the University offers to study at one of our international partners as part of a degree programme. Given the continued restrictions on large-scale in-person events, the Go Abroad Fair was held online for the second consecutive year, in November 2021. The online fair has seen lower sign-ups and attendance than our usual in-person event, however we did see higher attendance and engagement in 2021 compared to the 2020 event. Our Go Abroad Mailing List currently has 622 sign-ups, which has largely been achieved through promotional efforts for the fair, including increased and improved social media activity. We have introduced new software for our monthly newsletters, which allows us to track interaction levels. Our unique open rate is around 30%, which shows a good level of interest in Go Abroad opportunities for 2022/23.

6.4 We will open applications for our study exchange programmes between the 17th and 28th January. For the first time, we are combining both Erasmus and International Exchange into one online form, so that students can select their top preferences across both programmes without the need to complete a second application (with the exception of Joint Languages and Translation & Interpreting students going to more than one destination). Applications will be reviewed and approved by Go Abroad tutors for each academic discipline before the Go Abroad team allocates students to the available exchange places. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application by early March. A further update can be provided to the Committee after this point.

7 **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Louisa Stratton (Go Abroad Manager) (l.stratton@abdn.ac.uk)

7 January 2022

*Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open*
Appendix 1: Student Mobility Definitions

Erasmus+
Direction/Geographical coverage – Outbound/Inbound within Europe
Finance – Reciprocal tuition fee waiver/External funding towards subsistence (via Erasmus+)
Duration – Full year/First half-session/Second half-session/Summer/Graduate
Type – Study (both directions)/Traineeship (outbound only)

Swiss Exchange
Direction/Geographical coverage – Outbound/Inbound with Switzerland
Finance – Reciprocal tuition fee waiver /External funding towards subsistence (via Swiss European Mobility Programme
Duration – Full year/First half-session/Second half-session
Type – Study

International Exchange
Direction/Geographical coverage – Outbound/Inbound outside Europe
Finance – Reciprocal tuition fee waiver /External funding towards subsistence (via Turing)
Duration – Full year/First half-session/Second half-session
Type – Study

Study Abroad
Direction/Geographical coverage – Inbound only/No geographical restriction
Finance – Fee-paying/No external funding
Duration – Full year/First half-session/Second half-session
Type – Study