This Section of the Academic Quality Handbook should be of general interest to all students, and of particular interest to staff involved in the provision of support to students.

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5.1 Student Life

5.1.1 The Directorate of Student Life aims to provide appropriate services to students which will support their physical, psychological, emotional and professional needs throughout their University life, thus optimising their student experience and enabling them to realise their full potential. The Directorate consists: Careers Service, Campus Services, The Chaplaincy, The Infohub, The Sport & Exercise Team, Student Recruitment and Admissions (including the International Office) and Student Support. These distinct areas were brought together under the umbrella of Student Life in September 2013 to enhance, through mutual support and in collaboration with the Students’ Association, the provision already in place.

5.2 Student Support

5.2.1 The University recognises that a well-developed system of student support is vital to students' ability to gain the best from their studies. A comprehensive range of student support services is provided, brief details of which are given below. The University’s home Web pages carry up-to-date information at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/advice.php.

5.2.2 The Head of Student Support acts as line-manager for a range of support services, including: University Counselling Service, the Student Advice and Support Office and the Community Liaison Officer who, with a team of Student Resident Assistants, provides support for students in University-managed accommodation. The Student Advice and Support Office include the Student Support Advisers, International Student Advisers and Disability Advisers.

5.2.3 Student Support staff liaise with members of the academic staff, with office-bearers of the Students’ Association and with representatives of relevant outside organisations. Student complaints on non-academic matters are received by the Head of Student Support.

5.2.4 Feedback from the student body regarding the University's support services is obtained via the student representatives on the Student Experience Committee. Individual service areas conduct surveys of users’ views and aspects of Student Support are included in the Student Barometer and International Student Barometer surveys.

5.2.5 Guidance for students who become pregnant or adopt children, and for their partners during their studies is available from Appendix 5.10.

5.3 Academic and Personal Support

5.3.1 The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees remits include responsibility for the maintenance of an appropriate system of student academic and personal support for their respective cohorts.

5.4 Undergraduate Students

Regents

5.4.1 In Medicine, a Regent system operates to provide non-academic support for undergraduate medical students. A job description for the role of Regent is available from the College of Life Sciences & Medicine Office.
Personal Tutors

5.4.2 In September 2013, the University introduced a system of Personal Tutors for all undergraduate students. The Personal Tutor system provides general support to students in matters such as achievement of the Graduate Attributes, Employability, Co-curricular opportunities and feedback as well as a pastoral support role. All members of academic staff undertake a role as a personal tutor. Further information about the Personal Tutor Scheme is available at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support/personal-tutors.php

5.5 Supervisors of Postgraduate Students

5.5.1 Since most postgraduate students are based predominantly in a single School, all postgraduate students, whether they are following a taught programme of study or are registered for a research degree, are assigned a supervisor by their parent School, who is responsible for providing guidance and learner support. Further details are provided in Section 8.

5.6 Codes of Practice

5.6.1 The responsibilities of the teaching staff, Heads of School, and supervisors of research students, and also the responsibilities of students, are outlined in three Codes of Practice which are appended:–

Appendix 5.2:  Code of Practice on Undergraduate Teaching
Appendix 5.3:  Code of Practice: Postgraduate Taught Students
Appendix 5.4:  Code of Practice: Postgraduate Research Students

5.7 Communication with Students

5.7.1 Students receive a University e-mail account as part of the University’s e-registration process. Students are advised, on admission, that the University will normally use e-mail to communicate during term-time. They are informed that it is their responsibility to check their e-mail on a regular basis and to ensure regular housekeeping of their e-mail inbox. Students are informed that failure to check their e-mail or failure to receive e-mail due to being over quota or due to non-delivery of an e-mail forwarded to a non-University e-mail account will not be accepted as a ground for appeal (see section 5.23).

5.7.2 When students complete e-registration, they also gain access to their Student Portal. This enables them to:

- access their academic record including course enrolments, qualifications and prizes
- update their personal details (including address details)
- see details of their Teaching and Examination Timetables
- access their examination results
- apply for August re-assessments (resits)
- see details of books they have on loan from the Library
- view their Finance account with the University
- read important messages relayed to them via the Message Board
5.8 Support for Students in University-managed Accommodation

5.8.1 Starting University is an exciting experience, meeting new people, new friends, and the first taste of living independently. The University has around 2,300 spaces to offer first-time students including both under and postgraduate study. There is a wide range of accommodation available including self-catered and catered; both options have shared and ensuite facilities on offer. The University guarantees accommodation for all first time students whose applications are received by the published closing date.

5.8.2 All students in University-managed properties have access to a team of Student Resident Assistants, which is managed by the Community Liaison Officer. The Student Resident Assistants are trained on issues such as conflict resolution, health and safety, drugs awareness and mental health issues. They offer initial support to residents on a variety of issues and can point students in the direction of appropriate professional help. They organise events on site to help residents settle into University life and foster a sense of community. They also deal with discipline and can help residents resolve flat and other interpersonal disputes.

5.8.3 Further details of student accommodation is available at www.abdn.ac.uk/accommodation

5.9 The Students' Association (AUSA)

5.9.1 The student voice is an important element in developing our welfare services and the Students’ Association makes a vital contribution to policy and practice in this area. Altogether there are six sabbatical officers: Students are given leave from their studies to look after students’ interests or, more commonly, take up office after graduation. The Students’ Association will act on any student's behalf on academic matters such as academic appeals, complaints and discipline, and may accompany students to disciplinary appeal hearings if asked. Further details on the activity of the Students’ Association can be accessed via their Web pages (www.ausa.org.uk).

5.9.2 Under the terms of the Education Act 1994, students may exercise the right not to be a member of the Students’ Association as set out in paragraph 22(2)(c) of the Act (see Appendix 5.24). Students wishing to exercise this right should contact the Deputy Academic Registrar (Student Information Systems) for further information.

5.10 Student Advice and Support Office

5.10.1 The Student Advice and Support Office provides free, confidential and independent advice to the student body. The General Student Support Advisers cover problems with loans, finance, housing, legal issues, University procedures, benefits, personal problems etc. The Disability Advisers cover physical and mobility difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, medical conditions, specific learning differences, e.g. dyslexia, mental illness, individuals on the autistic spectrum. The Disability Advisers also provide guidance to those students who are eligible for the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA). The International Student Advisers have a wealth of experience and are trained to provide advice on immigration issues, in particular Tier 4 visa extensions and queries regarding dependents. They will refer students to external resources for guidance which is outside their areas of expertise. The HOST UK scheme for international students at the University is administered by the International Advisers.
### 5.11 School Conveners, Postgraduate Conveners and Class Representatives

#### 5.1.1
The University operates a system of *Class Representatives*, which is co-ordinated by the AUSA. They are nominated by the students, and generally one class representative is identified for each course at undergraduate level and at least one for each programme at postgraduate level.

#### 5.11.2
Class representatives are the main point of contact between the student body and the academic staff with respect to a particular course, and will be members of the relevant School Staff-Student Liaison Committee. Training for class representatives is provided by the Students’ Association in liaison with the national Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS) service.

#### 5.11.3
The Students’ Association Education Committee comprises undergraduate School Conveners and Postgraduate Conveners who acts as a conduit between class representatives and the Students’ Association. They also represent the student body at Senate.

### 5.12 Disabled Students

#### 5.12.1
The University welcomes disabled students, including students with long term medical conditions and specific learning differences, and is committed to improving access to its courses, facilities, buildings and social life. It is University policy to consider applications from disabled students on the same grounds as apply to all candidates. The University’s Disabilities Advisers are located on the second floor of the Students’ Union Building.

#### 5.12.2
It is also policy to take specific disabilities, including specific learning differences, into account when making arrangements for teaching and learning, and the assessment of a student’s performance. The onus is on a student to notify the University of their requirements, at the earliest opportunity. Each School has a School Disability Co-ordinator, who ensures that the requirements of disabled students are met within the School.

#### 5.12.3
Details on arrangements for disabled students can be found in the *Undergraduate and Postgraduate Prospectuses*, and in the University’s *Information for disabled students and those with specific learning difficulties and medical conditions* (Appendix 5.5), which takes account of the requirements of the Equalities Act. Prospective students are welcome to contact a Disability Adviser at any time for informal discussion.

#### 5.12.4
The following documents have been produced to assist disabled students and those responsible for admissions and examination arrangements:

- **Appendix 5.5:** *Information for Disabled Students and those with Specific Learning Differences and Medical Conditions*
- **Appendix 5.6:** *Policy on permitting disabled students to tape-record lectures*
- **Appendix 5.7:** *Flow Chart on procedures for disabled students*
- **Appendix 5.8:** *Procedures for Disabled Students*
- **Appendix 5.9:** *Recommendations Concerning Students with Dyslexia*

#### 5.12.5
Examination arrangements for disabled candidates are summarised in [Section 7](#).
5.13 University Sport and Exercise Team

5.13.1 The University’s Sport and Exercise Team consists of highly qualified and experienced staff, including sports scientists and physical education teachers who provide excellent sporting and health & fitness-related services for students. The team provides first-class delivery of exercise classes, from Pilates through to specialist sports conditioning, for all levels of participant. The team also boasts a diverse range of sporting expertise, including Strength and Conditioning (coaching for the Scottish and local area Institutes of Sport), extensive experience in coaching a variety of sports from recreational to elite level, and delivery within the sports related degree programmes. The team also works closely with student sports clubs and the AUSA’s Sports Union.

5.13.2 Aberdeen Sports Village and Aquatics Centre is our flagship sports facility, delivered in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and supported by sportscotland. These first-class sports facilities, backed up with an array of excellent services, provide the ideal venue for a range of activities, available to all students, at all levels.

5.13.4 Other available facilities currently include the King’s Playing Fields. The attractive outdoor playing fields boast two rugby pitches, a lacrosse pitch, an artificial cricket wicket, as well as a single tennis court and three additional courts which double as a floodlit training area during winter: Balgownie Playing Fields (situated two miles from the King’s campus in the Bridge of Don) play host to football and shinty teams, providing extensive pitches and changing rooms: Hillhead Centre (situated appropriate one mile from King’s Campus next to Hillhead Halls of Residence) has an exclusive stadium grass football pitch, full-sized sand-dressed synthetic pitch and an impressive sports pavilion: Boathouse on the banks of the River Dee which serves the thriving rowing club: Climbing bothy in Royal Deeside.

5.14 The Rocking Horse Nursery

5.14.1 The aim of the Rocking Horse Nursery is to provide nursery facilities for the children of staff and students. It operates on a non-profit, cost-covering basis. There are currently 47 full and part-time places for children aged 0-5 and places are split approximately half and half between the children of staff and students. The Nursery is supervised by professional, qualified staff, who report to a Board of Trustees which includes within its membership the President of the Students’ Association. The Nursery’s telephone extension is 3400.

5.15 The Chaplaincy

5.15.1 The University Chaplaincy Centre, located at 25 High Street, serves people of all faiths and none. The Chaplain and Assistant Chaplains are committed to serving the whole University community, irrespective of individual religious outlook. They are available to meet with students experiencing difficulties or to visit students who have been admitted to hospital. Hospitality, community, and inter-faith dialogue are actively encouraged. The Chaplaincy coordinates a café in Hillhead Halls of Residence, offers room bookings for student groups and can provide information about local and national faith communities. There are Honorary Chaplains of different denominations and staff faith representatives from various faiths appointed to serve the interests of our students. The University’s ancient Chapel is at the heart of the campus and, during term time, various services and concerts are held. Prayer rooms are provided for Muslim students on both the King’s and Foresterhill sites and a
Mosque is located near King’s College on the Spital. The Catholic Diocese supports RC students from its Chaplaincy on the High Street.

5.15.2 In November 2013 the Senate approved a ‘Policy and Guidance on Religion and Belief for Students’ in response to the increasingly diverse student population. The policy is an important reference point on matters arising for staff and students. The policy, as approved by the Senate, is available as Appendix 5.1.

5.16 **The University Counselling Service**

5.16.1 The Counselling Service provides counselling for students and runs workshops on topics such as Assertiveness, Relaxation, and Coping with Exams, which are free and open to any student.

5.17 **Careers Service**

5.17.1 The Careers Service is located on the 2nd floor of the Students’ Union in Elphinstone Road (extension 3601) and provides a wide range of services to under- and postgraduates, graduates, prospective students, staff, employers and the academic community.

5.17.2 The Careers Service supports students and graduates in exploring their options through careers education, information and guidance services.

- Guidance services can be accessed through short duty interactions, longer guidance appointments and an online Virtual Adviser service. Queries can range from discussions about career planning or postgraduate study options to practical help with applications and interviews.

- Access to a wide range of resources to inform students’ and graduates’ career choices is provided through our library in the Hub and a comprehensive and searchable Virtual Library with links to over 2500 resources.

- In addition to the Careers Service’s own 15-credit level II course ED2550 – Find Your Direction, careers staff contribute to many other credit-bearing courses as well as delivering workshops and talks through academic disciplines. A suite of zero-credit Professional Skills courses are also available via MyAberdeen. Successful completion of the Professional Skills course PD1001 is recognised on the graduate transcript.

5.17.3 The Service is involved in a wide range of co-curricular initiatives which help students to develop their skills and Aberdeen Graduate Attributes. Many of these co-curricular achievements are also recognised on the graduate transcript.

- The STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award offers students recognition for their contribution to activities such as Students’ Association club and society roles or involvement as Careers Subject Representatives.

- The Career Mentoring Programme supports students in developing their careers ideas by matching them with professionals who are willing to share their experience and expertise.
• Support for work placements is available, including the award-winning Aberdeen Internship, and the BP Student Tutoring Scheme which places students in local primary and secondary schools.

• The Careers Service contributes to and promotes opportunities which allow students to become involved in enterprise and entrepreneurship, particularly through organisations such as the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) and the Aberdeen Business Enterprise Society (ABES).

5.17.4 The Careers Service enables students to connect with employers from a wide range of sectors through:

• Organising a wide range of events such as fairs and employer presentations.

• Posting the latest graduate jobs, placements and internships on our website.

• Facilitating employer-led skills workshops which can range from advice on applications to developing commercial awareness.

5.17.5 The Careers Service works closely with the academic community. In particular, the Careers Service is represented on and provides information, for example on the Destinations of Leavers, to the Programme Advisory Boards (or equivalent employer liaison groups). Careers Advisers also liaise closely with academic colleagues to be able to provide the best possible support to students in specific academic disciplines and, more widely, through providing support and appropriate information to Personal Tutors.

5.17.6 Maintaining excellent relationships with a wide range of employers of all sizes and from many different sectors underpins and informs the work of the Careers Service. In addition to providing advice on the recruitment of our students and graduates and advertising vacancies, the Service also seeks employer opinions and encourages involvement through the Careers Service Employer Board, to which all Programme Advisory Boards and other employer liaison groups report, and through various Careers Service activities such as the STAR Award and Career Mentoring Programme.

5.18 The Infohub

5.18.1 The Infohub is the first point of call for all student services, information and enquiries. The Infohub is staffed by a team of friendly and experienced individuals who will make every effort to answer your questions. As well as providing information on most student related issues, the Infohub staff can check your registration status, prepare student letters, including bank and council tax letters, provide directions, issue ID cards, and set up payment plans for tuition and accommodation as well as taking payments. Students can also get information on IT support, accommodation, personal tutoring and peer mentoring as well as access to Registry Officers. All these services are located on the ground floor of The Students’ Union building.

5.19 The Registry

5.19.1 The Registry is in day-to-day contact with students and provides a range of advice and information in regard to student loans and tuition fees, financial assistance, progress, examinations, awards and degree regulations, graduation and appeals procedures.
5.19.2 Details of various aspects of student academic administration undertaken by the Registry are
provided in Section 6, Section 7, Section 8. The main responsibilities of the Section’s various
offices are summarised in Section 11. Further details of the services and facilities can be

5.20 Student Learning Service

5.20.1 The Student Learning Service (SLS) works with students at all levels of undergraduate and
postgraduate study to enhance their learning strategies. Specialist Advisers in Dyslexia and
other learning differences, maths and academic writing are available. The SLS offers
workshops, individual study advice sessions and tailored in-course workshops in collaboration
with academic staff. Topics include: academic writing, critical thinking, presentation skills, and
time-management and exam preparation. The SLS also offers a range of online study
resources for students.

5.21 English Language Support

5.21.1 All non-native English-speaking students are welcome to consult a member of the English
Language team in the Language Centre. English language-related enquiries are also welcome
from members of the academic and administrative staff.

5.21.2 Courses/workshops/tutorials are run throughout the academic year on academic writing and
communication skills.

5.21.3 A level 2 module (15 credits) “English as an International Language: Communication Skills for
Study and Professional Development” is offered in the first semester for undergraduate
students whose first language is not English and aims to develop communicative ability in line
with ALTE level 4 (competent user). The minimum entry level is the equivalent of IELTS 6.00.

5.21.4 In addition, the Language Centre offers a range of classes including IELTS preparation classes
and general English programmes.

5.22 Information Technology and Library

5.22.1 IT Services is responsible for the provision of information and communication services within
the University.

5.22.2 The Directorate of Library Special Collections and Museums is responsible for the provision of
Library services within the University.

5.22.3 Further information on the services are detailed in Section 11, which includes details of the
various Help and Information desks, as well as who to contact concerning the services offered.

5.23 Appeals/Complaints/Student Discipline

5.23.1 Full details on students’ progress and academic appeals, and complaints and student discipline
are provided in Section 6 [sub-sections 6.13 and 6.14, respectively]. The following appendices
refer:-
5.24 Making Your Opinions Known (including non-academic complaints)

5.24.1 Universities cherish freedom of speech and the responsible expression of all opinions. There are many formal and informal channels of communication within the University through which students can make their views known to academic staff and to the University authorities. AUSA represents the interests of students on University decision-making bodies, and will advise individuals how best to make their views heard if informal approaches seem not to have worked. Students also elect the Rector every three years. He or she holds one of the most senior positions in the University, chairs the University Court, and has a special responsibility to look after student interests. The Rector or his/her Assessor (representative) can be contacted through the Students’ Association. Regular surgeries are normally held during term-time.

5.24.2 The University recognises that there may be occasions when a student, graduate, applicant or member of the public feels that the level of service or treatment they have received from the University falls short of what might be reasonably expected. The University’s Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) reflects the University’s commitment to valuing complaints. The University’s aim is to resolve issues of dissatisfaction as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to conduct thorough and fair investigations of complaints so that, where appropriate, evidence-based decisions on the facts of each individual case can be made.