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Dear External Examiner,

As we progress towards the conclusion of the 2024/2025 academic year, I am writing once again to thank you for all the work you have done for the University over the past year and the support and advice which you offer colleagues in Schools. Your contribution enables us to reflect on our curriculum and assessment practices, and to look at ways of enhancing our activities across the University.

Assessment policy rewrite

Last year, I informed you that work was underway to review and rationalise our assessment policies. This work has now been completed, and 22 policies and guidance papers have been synthesized into three documents. These comprise an Assessment and Feedback Policy, a Quality Assurance for Assessment Policy and a set of Exam Rules. Our policy rewrite did not alter many of our existing rules but focused on presenting the University's existing rules more efficiently and effectively.

Various changes to policies to further support our students

This past semester we have actioned a set of important updates to a range of student support policies, with a particular focus on academic adjustments for disabled students. Five key documents have been revised - the Academic Adjustments for Disabled Students Policy, the associated staff and student Guidance for this policy, the Academic Alerts Policy and the Student Absence Policy. These updates aim to further align our approach with best practice in the Sector and reflect the current operations of our Disability Team at Student Services. Key policy improvements include the use of more accessible and inclusive language and practice, the removal of outdated roles and references, the elimination of the requirement for medical evidence to implement reasonable adjustments, and clearer and more detailed guidance for both students and staff, particularly on areas where colleagues requested clarification. These changes are a positive step to ensure that our policies not only meet legal standards but also continue to meaningfully support our students.

Policy enhancements

Other significant policy drafts throughout academic session 2024-2025 included the development of a pre-recorded materials policy, and the creation of a new Religious Observance (Students) policy.

Pre-recorded Materials policy (for designated online programmes only)

This policy was developed to support new online, flexible programmes using high-quality pre-recorded materials for the provision of online teaching. The existing Use of Captured Content policy did not apply to pre-recorded materials therefore a new policy was needed to account for the distinct considerations for this type of provision. The resultant Pre-recorded Materials policy addresses access, use, retention, re-use, and ownership of such materials, ensuring continuity of education for online students and clarifying staff responsibilities.

Religious Observance policy

The new Religious Observance policy was developed to outline the University's position on accommodations for religious observance. A working group addressed stakeholder interests, including Equality, Diversity, and Faith considerations. The policy details processes for declarations, records, and requests for accommodations, aiming to minimise disruption to academic obligations. Updates to the Student Absence Policy and Extenuating Circumstances policy will be necessary to complement this policy. This policy is going through final committee approvals and should be implemented for the coming academic session 2025-2026.

Strategic enhancements

Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)

The SPA was refreshed for the 2024-2025 academic session, covering a three-year period. It aligns with the University strategy, the Students' Association strategic plan, and Sabbatical Officers' manifestos. The SPA sets clear priorities and actions for each academic year, with updated processes and reporting lines.

Employability Strategy

A new university-wide Employability Strategy is being circulated. To ensure that the approach to employability is fully integrated within the Education Strategy, the new Employability Strategy highlights five high-level principles, identifies key objectives, and proposes next steps to deliver an improved employability offering within a three-year window.

MEQs (Module Evaluation Questionnaires)

Following a recommendation of the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and a prolonged period of low response rates from students, we conducted a review of our MEQs, which resulted in developing a new approach and the procurement of a new system (Explorance).

Key features of the new approach are:

- Change in nomenclature from Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) to Module Feedback Questionnaires (MFQs) to more accurately reflect the purpose of these surveys.
- Introduction of an additional mid-semester pulse survey allowing staff to act on student feedback during the module.
- More streamlined question sets to promote engagement.
- A mechanism to ensure timely closure of the feedback loop so that our students feel heard and can see the value in providing feedback to inform module enhancements.

Work has begun on procurement and the project team plan to implement the new software over the summer vacation period with a view to delivering the new approach to MEQs in S1 of AY2025/26. This work will include the installation, integration, configuration and testing of the new system alongside associated work to update related processes, guidance documents, and webpages, and the provision of training and support.

TQER

The University was the first institution to participate in a Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) under the new Scottish Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. An evidence base comprising a Strategic Impact Analysis and Advance Information Set was submitted to an external review team in December 2024 ahead of initial and main review visits in February and April 2025. The review team met with a range of staff and students during their visits to St Andrews. The Quality Assurance Agency will shortly confirm the review outcomes ahead of a full report being issued in early June. The University will respond to recommendations by early October via an action plan following consultation with staff and students.

Amendment to External Examiner Guidance documents

In line with [guidance from the QAA](#) and as a continuation of the review of our current institutional practice that we shared with you last year, we have implemented some further enhancements to the External Examining guidance documents in areas relating to the implementation of principles of equality, diversity, and inclusive practice.

The main updates are as follows:

- a) In the [Induction guidance for External Examiners](#), the School's approach to inclusive design, pedagogy and assessment structures has been added as one of the areas to be included in the induction and annual briefing.
- b) In the [Guidance for Heads on the training of External Examiners](#), it has been made explicit that documentation on how inclusive practice has been embedded into curriculum design, delivery, and assessment structures of the School should be given to External Examiners. Further, a sentence has been added under the Student Meeting with External Examiners to suggest that where possible, the meeting should reflect the diversity of the student body in the Schools.

Amendments to External Examiners pro forma report

We have also made some minor amendments to the annual pro forma report. These include reformatting the pro forma, rewording within sections, and adding two new questions:

- a) Did you receive the required support to fulfil the role, including training for the role and access to staff?
- b) Are there any examples of good practice taking place in the School that you feel should be shared more widely across the institution?

Reflection on External Examiners' Reports

Thank you once more for your role in providing valuable feedback to Schools and the University on areas of good practice and issues of concern, particularly in this ever-changing and challenging climate. All reports are monitored closely by Schools and the Associate Deans (Education) and Associate Provost (Education).

Summaries of your reports on undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision are shared with the Academic Monitoring Group and Learning and Teaching Committee each year. We were pleased to see that there were no concerns about the provision of a sufficient sample of work for review, opportunities to comment on draft examination papers, and about the operation of module boards in 2023 to 2024. We are very grateful for Professional Services colleagues' contribution to maintaining these high standards and efficient processing, often within tight timeframes. A small number of externals noted that in a few Schools clear documentation was needed to evidence how blind double markers had arrived at their agreed marks and we have taken relevant actions to ensure that practices related to double marking are transparent and clearly evidenced and recorded in all Schools.

We were also delighted to see your comments on the excellent academic achievements of our students, the high quality of feedback provided to them, and your helpful suggestions about enhancement of learning opportunities, for example with regard to employability, which is an area we are hoping to develop in our forthcoming Employability Strategy. We welcome your feedback on examples of good practice that we can share and ways to enhance our educational provision, alongside the quality assurance provided through your reflection on our grading processes, outcomes, and classification data.

The Associate Deans/Provost Education will host their annual Q&A session for External Examiners on 1 October 2025 from 10.00am to 11.00am via MS Teams (a meeting link will be circulated in due course). Newly appointed External Examiners are encouraged to attend, and all examiners will be welcomed.

If you have issues or comments that you wish to address directly to me rather than via the appropriate School, please feel free to do so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Clare Peddie', written in a cursive style.

Professor Clare Peddie
Vice-Principal Education (Proctor)