The University of Edinburgh

Senate Education Committee
Thursday 10 November 2022, 2.00 – 4.30pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams

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Minutes of the Meeting of Senate Education Committee held via Microsoft Teams at 2.00pm on Thursday 8 September 2022

DRAFT – For approval at 10 November 2022 Meeting

1. Attendance

Present	Position
Colm Harmon	Vice-Principal Students (Convener) – Ex Officio
Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance (Vice-Convener) – Ex Officio
Sabine Rolle	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Lisa Kendall	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)
Patrick Walsh	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Jamie Davies	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, UG)
Sarah Henderson	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching, PGT)
Paddy Hadoke	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)
Mike Shipston	Head of Deanery, CMVM
Jo Shaw	Head of School, CAHSS
Jason Love	Head of School, CSE
Sam Maccallum	Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice President Education
Shelagh Green	Director for Careers & Employability – Ex Officio
Melissa Highton	Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Division of Information Services – Ex Officio; Assistant Principal (Online and Open Learning)
Rebecca Gaukroger	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions – Ex Officio
Tom Ward	Director of Academic Services – Ex Officio
Marianne Brown	Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling (Interim)
Philippa Ward	Academic Services (Secretary)
In Attendance	
Teresa Ironside	Director of Data Science Education
Jon Turner	Director of Institute for Academic Development (in place of Velda McCune)
Lucy Evans	Deputy Secretary, Students
Apologies	
Laura Bradley	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)
Antony Maciocia	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)
Tim Stratford	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)
Sian Bayne	Assistant Principal Digital Education
Velda McCune	Representing Director of Institute for Academic Development – Ex Officio

Members noted that the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions would shortly be leaving the role. They were thanked for their considerable contribution to the work of the Committee and the University.

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 12 May 2022

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2022.

3. Convener's Communications

All relevant matters were discussed at later points in the agenda.

4. For Discussion

4.1 Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities

Members noted that:

- the Principles had not changed as compared with the previous version of the paper considered at the May meeting of the Committee.
- the Priorities had been expanded to aid implementation and a table of roles and responsibilities had been added to the document so that expectations for involved parties were clear.
- the Principles and Priorities were to be implemented from the start of academic year 2022/23, but Schools were primarily being asked to review current activity and identify gaps in 2022/23. Full implementation was expected from the start of 2023/24.
- principles 1.4, 2.5, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1, 6.4 were previously expected as part of the Taught Assessment Regulations and were not new. As such, these would continue to apply from the start of 2022/23.
- the strict requirement for feedback to be returned with 15 working days had been removed. However, Schools were still expected to aim for this wherever possible and to communicate clearly with students about expected turnaround times.

Committee members discussed:

- the overall value of the Principles and Priorities. They were extremely positive about the document recognising that, in the context of the ELIR recommendations, progress in this area was essential.
- Resource issues:
  - While it was understandable that resource implications had been linked to the Curriculum Transformation Programme, any meaningful engagement with the Principles and Priorities would inevitably require additional time for Directors of Teaching and Teaching Teams, and staff were already under considerable pressure.
  - Were it not possible to deliver the Curriculum Transformation Programme in line with current timescales, this could in turn affect implementation of the Principles and Priorities.
- Communications:
  - Careful thought needed to be given to the way in which the document and its requirements were communicated.
  - It would be beneficial to give Schools agency and not to be overly-prescriptive about the way in which the Principles and Priorities should be implemented.
  - However, it was also recognised that further guidance around some aspects of implementation would be appreciated by Schools.
  - Communications should make clear that while the document was broadly reflective, some aspects were more regulatory in nature.

  - Individual Schools should be responsible for informing their own students about the Principles and Priorities.
- Programme-level assessment:
  - The challenges with this were recognised. It was noted that, at this stage, the expectation was that there should be high-level oversight of course assessment at programme level to ensure coherence.
- Roles and Responsibilities Table:
  - There would be value in mentioning QA reports in the table as a means of allowing Schools to report on progress.
  - It was suggested that there would be benefit in making clear that Course Organisers should fit their assessment and feedback with the requirements of Programme Directors and Directors of Teaching.
  - It was suggested that there would be benefit in making it clear where responsibility lay for coordinating courses shared between programmes.

The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities were approved by the Committee without any amendments. The Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance agreed to liaise with the representative Heads of Schools on the Committee to seek their feedback on draft communications around the Principles and Priorities.

Action: Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance to liaise with the representative Heads of Schools on the Committee to seek their feedback on draft communications around the Principles and Priorities.

4.2 University of Edinburgh Students' Association Vice President Education Priorities 2022/23

The Students' Association Vice President Education outlined their priorities for academic year 2022/23, namely:

- increasing academic transparency and student academic support;
- working towards a more accessible and inclusive curriculum;
- and improving staff and student engagement with the University's student voice structures.

Member discussed:

- the significant concerns that were being raised by students about a return to in person exams and action that might be taken to address these concerns.
- training for student representatives – the EUSA Vice President Education noted that the Students' Association was looking at ways in which the training for student representatives might be enhanced and also at ways in which student representatives might have their contribution to the work of the University recognised.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Student Experience

The Deputy Secretary Students, who was in attendance at the meeting, noted that the University's default position was to be as open as possible in relation to student experience

matters. The content of papers was only closed where this was considered absolutely necessary and in line with permitted Freedom of Information exemptions.

Student Experience Update (taken to 7 June 2022 meeting of University Executive)

The Committee noted that comments had been received from a Senate member about the implementation of the new Student Support model:

- The Senate member was keen to know what monitoring, review and engagement there had been of the staff transition towards the new Student Support roles. Were things going as planned? There appeared to be confusion in the Senate member's home School, particularly amongst Programme Directors, about the new workflow and guidance processes.
- The Senate member noted that they would like to see consideration given to staffing numbers and effectiveness of the current Advisor-Student ratio for Wellbeing Advisors, as this had been a concern raised by Senate.
- The Senate member noted that they had heard concerns raised by colleagues about student access to expert advice on course selection – not just the expertise advisors have on the procedural aspects of course selection, but advice that requires a subject expert to guide the student to mastery of the field appropriate to their intellectual and career goals. The Senate member hoped to see this matter considered as the rollout of the new course selection staffing and workflow were reviewed.

It was agreed that the Convener would discuss these matter directly with the Senate member concerned.

Action: Convener to discuss implementation of the Student Support model with the Senate member concerned.

National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 Results (taken to 9 August 2022 meeting of University Executive)

Members discussed the following in relation to this paper:

- The University had seen improvements in a number of areas, for example in students' comments around course content, relationship with academics and teaching. Where there were improvements, it was important to recognise and acknowledge these.
- The University remained some way off its goal of being equally excellent in both its teaching and research. The Committee agreed that this issue could not be addressed through a 'one size fits all' approach and that tailored action plans were needed for each School. The Vice-Principal Students and Deputy Secretary Students would be working with Heads of Schools and Colleges to develop these plans.
- 'Sense of belonging' remained an issue for the University.

5.2 Doctoral College

The CMVM PGR representative provided the following verbal update on the work of the Doctoral College:

- **UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) stipend increase**

  The UKRI was increasing its minimum student stipend by 10% on the previously announced level for academic year 2022 / 2023. The University had taken the decision to provide the same 10% uplift to all students, regardless of their sources of funding. The financial implications of this decision were now being worked through.

- **PGR hardship funding**

  Student hardship in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the context of the cost of living crisis remained a concern. The University was hoping to increase the amount of hardship funding available and to encourage more students in need to apply. It was noted that students were often discouraged from applying because the process was felt to be intrusive. Members agreed that there would be benefit in providing students with more information about why such a detailed application process was needed (namely because of audit-related considerations).

  The Doctoral College had also agreed that a central fund to help students with visa and NHS surcharges was needed.

- **PhD duration**

  The Doctoral College was working through proposals to match funding with PhD duration, with Colleges working together to ensure consistency of application and to map duration to credit-bearing content. The Doctoral College was keen to be involved in high-level University discussions around ‘size and shape’.

- **Interaction with new Student Support structures**

  The Doctoral College had made contact with the University’s new Wellbeing Advisers, who would be involved in the next Doctoral College Forum. The feedback from Schools was that there was some confusion around the role of the Wellbeing Advisors in PGR student support.

- **Doctoral College Forum Meetings**

  These were being held bi-monthly with the next meeting scheduled for 22 September 2022.

- **Supervisor training**

  Training, including the mandatory course ‘Fundamentals of PhD Supervision’ and new resources for PhD examiners, was being provided online. There was an appetite to re-introduce in-person supervisor briefing sessions.

- **MScR marking instructions**

  The Colleges were working together to update the guidance for examiners and other relevant paperwork to ensure that it was consistent with current marking requirements.

- **Annual Review Policy update**

  The Doctoral College had contacted the Convener of APRC to confirm the next steps for review of the Policy.

- **Student Systems**

  The following was noted in relation to Student Systems:

  - There was a desire to allow greater visibility of Schedules of Adjustment to improve implementation.
  - The Doctoral College was addressing problems caused by lack of a case management system for PGR.
  - The Doctoral College was contributing to the development of new reporting systems for Leave of Absences of short duration (5 to 30 days).
  - The Doctoral College was contributing to the development of Escalation Processes.

- **Report from the Equality Diversity and Inclusion / Widening Participation PhD Intern**

  This had been received and welcomed by the Doctoral College and the implications were being worked through. Notable findings included:

  - The supervisor/ student relationship being central to experience.
  - The environment being central to experience.
  - Students wanting pro-active pastoral contact from the University / Schools
  - Students feeling that wellbeing and pastoral support was underfunded (despite recent increases in Wellbeing Services)
  - More practical support / better recognition (and environment) was needed for students who were parents
  - The financial landscape was challenging for overseas students.

6. For Approval

6.1 Proposed Changes to Academic and Pastoral Support Policy for Academic Year 2022/23

The Committee approved the proposed changes.

7. For Information / Noting

7.1 Academic Integrity Update

The Vice-Convener provided the Committee with the following update:

- The Institute for Academic Development had been tasked with developing a generic, mandatory course for all students on academic integrity. It was hoped that it might be possible to repurpose and develop a course which was already being used within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. The CMVM PGT representative on the Committee noted that they would be happy to assist IAD with this work.

- The Student Support Model project team were considering the Cohort Lead role descriptor and the role that Cohort Leads might play in providing students with more subject-specific guidance on academic integrity.
- The University's Academic Misconduct Investigation Procedures had been reviewed and would shortly be taken to Academic Policy and Regulations Committee for approval. It was recognised that the procedures were difficult for students to understand and as such, additional student guidance would be developed.
- Further work on academic integrity would be undertaken by the Deputy Secretary Students in due course.

7.2 ELDeR Requests 2020-22

The Committee noted the paper.

7.3 Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) 2022-23

The Committee noted that the SPA is negotiated each year between the University and Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA), with groups of staff and students consulted about priority areas. The priority areas agreed for 2022/23 were:

- Community, wellbeing and supporting transitions
- Transforming curriculum and engagement with learning and teaching
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Committee was advised that the deadline for applications for small project funding related to the priorities was 17 October 2022. Students would be provided with more information once the new semester was underway, and Committee members were encouraged to communicate widely about the funding opportunity.

Action: Committee members to advise those in their constituencies about the SPA small project funding opportunity.

7.4 Committee Administration

Developments from 11 August 2022 meeting of Senate, including new guidelines for Senate Committee operations

The Committee noted the guidelines within the paper on accessing Committee papers and information about the use of oral reports at Committee meetings.

Members were advised that a Senate member had provided comments on the section of the paper that gave guidance on the treatment of resourcing issues within Committee papers. The Senate member was of the view that the information within the paper did not fully reflect what had been agreed at the 11 August 2022 meeting of Senate. The Director of Academic Services indicated that he would update the Committee if it was appropriate to refine the guidance once Senate had confirmed the minute of its 11 August 2022 meeting.

Committee Membership and Committee Terms of Reference 2022/23

Members noted the current membership and terms of reference of the Committee and that these would be discussed further by Senate in the coming months.

Philippa Ward
Academic Services
27 September 2022

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Examination Format

Description of paper

1. This paper outlines key areas of focus and recommendations relating to examinations in the 2022-23 academic year, following the results of a University-wide student survey regarding in-person exams.

Action requested / recommendation

2. This paper is for both comment and approval. SEC is invited to consider approval of points 11 to 13.

Background and context

3. In September 2022, the Students' Association was notified that the University had made the decision to revert the majority of exams in the 2022-23 academic year to in-person, closed-book examinations.

4. A survey was released to the student body in late September to assess the situation and identify areas for improved support. At the time of closing (14 October 2022), the survey had received 799 responses. The full report, sent to Senior Leadership on 24 October 2022, has been attached for reference (Appendix 1).

5. The key findings were as follows:

- At the time of completing the survey, 30% of students did not know whether their December exams would be online or in-person.
- 76% of respondents had never previously had in-person exams at University
- 81% said that they were "extremely not confident" or "somewhat not confident" taking in-person exams as opposed to online.
- Of the respondents with a learning profile including learning adjustments, just 27% (46 students of 167) responded that they were "extremely confident" or "somewhat confident" that they would have these in place for their exams this academic year.

6. 540 individual students provided written comments explaining the reason for their lack of confidence regarding in-person exams. To summarise, 45% of these students reported that they felt either stressed, anxious, worried, or under-pressure from in-person exams. The range of reasons for this included feeling unprepared and that they lacked the academic skills, previous experience, or support from their

disciplines to prepare for closed-book exams. There were considerable concerns about the practicalities of being in an exam hall; from hand-writing and finding rooms, to permitted items. Notably, students also mentioned fears of contracting covid from large exam halls, with several saying they had not been in a room with a significant number of people since before the pandemic.

7. It was apparent that the return to in-person exams was affecting specific groups of students more than others; particularly disabled students and students with chronic illness, commuter students, student parents and carers, international students, particularly those with English as a second language (ESL), and students from Widening Participation (WP) backgrounds. For many of these students, exam format goes beyond personal preference; having in-person exams is detrimental to their mental health and their ability to fully engage with their studies, or perform to the best of their academic ability.

8. The Students' Association retains the position that there are substantive concerns for both academic performance and student welfare as a result of these findings. The original recommendation from the Students' Association had been a complete reversal of the exam format for the 2022-23 academic year to 2021-22 practices, including the December diet.

9. With the December diet released to students on 31 October 2022, it is recognised that the semester 1 diet can no longer be reversed. However, there is still a need to discuss support measures in place for December, the resulting January-February results period, and the status of the 2023 summer and resit diet. Recommendations for next steps are outlined in this paper and SEC is invited to consider points 11 to 13 for approval.

Discussion

10. With recognition that there needed to be space to discuss the summer and resit diet, particularly for the students in honours years sitting final year exams which count towards degree classification, there are 3 points for consideration and approval is sought from SEC on points 11 to 13.

11. Although the survey report indicated that all years of study had been considerably impacted by the pandemic, the key cohorts affected are students currently studying at honours level – many facing Uni in-person exams for the first time, or returning to the format after two years. They simply lack the assessment literacy and confidence to perform to their best ability in an in-person, closed-book setting compared to previous student cohorts, after being acclimatised to online exams for at least the last 2 years of study.

For this reason, **it is recommended that the summer diet return to online format for honours-level students only**, and that this is retained for the pandemic cohort in further years unless otherwise specified through further discussion. The same should be applied to the resit diet; the in-person nature of which has historically

created challenges for students regarding housing over the summer, work and care commitments, and delayed ESC outcomes preventing progression.

12. Secondly, **SEC is invited to approve of providing time in February and/or at the beginning of semester 2 for this Committee to review the impact that the December diet has had on the current pandemic cohorts**. In particular, there should be comparison of caseload for ESC and Board of Examiners to previous years, a comparison of progression rates, and analysis of any substantive gaps in attainment rates and equity in different marginalised student groups; particularly disabled students, international and ESL students, and WP students. This should be brought back to SEC in early 2023 to allow this group to assess the impact the return to in-person exams has had on students' academic performance and staff workload.

13. It is requested that **all Schools should support Special Circumstances applications relating directly to the examination format.** Specifically, cases where severe anxiety or other mental health problems have resulted or been exacerbated by stress from the assessment format or which mention a lack of time to adequately prepare following gaps in communication. Particularly, there should be total support for any students who were unable to have their Disability Learning Adjustments in place in time for their examination diet.

Establishing clear communication with students who present with considerable changes in academic performance in examinations compared to other forms of assessment is key. Ensuring that the frontline staff, likely to be contacted about exam results, are given appropriate tools and guidance to provide consistent support is equally necessary.

14. It is noted that some of the issues arising with the implementation of the December exam diet arose from the decision happening without earlier consultation or support from key stakeholders. It is hoped that future changes to assessment practice give due consideration to the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, perhaps most notably that Assessments should be "inclusive by design".

The author hopes that in future, students will be informed of substantive changes to their assessment formats with adequate time to prepare and adapt, and that these are made in future with due consideration for all staff and students impacted to ensure appropriate support and implementation.

Risk management

15. There are resourcing implications to the paper's points for approval; although it is noted that in its current iteration, plans to carry on with the 2022-23 academic year examination diets have, and will continue to have, considerable impact on staff workload in student support and services, beyond the impact to students already noted.

Equality & diversity

16. It is recognised within the paper that retention of a predominantly in-person exam diet for the 2022-23 academic year may have disproportional impact on marginalised student groups within “pandemic cohorts”. As the University continues to commit to the core principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, it is hoped that any decisions or actions arising will be holding EDI as a core priority, that protects and appropriately supports marginalised student groups. The requests for approval in this paper are made with full consideration for diversity and equity of opportunity in the student body in relation to exam format.

Communication, implementation, and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

17. To be agreed following approval of requests and actions arising from the paper.

Author

Sam Maccallum
Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students’ Association

Robin Gay (co-author)
Student Voice Manager, Edinburgh University Students’ Association

Presenter

Sam Maccallum
Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students’ Association

Freedom of Information

Open

Appendix 1

Report on In-Person Exams Survey

Context

Early in semester one of the 2022/23 academic year, the Students' Association became aware of anxieties and frustrations amongst the student body in relation to assessment, and in particular the return, for some students, to in-person exams.

To better understand the concerns being raised, the Students' Association launched a short survey on 29 September. This survey was promoted to and by student representatives, as well as via the Students' Association's email newsletter and social media channels. When it closed on 14 October, the survey had received 799 responses, including responses from every School at the University, with the exception of the Centre for Open Learning. Of those 799 respondents, 93% will be taking exams this academic year, and 91% will be taking exams this December.

Survey responses

Of the 679 respondent who will be taking exams this December, over 30% did not know at the time of completing the survey whether those exams would be in-person or online. This represents a fundamental failure of the University to adequately communicate to students about the format of their upcoming exams, and the anxiety this is causing is highlighted in their answers to subsequent questions.

Of those who did know what format their upcoming exams would be, 63% said their December exams will be entirely in-person, and 27% said their exams will be a combination of in-person and online, demonstrating how widespread the impact of the concerns raised with the return to in-person exams will be.

One of the key themes of the survey responses was a lack of familiarity with in-person assessments. 76% of respondents said they had never previously had an in-person exam at University, and therefore their in-person exams this December would be their first experience of the format. Some pre-honours students highlighted that they had never sat any significant in-person exam, as their final assessments at School or College had also been conducted online due to COVID, while many honours students expressed that although they had previously sat in-person exams, returning to them after such a long break, at the point in their degree where their performance mattered most was causing significant levels of stress and anxiety. In fact, 45% of respondents reported feeling stressed, anxious, worried or under-pressure from in-person exams.

> *"This is my honours year, and I am feeling extremely stressed about exams being in person, especially in a year that is important. I have been having panic attacks almost every day because of this sudden change." – School of Engineering*

Only 7% of respondents said they felt somewhat or extremely confident at the prospect of taking exams in-person, as opposed to online, and 81% said they felt somewhat or extremely not confident.

Factors impacting students' confidence in approaching in-person exams

Almost all respondents said they felt unprepared to approach in-person exams and were unsure what to expect of them in terms of content or format, and this is reflected in the calls for more information about in-person exams in later questions. In particular, students highlighted that although they had access to past papers, in many cases all the past papers available were from years when exams were held online, during which time Schools had made adjustments to exam formats – for example, towards questions which asked students to critical analyse or problem solve, rather than just recounting information – to accommodate the shift in delivery. They were unclear whether these newer formats would be retained for this year's in-person exams, or whether the exam formats would revert to previous in-person question styles.

Tied to concerns regarding the re-introduction of in-person exams were concerns regarding the shift away from "open-book" exam formats, with 16% of respondents saying they were worried about no longer having access to textbooks, formula lists, online graphing calculators, and their own notes from throughout the semester, as well as the ability to use CTRL+F to search digital resources. Many students expressed frustration that the "open-book" format was being removed, when it more closely resembles "real-life" conditions, and noted that closed-book exams place more emphasis on students' ability to remember large quantities of information – whether formulas and proofs, or theories and cases – than on critical thinking and reasoning. While some courses have confirmed that students will be allowed to take some additional resources into in-person exams, there is significant variation in how many pages students are able to bring, and in all cases, this represents a significant reduction from the full open-book format of online exams.

> *"The [School] has made exams significantly more difficult due to their open-book nature. We are now returning to in-person exams, however we will be allowed to take in a "cheat sheet". I am concerned that staff will continue writing exams at the level expected for online, open book, despite consistently ignoring students' complaints that the exams have been too hard." – School of Chemistry*

A number of respondents noted that preparing for closed-book, in-person exams requires a significantly different set of skills than preparing for open-book, online exams, and 15% said that they felt they lacked the skills to succeed in this new format. Many also stated that they were unsure how to prepare for their upcoming in-person, closed-book exams, reflecting both a lack of experience, and a lack of clarity regarding the content and format of the exams they will be taking in December.

Students also highlighted concerns regarding their ability to complete in-person exams within the allotted timeframe. In previous years' online exams, many students were given an additional hour of "submission time" to account for students needing to upload documents. However, anecdotally, there seems to have been widespread use of this time to complete, proofread, and perfect answers. Regardless of whether this was the intended use, the reality of the situation is that some students did do this; and they now feel they will be unable to write quality answers without this extra allowance.

18% of respondents expressed concerns about the practicalities of in-person exams, including but not limited to: the distractions created by sharing the exam hall with other students, the challenge of hand-writing their answers, and worries about finding exam halls and remembering items required to complete exams. It is also clear that the thought of being in an exam hall with a large number of people is a source of anxiety for some students, with several highlighting that they hadn't been in a room with over 40 people since before the pandemic, and a number expressing concerns about the risk of contracting COVID from in-person exams.

A significant number of students said they would prefer to take exams from the comfort and familiar surroundings of their own home, where they had relatively freedom to move around, access to

bathroom facilities, and refreshments. Several international students also highlighted that online exams had allowed them a degree of flexibility in terms of travelling home over the Winter break, and that the return to in-person assessment would impact their ability to visit family and the cost of their travel arrangements.

The experience of disabled students

22% of survey respondents reported having a University learning profile which included one or more learning adjustments related to exams. Of those 167 students, 37% said they felt somewhat or extremely not confident that the adjustments they needed to succeed in their in-person exams this academic year would be in place.

Many of those respondents stated they were unclear what adjustments were available to them, an issue which has been compounded by the fact that students are currently unable to book an appointment with the Student Disability and Learning Support Service until after the deadline for adjustments to be confirmed. Several students who had requested adjustments said they hadn't received confirmation these would be implemented, and those whose adjustments had been confirmed often said they didn't feel the adjustments they had been offered were adequate.

> *"For dyslexia I am allowed to be in a computer room for some exams. Yet, I have been told that it may be noisy, as there may be other students in that room, possibly revising or hanging out. I find this not very ideal and am highly confused about how that would be suitable exam room environment." – School of GeoSciences*

Students taking in-person exams for the first time this year also noted that this also meant they had no previous experience of using the relevant adjustments, and were therefore unable to know in advance how helpful they would be.

Responding to students concerns

It should be made clear that the vast majority of respondents expressed a preference for the University to retain primarily online exams, either permanently, for all students; for current students until they had graduated; or temporarily, until students have had more of an opportunity to adapt to in-person assessment.

However, when asked what would enable them to feel more confident approaching in-person exams this academic year, students did highlight a number of areas which the University could address.

There was a widespread demand for more information about all aspects of the in-person exam experience, from exam dates, and whether those exams would be in-person or online, to the content and format of exams, what materials students would be able to take into their exams, and the kinds of spaces exams would be held in. Some students referenced finding "walk-throughs" of an in-person exam – from arriving at the exam hall to leaving once the exam was completed – reassuring, but it's clear that this is unlikely to be useful for the third of students who still don't know whether they will have in-person exams, and the many more who are awaiting the dates and times of the assessments.

17% of respondents stated that they would feel more comfortable taking in-person exams, if these exams were closer in format to the "open-book" exams they had taken previously. Definitions of "open-book" varied, from access to students' own physical and/or digital notes, and one-page lists of formulas or rulings, to online calculators, and full textbooks. However, students were clear that

removing the expectation that they would memorise all the key information related to their course would reduce the pressure they felt, and enable them to focus on fully engaging with the content of their degree programme and the exams themselves.

15% of students said they would like the opportunity to take a mock exam, featuring the types of questions they would be asked in their real exams, under full exam conditions. While this request seems to be in-part about students gaining a better understanding of the content and format of the exams they'll be taking this year, for most students, mock exams were more about getting them familiar with the practicalities of in-person exams, from the location and layout of exam halls, to the experience of being in the space with lots of other students, and having the opportunity to practice key skills like hand-writing, and answering questions within a time limit. Students' only concern with the delivery of mock exams was the timing of these, as many noted that if they were too early in the semester, students would not have had a chance to adequately prepare, but too late, and they risked creating additional stress for students, particularly if they performed poorly in the mock exam.

> *"One of my courses is giving us a mid-term which is zero credit but will replicate a real in-person exam. This is really useful." – School of Economics*

Many students were keen to practice exam-style questions without the full exam conditions, with 14% saying they wanted more access to past and practice papers which accurately reflected the content and format of the exams they would be taking this academic year. In particular, respondents said they wanted access to past papers which included example answers and the marking scheme, and the opportunity to work through these with other students and the support of academic staff, so that they could both test their knowledge and see what a high-quality answer would be.

Related to this, 12% of students said they would benefit from more support from academic staff as they prepared for their in-person exams. Respondents were particularly keen for workshops which focused on revision and exam skills, resources which outlined the content they should focus on revising – particularly if there were key concepts or formulas which they would be expected to have memorised – as well as opportunities to speak to staff about course content which they were finding more challenging.

Students also expressed a desire for the difficulty of exams to be adjusted to reflect the return to the in-person format, particularly in Schools where there was a perception that exams had been made more challenging to reflect the move to online, "open-book" assessment. Similarly, students asked about whether marking criteria would take into account the additional challenges faced by students taking in-person exams for the first time, and whether exams would be marked "on a curve" if there was a significant drop in performance from students across a course.

Some stated that they would like to be given more time to complete their in-person exams – perhaps retaining the additional 45-60 minutes that was allocated as "submission time" during online exams – but others stated that they felt they were going to find it challenging to be in the exam hall setting for such a long amount of time, and would prefer if exams were shortened.

There was more consensus around the length of the revision period, which many students referenced as being too short, particularly when compared to the Summer exam diet. Some students referenced the anxiety of being in crowded exam halls, and noted that they would prefer to be in smaller rooms, with a number asking what COVID precautions the University would be taking around exams. Several students stated that they would prefer to type their exam answers, as they felt this was significantly quicker, more accurate, and provide more scope for them to edit and refine their answers. A number

of students also said that they would like more clarity and flexibility from the University with regards to resits, as they felt this would alleviate some of the pressure to perform well in this unfamiliar format.

And finally, a significant number of students expressed that they would simply appreciate more empathy and understanding from staff about the anxiety and stress caused by the return to in-person exams.

> *"I know for them it has only been two and half years of online exams, but for many of us, online exams are our only experience of exams at University, and as such we have zero idea of what to expect or how to prepare for something like this." – School of Engineering*

Conclusion

The Students' Association's position remains clear: the University does not have the time nor the resources to deliver a smooth and support transition back to in-person exams, and therefore any attempt to deliver a primarily in-person exam diet this December risks significant disadvantaging all students, but particularly disabled students.

If the University continues to move ahead with in-person exams, then we would urge them to consider the mitigations discussed above as a matter of urgency, but fundamentally we feel these are too little, too late, and will not address the more structural and systemic issues highlighted by this report.

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Futures for our Teaching Spaces

Description of paper

1. This paper introduces the final report of a short-life working group set up to generate ideas for the future of our teaching spaces. The work was led by Professor Siân Bayne (AP Education Futures) and Helen-Rose Wood (Head of University Space).
2. It is intended to inform the new Capital Plan to 2027, contributing to all outcomes in Strategy 2030 including supporting learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses and partners.
3. The final report provides an illustrated cluster of principles and themes to inform the future of University teaching spaces, co-developed with university staff and students. It connects with the work emerging from the Curriculum Transformation Programme, and the vision and principles outlined in the university's Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy 2020-2030.

Action requested / recommendation

4. Discussion, comment and endorsement.

Background and context

5. Connecting space, society and curriculum is critical to the university's continuing success. We need to optimise use of our estate while ensuring that it both enables exceptional student and staff experience and allows us to deliver on our wider social commitments. The new Capital Plan for the period up to July 2027 has now been fully approved by Estates Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and University Court. It will contribute to all outcomes in Strategy 2030 including supporting learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses and partners.
6. There is recognition that curriculum transformation and the continued evolution of learning and teaching will make different demands on the estate with an anticipated demand for both flexible and specialist learning and study space. To this end funding totalling £55m has been earmarked for the development of a Learning and Teaching Hub in the City Centre. Aimed at enhancement of the student experience, this will complement the current development of the Edinburgh Futures Institute in Central Area, the Nucleus Building at Kings Buildings and the proposed development of a Health and Care Education Hub at the BioQuarter.
7. In addition to these purpose-built facilities, Estates Committee has also approved funding of £1.9m annually for the Teaching Accommodation Programme (TAP). This provides funding to improve more than 350 centrally managed general teaching rooms already in use across the estate. This report supports all of the above by working with staff and students to build a set of principles and a vision for the teaching spaces of the future.

Discussion

8. Please see the attached report.

Resource implications

9. Additional resource needs are not anticipated.

Risk management

10. Detailed risk analyses will be conducted in the context of Estates developments.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

11. The report places a very strong emphasis on sustainability, planetary health 'green' buildings, non-sedentary teaching, outdoor teaching spaces, staff and student wellbeing, and the creation of architectures which are of enduring value to the world.

Equality & diversity

12. The principles proposed emphasise the need for future spaces which are accessible, safe, inclusive and welcoming to all.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

13. The paper is aimed at decision-making committees and groupings within the university, and to be readily usable in planning and design conversations, design team briefings and other places where the future of our campuses is being conceptualised. It is designed to provoke conversation and debate among university staff, students and the wider community where there is an interest in the future of teaching in a complex, challenging and changing world, and to inform projects taken forward through the new Capital Plan. It is anticipated that the report will be discussed in other relevant College, Estates and University committees.

Author
Professor Siân Bayne and Helen-Rose Wood
3 November 2022

Presenter
Professor Siân Bayne and Helen-Rose Wood

Freedom of Information
Open

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Futures For Our Teaching Spaces: principles and visions for connecting space to curriculum

Photo by James Lamb, Moray House School of Education and Sport, and Edinburgh Futures Institute

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

"Students understand the campus as a place of people, a network of friendships, a digital and physical space, live and ever-relevant, a place of great cultural and social exchange."

Architects Journal (2019)

Introduction

Connecting space, society and curriculum is critical to the university's continuing success. We need to optimise use of our estate while ensuring that it both enables exceptional student and staff experience and allows us to deliver on our wider social commitments. The new Capital Plan for the period up to July 2027 has now been fully approved by Estates Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and University Court. It will contribute to all outcomes in Strategy 2030 including supporting learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses and partners.

There is recognition that curriculum reform and the continued evolution of learning and teaching will make different demands on the estate with an anticipated demand for both flexible and specialist learning and study space. To this end funding totalling £55m has been earmarked for the development of a Learning and Teaching Hub in the City Centre. Aimed at enhancement of the student experience, this will complement the current development of the Edinburgh Futures Institute in Central Area, the Nucleus Building at Kings Buildings and the proposed development of a Health and Care Education Hub at the BioQuarter. In addition to these purpose-built facilities, Estates Committee has also approved funding of £1.9m annually for the Teaching Accommodation Programme (TAP). This provides funding to improve more than 350 centrally managed general teaching rooms already in use across the estate.

This report supports all of the above, by providing an illustrated cluster of principles and themes to inform the future of University teaching spaces. Co-developed with university staff and students, it connects with the work emerging from the Curriculum Transformation Programme, and the vision and principles outlined in the university's Learning and Teaching Spaces Strategy 2020-2030. It has been written by a short-life group set up at the request of the VP Students (Colm Harmon) and the Director of Place (Gary Jebb) to consider our education futures, and the kinds of teaching spaces our University should be planning to enable them. Group membership and process is set out in the appendix.

Sector and societal trends

The principles and themes emerging from this work take account of a cluster of inter-related sectoral and societal trends currently converging on the shape and future of university teaching. These can be summarised as:

Interdisciplinarity and reformed curricula: spaces that catalyse creativity and provoke innovation, enabling surprising connections and bringing diverse groupings together. The 'pedagogy' focus area in the Spaces Strategy 2030, proposes that learning and teaching should drive the way we envision space.

Belonging and 'home': congenial, convivial spaces across the campuses, in which students, staff and partners feel a sense of home and community. The 'communities' focus of the Spaces Strategy emphasises this need for belonging and shared ownership.

Universities' 'third mission': spaces that help the university connect to the life of the city and its wider communities, express its social purpose, and share the diversity of its knowledge. This point connects with the 'communities' and 'accessibility' focus of the Spaces Strategy.

Sustainability and planetary health: a focus on 'green' buildings, non-sedentary teaching, outdoor teaching spaces, staff and student wellbeing, and the creation of architectures which are of enduring value to the world.
The 'infrastructure' focus of the Spaces Strategy, also emphasises creative use of outdoor space.

Mobilities and digital education: teaching spaces that are configured to be inclusive of our global community regardless of an individual's physical location, nurturing flexibility, international connections, mobility and innovation in teaching. Our Spaces Strategy has a strong focus on accessibility.

Attention economy and slow time: recognising the importance of 'slow scholarship' and the challenge of achieving focus in an infinitely networked world.

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Guiding principles for our future teaching spaces

Our spaces will be accessible, safe and inclusive.

- They will support us to deliver our transformed curriculum.
- They will provide a welcome and a sense of home to all our students and staff, including those who are online.
- They will be enabled by sustainable architectures which express the ethical purpose of the University and our commitment to helping build a just, sustainable world.
- They will anticipate modes of teaching and study that don't yet exist.
- They will exist within buildings of enduring value for the world.
- They will connect to our transformed curriculum, embodying a cultural and pedagogic shift away from campus-centrism, transmission-based teaching and disciplinary siloes.
- They will enable a culture in which students, staff, neighbours and partners feel welcome, able to work together to share knowledge, take action and make change.
- They will offer liberating forms of digital connectivity and accessibility, while also enabling the slow scholarship that needs quiet, off-grid time and deep focus.

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To connect these principles directly to planning, this paper is aimed at decision-making committees and groupings within the university. It also aims to be readily usable in planning and design conversations, design team briefings and other places where the future of our campuses is being conceptualised. It is hoped that it will provoke conversation and debate among university staff, students and the wider community where there is an interest in the future of teaching in a complex, challenging and changing world.

In the sections which follow, we present a set of themes to shape the design of our future teaching spaces, illustrated by inspirational examples collated by working group members, and including comments from staff and students engaged in this work.

Contents:

3. **Introduction**

4. **Sector and societal trends**

5. **Guiding principles**

7. **Theme 1: Belonging and buzz**

9. **Theme 2: Sanctuary and beauty**

11. **Theme 3: Sustainable connections**

14. **Theme 4: Mobility, flexibility and flow**

17. **Theme 5: Openness, public co-creation and surfacing**

20. **Appendix: working group membership and process**

Theme 1:
Belonging and buzz

'Students that are empowered to use spaces provide a magic 'buzz' to a place. Authentic atmosphere comes from a small sense of mess and clutter: the residue of humans making the spaces their own.'

Report from the Edinburgh Futures Institute fieldtrip to London spaces, 2022 (collated by Lynne Craig, Depute Director of Innovation, University of Edinburgh)

Key words: convivial, welcoming, empowering, playful

The challenge: Create spaces which students want to spend time in, that feel homely and are welcoming of diversity. Combine space for focused, quiet work with opportunities for working together. These are spaces where playful messiness takes the place of corporate shine, and that students feel empowered to make their own.

Image 1: University of Warwick Piazza

Atmosphere and conviviality

World Cup Fever at the University of Warwick used University outdoor space to host the student community, bringing people together to experience and celebrate the matches. Student union, technology services, campus security, estates and the local arts centre all contributed to the organisation.

Social media conversations and photos were shared to the screen using a hashtag - #bigscreenpiazza trended in the UK.

Thinking beyond boundaries builds belonging in new ways. But these are spaces that need 'hosts' – people whose job it is to care for them and make them convivial.

Comment from MA Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design and 4th year BA Hons Interior Design student workshop

"The example from the University of Warwick is great – not only because it brings the university community together but also has the potential to bring in the wider community from the city as well."

Street art, ‘mess’, display

Street art as commentary, response and protest. Bringing variety, texture, messiness and meaning to unexpected spaces.

A sense of ownership of space

Spaces that aren’t too precious, where bikes, mess – maybe even pets – are allowed in and where students and staff feel a sense of ownership, homeliness and mutual connection. Integrated coffee and tea points with diverse suppliers.

Image 1: *New York’s FIT Black Student Union at Chelsea street*

Image 2: *Gratis Quo’s map of Leith*

Image 3: *Shona Hardie’s street art at Gilmore Park, Edinburgh*

Image 4: *Russell Ian Dempster’s ‘Paolozzi in Leith’*

Image 5: *The Graphic Design MA studio at Central St. Martins*

Image 6: *Coopers mobile coffee bar*

Antonios Mavrotas, Estates Student Intern

“While I think ‘messy’ spaces and outdoor/green areas for teaching are a great idea, I think they should be done very thoughtfully and thoroughly to ensure that those spaces are upheld to the same standards as the rest of the space and especially considering accessibility standards. If the students are allowed to bring bikes and pets in, it should be restricted to allow everything to be accessible to all students and staff.”

Theme 2:
Sanctuary and beauty

'We must dare to relax our grip on time for a day, or even for an hour, throwing clocks, watches and iPhones over the housetops, untethering ourselves… Good scholarship requires time: time to think, write, read, research, analyze, edit, and collaborate…slow scholarship cannot just be about making individual lives better, but must also be about re-making the university.'

Mountz, A. et al (2015) For Slow Scholarship. ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies, 14(4), 1235-1259.

Key words: cloistered, focused, off-grid, slow, enduring value

The challenge: Create beautiful spaces for slow scholarship, peace and focus. In an attention economy, sometimes we need to be off-grid.

Solitude and 'cloistering'

Quiet – even wifi-free – spaces offer time and space for focus and slow scholarship.

Image 1:*The Väre building at Aalto University designs-in hiding places*

Image 2: *Our own New College Library offers quiet, shared solitude for focused workdesigns-in hiding places*

Comment from MA Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design and 4th year BA Hons Interior Design student workshop: Slow scholarship

"We feel that spaces for slow scholarship already exist in the form of libraries and classrooms etc."

"What is needed in terms of slowing down is a sort of third place. What we have described as slow socialising. Or even a space to be slow alone."

Richard Andrews, Head of School, MHSES

"Much of the report is predicated on learning as a social act. But some learning is solitary, inward and needs monastic spaces as well as outdoor spaces for reflection, creation, transformation."

Layers of history and architectural beauty

The university already has buildings of outstanding value and beauty. Our future teaching spaces will build confidently on these, fabricating another layer in our history and creating buildings of enduring value to the world.

Contemplation and taking time

Creating dedicated spaces for meditation and thinking give us permission to slow down.

Image 1: *A layered façade in the Alhambra*

Image 2: *The Mindfulness Room at Carnegie Mellon University is a dedicated space on campus to rest, breathe and relax with no agenda. No classwork or technology allowed.*

Image 3: Our own labyrinth 'offers a unique space to slow down, still the mind and find time in a fast paced world'.

Jasmine Young, Estates Student Intern

"All the ideas are so exciting, and I especially love the idea about the quiet study room digital display and intervention of student work. As people are no becoming addicted to phones, we need a space where students can study in peace and focus."

Theme 3:
Sustainable connections

'The concept of ecology points in part to interconnectedness, and this is crucial to our story here, but interconnectedness ultimately has no end. And so it is with the University, it being increasingly interconnected with so many facets of the world, human and non-human.'

Barnett, R. (2018) The Ecological University: a feasible utopia

Key words: connectedness, biophilia, inside out, destinations, getting moving, SDGs

The challenge: Design for human-planet connections and movement away from the idea that classrooms need to have four walls; work with the city, bring the outside in, and take the inside out; create non-sedentary and biophilic teaching spaces; rooting design in the moral purpose of the university and our commitment to helping build a just, sustainable world.

Outdoor teaching spaces

Both permanently fixed and moveable, temporary structures enabling flexible pedagogies that can support outdoor teaching across the University. Working with the city as a teaching space; taking pedagogical inspiration and purpose by grounding teaching within issues, challenges and stories emerging from local communities. Seeking opportunities to cross boundaries, foster relationships and work on local, authentic issues.

Image 1: *Aarhus School of Architecture*

Image 2: *The Meadows*

Catherine Eastwood, Deputy Head of School, Vet School

"This is very exciting and I am hugely supportive of the direction of travel. I think there is a great opportunity to develop spaces in line with this theme. Easter Bush is a climate conscious campus and there are opportunities to intertwine these identities and values with learning. We are currently working on our 'Study Landscape' and have a working group assembled so the timing of this paper in excellent."

Take teaching out into the world

Mainstreaming mobile broadcasting technologies, teaching methods and services to support seminars and outdoor learning – valuing the city and Scotland itself as an authentic teaching space.

Soft fascination: garden rooms and green walls

Dissolving boundaries between inside and outside spaces helps develop and deepen our connection with the natural environment, creating calm, natural spaces which are nurturing of positive mental health and wellbeing. Attention Restoration Theory suggests that such 'soft fascination' helps restore diminished attentional capacity.

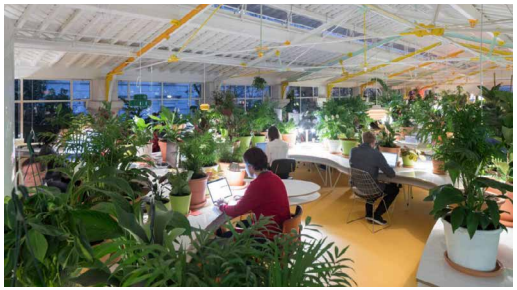


Image 1: *A walking seminar*

Image 2: *An outdoor learning credit-bearing course both run by the Moray House School of Education and Sport*

Image 3: *Second Home Lisboa, shared office space inside the Mercado Da Ribeira designed by José Selgas and Lucía Cano*

Image 4: *Biophilic learning space at Ohalo College, Israel*

Comment from MA Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design and 4th year BA Hons Interior Design student workshop: Slow scholarship

"This makes us think of:
Botanic Gardens
Chettinad Courtyard House
Spaces with big fixed windows
Cabins
Cottages
Repurposing existing buildings"

"In the university:
Bristo Square
Sculpture Court
Fixed windows to the outside landscape."

Hedonistic sustainability: designing for multiple benefits and purposes

Bjarke Ingels' 'hedonistic sustainability' seeks to design buildings and spaces which combine sustainable development and architecture with fun and stimulating community spaces. Teaching spaces could be designed that are educational, community focused, accessible and fun, designed with a just and sustainable world in mind.

Green walls

Exteriorising human-planet connections.

Image 1: *Copenhagen Harbour Baths provided community spaces for exercise, renovated the waterfront and required cleaning up of the harbour area and renewal of its ecosystem.*

Image 2: *Vertical Garden by Patrick Blanc at the Quai Branly Jacques Chirac Museum, Paris*

Theme 4:
Mobility, flexibility and flow

'The influence of digital technologies…has the effect of blurring the boundary between the physical classroom and the online environments where learning happens. Although there is a certain convenience in distinguishing between programmes that are delivered either 'on campus' or 'online', it is a distinction that ignores the postdigital reality of contemporary learning.'

Lamb et al (2022) The Postdigital Learning Spaces of Higher Education. Postdigital Science and Education 4, 1–12.

Key words: digital, postdigital, flexibility, mobility, online, porosity

The challenge: Being an Edinburgh student need not mean being in Edinburgh. On-campus students are also online, and learning and teaching are mobile. Hi-spec campus tech does new kinds of work to connect physical and digital estates, synchronising and mapping between the two. Students are active and engaged, regardless of physical location.

Digital twins connect physical and digital estates

Uiversity digital learning environments are mapped onto campus digital twins, synchronising and mapping between the two and enabling new forms of teaching and presence through VR and AR. Media production and pedagogy for virtual spaces which connect to our on-campus environments.

Image 1:*Conceptualisation of an urban digital twin*

Image 2: *Screenshots of a virtual reality 'learning lounge' that students on the Edinburgh MSc in Digital Education use as an informal gathering space*

Alan Gilchrist, Learning and Teaching IT Programme Manager, CMVM

"Whilst I'm very much in agreement with the majority of this report, the University will still need to have some dedicated teaching space for specific purposes, even in new buildings. Both vets and medics have subject areas where the teaching spaces need to be set up with specific technology that makes flexible use almost impossible. The students really enjoy the teaching that takes place in these spaces, regularly asking for more, so they will need to continue and be developed into the future."

Fusion: on and off campus students study together

In-room technology and the digital learning environment come together to enable seamless interactions between on- and off-campus students.

Interdisciplinary labs and virtual experiments are part of the architecture

Remote labs place teaching objects, artefacts and content in incidental and interstitial spaces, connecting the experience of present and remote students.

Lab spaces for interdisciplinary pedagogies include biolabs and makerspaces.

Image 1: *From the pilot of the Edinburgh Futures Institute fusion teaching classroom in the Lister Learning and Teaching building*

Image 2: *PractableTM remote laboratory installation at Kings Buildings, University of Edinburgh*

Image 3: *The biomakerspace at Rhode Island School of Design*

Jim Nisbet, Government and Projects Officer, CMVM

"Without strong intermediary action I worry that user groups will revert to an easy option of just specifying more of what we currently have. There are also needs to be a strong commitment to institutional funding - as we know from recent experience the message has been to shave costs, and if we have a shopping list of innovation (and more expensive) options they may be the first to go…"

Digital displays that belong to students

Flexible event and exhibition spaces, and information walls made, staffed and curated by students – student coursework as art, supported by services created to support students to curate, edit, archive and render these resilient.

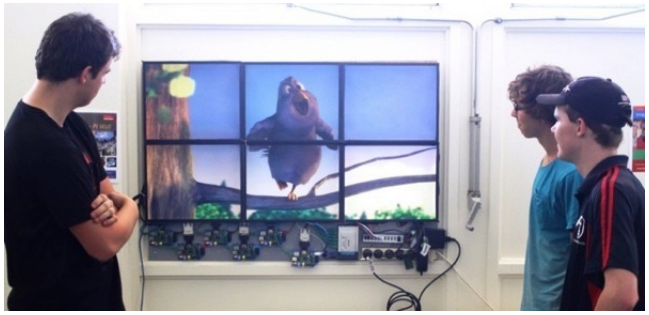


Image 1:*Cleveland Museum of Art's Gallery One*

Image 2: *Student-build video wall, using recycled electronics and a Raspberry Pi at Dixon College, Australia and Canberra Institute of Technology*

Juan Cruz, Head of School ECA

"We need to incorporate timetabling and how we can move students and staff through different kinds of spaces or perhaps base them always in the same space…. This is one of the things that we are finding most challenging at the moment – how to facilitate different kinds of engagement within a fixed estate."

Theme 5: Openness, public co-creation and surfacing

"Institutions of higher education are directly tackling community problems – combating poverty, improving public health, and restoring environmental quality. Brick by brick around the world, the engaged University is replacing the ivory tower."

Watson, D. (2011) The engaged university : international perspectives on civic engagement. New York, NY: Routledge.

Keywords: accessible, public facing, visible, welcoming, display, drama

The challenge: We need spaces which welcome the public to engage with our work, our people and our knowledge; boldly surfacing, celebrating and building intrigue about the work we do; finding ways to share our spaces and to co-create knowledge with a wider community

Visual interconnectedness

By providing glimpses of our spaces and our work, we draw the city in.

Image: *The Rolex Learning Centre at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne places agile spaces on view, embracing shifts of level to create areas of interest and pause*

Comment from MA Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design and 4th year BA Hons Interior Design student workshop: Slow scholarship

"I agree with adding spaces to promote the university to the community, to gain trust and answer questions. The public mostly gain information online but it is sometimes better to have a real glimpse of the university through displays and public spaces."

Welcoming a wider public in

The University is short of welcoming, public-facing spaces outside the festival. Each year, thousands of visitors come to the campus in groups looking to learn with or about the University. Unlike museums, galleries and other cultural and public spaces, we currently lack a space that can adequately welcome and accommodate these groups. Our future spaces should invite people in, for public learning and community projects, access to makerspaces, cafes, reading rooms.

A museum of the history and future of our University could form a locus.

By embracing connections with Scottish designers and alumni we could create beautiful, freely accessible spaces which draw our students and a broader public in.

Public makerspaces and supported media studios

Fabrication and maker spaces can be open to students and public, providing points of contact between University and community.

They can also offer supported media production spaces to enable mobile and hybrid teaching (podcasts for walking seminars, video for 'fusion' teaching, hands-on learning technology design, creating immersive digital spaces).

Image 1: *The Wellcome Institute hybrid museum, reading room and library hosts reading groups, workshops and performances*

Image 2: *STORM20 public makerspace, Copenhagenph*

Digital interventions which surface our students' work

Our students' work could be used in external displays to build connections with our local and wider community: learning as performance, and public learning bringing drama to the public face of the University.

Digital displays could also surface the nature of the University community – using data in imaginative ways (for example a digital heat map showing patterns of access to our work globally, real-time visualisations of research data, visual stories created by our community).

Image 1:*The staging of Tony Oursler's 'The Influence Machine' in George Square in 2016 opened the possibility of publicly projecting student work.*

Appendix: working group membership and process

Working group membership

Siân Bayne
(Assistant Principal Education Futures) (Co-convenor)
Helen-Rose Wood
(Head of University Space) (Co-convenor)
Rachel Simmonds
(Senior Lecturer Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design)
Tim Drysdale
(Chair of Technology Enhanced Science Education)
Euan Murray
(Head of Learning Spaces Technology)
James Lamb
(Lecturer Digital Education)
Beth Christie
(Senior Lecturer Learning for Sustainability)
Robbie Nicol
(Professor of Place-Based Education)

Critical friends

Richard Andrews
(Head of School, MHSES)
Lucila Carvalho
(Associate Professor of Education, Massey University)
Juan Cruz
(Principal of ECA)
Victoria Dishon
(Head of IT, CSE)
Cat Eastwood
(Deputy Head of School, Vet School)
Alan Gilchrist
(Learning and Teaching IT Programme Manager, CMVM)
Mingrui Jian
(Estates Student Intern)
Antonios Mavrotas
(Estates Student Intern)
Jim Nisbet
(CMVM Governance and Projects Officer)
Scott Rosie
(Head of Timetabling Services
Dean Sammanthan
(Estates Student Intern)
Jennifer Williams
(Creative Producer, Edinburgh Futures Institute)
Jasmine Yang
(Estates Student Intern)

Further input was sought via a workshop with students on the MA Interior, Architectural and Spatial Design and 4th year BA Hons Interior Design in ECA. Students providing input were:

Boyang Zhang
Xinwei Wu
Balagj Bargur Varadarajula
Fay Liao
Saloni Hosamani
Jasmintha Sivasankaran
Georgina Sioukrou
Aliah Iman Khairul
Shasha Mao
Claudia Lacarcel
Hassan Habbab
Rachelle Jones
Koo Hu

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Futures for assessment and misconduct

Description of paper
This paper gives a brief overview of current trends and trajectories in digital assessment and plagiarism detection, with a particular focus on 1) the implications of AI-assisted text generation and 2) rising concern over routine use of plagiarism detections systems such as Turnitin.

It goes on to outline how we might approach designing assessment practices which account for such trends, drawing on an example from the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

Aiming to inform a wider institutional debate on the future of assessment, it proposes that Senate Education Committee lead on more fully developing a response to these new trajectories, building on the new Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities, and for implementation through the Curriculum Transformation Programme and the Digital Strategy.

Action requested / recommendation
The committee is asked to discuss the issues raised in the paper, and to comment on how they might be addressed through institutional discussions, strategy, regulations and policy.

Background and context
The University has recently finalised policy on our assessment and feedback principles and priorities – these provide a strong framework for ensuring we meet a baseline institutional standard for assessment, but also ask us to be forward-looking by defining a set of priorities which emphasise the need for creativity and enhancement of our overall approach. This paper aims to contribute to this latter by discussing two digital and data-informed aspects of assessment which are currently hotly debated within the sector, and which are likely to significantly affect assessment practices over the coming years.

More generally, a series of highly disruptive trends in higher education are currently converging on our assessment practices:

- online providers of 'contract cheating' services (essay mills and other forms) continue to proliferate globally and remain widely available; these focus almost entirely on 'conventional' assessment modalities (ie essays and other forms of written text)[1]

- there is a widespread moral panic around the issue in public and media forums, despite there being very little empirical evidence of the extent to which contract cheating services are actually used by students – digital technologies and the pandemic 'pivot' are perceived to have amplified opportunities for 'cheating', but we do not yet have research evidence

[1] Newton, P. M. (2018) How Common Is Commercial Contract Cheating in Higher Education and Is It Increasing? A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Education*, 3 (1), pp. 1-18.

either to confirm or rebut this perception[2]

- partly as a result of the above, dependencies on data-extractive platforms (such as Turnitin) for policing plagiarism are culturally normalised; 98% of UK universities use Turnitin[3]: such platforms directly profit from the panic discourse outlined above

- rising student numbers and unmanageable academic workloads create a context in which there is rarely time for academics to gain the depth of familiarity with students and their writing styles to properly support good academic practice[4]

- new forms of AI/neural network technology such as OpenAI's Generative Pretrained Transformer 3 (GPT-3) are now able to generate text that is indistinguishable from human-generated language; this will require all sectors of education to re-think our dependency on written assessment practice [5]

This paper looks in more detail at two critical trends which – while likely to require us to take steps to transform our approach to assessment – also offer us the opportunity to make positive change. It provides a brief overview of 1) AI-enabled essay writing, and 2) current debates on routine use of plagiarism detection systems. It then goes on to map the implications for assessment practice in our own institution, introducing an approach to assessment design based on the example of the EFI PGT portfolio.

AI-enabled essay writing

Platforms and applications which make it easy to generate AI-written text are now readily and freely available, with the quality of writing produced often indistinguishable from human-generated text. Long-used in journalism, sports-writing and advertising, AI-writing is now becoming mainstream in other sectors. The implications for the ways universities assess students through the written form are potentially significant.

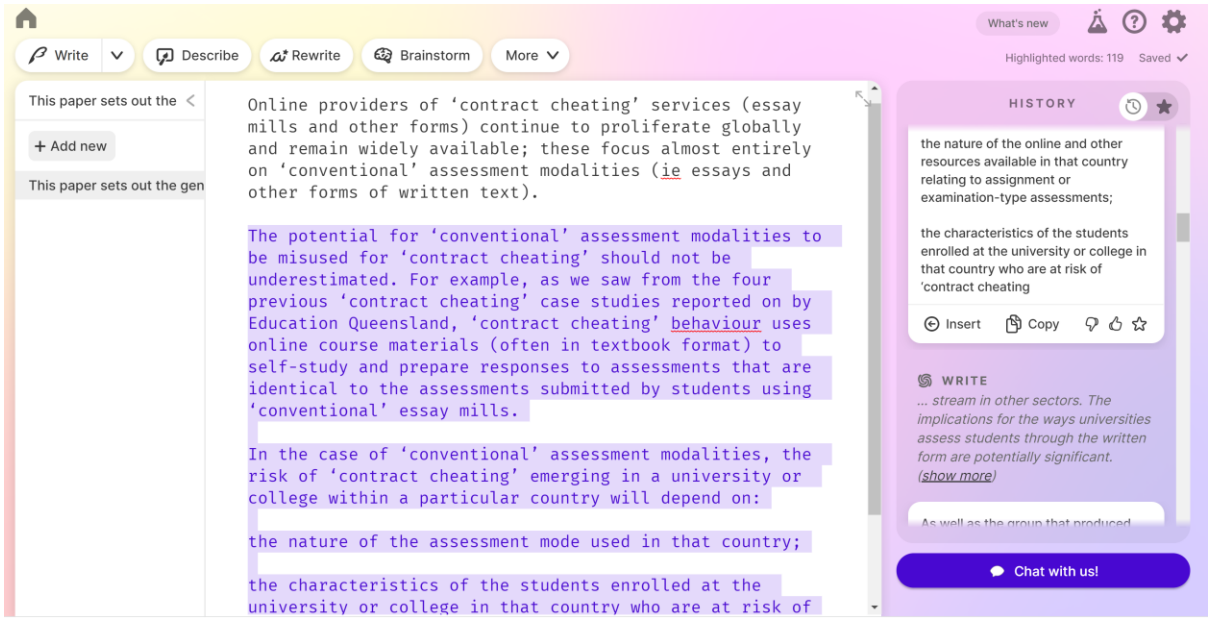
The example below – generated in 5 minutes and at no cost using the application Sudowrite – demonstrates how such systems operate.

[2] Kjellgren, R., Hamilton-Smith, N., Fraser, A. (2022) Criminal Grades? Contract cheating and student exploitation in Higher Education. Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research

[3] Turnitin for Universities (nd) https://www.turnitin.com/regions/uk/university

[4] UCU (2022) Workload survey 2021: data report. Universities and Colleges Union, June 2022

[5] Sharples, M. (2022) New AI tools that can write student essays require educators to rethink teaching and assessment. LSE Impact Blog, May 17th 2022.



An opening paragraph or two is provided, and the AI – using a neural network machine learning model trained using internet text – will continue to build the narrative (the text highlighted purple is AI-generated). The model is able to distinguish between types of writing and replicate them as needed (for example it can produce a news article, an academic paper or a high school essay)[6]. In the case of academic writing it is also able to use citations and references which can seem authentic. Clearly there are significant implications here for our ability to ensure authenticity of student work where assessment practices depend on free-text and the essay form.

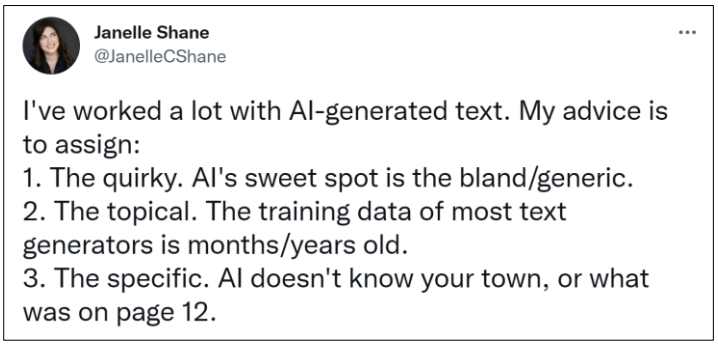
The technology that underpins applications like Sudowrite is known as Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3 (GPT-3), widely described as the most sophisticated language prediction model yet developed. Created by the US lab, OpenAI, the first paper on GPT-3 was introduced in May 2020. While GPT-3 can be used by third party developers to create applications like Sudowrite (there are many others), and it is easy to set up an account with the OpenAI GPT-3 playground itself, the relative newness of the model makes it likely that usage among students is not yet widespread. Universities therefore have a narrow window in which to develop policy and regulations designed to account for its use.

Current commentary emphasises that with a combination of institutional awareness and academic willingness to adapt assessment practices, GPT-3 has the potential to enhance rather than devastate conventional approaches in higher education. Awareness of what AI *cannot* do can help us design assessment which focuses on what is most valuable in higher education teaching and learning. Even just applying this thinking to conventional essays, we can design around GPT-3 by, for example by requiring:

- high-level synthesis based on in-class discussions
- analytical and critical comparison of two texts
- application of theories and frameworks to case studies and live challenges
- incremental assessments which build on each other over the course of the academic year

Or, as one commentator put it:

[6] Some illustrative examples of this in Slate, September 06 2022: https://slate.com/technology/2022/09/ai-students-writing-cheating-sudowrite.html



GPT-3 could also potentially be used constructively with students to help build their academic writing skills (for example, asking them to generate an essay and then analysing the output to critique and improve it, or showing them how to use it as a strategy for 'breaking' writer's block). Further implications and approaches are discussed below.

Plagiarism-detection systems

Plagiarism-detection systems in their current form will not be an effective way of preventing GPT-3-enabled cheating. However there are other, even more compelling, reasons why such systems are becoming increasingly problematic in the context of higher education assessment.

Use of Turnitin is now routine and normalised within UK higher education, yet it is striking how little reflection is generally brought to bear on its use. Research shows that very significant problems with the routine use of plagiarism detection systems cluster around their functionality, their assumptions regarding legitimate representation of knowledge, intellectual property issues, distrust and bias.

- **Function** – plagiarism detection systems do not work particularly well (originality reports are hard to interpret, often contain false positives, use proprietary algorithms which are impossible to interrogate, are incapable of accounting for the subtle and sophisticated analysis of free text vocabulary and can be side-stepped by students who understand how to re-structure, paraphrase or convert text to image). It also cannot account for text generated using new models like GPT-3.[7]

- **Assumptions about academic writing** – plagiarism detection systems align with a view of academic writing that is increasingly out-of-date, over-individualised, failing to recognise academic writing as often collaborative, diverse and increasingly multimodal. It supports standardisation of academic writing rather than diversity, experimentation and digital age modalities.[8]

- **Intellectual property** – plagiarism detection platforms turn student intellectual property into profit for private companies, which in turn are not accountable to universities. Turnitin currently has a 'non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual, worldwide, irrevocable license' to 1.4 billion student papers.[9] In 2019 the company was sold to the US media company Advance

[7] Weber-Wulff, D. (2019) Plagiarism detectors are a crutch, and a problem. *Nature*, 27 March 2019
[8] Canzonetta, J. and Kannan, V. (2016) Globalizing Plagiarism & Writing Assessment: A Case Study of Turnitin. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9(2).
[9] Turnitin End User License Agreement

Publications for US$1.75 billion.[10]

- **Business model** – Turnitin has an effective monopoly on plagiarism detection services in UK universities, underpinned by its massive database of student work (mostly contributed without authentic informed consent) and now consolidated by the purchase of its main competitor, Ouriginal, in 2022.[11] In immediate practical terms, this makes it difficult for Information Services to put meaningful pressure on the company regarding critical issues such as data retention and pricing.

- **Trust** – routine use of systems such as Turnitin normalise and structure-in distrust as a basis of the teacher-student relationship.[12] Requiring students' active compliance with a system which is based on an assumption of their untrustworthiness is not a helpful way to build strong academic relationships or encourage experimentation and risk-taking.

- **Bias** – research has shown that plagiarism detection services favour native language speakers, and perpetuate bias which can actively label some students as plagiarists even when they are not – particularly international students; Turnitin algorithms are proprietary and not open to scrutiny by their users.[13]

Turnitin has become ubiquitously-used in our university over the last decade without an accompanying institution-wide conversation about its implications. It is probably our most successfully-implemented learning technology, in that the values and assumptions embedded within it have become internalised and are unconsciously adopted across our community. They are now integral to many of our assessment practices. Many colleagues assume that our regulations require assignments to be run through Turnitin (they don't). Further, as it is embedded within Learn, many colleagues and Schools assume that its use for *routine* plagiarism detection at the point of assignment submission is mandated. Many parts of the university do require students to submit their assignments through Turnitin, effectively routinising its use.

The shift to hybrid teaching over the last two years brought with it a massive increase in submissions to Turnitin (a 404% increase between May 2019 and May 2021 according to ISG service stats) – presumably due to reduced confidence in student conduct in the online mode, and the wide use of exam alternatives over this period. All this activity further embeds the deeply problematic issues of bias and distrust outlined above. It also amplifies the extent to which we are requiring our students to donate their intellectual property to generate data and profit for a third-party platform over which we have very little leverage as an institution.

Developing alternative approaches: one example

There are many ways of creatively approaching some of the issues raised above. I present here just one example from EFI which, having the privilege of being new, has been able to design from a

[10] EdSurge (2019) Turnitin to Be Acquired by Advance Publications for $1.75B, March 6th 2019.

[11] Times Higher Education (2022) Ouriginal chief defends Turnitin takeover against monopoly jibes. Times Higher Education May 5th 2022.

[12] Bayne, S., et al (2020) *The Manifesto for Teaching Online*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.

[13] Introna, L. and Hayes, N. (2011) On sociomaterial imbrications: What plagiarism detection systems reveal and why it matters, *Information and Organization*, 21(2), 107-122.

relatively blank slate. The EFI PGT assessment strategy works to address and, where possible, mitigate the trends and trajectories outlined above.

EFI aims to be a space in which our students are encouraged to engage critically with data-enabled and digital practices – a space in which risk-taking is supported, assessment approaches engage creatively with digital methods, and the new modalities of academic writing and work are understood. Our teaching model is heavily oriented to interdisciplinary collaboration through group-working and peer-feedback, to multimodal representation, to the opportunities for assessment offered by making, coding, visualising, crafting and building as well as the established representational forms of writing.

Our courses use a range of assessment approaches – essays and reports are part of this, but we also require our students to work collaboratively to directly address defined societal challenges by co-producing presentations and slide decks, creating videos, generating code, crafting physical objects, building digital artefacts, creating videos and designing data visualisations. By enabling this range and variety we provide students with:

- the scope to be creative and innovative in the representation of academic knowledge
- the chance to develop essential team-working and collaborative problem-solving skills
- the ability to foreground digital and data skills, placing digital forms at the centre of our assessment strategy

These approaches also carry the advantage of being relatively plagiarism- and automation-resistant, the intention being to 'design out' plagiarism, collusion and other forms of academic misconduct through creative assessment design.

EFI will not make any routine use of plagiarism detection systems at the point of assignment submission – it is particularly important that we have a well-articulated position on this issue, as it fundamentally relates to ethical data practices and requires a coherent alignment between our assessment practices and the wider EFI ethos. Plagiarism detection systems will only be used where there is a suspected case of misconduct that requires to be escalated.

There are no exams in EFI. While closed-book exams do mitigate risks associated with GPT-3, they bring too many well-documented problems to justify use in the EFI context, including negative effects on student wellbeing (research shows that examination stress is associated with mental health issues including 'anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm, panic attacks, burnout and thoughts of suicide'[14]), inequity (ability to perform well in exam conditions is not equally distributed[15]) and inauthenticity (exams do not uniformly allow students to demonstrate their learning to the best of their ability[16]).

[14] Jones, E. et al (2021) Student wellbeing and assessment in higher education: the balancing act. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46:3, 438-450.
[15] Rossiter, J. et al (2020) A case for abolishing high-stakes exams. Centre for Global Development.
[16] McArthur, J. (2021) Rethinking student involvement in assessment. Centre for Global Higher Education working paper.

Discussion

As a university we have done significant, important work in recent years to support and enable meaningful, rigorous, creative assessment practice. Maintaining our ability to be agile in this regard is essential if we aspire to make a shift toward more ethical, contemporary and future-proof approaches. This will require a combination of university-level structural adaptation and discipline-appropriate review and reform. Senate Education Committee should be leading on more fully developing these in the context of the new Assessment Principles and Priorities, for implementation through the Curriculum Transformation Programme and the Digital Strategy.

Activities that Senate Education Committee should consider supporting include:

1. review of assessment-related workload allocation which currently does not allow sufficient time for staff either to develop deep knowledge of students' writing styles and capacities, or to innovate in assessment design
2. systematic review of the assessment approaches of courses and programmes (possibly through Curriculum Transformation) with a view to reducing assessment burden and freeing time for innovation and adaptation
3. review of assessment regulations to account for new forms of potential misconduct and emerging writing practices – including review of the anonymity requirement
4. in the context of the Digital Strategy, review of our technology infrastructure and the ways in which Turnitin is embedded within our systems, alongside review of our contract with Turnitin
5. resourcing of a cross-institutional academic development programme in assessment diversification
6. resourcing of discipline and subject-specific academic development relating to assessment diversification, including review of local policy-development in relation to Turnitin use

Resource implications

Review and development along the lines suggested would require resource, which could be addressed through Curriculum Transformation. A move away from Turnitin would have the potential to bring savings.

Risk management

Risks associated with not taking action on the issues raised in this paper are significant, and relate to student wellbeing, our organisational commitment to ethical data practices and authentic assessment, compromises to student privacy and intellectual property, issues with misconduct and – most importantly – our ability to guarantee the quality of our degrees and provide our students with a robust and high-quality learning experience. A full risk assessment would be required ahead of taking action on the issues identified above.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

The paper does not directly reference the climate emergency. It relates to SDG 4.

Equality & diversity
The issues raised in this paper are fundamentally about equality, diversity, ethical practices and fairness – and how we ensure these are embedded in our assessment practices for the future.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed
Following discussion at SEC, it is proposed that actions be taken forward through CTP and implementation of the digital strategy. It may be appropriate for a short-life SEC working group to be established to develop the detail of our response.

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3 November 2022

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Freedom of Information
Open

Senatus Education Committee

10 November 2022

Senate Committees' Internal Effectiveness Review 2021/22

Description of paper

1. At the final meeting of 2021/22, Academic Services notified Senate and its Standing Committees of plans for the annual internal review of the effectiveness of Senate and its Committees.
2. This paper provides Standing Committees with analysis and potential actions drawn from the responses received to the light-touch internal Senate Standing Committees Effectiveness Review conducted in summer 2022.

Action requested / recommendation

3. The Committees is invited to note and comment on the analysis of feedback received on each Committee and the proposed actions set out in Appendix 1, which are intended to aid continuous improvement of our approach to academic governance in 2022/23.

Background and context

4. The University is required under the 2017 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance to carry out an annual internal review of Senate and its Committees which carry delegated responsibilities.
5. In summer 2022, Academic Services issued a short questionnaire to Senate Standing Committee members and their responses were collated.
6. The review was deliberately light touch, taking account of the forthcoming external effectiveness review to take place in 2022/23.
7. A copy of the analysis received from members in relation to Senate and its Committees will be made available to the consultant that carries out the external effectiveness review. This will highlight key issues for the review to consider.

Discussion

8. A copy of responses received in relation to the Committees and proposed actions can be found in Appendix 1.
9. Given the low number of responses (total of 12) the summary includes the raw responses received from Committee members. We are satisfied that this information does not allow individual respondents to be identified.
10. Suggested actions, in response to the feedback from Standing Committee members, are intended to be proportionate to the scope of an annual effectiveness review, and the volume of feedback received.
11. Senate received a copy of the responses received from Senate Committees' members at its meeting on 12 October, and was invited to provide comments and suggestions for potential actions. No comments were received from Senate.

Resource implications

12. The recommended actions will require coordination by Committee Administrators in Academic Services as part of their established roles in support of Conveners and the cycle of Committee business.

Risk management

13. This activity supports the University's obligations under the 2017 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance.

Equality & diversity

14. The review provides an opportunity to identify any equality and diversity issues in the composition of Senate Standing Committees, and the way they conduct their business.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

15. The findings of the review have been reported to the relevant Senate Standing Committees and they will discuss and take forward actions in response.
16. Academic Services will report to Senate and its Standing Committees at the first meeting of 2023/24 on progress against actions taken in response to the review.

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APPENDIX 1

Report of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee Internal Effectiveness Review 2021/22

The Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee currently has 19 members. 4 responses were received to the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire.

- **Committee Remit**
  Majority of respondents strongly agreed with the following statements, one respondent agreed with the following statements:
  - The Committee remit is clear
  - The Committee remit is appropriate
  - The Committee has adapted effectively to challenges of changes in priority.

  All respondents agreed that the Committee is using task groups effectively.

  General comments received in relation the Committee remit are as follows:

  - The remit of the committee is clear
  - Policy and governance decisions around wellbeing would be best placed elsewhere, but only if and when another governance structure is in place to support these.

- **Governance and Impact**
  Half of the respondents strongly agreed, and half the respondents agreed that:
  - They have a clear understanding of how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University
  - There is an effective flow of business between relevant College Committees, Senate Committees and Senate
  - The Committee makes the desired impact based on its remit and priorities

  The majority of respondents agreed that there are clear links between Committee business and University strategic priorities. One respondent disagreed with this statement.

  General comments received in relation to governance and impact are as follows:
  - There is possibly not quite enough link to Quality Assurance
  - Prior to joining the Committee, a member did not have a clear understanding of how APRC fit into the academic governance framework of the University, however, this is now clear since joining the Committee.

- **Composition**
  The majority of respondents strongly agreed, and one respondent agreed that the current composition of the Committee enables it to fulfil its remit and the size of the Committee is appropriate in order for it to operate effectively.

  The following comments were made by respondents in relation to composition:

  - Members are dedicated and the mix of the membership is effective at enabling those with specialist expertise to share their views and knowledge as needed for different agenda areas. The chair enables good discussion about agenda items in order for everyone to feel they can contribute effectively and appropriately.
  - Committee membership is quite large but I think this is necessary to cover all the student cohorts. It might be helpful to have student reps covering UG/PGT/PGR to

consult and provide feedback on specific papers and proposals as asking a UG rep to feedback on a PGR proposal is not always suitable.

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**
  The majority of the respondents agreed that the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population. One respondent disagreed with this statement.

  All respondents agreed that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business.

  The following comment was made on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

  - It would be good if APRC could invite some more colleagues from under-represented, and systemically marginalised groups to join.

- **Role**
  The majority of respondents strongly agreed, and one respondent agreed that:

  - They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as Committee members.
  - They received an effective induction when they joined the Committee

  All respondents strongly agreed that Committee members fully engage in Committee business.

- **Communications**
  The majority of respondents agreed, and one respondent disagreed with each of the following statements:
  - The Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders
  - They have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee as a representative of their College or Group
  - They have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee

  The following comments were received in relation to communications:

  - There can always be improvements in communication
  - I believe it can be made clearer to each member, which 'audience' they are to receive comments from, and who they cascade out to. Although APRC usually have open papers/minutes they are not well-advertised to the wider University community.

- **Support**
  All respondents strongly agreed that the Committee is effectively supported by Academic Services.

  The majority of respondents strongly agreed, and one respondent agreed with each of the following statements:
  - The information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making;
  - Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail on the background of issues brought to the Committee.

  All respondents agreed that Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail on how Committee decisions will be implemented.

Report of Senate Education Committee Internal Effectiveness Review 2021/22

Senate Education Committee currently has 24 members. 5 responses were received to the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire.

- **Committee Remit**

  All respondents agreed that:

  - The Committee remit is clear.
  - The Committee has adapted effectively to challenges of changes in priority.

  One respondent disagreed that the Committee is using task groups effectively and that the scope of the Committee remit is appropriate.

  In relation to scope of the Committee remit, some respondents suggested that:

  - Student welfare issues should be dealt with elsewhere (and ideally not as part of Senate at all).
  - There is continuing potential for overlap and duplication with the other Standing Committees, particularly in relation to Quality Assurance and ELIR recommendations. There may be benefit in being clearer on the ownership of specific actions. Effective oversight and governance of the Student Experience and Wellbeing is complex, and likely to become ever more so. Some thought needs to be given to how best to address this as the new model of student support rolls out. Education Committee already has a very wide remit and SQAC does not necessarily have the right membership. It would therefore make sense to consider a dedicated Senate Standing Committee, potentially replacing SQAC, with relevant QA oversight moving to SEC and / or APRC as necessary.

- **Governance and Impact**

  All respondents agreed that:

  - They understood how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University.
  - There is an effective flow of business between relevant College Committees, Senate Committees and Senate.
  - There are clear links between Committee business and University strategic priorities.

  One respondent disagreed that the Committee makes the desired impact based on its remit and priorities. They suggested that:

  - There is a perceived large gap and disconnect between the work of SEC and Schools. The resumption of short-life task groups with membership drawn from Schools would help to address this, but some thought needs to be given to how SEC can engage and communicate with the wider University Community more effectively.

- **Composition**

  Respondents were satisfied that the size of the Committee is appropriate in order for it to operate effectively.

One respondent disagreed that the current composition of the Committee enables it to fulfil its remit.

The following comments were made by respondents in relation to composition:

- As recent discussions at Senate have shown, not everyone in the University is convinced that the current composition of the Committee is right. Regardless of whether I agree with this point or not, it is a problem in itself if there is doubt (or even distrust) over composition - and hence decision-making processes more generally – in part of the institution. These problems may ultimately affect the Committee's ability to fulfil its remit. I would therefore be happy to add other Senate members to the Committee if that led to higher levels of trust. I would be concerned, however, that a further increase in membership (SEC is already very large) may make the Committee less agile, so any increase should be kept small.
- While it continues to deal with student welfare issues, the Committee needs to include those with key responsibility in that area. If the Committee is not dealing with student welfare issues in the future, then the current Committee makeup is fine. The key is that the membership should include all of those with key responsibilities for aspects of the remit supplemented with a number of "experts".
- I have put that I 'agree' on the size, but actually I am between agree and disagree. It is a good size for inclusion, and perhaps that is important for Senate committees. On the other hand, its size means its members don't really carry much responsibility since it makes that all quite diffuse.

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

  Three respondents agreed that the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population, but two disagreed.

  While four respondents were satisfied that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business, one was not.

  The following comments were made:

  - I think there could be consideration given to more student representation, beyond EUSA.
  - The current makeup of the committee lacks racial diversity.

- **Role**

  All respondents agreed that:

  - They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as Committee members.
  - Committee members engage fully in Committee business.

  One respondent did not agree that they have received an effective induction when joining the membership of the Committee.

- **Communications**

  Two respondents disagreed that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders and that they have a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee.

One respondent disagreed that they have a clear understanding of their role on the Committee as a representative of their College or Group.

The following comments were received in relation to communications:

- I'm not sure that the Committee has much visibility across the University, with members of staff or with students. I'm not saying that it should necessarily have more but as a member of the Committee I don't feel necessarily that I understand what cascading I should do. This is particularly because I am there as a representative HoS, but surely I'd not cascade to my own School only - perhaps to other HoS's...?
- This is the weakest area of the Committee function at present and it is time for us to think more carefully about how the Committee communicates and engages directly (and through reps) with the wider community.

- **Support**

  All respondents felt that:

  - The Committee is effectively supported by Academic Services;
  - The information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making;
  - Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail on the background of issues brought to the Committee.

  One respondent disagreed that Committee papers provide an appropriate level of detail on how Committee decisions will be implemented.

  The following comments were received in relation to support:

  - Implementation details are sometimes a bit thin;
  - All excellent;
  - Implementation and communication plans as a result of Committee decisions need to be more carefully discussed especially in relation to any decisions that need to be referred to Senate / other committees before final action can be taken.

Report of Senate Quality Assurance Committee Internal Effectiveness Review 2021/22

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) currently has 12 members. Three responses were received to the following questions of the Internal Effectiveness Review Questionnaire:

1. **Committee Remit**

   Respondents agreed that the remit of the Committee is clear, that it has adapted well to changes to priorities and uses its task groups effectively. The following was noted:

   - Committee tasks groups might be able to make more rapid progress on short-life task groups if it could draw on additional resource.
   - The committee is very effective and open to different voices which I value. It would be useful to have some means to ensure those charged with taking actions forward follow through.
   - SQAC has been responsive to the changes in priority and sympathetic to the workload pressures on key staff across the institution. SQAC has used task groups well although they have been small in number over the last couple of years.

2. **Governance and Impact**

   All respondents understood how the Committee fits into the academic governance framework of the University, and considered there to be a clear link between Committee business and the University's strategic priorities.

   However, not all respondents agreed that there is an effective flow of business between College Committees, the Senate Committees and Senate. Respondents noted that:

   - Having College Deans as contributors to the committee is useful in ensuring a good relationship between College committees and Senate Committees. I find it a valuable way of being able to ensure there is 2 way communication.
   - I think that flow of information between the committees often relies on individual membership rather than something more formal. I'd also like SQAC to make more impact in terms of seeing more effective change happen. It is not always clear that the Committee's findings inform decision-making by APRC and other standing committees. This might be clearer to those who attend a range of standing committees.

   - It is notable that the Committee's ongoing scrutiny of and support for the thematic reviews does not always translate into progress and resource, which suggests that the Committee struggles - in some areas - to make the desired impact.

   - It is not clear that priorities identified by the Committee have a significant impact on Senate decision making and ESG priorities. Business flows effectively from Senate to the standing committee and to College, and from external bodies to the committee thanks to our QA VP and PS support, but it is less clear that business flows from the committee horizontally or upwards.

3. **Composition**

   All respondents were satisfied that the composition of the Committee, one noting the following:
   - I value the current composition as a range of voices are heard and can share information.

However, one respondent did not think the size of the Committee enables it to operate effectively, noting the following:

- The current Committee is doing excellent work, but the volume of work - much of it urgent - is falling heavily on the Deans and VP, who already have significant workloads, and we risk struggling to progress some new projects without further resource. We might benefit from greater student representation.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

All respondents were satisfied that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business.

However, respondents disagreed that the composition of the Committee is suitably representative of the diverse University population. The following was noted:

- We are not a diverse group, which reflects the disadvantage specific groups of staff face to reach the grades that are represented at the Committee. Improved representation alone would not ensure EDI considerations are adequately addressed. We could improve further by considering how we mandate EDI consideration, in terms of process and committee member knowledge of EDI.
- The composition is a reflection of those with responsibilities at different levels in the University and Colleges which is appropriate but not as diverse as it could be.

5. Committee members - role clarity and participation

All respondents felt they had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities, received an effective induction when they joined the Committee, and that Committee members engage fully in Committee business, with one noting the following:

- I have been grateful for the option to engage in hybrid mode this year and would have been unable to attend without this option. I regard this as an effective reasonable adjustment and an example of how the Committee supports EDI consideration.

6. Stakeholder engagement and communications

The respondents felt that they had a clear understanding of their role as a representative of their College or Group and had a clear understanding of their role in cascading information from the Committee. One respondent noted that:

- Papers from SQAC influence discussions at College level and vice versa if something is raised at College that needs wider discussion this is raised.

However, one respondent disagreed that the Committee communicates effectively with stakeholders, noting that:

- The challenge of communicating QA business to all our stakeholders is longstanding. The committee is obviously working hard on this, e.g. through the Digital Maturity project, but how to ensure QAE is visible, accessible, and usable across the University is still a challenge.

7. Committee support

All respondents felt that the Committee was effectively supported by Academic Services; that the information provided to the Committee supports effective decision-making; and that Committee papers provide appropriate background of issues and an appropriate level of detail on how Committee decisions will be implemented. The following was noted:

- Outstanding support by Academic Services throughout this year.
- In my opinion the committee operates very effectively, is chaired very well and is collaborative in approach to items raised. The size means good discussion but clear decisions and outcomes making it a valuable contribution to the University.
- Further digitisation in line with the Digital Maturity recommendations will be welcomed.

Potential actions in response to 2021/22 review

Area Under Review	Recommended Action	Responsible	Date
Remit	1. Committees to consider the appropriateness of their remit in addition to overlap with, and links to, other Senate Standing Committees, and to feed their views into the externally-facilitated review.	Committee Conveners Standing Committees Supported by Committee Administrators	Ongoing throughout 2022/23
Composition	2. The expansion of Standing Committee membership to include three elected academic Senate members to each Standing Committee. Senate approved the change of composition and process, with new members expected to join Committees in time for the second cycle of Committees.	Senate Clerk Committee Administrators Committee Conveners.	November 2022
Governance & Impact	3. An external effectiveness review of Senate will take place in 2022/23, and as part of this review the effectiveness of the relationship between Senate, its committees, and the wider University governance structure will be considered. 4. The Convener's Forum will be asked to consider how it can support enhancement of communication between Standing Committee's particularly around items of common business. 5. Each committee to consider more effective use of short-life working groups	Standing Committees members are asked to engage with the external effectiveness review as and when required Convener's Forum Committee Conveners Committee Administrators	All: ongoing throughout 2022/23
EDI	6. Each committee to give proactive consideration of EDI for all papers/discussion and decision making.	Standing Committees Committee Conveners Committee Administrators	Ongoing throughout 2022/23

	7. Committee Convener's will be considering how to respond to a motion approved at Senate on 12 October: *Each committee convener is expected to propose for approval by the Senate Exception Committee and/or next Senate Meeting reasonable additions to their committee to improve BAME, student, and trade union representation.*	Committee Conveners	By the next meeting of Senate
Role	8. Academic Services and the Convener to continue offering effective induction for members and to implement improvements to approaches where possible.	Committee Conveners Committee Administrators	Ongoing throughout 2022/23
Communications	9. A Senate Committees' Newsletter will be reintroduced from 2022 onwards. The newsletter will inform the University community of discussions and decisions taken at Senate and its Standing Committees.	Committee Administrators	The first newsletter is expected to be published in December 2022, with further newsletters to align with the cycle of Committee business.

Progress on actions identified in the 2020/21 review

Area Under Review	Recommended Action	Progress against actions	Responsible
Remit	1. Student Experience to be included as standing item for SEC 2. SQAC and SEC to consider triggers for escalation and relationship with University Executive	The University is commissioning an externally-facilitated review, which will be able to take a systematic look at this issue.	Secretary Conveners' Forum
Composition	3. Senate to receive discussion paper on this topic at a later date.	Senate has discussed this and agreed some additions to Standing Committee membership. The externally-facilitated review will provide an opportunity to take a more systematic look at the composition of the committees.	Academic Services will take this forward with Senate Convener.
Governance & Impact	4. Each committee to consider more effective use of short-life working groups	No general action on this issue to date, although Committees have set up some new short-life working groups.	Convener/Secretary
EDI	5. Each committee to ensure proactive consideration of EDI for all papers/discussion and decision making. 6. Senate to receive a discussion paper on 'composition' at a later date, to include EDI .	See relevant section of table setting out proposed actions in response to 21-22 review.	Convener/Secretary Academic Services will take this forward with Senate Convener.
Role	7. Each committee to consider effective induction for members and implement revised approaches as required	Academic Services / the Conveners have offered induction to all new members, and would welcome feedback on how helpful this has been.	Convener/Secretary

Communications	8. Each committee to be more explicit at each meeting regarding how decisions will be communicated or implemented	Academic Services have continued to be attentive to this issue when producing minutes and following up on actions from Committee meetings. Academic Services are relaunching the Senate Committees Newsletter in 2022, which will assist with communicating Committee decisions.	Convener/Secretary

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

10 November 2022

Curriculum Transformation Update

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an update on work in progress with the development of a proposed curriculum framework for consideration via the appropriate University governance channels, including Senate and other groups (e.g. relevant Standing Committees of Senate) in early 2023.

   This will directly contribute to Strategy 2030 outcomes ii, v, vi, ix and xii, and be relevant to other outcomes including iv, x and xiii

Action requested / recommendation

2. For discussion and feedback during and after the meeting to inform the development of the next iterations of the framework (particularly the programme archetypes and draft guidance and rules to inform its application).

Background and context

3. Curriculum Transformation is a major and long term change and investment programme for the University. We are coming towards the end of an initial scoping phase (April 2021 to December 2022) which will lead into multi-year design, development and implementation phases.

   Work has continued throughout 2022 on the Student Vision and on the development of an institutional curriculum framework. This paper provides an update on work in progress and plans for the next three months as we look ahead to discussion of a proposed curriculum framework, readiness assessment and benefits case at Senate in February 2023.

   Further information including plans and progress is at https://edin.ac/curriculum-transformation (open to external visitors) and the curriculum transformation hub: https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation (internal audience – staff and students).

Discussion

4. Appendix 1 provides an update on progress with the main elements of the curriculum framework (Edinburgh Student Vision, Curriculum Design Principles and Programme Archetypes).

5. This includes a report on the consultation and reaction to the Edinburgh Student Vision and the second iteration and next steps with the development of use cases for the Curriculum Design Principles.

6. A second iteration of the Undergraduate Programme Archetypes is presented. This includes proposals for four core undergraduate disciplinary archetypes

(Single, Double, Combined and Single-Restricted Honours).

7. The Single Honours archetype includes flexibility in credit weightings between minimum and maximum set limits per year and at programme level. This includes flexibility to increase the disciplinary credit load in years 3 and 4.

8. The single honours restricted archetype would only be available to disciplines with very tight external accreditation requirements.

9. The Double and Combined Honours archetypes provide a route for students to spread their study across two main disciplines. The Double Honours archetype is based upon any permitted combination of two anchor disciplines with no prescribed integration between the disciplines. The Combined Honours archetype includes an enrichment element or other steps to connect the anchor disciplines. This could include tailored courses to link the two disciplines, recommendations for existing courses at the interface between the disciplines, or a combination of the two. The expectation is that there would be an opportunity for a capstone element that draws on both disciplines.

10. This update contains further detail on how Challenge Courses, Experiential Learning and Enrichment Elements could work and be developed as part of the Curriculum Framework.

11. Appendix 2 provides a first pass at articulating some of the rules and guidance for how the Curriculum Framework should be applied and used. This includes current thinking around programme structures and design, challenge courses, experiential learning and enrichment elements, course selection and enrolment. It is incomplete and should be seen as early stage work in progress. We will work with Schools, Deaneries, members of the Curriculum Design Principles & Architecture and Supporting the Curriculum Workstreams to test, refine and further develop the rules and guidance. Key areas to add include approaches to admissions, transfers, progression and degree awards.

Resource implications

12. The programme resources to date have been managed through the project team staff time to support the development of the programme archetypes and design principles and the supporting the curriculum work. During the upcoming semester a draft investment case will be developed working with key stakeholders, based on feedback already received and experience from other universities undertaking a similar programme. As well as setting out the vision we want to achieve, this will also set out the initial forecast for staff effort required to deliver the programme. In addition to resource, the initial scheduling and timeline for implementation will be developed which is expected to be over a number of years, and dependencies and opportunities with other initiatives will need to form part of this consideration.

Risk management

13. Key risks include the readiness and suitability of current University systems and support, along with concerns around capacity and timelines, particularly when considering the demands of running curriculum transformation alongside other

major institutional change programmes and as we emerge from the pandemic. These risks are being monitored and ameliorating actions identified through the use of a risk log reported on to the Programme Board.

The connections between these risks and implications for the scale and timeline of curriculum transformation will be a key consideration for the Board as we move from principles to specific sets of recommendations and take these recommendations through the appropriate governance channels. Central to this will be whether providing more time to understand and use the curriculum framework will increase the positive impact of curriculum transformation, and the need for a thorough assessment of whether the systems and other changes needed to support curriculum transformation can be implemented in time. In short, transformation and innovation to improve student and staff experience is the core aim, and this must dominate our actions and planning.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

14. Curriculum Transformation will support a positive contribution to the SDGs by the University. Objectives around inclusive and equitable access to education (SDG4), wellbeing (SDG3) and gender equality (SDG5) align with the purpose of Curriculum Transformation and the prototype Curriculum Design Principles. SDG13 (action to combat climate change and its impact) features directly in the Edinburgh Student Vision and through consideration by a Climate and Sustainability working group.

Equality & diversity

15. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will be reviewed periodically as we move from the scoping to the design and implementation phases of the programme in early 2023. Going beyond this, a commitment to equity, inclusivity and diversity is a key element of the Student Vision and the prototype Curriculum Design Principles. This will be a major focus for the resources and guidance developed to support curriculum transformation.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

16. The work in progress and next steps described in this paper will be discussed and evaluated through the Curriculum Transformation Board[1] reporting to the University Executive, through appropriate Senate Committees, Senate and Court. In addition to an expanded set of University wide communication and engagement activities, the programme team will continue to work with Heads of School, Directors of Teaching, Schools and Deaneries on the preparation of the curriculum framework.

[1] https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Who-is-working-on-CT.aspx

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November 2022

Freedom of Information
Open

Appendix 1

Curriculum Framework – Update on Work in Progress

We are making solid progress on the preparation of a proposed curriculum framework for consideration via the appropriate University governance channels, including Senate and other groups (including relevant Standing Committees of Senate) in early 2023. This update on the main elements of the framework (the Edinburgh Student Vision, Curriculum Design Principles and Programme Archetypes) should be read in conjunction with Appendix 2 which provides some initial propositions (potential rules and guidance) for how the framework could be used in practice. It is important to emphasise that the content of both Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 is work in progress. We will be using feedback from Senate Education Committee, Schools, Deaneries and other groups to further develop, test and refine the framework and guidance.

We are coming towards the end of the scoping phase for curriculum transformation. During 2021 and 2022 we have worked with staff, students and other stakeholders to explore and understand what we want from curriculum transformation. The first step in this was to develop an Edinburgh Student Vision to describe what we want the consequences and experience of the curriculum to be for students, graduates and applicants. This has fed into current work on the development and testing of an institutional curriculum framework comprised of a set of design principles and potential programme archetypes (structures).

Edinburgh Student Vision

The purpose of the Edinburgh Student Vision is to define a shared ambition for the distinctive qualities and impact of the curriculum for our applicants, students and graduates.

We have followed a three stage process to develop the Edinburgh Student Vision. The initial exploration stage took place between July and December 2021. A range of methods were used to draw in as varied and broad a range of perspectives as possible from individuals and groups. Curriculum Transformation workstreams and groups undertook focussed pieces of research and analysis, including a survey of recent graduates and discussions with employers. These groups also considered specific issues and challenges (e.g. relevance and implications for Taught Postgraduate Programmes). Perspectives and insights were gathered via the Curriculum Transformation Hub and through conversations with more than 30 committees and groups around the University, involving >700 staff and students.

These insights were shared at a meeting of workstream and group members at the end of November 2021 that led to the production of a draft vision (Box 1). It is built around three high level objectives that focus on creating long lasting benefits for our students, alongside a set of core principles for the development of a curriculum that will support the achievement of these objectives by utilising the key strengths and characteristics of our University.

A consultation on the draft vision took place between April and June 2022[2] using a range of methods and with different audiences. An online consultation via the Curriculum Transformation Hub was viewed by >500 individuals generating 33 survey responses. Feedback was also gathered through briefings to the Directors of Teaching Network, committees and groups, through workshops and consultation events, interviews and focus groups. We have continued to gather reactions to the Student Vision throughout the

[2] https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Edinburgh-Student-Vision-Consultation.aspx

summer and early autumn of 2022, particularly through discussions with Schools and Deaneries.

The Edinburgh Student Vision

The vision is built around three high level objectives that focus on creating long lasting benefits for our students, alongside a set of core principles for the development of a curriculum that will support the achievement of these objectives.

Objectives:
Our vision is for all students to benefit from a curriculum that will result in them being:

- **Disciplinary experts**: with advanced specialist skills, knowledge and experience
- **Ready to thrive in a changing world**: having developed the skills to be reflexive learners imbued with a critical mindset, cultural sensitivity and open to diverse perspectives
- **Highly employable**: can translate experience and capacities to career success, on graduation and beyond, seeking congruence with their own values and aspirations

Core Principles:
Our curriculum will achieve these objectives through programmes built around the following core principles:

- Supports the development of **self-directed, curious and confident learners**: who are critical thinkers, innovative, agile, resilient, creative and empathetic
- Provides **disciplinary depth, identity & expertise**: with students able to synthesise & apply learning, having developed their specialist knowledge and understanding, research skills and an appreciation of the research process
- Includes **experiential, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning**: with students able to work well with others, understand & use different perspectives, and develop strong communication & collaboration skills
- Has a clear focus on **integrity & is values-driven**: promoting honesty & integrity, equity, inclusion, respect, cultural humility, and a willingness to challenge structural enablement and embedded advantage
- Develops high levels of **digital and data literacy**: with students informed and active, confident in a range of environments and uses, with a mature understanding of ethical and societal considerations
- Builds **understanding and engagement with global challenges** (for example sustainability & climate change): to develop skills in solution design and delivery, able to explain & grasp the relative importance of different actions, work constructively across different contexts and be empowered to take action

Box 1 – Draft Student Vision

There has been overall support for the substance of the vision from the majority of respondents and other stakeholders. Key considerations emerging from the consultation included the importance of a stronger focus on wellbeing, how best to make the curriculum distinctive to Edinburgh, the need for investment in systems and other areas of support for the curriculum and the importance of a robust implementation plan. These points are being taken forward through current work in progress on curriculum design principles, programme archetypes and the Supporting the Curriculum Workstream.

Feedback gathered during and beyond the consultation will inform an update of the vision and be built into the Curriculum Design Principles work. This includes widening the definition of the third objective beyond employment to incorporate other dimensions of achievement (e.g. self-employment, societal and personal impact). The importance of a strong focus on wellbeing, including a stronger emphasis on societal benefits (including

through on-programme learning opportunities), consideration of what is meant by disciplinary depth and expertise in this context and its relationship to interdisciplinarity all feature in the second iteration of the Curriculum Design Principles (see below).

Once the Curriculum Framework has been finalised we will test and refine the phrasing and presentation of the Student Vision with a range of internal and external audiences. Potential applicants, including international applicants and those from a Widening Participation background, will be a key focus for this work.

Institutional Curriculum Framework

At the heart of curriculum transformation will be the development of an institutional curriculum framework to support achievement of the Edinburgh Student Vision. The framework consists of a set of programme archetypes to give us the structure of the curriculum and design principles focussed on how we deliver the curriculum (teaching, assessment, and infrastructure).

Curriculum Design Principles

The Curriculum Design Principles are intended to inform and support decisions on the selection and implementation of programme archetypes, and to guide decision making and planning at all levels, looking at how the curriculum is designed, developed, and supported. Prototype design principles were produced in April 2022 and shared alongside prototype archetypes. Feedback on the first iteration of the design principles (content and approach) was positive but when we started to test the utility and relevance of the principles we identified a need to tighten them up and look in more detail at how they can be used in practice. This is the focus for the second iteration of the design principles produced in late September 2022 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Curriculum Design Principles (Second Iteration)

An important theme emerging around the design principles is clarity on the intentions behind their implementation. The Curriculum Transformation Board have emphasised that the use of the design principles should support staff and student agency (so be responsive to different disciplinary contexts, enabling colleagues to be creative and use their academic judgment) and increase institutional resilience, particularly the resilience of staff and

students (so helping to manage workloads for individuals and introducing systems and policies that remove the need for time consuming workarounds).

Work is underway to identify examples of how the principles can be used for specific purposes by different colleagues around the University. This includes Programme Directors and Course Organisers using the principles to support the creation of new courses and programmes, to evaluate and enhance existing practice, communicate priorities with staff and students, and make connections to other work (e.g. Student Support Project). We will develop guidance and toolkits to support the use of the principles, drawing on relevant practice and resources from around the University and sector, aiming to have examples of this guidance available in early 2023.

Programme Archetypes

Our aim is to develop a limited number of programme archetypes (or delivery structures) at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level. The purpose of the archetypes is to facilitate greater clarity and consistency in our offering to students and enable achievement of the curriculum design principles, sharing of courses across programmes and understanding of the requirements for the infrastructure needed to support the curriculum.

The archetypes must be responsive to the requirements of external accreditation, support appropriate and achievable levels of choice and flexibility for students, and respect the expectations and requirements of different disciplines. An initial set of prototype undergraduate archetypes was produced in April 2022, with prototype taught postgraduate archetypes following in August 2022. These have been shared for discussion with Heads of School, Directors of Teaching, the University Executive, Curriculum Transformation Board, meetings with School representatives etc. Several Schools and Deaneries have used them to support discussion and thinking locally which is particularly welcome. Feedback from these sources is being used to support the development of second and third iterations of the archetypes for further discussion and testing in different subject areas before the end of the year.

Undergraduate Programme Archetypes

A second iteration of the Undergraduate Programme Archetypes was discussed by the Curriculum Design Principles & Architecture Workstream and Curriculum Transformation Board in late October/early November 2022. Key changes from the first iteration include a change in terminology (dropping the use of the terms “major” and “minor”), developing ideas around Challenge Courses and Experiential Learning, exploring the concept of enrichment elements (partly as an alternative to “minors”) and extending the archetypes to cover 5-year integrated Masters and 6-year professional degrees. A comprehensive slide deck including all of these developments will be shared with Schools and Deaneries following discussion at Senate Education Committee.

The proposed approach is that programmes will be built around the following structural elements: disciplinary archetypes, enrichment elements and challenge courses. All programmes will include challenge courses and experiential learning. There is some flexibility in how these categories can be used. Experiential learning can be embedded within the disciplinary archetype as well as offered as stand-alone courses, while challenge courses can be experiential and some could operate independently or as the first part of an enrichment element.

We are proposing four core **undergraduate disciplinary archetypes** (Figure 2). Schools and Deaneries would elect to run programmes using one or more of these disciplinary archetypes. We are proposing one main Single Honours archetype. Within this archetype there would be flexibility in credit weightings between minimum and maximum set limits per

year and at a programme level. This includes flexibility to increase the disciplinary credit load in years 3 and 4. Running programmes at the lower end of the disciplinary credit weighting limit (particularly in years 1 and 2) would provide the potential for students to move into double or combined honours paths or to take additional enrichment elements, including those providing potential for transfers at the end of years 1 or 2. The single honours restricted archetype would only be available to disciplines with very tight external accreditation requirements.

The Double and Combined Honours archetypes provide a route for students to spread their study across two main disciplines. The Double Honours archetypes is based upon any permitted combination of two anchor disciplines with no prescribed integration between the disciplines. The Combined Honours archetype includes an enrichment element or other steps to connect the anchor disciplines. This could include tailored courses to link the two disciplines, recommendations for existing courses at the interface between the disciplines, or a combination of the two. The expectation is that there would be an opportunity for a capstone element that draws on both disciplines.

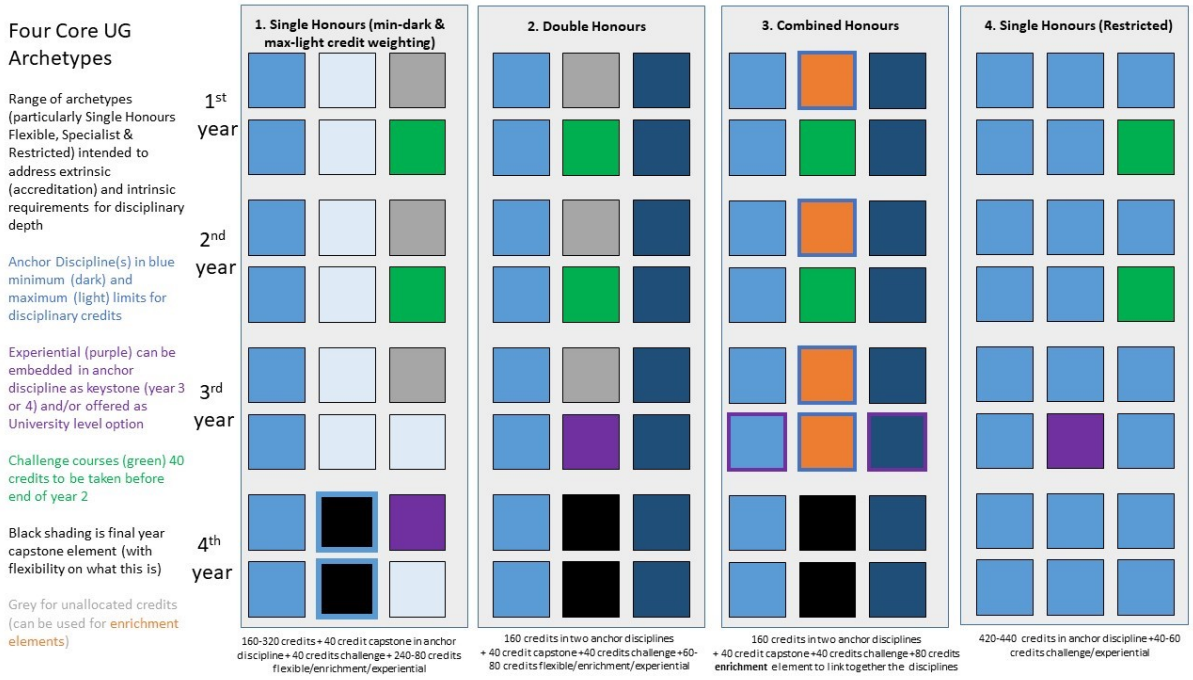


Figure 2 – Second Iteration of Undergraduate Programme Archetypes
(NB Courses presented as 20 credits for ease of illustration only. This is not intended to rule out other potential course credit weightings.)

Challenge Courses are intended to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning that draw on institutional research strengths and capabilities. Students would be required to achieve 40 Challenge Course credits by the end of year 2, choosing from a menu of challenge courses from 3 or 4 categories (e.g. Global Challenges, Working Across Boundaries, Emerging Disciplines, Ways of Thinking). Challenge courses could be offered by Schools and/or at a University level and would be designed to be taught to students from a mix of disciplines. The expectation is that Challenge Courses would be open to all students from across the institution. Enrolment on these courses is therefore likely to be in the 100s to 1000s with the potential for some Challenge Courses to be offered as online and asynchronous online courses. Colleagues teaching Challenge Courses will be supported to develop appropriate and innovative teaching and assessment methods in line with the Assessment & Feedback Principles and Priorities. Professor Sabine Rolle has agreed to

lead work to bring colleagues together to develop thinking around challenge courses, identify potential challenge courses (new and current) and look at the regulatory, governance and practical implications of developing and running challenge courses.

Experiential Learning figures prominently in the Student Vision. Professor Lesley McAra is leading a group developing definitions for experiential learning, looking at current approaches and exploring the opportunities and consequences of scaling up provision. We are proposing a two pronged approach. One, that experiential learning should be embedded as a keystone element of at least 20 credits in all disciplinary archetypes (Single, Double and Combined Honours). Building on current practice this could include activities like project work, placements, professional practice and study abroad. Two, that this will be complemented by significant growth in the availability of institutional level experiential learning courses or models (e.g. Students As Change Agents – SACHA, Student-Led Individually-Created Courses – SLICCs, Work Based Projects, Outreach Courses). These could be designed to align with or provide interdisciplinary/experiential alternatives to traditional capstone elements. Challenge and other courses in years 1 or 2 could also be run as experiential learning courses.

Enrichment Elements are intended to provide opportunities for learning to be built and consolidated across 80 credits of linked courses. Enrichment elements would be designed as coherent and substantive blocks of learning and could be offered as compulsory or elective programme elements. The intention is to use enrichment elements to support innovation & exploration for staff and students, and to provide structured flexibility to support programme design, student outcomes and progression. All would be named on transcripts, some could appear in the degree award itself. Four potential structures for enrichment elements are illustrated in Figure 3 (80 credits of linked courses). The adoption of a single honours archetype with flexibility on credit weighting might reduce the need for some of these potential structures, especially C and D. This is likely to be a focus of attention in the development of the third iteration of the undergraduate archetypes. Table 3 provides some speculative examples of potential enrichment elements.

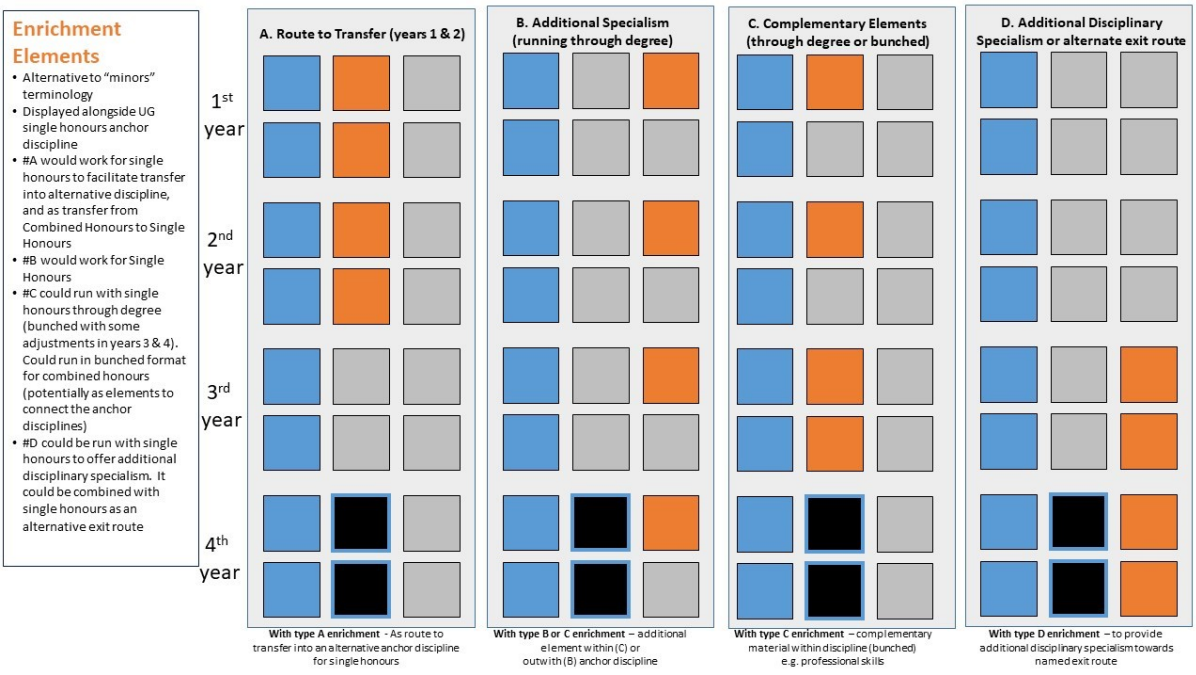


Figure 3 – Enrichment Elements

Potential Enrichment Elements

- **Data Skills** – thread 80 credits of data skills courses across four years, building from introductory material to more specialist/applied content by year 4. Potential "with" element
- **Languages** – offering a coherent block of 80 credits over two years or spread across all four years, building on learning from course to course. Potential to be a "with" element of award
- **Disciplinary Introduction** – offering 80 credits across two years as a stand-alone introduction to discipline or as route to transfer into Single/Combined Honours
- **Thematic or Specialist content** – using enrichment element route to offer a coherent strand of content (that could appear as a "with" element of an award). One application could be where a School wants to offer teaching linked to an area of research strength below the scale of a full disciplinary archetype, including teaching in emerging disciplines or linked to interdisciplinary themes.
- **Engineering Design & Maker Space** (e.g. HYPED) – providing an 80-credit opportunity for in-depth experiential learning, combining teaching and support for design, project development and implementation. Could be connected to an alternative capstone element.
- **Professional Communication (or other Professional or Specialist skills/methods)** running alongside disciplinary content during years 1 to 4.
- **Disciplinary Specialism (Advanced)** – 80 credit enrichment elements in years 3 and 4 to sit alongside the single honours (flexible) archetype and provide scope for additional specialism linked to discipline. Could also be used for inter-disciplinary or applied elements to sit alongside single honours during years 3 and 4.

Box 2 – Examples of potential enrichment elements

Postgraduate Taught Programme Archetypes

A prototype set of Postgraduate Taught Programme Archetypes was produced in August 2022 based on insights and perspectives from the Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Transformation Working Group[3]. These Postgraduate Archetypes are intended to help understand and visualise the structure of current and future taught postgraduate provision, to inform decisions on curriculum design, and support achievement of curriculum design principles and the student vision. They are also intended to enable appropriate sharing of courses between programmes and to understand and define what is needed to support the curriculum (QA, regulations, systems, physical & digital infrastructure etc.). In developing these archetypes our aim is to address the requirements of different modes of study (full-time, part-time, accretionary; on-campus, on-line, hybrid) and different types of programme (e.g. research preparation, disciplinary specialism, practice-based, interdisciplinary/thematic, professional development).

Our initial proposal is for three taught postgraduate programme archetypes (Figure 4). The mode 1 archetype is built around courses with or without a summer capstone. Mode 2 is built around activities running throughout the programme. These could be research projects, professional practice or studio based all potentially supported by some mix of supervision, mentoring, structured reflection and skills training, alongside the potential for offering credit-

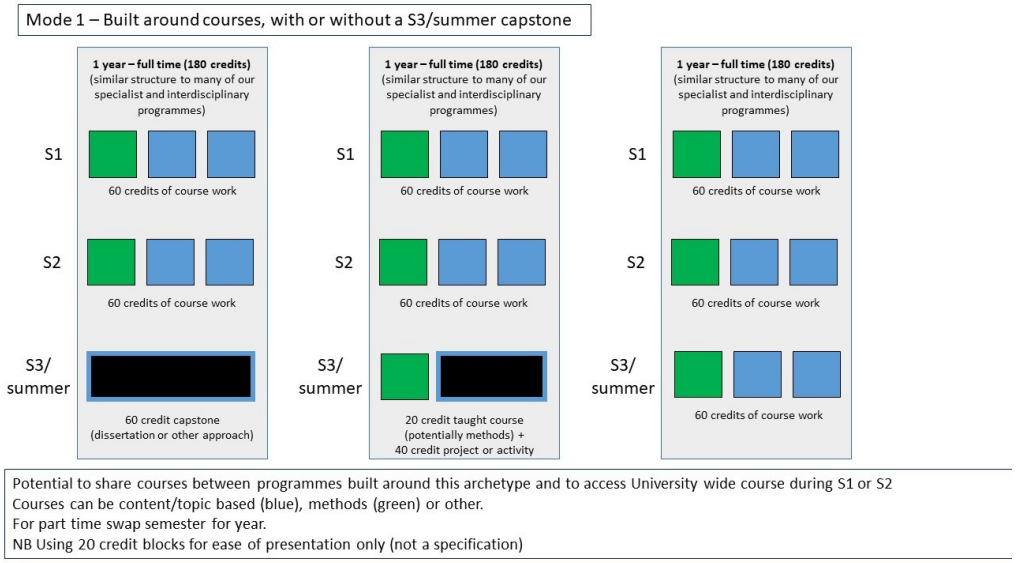
[3] https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Workstreams-Overview.aspx#postgraduate-group

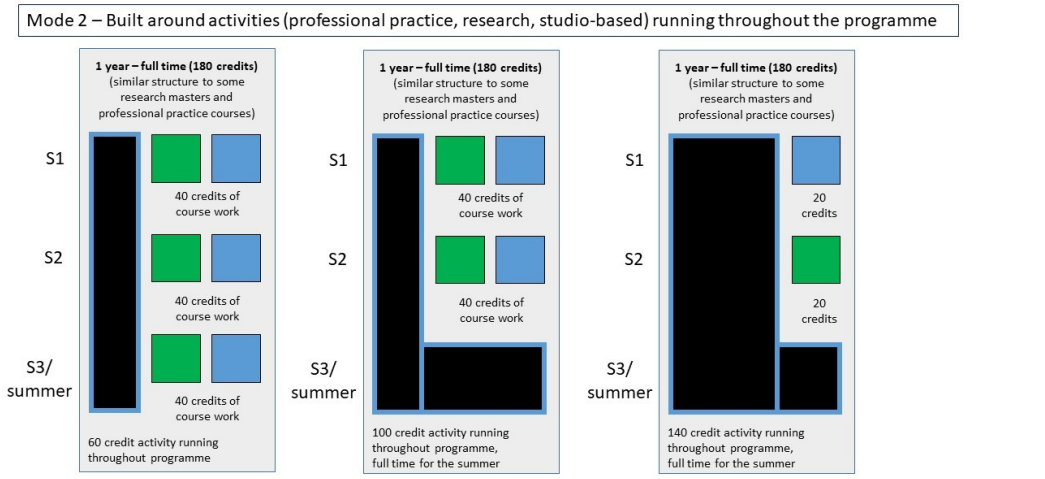
bearing courses. Mode 3, an accretive approach potentially including microcredentials would enable students to build up course and other credits over an extended period of time.

The initial reaction to these archetypes has been positive but there remains a significant amount of work to do. Key areas to explore for the next iteration will be whether these archetypes provide sufficient flexibility for Schools and Deaneries, progression and the position of PG Certificates and Diplomas in these archetypes, 2-year Masters, integrated and intercalated Masters and relevance to structured doctoral programmes.

Next steps

During the remainder of 2022 we will be working with specific Schools and Deaneries to test the application of the undergraduate and taught postgraduate archetypes in their areas. We will flesh out thinking and develop examples of potential challenge courses, experiential learning and enrichment elements, prepare examples of how the design principles can be used and supported in practice, and prepare the next iterations of the Taught Postgraduate and Undergraduate programme archetypes.





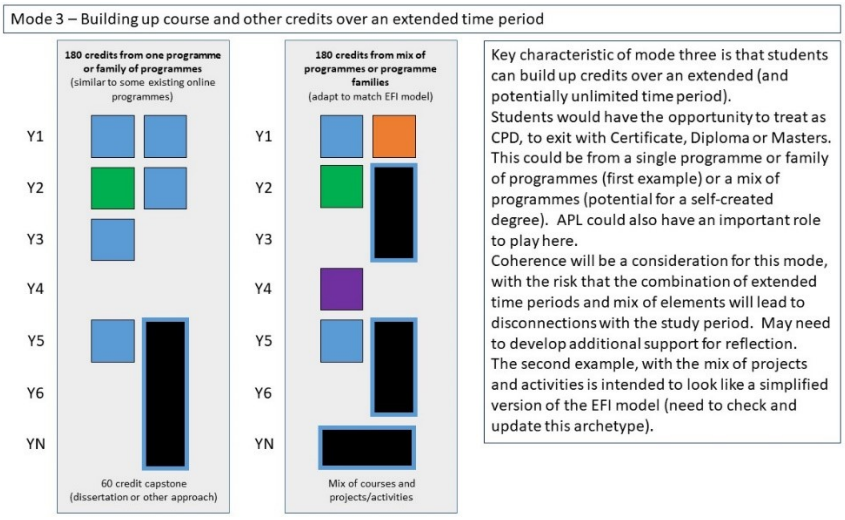


Figure 4 – Prototype Taught Postgraduate Programme Archetypes

Appendix 2

DRAFT Curriculum Transformation Core Proposition and Use of Curriculum Framework

The Curriculum Framework (Appendix 1) will be accompanied by guidance and rules for its application and use. This is a first pass at articulating some of these rules and guidance. It is incomplete and should be seen as early stage work in progress. We will extend and refine this guidance through discussions with the Curriculum Design Principles & Architecture Workstream, Curriculum Transformation Board, Schools and Deaneries. This initial draft considers only the undergraduate curriculum.

Core Proposition (DRAFT)

All programmes will use the curriculum design principles in combination with one or more of the programme archetypes, challenge courses and enrichment elements to address the Edinburgh Student Vision and other intended benefits of Curriculum Transformation.

The student vision comprises three high level objectives that focus on creating the following long lasting benefits for our students and graduates:

- Disciplinary expertise, skills, knowledge and experience
- Ready to thrive in a changing world through their growth and development as learners
- Successful on their own terms and able to translate experience and capacities to future success in employment, careers and other areas of personal achievement

With a commitment to provide an educational experience that includes:

- Support for the development of self-directed, curious and confident learners
- Designed to support student wellbeing
- Disciplinary depth, identity and expertise
- Experiential, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning
- Has a clear focus on integrity and is values-driven
- Develops high levels of digital and data literacy
- Builds understanding and engagement with global challenges

The curriculum design principles and archetypes are intended to be used and interpreted in a way that promotes staff and student agency (encouraging colleagues to be creative and responsive to their discipline and context, providing students with opportunities for choice and flexibility within and between courses) and increases institutional resilience (including the resilience of staff and students by helping manage workloads and reducing the need for workarounds and exceptions).

Institutional regulations, policies, infrastructure and support for teaching and learning will be designed to align with the institutional curriculum framework (archetypes and design principles) and be implemented in a way that supports agency and resilience.

Programme Structures & Design (DRAFT)

- Schools and Deaneries will select from the menu of permitted programme archetypes for each programme they offer. The Single Honours (Restricted) archetype will only be available for Programmes with very tight external accreditation requirements.
- These archetypes have been designed to support a core set of programme types (Single Honours, Double Honours, Combined Honours, General/Ordinary and Integrated Masters) and a limited number of discipline-specific programme types (e.g. Fine Art, MBChB, BVM&S).
- If utilising the Double or Combined Honours archetypes Schools and Deaneries will be able to specify which disciplines can be taken alongside each anchor discipline for the award of Double or Combined Honours.
- Schools and Deaneries will be able to specify which enrichment elements can be taken as part of each programme (compulsory or elective).
- Schools and Deaneries will be able to specify whether their anchor disciplines and enrichment elements are open to all students or to a restricted (and specified) range of programmes.
- For all programmes, DRPS will specify the possible/desirable/allowable options for Double and Combined Honours and Enrichment Elements. There will be standard text in DRPS describing Challenge Courses, experiential learning, enrichment elements and approaches to teaching and learning (linked to use of the Curriculum Design Principles) and their role in supporting achievement of the student vision. .
- Use of archetypes and enrichment elements may provide an opportunity for Schools and Deaneries to streamline the number of programmes offered at admission (linked to anchor disciplines), retaining the capacity for specialism during the programme to graduate with one of a range of specialisms linked to the anchor discipline. This range of specialisms would be included in programme advertising.
- Schools and Deaneries could decide to offer some subjects only as enrichment elements rather than as Single, Double or Combined Honours archetypes.

Challenge Courses, Experiential Learning and Enrichment Elements (DRAFT)

- The use of appropriate Single, Double and Combined Honours archetypes will ensure that all students benefit from a curriculum that provides disciplinary depth, identity and expertise in line with our commitment to the Edinburgh Student Vision.
- The introduction of challenge courses, experiential learning and enrichment elements will support achievement of the following commitments:
    - Includes experiential, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning
    - Has a clear focus on integrity and is values-driven
    - Builds understanding and engagement with global challenges
- All students will be required to achieve a minimum of 40 **Challenge Course** credits by the end of year 2 (potentially by end of year 3 for integrated Masters or direct 2nd year entry).

- The intention is that students would select from a menu of Challenge Courses that will likely be grouped into a small number of categories (e.g. “Global Challenges”, “Ways of thinking”, “Emerging Disciplines”, “Working Across Boundaries”).
- Ambition and intention is for Challenge Courses to link to and draw from our institutional research strengths and capabilities.
- Challenge courses could be offered at a University level, by individual Schools/Deaneries, or by partnerships of two or more Schools/Deaneries.
- Challenge courses could draw on a range of teaching approaches (e.g. lecture/seminar based; online/on-campus/hybrid; asynchronous online; experiential).
- Expectation is that Challenge Courses would be open to all students across the institution (perhaps with specific exceptions – e.g. linked to overlapping content) and consequently run at scale (100s to 10000s).
- Challenge courses could be pass/fail (or with flexible credit weighting depending on assessment method).
- Expectation is that we would have a group to oversee development and governance of Challenge Courses.

- **Experiential learning** will be embedded as a keystone element within programmes and offered as a University level option. Lesley McAra is chairing a curriculum transformation group looking at definitions and approaches to offering experiential learning at scale, including resource, support, pedagogic and assessment considerations
  - Working assumption is that approved courses would be categorised (and tagged within our systems) as experiential learning using definitions developed by the Curriculum working group. This is likely to include consideration of opportunities like professional/clinical practice, study abroad, work based learning/projects
  - All disciplinary archetypes will be required to include a minimum of 20 credits tagged as experiential. This would guarantee that all students participate in an element of experiential learning. Many students will participate in much more than 20 credits of experiential learning across their programme of study.
  - This will be complemented by the availability of institutional experiential learning courses or models (e.g. SAChA, SLICCs, Work Based Projects or Outreach Courses) in years 3 or 4. These could be designed to align with or replace traditional capstone elements (offering interdisciplinary/experiential alternatives to traditional specialist dissertations or projects).
  - Some challenge courses could be run as experiential learning opportunities.
- **Enrichment elements** provide an opportunity for outside/elective courses to be taken as a coherent series and reflected as such on the award/transcript. The purpose of developing these enrichment elements is to curate collections of courses outside the anchor discipline in a way that provides coherent, structured and substantive learning. They can also be combined with archetypes to support transfers, provide alternative exit routes, additional specialisms and greater flexibility in how the archetypes operate.

Course Selection and Enrolment (DRAFT)

- A key priority will be to automate as much course enrolment as possible and ensure that the development of support for course selection and enrolment is a joint endeavour between the Student Support Project and Curriculum Transformation (responding to School/Programme/Enrichment Element and Student requirements and with a focus on the roles of Student Advisors in supporting student choice).

- Student timetables will be pre-populated based upon compulsory anchor discipline requirements and any compulsory (programme-related) enrichment elements. Students will then select any optional elements needed to meet their disciplinary programme archetypes.

- Students will be able to see what elective enrichment elements, challenge courses and other outside courses are open to them. This availability will be informed by any programme-specific recommendations or restrictions (e.g. preventing access to enrichment elements that duplicate disciplinary programme content) and timetabling constraints.

- Self-service enrolment will be possible and encouraged (with Student Advisor support and other guidance available as appropriate). Students will be encouraged to start by looking at the availability of enrichment elements and challenge courses (and reminded of the requirement to take 40 credits of challenge courses by the end of year 2).

- We may need to include mechanisms for students to input a prioritised set of enrichment/challenge course choices by a set deadline with the system working to optimise enrolment based upon courses capacity and timetabling constraints as well as student choice.

- When managing enrolment for courses in second and subsequent years the system will need to accommodate ongoing enrichment elements as well as programme specific disciplinary anchors and enrichment elements. The system should also flag opportunities to build on past challenge and enrichment element course completions.

Next Steps

This is an incomplete first pass at articulating some of these rules and guidance and should be seen as early stage work in progress. We will work with Schools, Deaneries, members of the Curriculum Design Principles & Architecture and Supporting the Curriculum Workstreams to test, refine and further develop the rules and guidance. Key areas to add include approaches to admissions, transfers, progression and degree awards.

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Student Experience Update

Description of paper

1. This paper provides an update on Student Experience for Autumn 2022/23.

Action requested/Recommendation

2. To note the update.

Background and context

3. A positive experience for our students, new and returning, at the commencement of a new academic year, was been a priority for us for welcome and welcome back, as we returned to a full campus delivery (except dedicated online).

4. This year marks the operational launch of our new Student Support model, a University strategic priority programme that is expected to contribute to improved student satisfaction and wellbeing.

5. Cost of living pressures has been a significant concern for our entire community and we have responded to this as an institution in a variety of ways and will continue to review to support our students

6. Work towards the Curriculum Transformation Programme has been progressing with dedicated updates to take place as a separate item on the SEC agenda.

7. The Office for Students has conducted a review of the National Student Survey. The results of this review are now published with roll out for the 2023 survey. A separate briefing is provided for SEC.

Discussion

Student Support Model

8. Following Executive and Court agreement, planning restarted post pandemic in October 2021, Phase 1 role out of the Model has taken place

9. A reminder that the new model has a team of people to support with different aspects of student life.

- Cohort leads to build a sense of community and belonging through supporting induction and transition and an academic vision for the programme.

- New professional services teams of student and wellbeing advisers; the student advisers provide the first point of contact and triage to other roles within the model. The wellbeing advisers are there to provide support with wellbeing and personal matters, and to deal with the more complex cases. We have recruited c.80 members of professional services staff (student and wellbeing advisers)

- To build on and extend the already well-established Peer Assisted Learning and Support schemes (PALS) delivered across the University.

- Recognising and assuring the importance of teaching teams in supporting students to transition into and through their studies both within and alongside the taught curriculum.

10. Phase 1 is for first year undergraduates and postgraduate masters students (except in Economics where is all years of taught students), with postgraduate research students able to be supported by wellbeing advisers. This is in all Schools in CSE, 1 in CMV and 5 in CAHSS.

11. Implementation has been a partnership approach with a central project team supporting College implementation groups, aimed to deliver a baseline of consistent support within all Schools. This consistency has be delivered in the professional services roles of student and wellbeing advisers, guidance for the role of cohort lead whilst enabling Schools to have a flexible approach within their context.

12. This model is in the early stages and we are gathering case studies; there are examples of where the new approach is working well to support students, we also want to share examples we can learn from. These are being gathered and will shared in the coming weeks within our briefing resources. We have plans for evaluation and monitoring through surveys and focus groups with students (supported by EUSA) and staff, supported by EUSA. This will inform Phase 2 planning and a longer term approach to continuous improvements when the model moves from project to 'business as usual'.

13. Planning for phase 2 to fully roll out for 2023/24 is well advanced with College leads, Schools and the Project Board. This will primarily focus on 1) improvements / learnings from Phase 1, 2) design and implementation, 3) Phase 2 readiness e.g. training, recruitment, 4) supporting structures e.g. communications, governance, policy and regulations, underpinning systems.

14. We have revised our governance approach in line with Phase 2 roll out and will be working with College Registrars and others to ensure resourcing needs are captured in the upcoming planning round.

Cost of Living

15. At the last University Executive, we discussed the Cost of Living crisis. In follow up to these discussions, we can report the following actions are underway:

- In a University and EUSA collaboration, we produced a video for students about the cost of living, plus a dedicated website. This will be followed up as part of a wider student communications campaign throughout the year.
- The University's participation grant (With EUSU/EUSA), removes barriers for students who are unable to afford to participate in sports and societies. 225 students have applied so far.
- We have been working with EUSA on a rebranding of the fund for student hardship as well as a new set of webpages.
- The application process has been further streamlined, and to reduce bureaucracy and enable faster turnaround of applications
- We will continue to encourage student to come forward earlier for accommodation and financial advice, working in conjunction with EUSA's Advice Place.
- The ACE support for the Accommodation Advice has been extended for two weeks from w/c 3 October.
- We have launched a set of low cost food options.
- We will continue to provide emergency help, such as accommodation and food vouchers, to students in immediate crisis and work with local charities.

- A University Cost-of-Living Working Group (formerly Poverty Commission Working Group) will remain functional to provide insight from areas across the University on how best the University can support staff and students through this crisis.

16. Universities Scotland who have been collating feedback from universities on their approaches and there are similar approaches across the sector as we are applying at Edinburgh. Universities Scotland are lobbying Scottish and UK Government and other stakeholders to support us in this.

National Student Survey

17. The University Executive supported the next steps outlined in our paper on the NSS results 2022 and we are working ahead on these with School meetings taking place before the winter closure.

18. For the 2023 NSS, the Office for Students has confirmed the outcomes of their consultation over the summer on proposed changes to the National Student Survey. A separate paper is included for SEC to note the changes.

Resource implications

19. There are no specific resource requests in this paper. We note the ongoing work of colleagues in Schools and central services towards the delivery of the major initiatives discussed.

Risk management

20. Failure to address student experience would mean we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030. It also caries reputational risk and continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

21. This paper would support the SDG "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" as part the strategic objective to improve student experience. The proposals would not hinder the achievement of any other UN SDGs or exacerbate the Climate Emergency.

Equality & diversity

22. Our work in student experience will support greater equality, diversity and inclusion for students within our community.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

23. This paper presents an update to note. Many areas of the update have next steps built into them.

Further information

24. *Author*
Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary Students

Professor Colm Harmon
Vice-Principal Students

Presenter
Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary Students

Freedom of Information

25. Open.

Senate Education Committee

10th November 2022

National Student Survey (NSS) 2023 – Outcome of OfS Review and Optional Questions

Description of paper

1. This paper confirms the outcome of the Office for Students (OfS) review of the NSS and the resultant changes to the survey which will be in place for 2023. The paper also presents the proposed optional questions specifically for students at the University of Edinburgh.

2. The data generated from the NSS contributes to improving the quality of teaching and learning, the student experience and student satisfaction.

Action requested / recommendation

3. For approval. The Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed banks of questions to be included in the NSS 2023.

4. The Committee is asked to note the outcomes of the OfS review of NSS and the potential impact on the changes to the scale for the University results.

Background and context

5. The NSS is an annual survey of final year undergraduate students and takes place between February and April each year. In Scotland, participation in NSS is a condition of the SFC's funding for higher education providers. Institutions in Scotland are required to promote the NSS.

   A review of the NSS was launched by the OfS in 2020 with the aim of ensuring the survey remains fit for purpose and continues to support regulation and student information across the UK. Institutions were consulted as part of this review process, which took part in two phases. The outcomes of the review were published in October 2022, and changes will be in place for NSS 2023.

   The (updated) survey consists of 29 core questions (Appendix 1). Each institution is also given the opportunity to ask additional optional questions which can be taken from a list of suggested banks (see Appendix 2) and/or questions which have been created internally.

Discussion

<u>NSS Review Outcomes</u>

6. Resulting from the work of phase two of the NSS review, there will be changes to core survey questions, as well as changes to response scales.

7. Key changes are;
   a. A new four-point item-specific response scale will replace the Likert response scale in the core questionnaire
   b. The summative question on satisfaction will be asked to students in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland **only**

c. The introduction of a new question on mental wellbeing support for students in all four nations: (*How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?)*
d. The introduction of a new question on freedom of expression to students in **England only:** *(During your studies, how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions and beliefs?)*

8. There are also changes to a number of questions. In Appendix 1, each question is listed, the scale and the comparator questions in the survey up to this year.

9. There are no changes proposed to the optional question banks for 2023 but these will be reviewed further.

10. Senate Education Committee is asked to note these changes and the potential impact this will have on the University's results going forwards, notably the risks to us with the removal of the "Neither Agree or Disagree" score.
This will discussed at University Executive and will be part of discussions scheduled with Colleges and Schools in November and December. As noted at the last SEC, these meetings are about creating plans on a School by School basis for supporting improvements, with marked areas of focus, accountability and measures of success. We will report to SEC in due course on the plans developed at these meetings.

Optional Questions

11. In 2022 the University opted to include 2 additional banks of questions – *Bank 9 Welfare, Resources and Facilities* and *Bank 11 Assessment.* This was the first time these banks had been asked.

12. The University has been asked to show demonstrable progress in both student support and assessment and so it is recommended that the University asks the same banks in NSS 2023. Asking the same banks as last year will also allow trend data to be gathered.

13. With the phased implementation of the new approach to student support, continuing to ask Bank 9 will also allow data to be gathered before, during and after the implementation of the new model.

14. The questions within the banks are:

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities

1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B11. Assessment

1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.
2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

15. Please note that we cannot change the wording within banks or choose to only answer certain questions within a bank.

Resource implications

16. No resource implications

Risk management

17. Failure to address student experience would mean we have not met our strategic ambitions as set out in Strategy 2030. It also caries reputational risk and continues to affect the University's standing in national league tables.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

18. This responds to Goal 4: Quality Education. The data from the NSS is used to improve the experience of students at the University.

Equality & diversity

19. Our work in student experience will support greater equality, diversity and inclusion for students within our community.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

20. If agreed, the optional questions will be included in the NSS 2023. The process for including and reporting on these questions will be overseen by Marianne Brown, Interim Head of Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling.

Author
Marianne Brown
Sarah-Jane Brown

Lucy Evans

Presenter
Marianne Brown

Freedom of Information

Open

Appendix 1 – NSS Core Questions and Scale 2023 and 2022

NSS 2023 Core Questions	**NSS 2023 Response Scale** (all have an option - This does not apply to me)	**NSS 2022 Core Questions** (Scale for all: Definitely agree; Mostly agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Mostly disagree; Definitely disagree; Not applicable)
Teaching on my course		
1. How good are teaching staff at explaining things?	Very good; Good; Not very good; Not at all good	1. Staff are good at explaining things
2. How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?		2. Staff have made the subject interesting.
3. How often is the course intellectually stimulating?		3. The course is intellectually stimulating.
4. How often does your course challenge you to achieve your best work?		4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.
Learning Opportunities		
5. To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?	To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all	5. My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth.
6. How well does your course introduce subjects and skills in a way that builds on what you have already learned?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	6. My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics.
7. To what extent have you had the chance to bring together information and ideas from different topics?	To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent	7. My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt.
8. To what extent does your course have the right balance of directed and independent study?		
9. How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	
Marking and Assessment		
10. How clear were the marking criteria used to assess your work?	Very clear; Clear; Not very clear; Not at all clear	8. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
11. How fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?	Very fair; Fair; Not very fair; Not at all fair	9. Marking and assessment has been fair.

12. How well have assessments allowed you to demonstrate what you have learned?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	
13. How often have you received assessment feedback on time?	Very often; Fairly often; Not very often; Rarely	10. Feedback on my work has been timely.
14. How often does feedback help you to improve your work?		11. I have received helpful comments on my work.
Academic Support		
15. How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?	Very easy; Easy; Not very easy; Not at all easy	12. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.
16. How well have teaching staff supported your learning?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	13. I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course.
		14. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course.
Organisation and Management		
17. How well organised is your course?	Very well organised; Well organised; Not very well organised; Not at all well organised	15. The course is well organised and is running smoothly.
		16. The timetable works efficiently for me.
18. How well were any changes to teaching on your course communicated?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.
Learning Resources		
19. How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well.
20. How well have the library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?		19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well.
21. How easy is it to access subject specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software) when you need them?	Very easy; Easy; Not very easy; Not at all easy	20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to.
Student Voice		
		21. I feel part of a community of staff and students.

		22. I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course.
22. To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?	To a large extent; To some extent; To a small extent; Not at all	
23. To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?		
24. How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?	Very clear; Clear; Not very clear; Not at all clear	
25. How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	26. The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.
Mental Wellbeing Services		
26. How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services?	Very well; Well; Not very well; Not at all well	
Freedom of Expression		
27. English providers ONLY		
Summary question (Scotland, Wales and Ireland ONLY)		
28. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.	Definitely agree; Mostly agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Mostly disagree; Definitely disagree	27. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.
Open text question		
29. Looking back on the experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight?		28. Looking back on the experience, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight? [open text

Appendix 2 - National Student Survey 2023 - Banks of Optional Questions

B1. Personal Development

1. The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.
2. My communication skills have improved.
3. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

B2. Students' Union (Association or Guild)

1. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) had had a positive impact on my sense of belonging to the university or college.
2. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has had a positive impact on the local community.
3. The Students' Union (Association or Guild) has helped me develop useful life skills.

B3. Careers

1. As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects.
2. Good advice is available for making career choices.
3. Good advice is available on further study opportunities.

B4. Course Content and Structure

1. All of the compulsory modules are relevant to my course.
2. There is an appropriate range of options to choose from on my course.
3. The modules of my course form a coherent integrated whole.

B5. Work Placements

Did your course involve any work placements?

a. Yes (ask all questions in this section)
b. No (skip this section)

1. I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements.
2. My placements were valuable in helping my learning.
3. My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course.
4. My placements have helped me to develop my general life skills.
5. The taught part of my course was good preparation for my placements.

B6. Social Opportunities

1. I have had plenty of opportunities to interact socially with other students.
2. I am satisfied with the range of clubs and societies on offer.
3. I am satisfied with the range of entertainment and social events on offer.

B7. Course Delivery

1. Learning materials made available on my course have enhanced my learning.
2. The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn.
3. The delivery of my course has been stimulating.

4. My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research.
5. Practical activities on my course have helped me to learn.

B8. The Physical Environment

1. Security has been satisfactory when attending classes.
2. My institution provides an appropriate environment in which to learn.

B9. Welfare Resources and Facilities

1. There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs.
2. When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful.

B10. Workload

1. The workload on my course is manageable.
2. This course does not apply unnecessary pressure on me as a student.
3. The volume of work on my course means I can always complete it to my satisfaction.
4. I am generally given enough time to understand the things I have to learn.

B11. Assessment

1. Teaching staff test what I have understood rather than what I have memorised.
2. Assessment methods employed in my course require an in-depth understanding of the course content.

B12. Learning Community

1. I feel part of a group of students committed to learning.
2. I have been able to explore academic interests with other students.
3. I have learned to explore ideas confidently.
4. Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued.
5. I feel part of an academic community in my college or university.

B13. Intellectual Motivation

1. I have found the course motivating.
2. The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study.
3. The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.

B14. Entrepreneurial opportunities

1. If I was interested in starting my own business, I know where I could find support in my institution.
2. My Higher Education experience has helped me develop skills that could help me run my own business in future.
3. As a result of my Higher Education experience, I am more likely to consider running my own business in the future.

B15. Employability and skills

1. My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career.
2. My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.

3. The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.

B16. Environmental sustainability

1. My institution encourages good environmental practice.
2. My course has encouraged me to think about environmental sustainability.
3. I have had opportunities to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability.

B17. Student safety

1. I feel safe to be myself at university/college.
2. My institution takes responsibility for my safety.

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Learn Ultra Upgrade

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the Senate Education Committee (SEC) with a brief update on the progress of the Learn Ultra update.

2. The move to Learn Ultra supports the Strategy 2030 as it states that we will offer an excellent student experience and improved digital outreach enabling global participation in education along with offering appropriate technology tools for the job. Moving to Learn Ultra underpins the technology required in preparation for improving the student experience and delivering a new curriculum along with linking directly into the Digital Strategy and the IT and Libraries strand of supporting Curriculum Transformation.

Action requested / recommendation

3. This paper is for information only.

Background and context

4. Each year, the Learn Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) hosts over 5000 active courses for both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, covering both online and on campus delivery.

5. Whilst ongoing investment is made on a regular basis for the physical teaching spaces, the VLE has not received an upgrade in over 10 years. The move to Learn Ultra allows for investment in the VLE and in turn brings the Learn VLE in line with other competitors.

Discussion

6. The move to Learn Ultra will be completed in two stages: a. Enabling Ultra Base Navigation (UBN) and b. Enabling Learn Ultra courses. The initial stage was completed in June 2022.

7. In preparation for the delivery of UBN in June 2022, all technical work for the move to Learn Ultra was completed ‘up front’ which allows for no additional downtime to be required when Ultra courses are enabled in 2023.

8. A programme of Communications was initiated in May through to July to raise awareness of the move to UBN. The programme of communications saw a multipronged approach to reach both staff and students and will be initiated again across August and September in preparation for Start of Term.

9. With the second phase, enabling Learn Ultra courses, this piece of work paves the way for optimising the VLE for the delivery of credit-bearing courses from AY 23/24. As a result, any non-credit bearing courses are being reviewed to identify alternative platforms for delivery where appropriate.

10. Support and guidance will be available via the Learn Ultra Upgrade project for any owners of non-credit bearing courses which are being recommended to be moved onto an alternative platform.

11. As part of the move to Learn Ultra, an Early Adopter programme has been created. This programme will provide insights into resource and workload requirements per course, along with providing key information around good practice in both the preparation to migrate and the migration process itself. Details of the Early Adopter programme are discussed in the paper 'Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme' of this SEC.

12. In terms of governance, the Learn Ultra project board has now met twice (May 2022 and August 2022), both implementation groups have had their initial meetings (august 2022) with user groups (both academic and professional services) being scheduled for post the start of semester.

13. Following on from the success of the Learn Foundations project, the Learn Ultra Upgrade has continued with the annual summer internship, recruiting students to support Schools and Deaneries in preparations for Start of Term activities.

14. Over the course of the summer 2022, the interns support by undertaking accessibility mapping reviews on a selection of courses from across the University. 7 of the 9 interns recruited have opted to extend their contracts through to April 2023 to continue to support the project in data analysis and student-led guidance.

Resource implications

15. A project team from within LTW has been put together to support with the delivery of the Learn Ultra upgrade working closely with college learning technology support as part of the project team.

16. It is anticipated that the work load for course leaders using Learn Ultra will be an **additional 2 hours of training to learn the new interface**. This is based on several assumptions that are currently being tested with the Early Adopter community to ensure appropriateness.

Risk management

17. The move to upgrade the VLE to Learn Ultra mitigates against a number of risks, including:

    a. Student and staff experience is at risk if updates to the VLE are not undertaken to improve integration with other hybrid teaching tools such as Teams.
    b. Learn is integrated with multiple major online systems and must be secure, robust, resilient, and rigorous. We must move to the next version.
    c. That we will align Learn Ultra with the Curriculum transformation programme and other strategic change programmes to ensure commonality of standards and objectives, as well as ensure that we mitigate and assess the overall impact of change to the Schools.

d. There is the potential of a reputational risk for the University of not providing up to date technologies for teaching and ignoring staff and student feedback.
e. Online learning – risk of not having in place the technologies and platforms necessary for business continuity.
f. Risk of not supporting the University to reach its goals to widen participation, improve the student and staff experience and progress strategic projects focussed on reviewing the curriculum.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

18. UNSDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education lifelong opportunities for all.

Equality & diversity

19. Use of the VLE supports the Accessible and Inclusive Learning policy in a variety of ways, thus enhancing the student experience at the University of Edinburgh:

    a. User profiles will have enhanced inclusivity features giving both students and staff the ability to:
        i. Add pronouns to their profiles;
        ii. Clarify the pronunciation of your name by adding the phonetic spelling and recording name pronunciation direct in the platform.
    b. Improved navigation for all users when accessing Learn. Ultra base navigation enhances the navigation for new course activity including ability to access grades, feedback, submission deadlines at programme level without the user needing to access a course.
    c. Enhanced accessibility with Learn Ultra being built with Universal Design in mind.
    d. A more modern, intuitive and usable VLE that meets student expectations of an “up to date” website and that allows for courses to be created and delivered more easily with more user-friendly content features.
    e. Responsive web design, with an interface that works well on all types of device and screen sizes.
    f. Access to Blackboard’s "File Transformer", which allows users to upload a course file and download it in an alternative format. This will be easily accessible from the main Ultra base navigation page.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

20. For the purposes of the upgrade, the Learning, Teaching and Web Communications Manager will work closely with Schools and Deaneries to understand communications requirements. Part of this work will be undertaken via the Early Adopter Programme (please see the Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme Paper for more information) which will begin to inform the communications approach and subsequent implementation will be underpinned by the Learn Ultra communications strategy.

21. A round of engagement is currently underway within each of the Schools and Deaneries with the dual purpose of gathering School/Deanery level requirements in preparation for the implementation of Learn Ultra along with beginning to raise awareness. This approach is being supported via three key activities:
    a. School/Deanery engagement sessions – Requirements gathering.
    b. School/Deanery committees – Awareness raising;
    c. College Committees – Awareness raising.
22. All requirements gathered are being collated and will factor within the implementation plan for the upgrade across the summer of 2023.

Author
Lee-Ann Simpson
31st October 2022

Presenter
Melissa Highton

Freedom of Information *Open*

Senate Education Committee

10 November 2022

Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme

Description of paper

1. This paper provides the Senate Education Committee (SEC) with a brief update on the progress of the Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme.

2. The Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme forms part of the move to Learn Ultra which supports the Strategy 2030 as it states that we will offer an excellent student experience and improved digital outreach enabling global participation in education along with offering appropriate technology tools for the job. Moving to Learn Ultra underpins the technology required in preparation for supporting the new curriculum along with linking directly into the Digital Strategy (Cross-over between the EDI & Ethics and students & educators work stream relevant to teaching and the student experience).

Action requested / recommendation

3. This paper is for information only.

Background and context

4. In order to prepare for the full Learn Ultra upgrade (summer 2023), a selection of courses were identified from across the University to upgrade to Learn Ultra a year early (summer 2022) to provide insights and requirements.

5. These courses form the Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme.

Discussion

6. Following discussions with other institutions who had successfully migrated across to Learn Ultra, the University of Edinburgh initiated an Early Adopter programme, aimed at rolling the upgrade out 12 months ahead of schedule to a select number of courses to allow for lessons learned to be gained and implemented in preparation for the full roll-out.

7. From October 2021 through to February 2022, a round of engagement was undertaken by the project team, engaging with all Schools and Deaneries across the University to begin raising awareness of the Learn Ultra Upgrade.

8. As part of those engagement sessions, the Learn Ultra Early Adopter Programme was discussed, with Schools and Deaneries being asked to consider taking part in the programme.

9. In March 2022 the Early Adopter Programme was initiated with over 130 courses being identified, representing all three Colleges. These courses were split by delivery with focus given to Semester 1 and Yearlong courses before all remaining courses to be supported. All in-scope courses can be located on the Learn Ultra SharePoint.

10. In order to support course teams taking part in the Early Adopter Programme, project resource was assigned to the programme, providing Instructional Design, Learning Design and Learning Technology support. Each College was assigned a core support team to provide 1-2-1 support and guidance during the programme.

11. In preparation for the Start of Term activities, a programme of Early Adopter training was developed and delivered. This programme allowed all course teams to become familiar with Learn Ultra courses prior to course build commencing:

    a. **A day in the Life webinar:** Short orientation sessions to allow colleagues to see Learn Ultra from both a staff and student perspective.
    b. **An Edinburgh Model for Online Teaching:** Experiential opportunity for colleagues to spend a short amount of time on a Learn Ultra a student.
    c. **10 Things to do in Learn Ultra:** A tutor-led, task-based workshop for learners to engage with Learn Ultra as an instructor. The workshop covers 10 common tasks carried out when creating and using courses in Learn Ultra. Users will spend time exploring Learn Ultra in a structured way.
    d. **Good Practice with Learn Ultra:** A tutor-led consolidation session following from the learning gained from '10 Things to try in Learn Ultra'. During this workshop, users are given the opportunity to work on courses to build and edit content with an emphasis on pedagogy and good practice workflows. Users are supported through demonstration and discussion with tutors and peers.

12. All Early Adopter training courses have been designed with accessibility and inclusivity in mind to ensure accessibility, inclusivity and good practice form the base of all Early Adopter training, support and guidance created as part of the project.

13. Early Adopter training is being delivered in three tranches via the project team along with train the trainer opportunities having occurred with multiple Learning Technologists from across the University having attended the core Learn training, delivered by external Blackboard consultants:

    a. Tranche One: July 2022;
    b. Tranche Two: August and September 2022;
    c. Tranche Three: November and December 2022.

14. Resources have been made available for all Early Adopter colleagues via the Learn Ultra SharePoint. This, along with the Early Adopter Teams site has been set up to support the Early Adopter course teams along with providing a place for 360 feedback and evaluation.

15. Good practice support and guidance on using Learn Ultra has been created to provide a consistent experience in using Learn Ultra and is being tested via the Early Adopter Programme in preparation for the 2023 delivery. This has been developed as a series of pages on the early Adopter SharePoint site.

16. For the start of Term preparations, the project team worked with the course teams to understand the resource required to migrate courses from Learn

Original in to Learn Ultra. This data is being used to help inform a resourcing model for the full roll-out in 2023. This model may vary from School/Deanery due to specific requirements discussed.

17. For Semester 1 of the 22/23 Academic Year, approximately, 90 courses are being taught via Learn Ultra with a further 40 being supported in preparation for teaching commencing from January onwards.

18. Feedback received to date from the Early Adopter Programme has been positive and is informing the plans for the at-scale roll-out in 2023.

Resource implications

19. A project team from within LTW has been put together to support with the delivery of the Learn Ultra upgrade working closely with college learning technology support as part of the project team.

20. It is anticipated that the work load for course leaders using Learn Ultra will be an **additional 2 hours of training to learn the new interface**. This is based on several assumptions that are currently being tested with the Early Adopter community to ensure appropriateness.

Risk management

21. The move to upgrade the VLE to Learn Ultra mitigates against a number of risks, including:

    a. Student and staff experience is at risk if updates to the VLE are not undertaken to improve integration with other hybrid teaching tools such as Teams.
    b. Learn is integrated with multiple major online systems and must be secure, robust, resilient, and rigorous. We must move to the next version.
    c. That we will align Learn Ultra with the Curriculum transformation programme and other strategic change programmes to ensure commonality of standards and objectives, as well as ensure that we mitigate and assess the overall impact of change to the Schools.
    d. There is the potential of a reputational risk for the University of not providing up to date technologies for teaching and ignoring staff and student feedback.
    e. Online learning – risk of not having in place the technologies and platforms necessary for business continuity.
    f. Risk of not supporting the University to reach its goals to widen participation, improve the student and staff experience and progress strategic projects focussed on reviewing the curriculum.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

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Equality & diversity

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e. Responsive web design, with an interface that works well on all types of device and screen sizes.
f. Access to Blackboard’s "File Transformer", which allows users to upload a course file and download it in an alternative format. This will be easily accessible from the main Ultra base navigation page.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

24. Communications
    a. As part of the Early Adopter Programme, communications requirements are being obtained from the Schools and Deaneries involved to allow for a stepped approach to communications to be achieved:
        i. Top-level communications provided by the project team to staff colleagues via a variety of communication channels including School, internal communications, newsletters, ‘just in time’ contextual updates (Via Learn and MyEd) and Social (where appropriate). This type of communications will provide an overview of the project along with key information that will be needed by colleagues across the campus.
        ii. Working partnership with local communications colleagues within the Schools and Deaneries to ensure that all local communication channels are taken advantage off (including attendance at local activities such as committees, all-staff meetings, any other appropriate meetings etc.).
        iii. Resource pack will be made available based on learnings from the Early Adopter Programme. This resource pack can be tailored per School needs and requirements.
25. Implementation
    a. To support with the implementation requirements, Schools and Deaneries are being consulted with from October to December 2022. These consultations will provide the project team with key requirements (such as: training and communication needs/staff profile/resourcing), all of which will

form part of the project implementation plan for the at scale delivery.

26. Evaluation
    a. An evaluation of the Early Adopter Programme is underway, using a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data.
    b. The evaluation is looking at understanding the key areas of the programme that will support with the implementation plan for the at-scale delivery in 2023.

Author
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31st October 2022

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